

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
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(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)**

**HABERMAS AND THE DISCOURSE OF MODERNITY**

**BY  
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**JULY 2011**

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- BT Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time, 1985 London, Basil Blackwell  
Trans. Macquarie and Robinson
- PC Habermas, Jurgen. The Postnational Constellation, Political Essays, 2001, The  
MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Trans Max Pensky.
- PDM Habermas, Jurgen. The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity; Twelve Lectures,  
1987, The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Trans. Frederick Lawrence.
- PT Habermas, Jurgen. Postmetaphysical Thinking, Philosophical Essays, 1998,  
Polity press. Trans William Mark Hohengarten.
- TCA1 Habermas, Jurgen. The Theory of communicative Action, volume one, 1984,  
Beacon press, Boston, Trans. Thomas McCarthy.

## Introduction

The issue of the modern and modernity, continually surfaces behind contemporary discussions of meaning, validity, rationality, and generally truth across the disciplines. Interrogating the modern is seen as one pivotal direction in addressing the problems in human history, the contemporary world, and also humanity's future prospects. Issues ranging from slavery and colonialism, male domination, otherness, the place of institutions and scientific inquiries, all the way up to the emancipation of humanity from poverty, war and injustice, are all in one way or the other being connected with an analysis of the modern. But what's the modern and modernity.

Etymologically, there is an agreement that the word modern originates from the Latin terms 'modernus' and 'modo' when Christianity tried to distinguish itself from the "pagan Roman past" (PC, 131). What's interesting in the development of the concept 'modern' is not just the ever historical process of the emergence of a present, but a now that radically tries to detach itself from the past. This is a present which tries to evolve its normative criteria and heralds its place in history as the beginning of a novelist age. Still, questions such as; when does modernity began and has it ended, is it a project (Habermas), a historical time line or an attitude (Foucault); is modernity emancipatory or repressive and disciplinary, are we currently in a modern or postmodern age, is modernity universal or particular, does modernity need to be reformed or abandoned, are all highly debatable.

Generally, the issue of modernity is associated with the fate of reason in modern European history. Specifically modernity is related to how reason was conceived as a critical and emancipatory guide towards the ontological, social, political, technical and overall development of humanity. As Lawrence Cahoon, in his, *From modernism to postmodernism, an anthology* puts it, modernity sought to empower individual rationality towards mastering the mystery of humanity's existence. Thus modernity, "which places the highest premium on individual human life and freedom,... believes that such freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through virtuous, self-controlled work, creating a better material, political and intellectual life for all" (Cahoon, 2003,9). In the debate over modernity and the fate of human rationality, eventhough modernity espoused

individualized, unrestrictive, reflective rationality as an emancipatory ideal; this optimism was accompanied along the way with pessimism about the destructive aspects of modern rationality. As Hoy and McCarthy put it in the context of twentieth century Critical Theory, while some firmly believed that the “sleep of reason produces monsters”, others held that “the dream of reason produces monsters” (Hoy and McCarthy, 1994, 10). Thus, while some propagated the cultivation of human rationality to conquer the darkness of humanity’s existence trapped in dogmatic traditions and authority; others pointed out what’s lost in the triumph of subjectivity and the unlimited exercise of human rationality. For Steven Best, one could characterize the issue of modernity via the concept of progress. Thus, Best holds that “there are two major assumptions that typically inform modern concepts of progress. First, the structure of human time is unified and continuous; different cultures and nations ultimately belong to one and the same historical process... Second, the continuity of historical time is governed by a purpose, by a teleological movement where human beings advance from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality” (Best, 2005, 4). History, is seen as a ground where humanity’s existence is refined and qualitatively advanced taking societies as a whole from ancient, to medieval, and finally to the novel modern period which manifests the highest stage in human development.

One way of comprehending the problem of modernity is to situate it in terms of other concepts like modernization, modernism and postmodernism. As we have seen the concept of modernity is usually crystallized around the development of rationality in the modern European period which is supposedly individualistic, reflective, and multidimensional in trying to problematize every aspect of our lives. Another concept is modernization, and it broadly refers to how rationality was interpreted in science and technology signifying material achievements in the modern period. Further, we have modernism, which criticizes the exaggerated and destructive facets of modern rationality and instead tries to bring the aesthetic dimension into focus. Finally we have postmodernism which envisages an abandonment of modern rationality in favor of a heterogeneous, diverse approach that addresses the complexity of human life. Thus, modernity could be seen in how it defends an emancipatory ideal of rationality which differs from modernization, modernism and postmodernism. Still, the intrinsic connection

between the four concepts should be stressed. Since they all signify how modern reason was casted and recasted throughout modern history.

In this thesis, the focus will be on critically exposing the accounts of one of the most influential philosophers of the Twentieth century, Jurgen Habermas, on the modern condition and the idea of modernity. Habermas tried to approach modern society from an interdisciplinary angle, with an aim of exposing its foundations, underlying presuppositions, identifying its threats and potentials and building an emancipatory critical social theory. As James Gordon Finlayson puts it, Habermas's general project could be divided into five areas that are intrinsically related.

First of all, we have Habermas's "pragmatic meaning programme", where an analysis of speech acts, the issue of how are speech acts employed, how "does speech coordinate the actions of social agents", and "what is the relation between validity and meaning" are raised.(Finlayson,2005,139) Secondly, in Habermas's "theory of communicative rationality", an inquiry is made into the various kinds of actions, and questions what kind of actions should be strengthened as the foundation of modern societies (Ibid). Thirdly, in "the programme of social theory", issues of "how is social order possible"? the "nature of modern societies", what is the main problem of modern societies, and what's the solution, are raised. (Ibid, 140) Fourthly, in "the programme of discourse ethics" the possibility of a 'moral order' and a distinction between the ethical and moral are problematized (Ibid, 141). Finally, Habermas's "programme of political theory" inquires into the legitimacy of modern political and legal systems. (Ibid, 142) In this thesis, the focus will be on Habermas's reconstruction of the philosophical discourse of modernity and his defense of modernity in terms of strengthening the implicit communicative rationality found in modern societies. Habermas's discourse of modernity is where his ideas on meaning, rationality and social theory are directly applied. Further, it provides the framework for the discourse theories of ethics and politics.

In the following chapters, we will look at how Habermas defends his claim that modernity is an uncompleted process. How Habermas sketches modernity as a process of rationalization in terms of the emergence of three value spheres and corresponding validity claims, and how societies move from conventional to postconventional

conditions will be discussed. Finally, how Habermas tries to defend his communicative paradigm from what he calls the philosophy of consciousness will be elaborated. The philosophy of consciousness is a label under which philosophical orientations and social theories that failed to recognize the intersubjective communicative potential in modern societies are spelled out.

My main focus in this thesis is exposing the central arguments of Habermas's work PDM. To this extent, the twelve lectures have been divided into the four chapters of this thesis. The fifth chapter offers a critical analysis.

Chapter one, *Modernity, from Hegel to Nietzsche*, analyzes lectures one, two and three of Habermas's PDM. This is related to the inauguration of modernity, and its clearest expression in Hegel, the critiques of the young and old Hegelians, up to Nietzsche's entrance into the discourse. Here, the focus will be on how Habermas conceptualizes modernity as an uncompleted project, and his attempt to defend modernity against modernism, modernization and postmodernism. Further, the attempt to employ Weber's theory of rationalization and Hegel's philosophy to develop the concept of modernity will be discussed. Finally the failure to develop a communicative approach to truth and rationality will be elaborated.

Chapter two, *Modernity and its critics from Nietzsche to poststructuralism*, sketches how a radical critique of reason developed in Nietzsche is employed by and hence further developed, in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Heidegger's philosophy of Being and Bataille's concept of the 'heterogeneous'. Here, lecture four of the PDM that deals with Nietzsche, lecture five on Horkheimer and Adorno, lecture six on Heidegger and lecture eight on Bataille are analyzed. The chapter begins with introducing Nietzsche's radical critique of reason and his interrogation of modern ascetic values. Then, after drawing Nietzsche's alternatives from *The Birth of Tragedy* to the 'will to power', the two paths opened up by Nietzsche's critique of modernity will be discussed. Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of modernity is discussed in terms of situating their approach as it differs from traditional theory. After showing how the Frankfurt schools' critique moves from a critique of ideology to a general critique of reason, Habermas's critique of the Frankfurt schools' aporia will be briefly discussed. A

third major aspect of this chapter is on Habermas's discussion of Heidegger's philosophy of Being and its consequences for communicative rationality. The section on Heidegger ends with a discussion of Habermas's exposition of Heidegger's Nazi affiliations. Finally, a discussion will be made of Habermas's critique of Bataille's heterogeneous approach. Bataille tries to invoke what's excluded by the modern rationalistic tradition as an alternative to Western rationality's limitations.

Chapter three, *Habermas and postmodernism*, tries to locate how Nietzsche's radical critique of reason is further developed in the poststructuralism of Derrida and Foucault. Lecture seven on Derrida and lectures nine and ten of the PDM on Foucault will be discussed. After giving a brief introduction of postmodernity and postmodernism, an attempt will be made to shed some light on the Habermas/Derrida debate. This debate is seen as a defense of the distinct value spheres and everyday communication from deferrals of meaning. After exposing Derrida's views on deconstruction, metaphysics, differance, Phonocentrism and logocentrism, the major focus will be on how Habermas rejects Derrida's reference to infinite referral and the question of an implicit metaphysics in the latter's arche-writing.

The second section of this chapter is devoted to the Habermas/Foucault Debate as one between communicative rationality and disciplinary power. After establishing Foucault's relation to Bataille, Derrida and Nietzsche, there will be a discussion on Foucault's move from archeology to genealogy, and from will to knowledge to power. Finally Habermas's critique of Foucault's methodological approach will be discussed.

Chapter four, *Habermas, Reforming modernity*, focuses on Habermas's new reading of the discourse of modernity which is found in his attempt to develop a communicative rationality from the potentials embedded in modern societies. Major portions of this chapter are devoted to Habermas's discussions of the difference between transcendental and reconstructive sciences, consequences of the communicative paradigm for conventional approaches to meaning, communication, rationality and instrumental rationality and the lifeworld's function in modern societies. Finally, a discussion will be made on how Habermas's postmetaphysical approach relates to religion and modernity. Lectures eleven and twelve of Habermas's discourse of modernity will be analyzed here.

Chapter five, *Habermas's discourse of modernity examined*, discusses four major issues. First charges of misreading on Habermas's discussions of Weber, Hegel, Derrida, Foucault, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Bataille will be elaborated. Secondly, a discussion will be made of critics not included in Habermas's discourse of modernity. Selections are made from transmodern, African, feminist and intercultural approaches. Thirdly, I will try to point out some of the shortcomings of Habermas's discourse of modernity in relation to the aesthetic, material relations, nonsecular identities, the marginalized side of modernity and shortcomings in the discussion of postmodernism. Finally, the positive side of Habermas's discussion of modernity in relation to metaphysical thinking, and a diagnostic and remedial approach for discussing the human condition, will be pointed out. The paper ends with a brief conclusion.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Modernity from Hegel to Nietzsche

In the preface to his work *PDM*, Habermas starts his discussion in light of the paper he presented in receiving the Adorno prize, in September 1980, entitled *Modernity-an unfinished project*. Habermas was especially intrigued at the time by postmovements especially poststructuralism and postmodernism in general, which presented their farewells to modernity in different forms.

Habermas, according to some like James Gordon Finlayson, wanted to show that, modernity is a project and that it's not completed yet. It's a project since it arises as a conscious attempt to solve problems in relation to rationalization of the lifeworld. There was a distancing from medieval and pre-modern periods by a process of rationalization, still problems like separation between the distinct value spheres and everyday world begun to occur. So, modernity amongst other things, tried to solve this. Modernity is also uncompleted, since Habermas thinks that, problems encountering modernity, like colonization of the lifeworld, could be solved by appealing to and strengthening the life world and its emancipatory potentials found in the three validity claims, from power, money and other forms of instrumental rationality (Finlayson, 2005, 65-66).

Habermas's discourse of modernity could generally be viewed as a process of secularization or the opening up of a space through which modern individuals could raise their claims to truth. For Finlayson, this secularization could be viewed in two ways. First, we have an account of the emergence of three value spheres oriented towards solving specific issues, three validity claims where distinct claims to truth are raised and three forms of discourse which are "initiated with a challenge issued by the hearer to the speaker to make good her validity claim." (Finlayson, 2005, 42) Secondly, Habermas tried to appropriate Kohlberg's development psychology into his discourse of modernity. Kohlberg sketched three stages through which the moral development of children goes through. These are, 'pre-conventional morality' in which right and wrong is interpreted in terms of immediate consequences, 'conventional morality' where one confirms to

established norms and finally, ‘postconventional morality’ where distinctions are made between authority and validity, what’s provided beforehand and reflected upon.(ibid,69-72). When we come to Habermas’s discourse of modernity, Habermas using Kohlberg argues that in terms of their competence i.e. their ability to forward contestable claims to truth, modern societies have moved from ‘conventional’ to ‘postconventional’ morality. Habermas didn’t focus on Kohlberg’s ‘preconventional morality’, and eventhough he appropriates the latter’s ideas in volume two of his *TCA*, from the *PDM* and so on he focuses on the three validity claims, value spheres and discourses. Here, my focus will be on how Habermas sketches the modern project in terms of three value spheres correlating with three validity claims and the various proponents and critics that accompanied the project.

### **1.1 Modernity and the Rationalization of the Lifeworld**

Habermas begins his characterization of modernity by a discussion of the rationalization of the life world found in Weber’s sociology of religion. In his sociology of religion, Max Weber talks of how the abandonment and distancing from religious accounts led to a process of rationalization in the West. Accordingly, the abandoning of the religious world views goes along with the emergence of three ‘value-spheres’ manifesting a secular outlook. There emerged theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres. (PDM, 1) Habermas further elaborates the emergence of a secular culture out of a religious background and world view, in terms of Durkheim and Mead’s account of the “rationalization of the life world”. This is a process involving examination of one’s own cultural background, emergence of universal norms and values, the rise of a communicative rationality and how the individual identities emerge in this process.

Today, as Habermas sees it, Weber’s rationalization appears under a theme of ‘modernization’. Accordingly, modernization supposedly consists of various ideals affirming others which are related to ideas like increase in accumulated wealth, productivity, mobilization of resources, emergence of central administration, urbanization, secularization, increase in rights and participation in government, and so on. Habermas contends that the theory of modernization changes Weber’s occidental

rationalization and abandonment of religious world-views in two senses. On the one hand, seeing modernity as a universal model and criteria against which developments of societies will be assessed. On the other, abandoning accounts of the rationalization of the lifeworld so that modernity and rationality will be uncoupled. (PDM, 2)

Modernization has, according to Habermas, contributed to the emergence of postmodernist movements. Modernization has ignored its relation to modernity and rationalization of the lifeworld and instead tried to see itself as a universal model for assessment of different cultures and traditions. In a similar line, postmodernists also claim that the ideas and legacies of modernity have ended, and that we are now in a post-modern age. So, both modernization and postmodernism, try to disassociate themselves from modernity, and instead try to conceive their projects as what's refined out of modernity, and hence constitutes a better approach. Hence;

*From this perspective, a self-sufficiently advancing modernization of society has separated itself from the impulses of a cultural modernity that has seemingly become obsolete in the mean time; it only carries out the functional laws of economy and state, technology and science, which are supposed to have amalgamated into a system that cannot be influenced.*  
(PDM, 3)

The postmodernist appeal to a postmodern age is also seen as one of exposing reason as a tool for dominating others, instead of pure reason. For Habermas, one could identify two facets of postmodernism. A 'neoconservative' one, which doubts the process of rationalization that is said to have taken place in the West and also, an 'anarchist' one which admits that modernity is rationalization but asserts that reason with the collapse of modernity is manifesting itself as repressive and instrumental. (PDM, 4) Here Habermas, goes on to look at Hegel's understanding of modernity, claiming that he is the one who clearly articulated it first, and that in this sense, we can see the extent to which post-modernist ventures are justified.

## **1.2 Hegel and the Novel Modern**

For Habermas, Hegel developed the idea of modernity in two senses. "epochal and chronological", and also as the arrival of the last stage in human history. Qualitatively,

Hegel saw the present as the beginning of the process of progress and development. Also, historically speaking, Hegel standing at the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the last three centuries i.e. Sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth and historical facts of the discoveries, renaissance and reformation as effecting a break with medieval period. So, “the year 1500 constituted the epochal threshold between modern times and middle ages” (PDM, 5). Following the famous German historian Reinhart Koselleck, Habermas asserts that terms like modern, modernity and modernization have in them an idea of striving for a future potential, progress and actualization. Especially during Hegel, history comes to be conceived as a continuous process moving towards progress. Still, the present was also seen as a culmination. It was declared the novel age which tries to dawn a new process for humanity that will culminate in progress.

In his preface, to *The phenomenology of mind*, Hegel as Habermas sees it saw his current reality as where the present was a qualitatively superior stage than the past and its historical cruelties and contradictions. But, what is the current, the present, the current novel age for Hegel? Hegel saw the nineteenth century, as refinement of the ideas of Enlightenment and French revolution, and as a state that emerged out of historical contradictions and hence a new stage in the dialectical process and march of history towards progress.

Radical and revolutionary concepts emerged in the eighteenth century in general and Hegelian philosophy in particular, that are supposed to be manifestations of the novel and unique age. Hence, “words such as revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis and zeitgeist” (PDM, 7) emerged signifying the radical nature of the present. Here, what interests Habermas, is to what extent modernity has managed to detach itself from pre-modern times, from where it borrows its criteria of truth, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, and generally truth. Habermas also asks, to what extent does the past affect the ‘modern’ not just the present but the novel present? Here Habermas claimed in his radical thesis on modernity that: “Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; it has to create its normativity out of itself.” (ibid)

Habermas here is claiming that because of the rationalization of the lifeworld, and distancing from religious world views, three value spheres arise i.e. that of theoretical, practical and aesthetic. These spheres are related to the lifeworld and its validity claims in everyday communicative processes relating to the objective, social and subjective worlds. What this implies, is that it is from the raising and contestation of different validity claims that modernity infers its criteria of good, bad and generally truth. So, modernity has succeeded in creating its own criteria's and tools for arriving at the truth.

### **1.3 Modernity and Modernism**

In *PDM*, Habermas clearly states that he is trying to discuss modernity from a philosophical and not an aesthetic angle. Here, he distinguishes modernity from modernism, which is a certain movement in art and literature that could be seen as a critique of modernity. Modernity amongst other things advocated new and unusual ideas in art and literature, new conceptions of time, limitations of modern culture, exaggerated rationality, ills of capitalism, urban life and so on. Habermas claims that historically;

*The mentality of aesthetic modernity begins to take shape clearly with Baudelaire and with his theory of art, influenced as it was by Edgar Allan Poe. It then unfolded in the avant garde artistic movements and finally attained its zenith with surrealism and the Dadaists of the cafe Voltaire (Habermas, 1997, 40).*

Further, Habermas thinks that, one way of looking at the historical development of modernity is to see how it was articulated in modernism or aesthetic modernity. Here Habermas focuses on how Baudelaire's notion of modern art and modernity comes out of the debate between the 'moderns' and 'ancients' on the current work of art and how it should stand in relation to the ancients. Accordingly, the moderns equated idea of perfection to that of 'progress' inspired by the physical sciences. Rather than trying to define beauty as objective and eternal, they focused on what is fleeting, particular and relative. So, in the middle of the nineteenth century the idea of 'modern' and 'modernity' come to be articulated in this debate. (PDM, 8)

Baudelaire locates modernity with the current work of art. Instead of taking, either the sides of 'moderns' and identifying beauty with what's particular and relative or, with

'ancients' and advocating perfection and absolutism, Baudelaire focuses on 'Fashion'. So, beauty is seen as that which passes in the current work of art as reminiscent of eternal beauty. The contemporary, finite work of art, standing in the present moment gives us a glance of beauty and makes beauty, understanding of beauty, its assessment and generally the presence of beauty to humans possible.

What makes the modern work of art significant is that it creates the moment where we glance at beauty, and appreciate it. Its where, "the eternal comes into fleeting contact with the actual" (PDM, 9). In Baudelaire, eternal beauty manifests itself in the current, fleeting work of art. In the essay, *The painter of modern life*, Baudelaire defines modernity as: "The transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable." (Cahoone, 2003, 100)

When, one sees the work of art glowing, produced in the current, and being glanced at in the moment, we are gaining an insight into beauty itself, which is beyond but at the same time passes through the finite and temporal. There is a search and a look for the novel, in the transitory. Habermas, thinks that Walter Benjamin appropriated Baudelaire's aesthetic insight into his conception of the 'Now time', and how the current sparks in history.

Walter Benjamin, in developing his conceptions of time, was trying to avoid two conceptions of time. These are, time as moving towards progress and betterment, and second, conceiving history, and time outside norms and values and seeing history as simply consisting of events coming after one another. Instead, Benjamin focused on how the present causes ruptures in history. Hence, in both Baudelaire and Benjamin, we have a notion of how the present bursts and sparks. Eventhough in Benjamin the unique present relates itself to a past and sparks out of it, just like Robespierre appealed to ancient Rome as a reference. And Habermas focuses on how modernity stands out, creating its own normativity, criteria and standards.

Habermas goes on to elaborate on Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history and time in his "excursus on Benjamin's theses on the philosophy of History". Accordingly,

Benjamin viewed the present as unique, full of potential, disrupting the homogeneous and continuous flow of time, and thereby standing on its own just like the arrival of the messiah is supposed to lead to an interruption in history and deciphering of the unique present moment. Also Benjamin's unique present, is supposed to stop the flow of time (PDM, 11). As Benjamin sees it, modern time conceptions are focused on the future, an expectation and what is to be arrived at as a culmination of historical developments. But, Benjamin's focus is on the unique present moment and its relation to the neglected and hidden past and how this leads to a projection of a new future. In the process, the present finds a unique place for itself in history.

According to Habermas, Reinhart Koselleck conceived history in terms of what is expected in the future and what is experienced first hand, and how what is experienced continually contradicts with the expectation (PDM, 12). Hence, past expectations caused by past glorious experiences are replaced by new expectations forwarded into the future. Koselleck focuses on how this expectation tends to be idealistic and hence contradicting with what's experienced. Koselleck, for Habermas failed to see how the horizon of expectation is related to a uniform conception of history, with a future always fixed as the model towards which humanity is striving. This is what Benjamin objects. Everytime, progress is set as that which drives the engines of history the present's uniqueness, what it introduces into history, how it derives itself out of remembrance of the neglected past, how it consolidates its unique position in history, and generally how it dislocates the continuous flow of history, are overlooked.

Radical historical thinking, proper relation to the past, the proper status of the present and projection into the future, was according to Habermas, advanced in different forms, under 'effective history'. The issue is that of how far the present is able to distance itself from the past, and what the proper relation to the past is. Despite differences, there is the idea of the present coming out of the past in all forms of effective history. Hence;

*Two moments are constitutive for this consciousness: on the one hand, the effective-historical bond of a continuous happening of a tradition in which even the revolutionary deed is embedded; on the other, the dominance of the horizon of expectation over a potential of historical experiences to be appropriated. (PDM, 14)*

What is emphasized in effective history is both how the past, present and future are intrinsically related and that even the novel present owes its uniqueness to its relation with the past and future, and also expectation is valued over what is experienced in history. The difference between Habermas's 'novel' present and Benjamin's 'unique' present is that, while the former introduces itself as continually detaching itself from the past, the latter attaches itself to a neglected past and tries to actualize it in the present. In Habermas, the present forwards itself as distinct in introducing its own normative criteria. On the other hand, Benjamin's present is intimately related to a past that's overlooked and is now to be remembered in the present.

Benjamin's conception of history and time instead focuses on the experienced unique present. The past is seen as suppressed, unfulfilled and hence full of potential. This potential is to be realized by the present which actualizes the past and thereby introduces itself in time. Hence, Benjamin's concept of time is one relating itself to the past cruelties, injustices and an attempt of addressing past injustices with a radical present that takes its seeds out of the past and immediately introduces itself in history.

Habermas continually praises Hegel for being the first to conceive modernity as a philosophical problem, and trying to articulate modernity's relations to the past, where it derives its criteria, and how it can consolidate itself as the novel age leading humanity towards progress. The understanding of modernity has already been developed starting from the age of discoveries, Renaissance, Reformation, and in philosophy from Descartes' 'cogito' up to Kant's critique of pure reason. But, even though modernity came to consolidate itself by distancing itself from pre-modern times, still its relation to the past and place in history were not properly established. Hence, standing at the nineteenth century, Hegel perceived the modern project as it is manifested in philosophy and our lives, and tried to make it a crucial part of his philosophy, by postulating as a solution, a unifying reason against the division of reason into different spheres in Kant's critiques. What motivated Hegel's philosophy was the modern condition. This is where reason has been divided into theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres. For Hegel, reason as a

unifying force was to establish a unity and harmonious relation between the different moments of reason, relation between individuals, and between individuals and the state.

#### **1.4 The Principle of Subjectivity**

According to Hegel, the essence of the modern age lies in its principle of 'subjectivity'. This principle can be further divided into the ideals of individualism, right to criticism, autonomy and idealism. Rather than appealing to any tradition, or higher authority, the individual was seen as the proper subject and starting point of reflection. This was related to criticism, or problematization of the given and the fact that nothing was to be exempted from critical examination. This in turn, implies autonomy or freedom of humans, or the individual, to reflect on the modern condition. Finally reason was conceived as the tool of this world that's to be utilized for interrogation, aiming at the truth (PDM, 17).

This principle of subjectivity for Hegel was established through key historical movements like the Reformation, the Enlightenment and French revolution. The significance of the reformation lies in its focus on the primacy of the individual and how he or she independently relates to God rather than the authority of Bible, the church or religious figures. Enlightenment further asserted the supremacy of reason by advocating reason's ability to provide solutions for our social, political, economic, artistic and generally all aspects of our lives. Further, in the French revolution, the status of traditional laws and the state were eroded as a result of the assertion of individual freedom and liberty.

As a result of this, modern forms of inquiries and generally modern life came to be organized around the principle of subjectivity. First of all, the natural sciences rejected any super natural explanations and in turn focused on the idea of a reflecting subject knowing nature that's already available as a raw data. Also in morality, moral concepts originated from reason and human authority, and the freedom of individual members designating what's right and wrong, and inconsistent with the common good. In art, especially Romanticism, the individual and its inward experiences were emphasized.

In philosophy, the principle of subjectivity was established in Descartes cogito; where there is a mind-body dualism and the thinking 'I' is the starting point of reflection. It reached its highest stage, in Kant and the division of reason into three spheres and hence the further articulation of subjectivity. Kant, in his critique of pure reason, tries to put an end to the dilemmas of the metaphysical tradition and its exaggerated reason by limiting knowledge to things as they appear to us, and in turn dividing this possible cognition into three spheres, and putting the subject as starting point of reflection. Hence;

*By the end of the eighteenth century, science, morality and art were even institutionally differentiated as realms of activity in which questions of truth, of justice, and of taste were autonomously elaborated, that is, each under its own specific aspect of validity. (PDM, 19)*

Instead of one unified reason, and an undivided orientation of the subject towards the world, Kant focuses on three possible areas of reflection and knowledge, and hence the refinement of subjectivity. Still, for Kant, the division of reason was not a problem but only a delimitation of human cognition and elucidation of the subject and its possible areas of inquiry. The challenge for Hegel was to come up with a philosophy that articulates modernity and its status, and standing within modernity and not by appealing to pre-modern standards, to forge a unity between the various divisions in knowledge, reality, the state and so on. Put in other terms, how could one, come up with a unifying reason standing inside of modernity and leaving past ideals.

As Hegel saw it, the subjectivity of the modern age, proved adequate in undermining the power of religion and traditional authority. Still, reason was not able to bring the contradictions of thought and history into a harmony. Instead, what subjectivity yielded was the autonomy of the subject and differentiation of reason into three value spheres. Hence, Hegel postulated the absolute. Especially in his *phenomenology*, Hegel tried to achieve an undistorted, unifying knowledge, by showing how consciousness develops, and overcoming inconsistencies through a dialectical process of refinement.

Kantian philosophy was criticized by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, for two major reasons amongst others. First, eventhough, Kant further articulated reason's autonomy in his three

critiques and established the autonomy of the theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres, still he failed to show the unity between the three. So, Kant “left us with a fragmentary philosophy, which, however, stunning in its individual parts, failed to show the unity of human experience.” (Higgins and Solomon, 2003, 182) Also, Kant’s noumenal was greeted by his critics as a source of skepticism. What belongs to the noumenal, how the existence of the thing in itself can be established, were, some issues to be raised. This led to a search for an ideal that could introduce no place for skepticism in the name of what goes beyond cognition and is unknowable.

Habermas asserts that the young Hegel, witnessing the cruelties of history and its tragedies first hand, postulated reason as a tool of unification and final harmony manifested in history’s contradictions. Most philosophies of the Enlightenment focus on the limits of reason and of human cognition, and how understanding is possible based on the self reflecting subject. Instead, Hegel focuses on an absolute reason that underlies both individuals and societies, and brings a final harmony.

According to Habermas, the young Hegel with Schelling and Holderlin in the Tubingen seminary developed a concept of public religion that stood against the current religions and also Enlightenment and its orientation towards religion. For Hegel, the concretely established religions of his day were based on authority, while the Enlightenment’s outlook towards religion was abstract and ideal. Instead, Hegel opted for a religion carried out through public religious ceremonies, involving members of the society and creating bonds or solidarity between individuals. Hegel focused on a religion, which is to; “Present itself in public in celebrations and cults, only if it connected up with myths and addressed the heart and the imagination, could it, as religiously mediated morality, “be woven into the entire fabric of state” (PDM,26).

Hegel applied his critique of religion to current political structures of the day, which he saw as failing to bring a harmonious relation between the individual and the state and their laws being based on authority and divorced from the communal life.

In the essay, *spirit of Christianity and its fate*, Hegel advocates a reason, manifesting itself in a public religion and unifying subjects. This is based on a community, where a

reciprocal and symmetrical relation is established between members of society. For Hegel, this is the ethical not the moral state. Hegel meant by 'ethics' a conscious membership in society and reciprocal relations amongst enlightened individuals. While by 'moral', what Hegel has in mind, is a community filled with egoistic rational individuals, each competing to satisfy their needs. (Melchert, 2002, 490) So, in opposition to abstract moral laws and rights, Hegel focused on reciprocity between members of a society and punishment of those who stand against the harmonious order.

Besides religion, Hegel also advanced his ideas of unity and harmony in his views on art. Art was supposed to express the truths of religion in an ethical state. But, Hegel abandoned his aesthetic ideals, after realizing that the essence of modernity is reason, and the problem of modernity is its fragmentation into three spheres. So, what was needed is not an aesthetic union, but a reason that brings together the different spheres and contradictions of history and concrete life (PDM, 31-32).

In place of Hegel's absolute, Habermas proposes his intersubjectivist approach to rationality. This constitutes, conceiving modernity in terms of the rationalization of the lifeworld i.e. abandoning of conventional standards and pre-modern religions, traditional outlooks. This resulted in the planting of different spheres i.e. theoretical, moral and aesthetic correlating to the everyday world and its three validity claims to objective social and subjective worlds. Thus, the focus is on the lifeworld, how speech acts coordinate our social actions through validity claims, and the continual production of truth in reciprocity. This differs from Hegel's philosophy of right which holds the state as the concrete actualization of the spirit in history. (PDM, 37-40)

From Habermas's vantage point, Hegel's philosophy did not escape the limits of the philosophy of the subject. Reason is depicted as an overarching and overwhelming force behind the contradictions in actual history and also the various stages in the development of consciousness are devalued. So the current existing reality, which has a potential for critique is devalued, since it's held to be part of a greater whole i.e. the progress of history towards absolute spirit. This also devalues intersubjectivity, since subjects are finite and small parts in the dialectical movement of history.

Hegel, on his essay *On the essence of philosophical criticism*, elaborated two kinds of criticism. First as a critique of degenerated, repressive current forms of life preventing progress. Also, a critique of subjective idealism i.e. philosophies of Kant, Fichte, which resulted in various dichotomies and failed to show the unity of human experience. Hegel. In his *philosophy of right* only carries out a critique towards idealist philosophies and hence focuses less and less on critique of actuality. As Habermas claims, this; “blunting of critique corresponds to a devaluation of actuality, from which the servants of philosophy turn away” (PDM, 43).

Habermas elaborates on Schiller’s *letters on the aesthetic education of man* to show how the idea of intersubjectivity was also presented through art. Habermas acknowledges Schiller for being the first to introduce an “aesthetic critique of modernity”. (PDM, 45)

Schiller Objected Greek poetry and art for appealing to authority of the gods and having a religious outlook. He also criticized bourgeoisie society for promoting an excessive individualism and selfishness, and also modern science which based on its abstract rules and logic negated everyday sensuous life. Instead; “Schiller stresses the communicative, community-building and solidarity-giving force of art, which is to say, its public character” (PDM, 46).

Schiller’s general focus was on the tension between the passionate and material on one hand and the capacity found in understanding and imposing order in man on the other. So, Schiller in his concept of the artistic beauty or the appearance, tried to postulate how the aesthetic, frees man from both sensuous nature and capacity for reason, and instead tries to mediate the two. So, art for Schiller; “arouses a middle disposition, in which our nature is constrained neither physical nor morally and yet is active both ways”. (PDM, 48)

According to Fred Dallmayr, Habermas’s critique of Hegel’s conception of modernity can be summarized by two points. Hegel tried overcoming the philosophy of the subject himself standing under or working under the premises of the philosophy of the subject

and failing to project a reason that can unify humanity's experiences. Hegelian discourse on modernity also being very abstract leads to a devaluation of the actual. Hence, its highly contemplative. (Dallmayr, 1987, 688)

For Habermas, Hegel pioneered the attempt to conceptualize modernity's attempt to grasp its own place in history, and maintain a proper relation to the past and time in general. What Hegel basically tried to accomplish was to apprehend the current and the existing into his own philosophical system. Modernity was raised to a philosophical issue in Hegel's time, and he tried to address its problem of self assurance, and generally its attempt to make sense of itself in his own philosophy. As Arnold Ruge also sees it, Hegelian philosophy is distinct in trying to raise the existing states of affairs to the status of a philosophical reflection. Hence Hegel; "By elevating contemporary history to the rank of philosophy, he put the eternal in touch with the transitory, the atemporal with what is actually going on" (PDM, 51).

One of the things unique to Hegelian philosophy is the fusion of the 'popular' and 'academic' conceptions of philosophy. While Kant maintained a distinction between philosophy as it is conceptualized commonly and as it is practiced by intellectuals, Hegel succeeded in bringing and analyzing the current, existing condition in his own philosophy and hence abolishing the hitherto distinction between worldly and academic concept of philosophy. After Hegel's death, philosophy came to be practiced by academicians in institutions and universities theoretically, and amongst other things this resulted in philosophy, losing its connection with the everyday world, and the introduction and application of the various sciences to conceptualize and analyze the world. This changed for Habermas, in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, when Heidegger tried to lay out the everyday structures that ground 'Dasein', and hence the use of philosophy in deciphering concrete structures. Also, the Hegelian Marxists using Weber's analysis of Marx tried to reestablish the link between philosophy and the concrete with a "theory of reification" and establish links between "economics and philosophy" (PDM, 53). Also from Husserl to Foucault, philosophy has tried to reestablish its link with the given, by way of a critique of the sciences.

Still, all these attempts are different from Hegel, since beyond trying to conceptualize current history in philosophical themes, Habermas sees in these various ventures, an advocacy of the end of philosophy discussions in different ways. The end of philosophy discussion is an attempt to put an end to philosophy as it is traditionally practiced and culminated in the current scene. Of course, there are diverse orientations here. For instance, in Heidegger traditional philosophy failed to reflect on Being as such and instead focused on particular entities. In young Hegelians philosophy as practiced hitherto was meditative and hence needs to stay in touch with the particular and concrete.

### **1.5 Modernity, from Hegelianism to Nietzsche**

For Habermas, the major significance of the young Hegelians, lies in further establishing the discourse of modernity by a way of freeing it from an oppressive, absolutist, omnipresent reason of Hegelian philosophy. Accordingly, for Habermas, “we remain contemporaries of the young Hegelians” in trying to free philosophy and its meditation of the actual from an absolutist metaphysical reason that supposedly manifests itself in thought’s and history’s contradictions (PDM, 53).

It’s the importance of the fleeting, fragmentary and finite moment that the young Hegelians tried to bring into their philosophical reflection. Hence, amongst others, Feuerbach displays the primacy of the senses in affirming one’s existence, Kierkegaard focuses on how the concrete individual establishes himself through history and individual choice, and Marx analyzes how our lives are shaped by material relations. Especially for Kierkegaard, concrete existence is characterized by a decision to go beyond the rational. This is acting in accordance with the suprarational. What all these three objected against was the devaluation of the present and concrete in name of its involvement in a larger process of history and how throughout history the finite confronts the finite to finally resolve into the infinite. Hence, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard and Marx;

*insist on the desublimation of a spirit that merely draws the real oppositions emerging at a given time into the suction of an absolute relation to self, so as to de-actualize them, to transpose them into the mode of the shadowy self-transparency of a remembered past and to strip them of all seriousness. (PDM, 54)*

Still, the young Hegelians took from Hegel the notion that philosophy has to conceptualize current history; eventhough for Hegel, the present is a part of a larger process. One thing common to the critics of modernity, from Hegel to poststructuralists is a critique of subject centered reason. This subjectivist reason which supposedly leads to emancipation and freedom is exposed as resulting in a fragmented notion of reason, oppressive metaphysics, and instrumental reason and so on.

According to Karl Lowith, while the old Hegelians tried to consolidate and reaffirm the existing state of affairs and establish their rationality, the young Hegelians on the contrary, exposed the flaws in current religions, the state, and made a plea for a radical transformation into the future. Lowith specifically traced the old/young Hegelian distinction into “Hegel’s dictum that the real is the rational and the rational is the real” (Higgins and Solomon, 2003, 294). The old Hegelians saw the existing social conditions as manifestation of the will of reason, while the young ones, called for a radicalization of existing affairs and realization of progressive ideals in the future.

What the young Hegelians introduced was the primacy of the concrete and responsibility for history. In connection to history, the young Hegelians introduced the notion of solving history’s riddles, and how the chaotic present is responsible for the unfolding of the future. This stood contrarily to the old Hegelians who tried to justify existing states of affairs, and Nietzsche who criticized the idea of rationality altogether by expounding the idea of will to power manifesting itself in reason, and specifically instrumental reason in the current stage.

Habermas sees the attempts to abandon the discourse of modernity as a whole and the young Hegelian critique of modernity in particular as being code in the so-called “post-movement”. But this is flawed since one cannot divorce Western modernity from its roots in rationalization of the lifeworld, and the solution is working through the various contradictions in the discourse, looking at various themes, and positions and counter positions that have emerged. Hence, Habermas goes on to look at Marx’s critique of Hegel, to show how “the replacement of self consciousness” by ‘labor’ ends up in an aporia within Western Marxism. (PDM, 59)

Humanity's conception of time and generally life, were changed by material achievements like the railroad. The significance of the railroad lies on its being a vehicle through which the modern understanding of time was grasped by the public at large. The rationalization of the lifeworld, emergence of three validity spheres and claims, was to be grasped, not only among the few intellectuals, but the masses, generally. Here, material achievements like introduction of the railway were to be seen as first hand evidences of the progress that humanity is making and the novel age, it has entered in. Habermas quotes the Marx of the *communist manifesto* who acknowledged the effects, material transformations introduced into human life and how these material realities were going to change our life. As Marx sees it in the *communist manifesto*, "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (PDM 60).

For Habermas, three interconnected ideas can be derived from Marx's observations. (a) Concretely existing humans can have direct access and relation to reality without a mediation of any authority, including philosophical contemplation. The modern world is manifesting itself through economic and technological advances in the West, and can experience these advances in the West and, (b) there is an urge to philosophically conceptualize the movement of history and especially how the present tries to detach itself from the past and how it stands in an optimistic relation to the future. (c) What accompanies, these two is a rapid acceleration in material production, material relations and instrumental rationality (PDM, 60-61).

Central to Hegel's political philosophy is the distinction between civil society and the state. While, one finds in civil society conflicting private interests, the state is on the other hand, a space where there is a mutual relation between the individual and the state.

As Hegel sees it in the state;

*[t]he individual goes beyond the level of his private, personal thoughts and wishes, his mere existence.....the subjective mind. Through the state, he has learned to universalize his wishes, to make them in to laws and to live according to them (Cropsey and Strauss, 1964, 629).*

What animates societal interaction in the civil society for Hegel is maximization of personal profit and calculation, but in the state, the individual goes beyond one's own private interest to an adherence to universal laws that led to the protection and fostering

of individuals in society. As Hegel sees it, reason is actualized and manifests itself in the state. This is contrasted to the family where reason is under the dictates of passion, and civil society, where private interests dominate. On the contrary, Marx thinks that in the state there is a struggle for material forces and relations of production, between two antagonistic forces, the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Habermas thinks that the heart of praxis philosophy is how the subject stands in relation to external utilizable objects, instead of the focus of philosophy of subjectivity in regarding the transparent subject standing in relation to a knowable objective state of affairs. Hence, the foundational block of modernity becomes labor and not self consciousness. So, “the only true subject is the practical subject or the subject of practice ... the subject is nothing other than practice” (Balibar, 2007, 25).

As Marx sees it, humans are animals who create themselves through their productive labor. Humans create not only products, but also themselves as a being that produces. But, what capitalism introduces is a degradation of man’s potential, with an introduction of mass production, technology and machinery and hence the separation of man from his labor. At the final analysis this results, in what Marx calls alienation. As Erich Fromm puts it, alienation is “essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object” (Fromm, 1997, 47). For Marx, in alienation, one is divorced from oneself as a productive being since one is creating for other. From others, since what characterizes relations with other is fierce competition, from the product of labor since the product ceases to be one’s creation and gains an external and objective significance, and also from production process. Since production is no more self creation but mass production and creating for others.

Praxis philosophy supposedly holds a “critical revolutionary activity” in its urge to radicalize relations of production, to overcome alienated labor and fetishism and enable humans, gain their power to create themselves through labor. Still, for Habermas, Marx and philosophy of praxis, does not escape the confines of the philosophy of the subject since it analyzes alienation, fetishism, and so on in terms of labor conceived instrumentally. Reason is conceived in terms of a subject’s interested relation to utilizable objects and is also conceived as an instrument for revolutionizing relations of production (PDM, 65).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Modernity and its Critics from Nietzsche to Poststructuralism

*Nietzsche seeks to salvage Nineteenth-century Europe from its Nihilism of values: by a philosophy of universal becoming which would render possible re-valuation (Heidegger in Richardson, 1967, 381).*

Until Nietzsche, a radical break with modernity was not achieved. The critics and reformers of the modern project like Hegel and right and left Hegelians still haven't lost faith in reason's capacity to increase our understanding of the world and our lives, both theoretically and practically. Hegel wanted to unify reason which he saw as fragmented in Kantianism, and right and left Hegelians tried to reformulate Hegelian philosophy and justify its doctrines in actual states of affairs and put it in contact with the concrete and practical, respectively. The principle of modernity that attracted its followers was its "sign of subjective freedom." The subjective freedom was realized in society through the pursuit of individual interests, in the state in form of free and equal participation of all citizens, in the affirmation of individual's private lives and generally a formation of a culture that reflects on its own historical backgrounds and contradictions. (PDM, 83)

One aspect of modernity and specifically the Enlightenment was the weakening of the power of religion in our lives. Instead, the Enlightenment cultivated a faith in a reason which learns from its mistakes historically, and refines itself to lead humanity towards progress. In both Hegel and the Hegelians, reason was construed as a unifying element which develops and refines itself throughout history. Accordingly, "Enlightenment can only make good its deficits by radicalized enlightenment; this is why Hegel and his disciples had to place their hope in a dialectic of enlightenment in which reason was validated as an equivalent for the unifying power of religion".(PDM,84)

#### 2.1 Nietzsche, a Radical Critic of Modernity

Habermas tries to locate Nietzsche's philosophical ventures in light of the failure of the philosophy of Hegel, the left and right Hegelians. Hegel's absolute reason was elevated beyond temporal and particular history and led to the negation of the present and the

particular. Also, the left Hegelians in their attempt to revive an interest in the particular and finite, and hence put Hegel's absolute reason in touch with the particular, end up in the final Analysis in an instrumental reason and therefore failed to provide a strong alternative. Finally, the right Hegelians failed to justify how Hegel's philosophy will succeed in consolidating current realities, especially the state and religion.

Habermas understands Nietzsche's starting point for an analysis of modern society, as a critique of a passive, contemplative, ascetic orientation towards life. Knowledge has been divorced from practical necessities and the needs of a society. Generally, modern thinking has lost its capacity to provide humanity with an ideal that can affirm this life. Hence for Nietzsche; "Modernity represents some sort of epochal, unique 'twilight,' or 'decline,' or 'degeneration,' or 'exhaustion,'... the modern age is, uniquely the advent of Nihilism." (Pippin, 2006, 256)

Before Nietzsche's entrance into the discourse of modernity, religion's power to provide an alternative for modern man's search for meaning and self-certainty was replaced by reason. This took the form of absolute reason in Hegel, practical, interested reason in left Hegelians and remodeling of absolute reason to connect it with historical realities and forms, in right Hegelians. In this scenario, Habermas sees Nietzsche as being left with two alternatives. Working within the philosophy of the subject or completely denounce and reject it. Nietzsche chose the second alternative and decided to step out of the reason of Western civilization.

For Nietzsche, Modern society lacks the criteria that it needs to consolidate its position and makes its presence felt in history. This is because, its exaggerated reason and science only managed to deny this life. As Nancy Love sees it, modern society for Nietzsche witnessed the highest stage in the production of ascetic ideals in the history of humanity. Accordingly, for Nietzsche, all the greater truths are results of man's 'will to power', or the urge to create meanings and affirm life. But most of the ideals have managed to negate this life in the "name of Forms, of God, of Being in the name of truth". (Love, 1986, 4) Modern society's highest expression of Truth, i.e. science, led to a destruction of all religious and mythical beliefs, and finally resulted in atheism which is too weak to

affirm this life. So, Nietzsche, according to Habermas, declares that “from ourselves we moderns have nothing at all.” (PDM. 86)

As an alternative, Nietzsche tries to appeal to history with an aim of exposing and destructing the rationalistic tradition. In his work, *The birth of tragedy*, Nietzsche uses historical research and his philological backgrounds to go back into the pre-Christian, pre-rationalistic world of the Greeks and derive criteria by which to criticize the modern world. According to Habermas, Nietzsche’s point of departure is twofold. On the one hand, the Enlightenment is not able to provide a better alternative to religion, with its confidence in reason and rationality; on the contrary it resulted in nihilism. This is what Nietzsche expresses through the madman, in his, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. What the madman expresses is a kind of description that is twofold. On the one hand; people are released from chains of divine belief and faith while on the other, this freedom also poses a threat since by rejecting God, our values have no reference, we no longer have a meaning, and the value of life is in question.

*The madman, have you not heard of that madmen who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours run to the market place, and cried incessantly. ‘I seek God I seek God’ as many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provided much laughter. Has he got lost asked one, did he lose his way like a child? Asked another? (Nietzsche, 2006, 476)*

On the other hand, modernity cannot appeal to pre-modern standards since rationality is also found in ancient and medieval philosophical systems, although in the Enlightenment the faith in reason reached its peak.

For Habermas, in Nietzsche, modernity’s novelty and distinctness, its unique emergence in the rationalization of the lifeworld and emergence of distinct values spheres and validity claims gets lost. Instead, modernity is conceived as the culmination of Western philosophy’s firm insistence, on rationality and Christianity’s life denying values (PDM, 87).

Nietzsche’s initial alternative to the paradoxes of modernity is found in his aesthetic ideals in *The birth of tragedy*. Here, Nietzsche offers Richard Wagner’s opera as a

modern form of the Greek tragedy and hence a solution for the problem of existence. Nietzsche uses the Greek gods 'Apollo and Dionysus' to explicate two different natural tendencies and inclinations. Apollo represents reason, order and stability while Dionysus represents chaos, passions, and emotions. The significance of Greek tragedy lies in bringing the elements of order and chaos, under one form of art, where the two elements can exist along with each other. In Greek tragedy, while Dionysus manifested the excessive portrayal of passions and emotions by the members of society as a whole. Apollo in turn represented the order of the rhythms and the ceremonies.

Through Tragedy, the Greeks affirmed the pessimistic side of life. The Greeks accepted natural and man made evils as major facets of humanity's existence. This for Nietzsche was destroyed by the Western philosophical tradition's strict insistence on reason and abandoning of passions, emotions and the aesthetic, starting from Socrates. Hence for Nietzsche in Socratic maxims like, "virtue is knowledge man sins only from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy...lies the death of tragedy" (Janaway, 2006, 50). What Nietzsche sought in Wagner was a revival of ancient Greek tragedy in modern opera that acknowledges the harsh side of life, and affirms existence, by affirming this pessimistic side.

Habermas acknowledges Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner's musical drama. Nietzsche witnessed that what Wagner's opera and Schopenhauer's metaphysics, can do best is affirm the harsh side of life, instead of trying to provide an alternative to it. Nietzsche's alternatives are found in his 'will to power', the 'overman' and the "affirmation of eternal recurrence". Nietzsche called for a transcending of the 'last' or 'modern man' who is on the verge of Nihilism. The 'overman' is a creator of values and an ideal that transcends uncivilized, brutish and cruel ancient morality and also the current 'last' man who is rational but weak. The 'overman' affirms 'eternal Recurrence' or recognizes that there is no final stage where dominance will be established once and for all and that the problem of existence, continual struggle and trying to fit into the schema of nature is not something going to be overcome once and for all.

Nietzsche's concept of 'eternal recurrence' is a critique of other-worldly philosophies and ideals that sought reconciliation in the end and in the otherworldly. Nietzsche severely criticized amongst others, philosophies that negated earthly life as imitative, bodily, and transient. He was also against the look for emancipatory ideals in justice in an afterlife or in what goes beyond the sensuous. In turn, Nietzsche argues that throughout time and hence history we continually struggle to affirm our existence and impose values on one another. History witnesses 'transvaluations of values' i.e. redefinitions of values and imposition of new meanings. We are not moving progressively towards a determined path. On the contrary, we are continually trying to reaffirm our existence and strife is what best characterizes this life.

Dionysus represents the passionate tendencies in human beings. As a god it never arrives. So the tendencies it represents i.e. the passionate and emotional are realized in the space it leaves through artistic practices. The idea of Dionysus as the coming god who presents himself with absence was according to Habermas, also developed in early Romanticism. Accordingly, the idea of Dionysus was taken as an equivalent for Christ as the messiah who comes in the future and is currently absent.(PDM,91) This absence creates a space in this world where the promises of the Enlightenment, and the infinite worth of individual, its interrogation of tradition and affirmation of its rights, will be realized. So, Nietzsche recognizes how Wagner takes up the romanticist theme of fulfillment in this world through absence, of the other-worldly, and thereby rejects the latter's approach. This is since, for Nietzsche all forms of other worldliness end up in a negation of this life and the degradation of it as fleeting, finite, and so on. Accordingly "The mature Nietzsche recognizes that Wagner in whom modernity is almost 'summed up', shared with the romantics the perspective on the still to come fulfillment of the modern age." (PDM, 92)

One of the things that Nietzsche maintained in his *Birth of tragedy* is the Schopenhauerian insight that the principle of individuation has limitations. For Schopenhauer, going beyond Kant's identification of the noumenal as the 'unknowable' one could attribute the noumenal world to the world of will. In the phenomenal world, the principle of individuation makes it possible for individuals to grasp the world by applying space and time. But, beyond this, the world of will manifests itself in the individual in

form of excessive desires and inclinations, resulting in feeling of pain and suffering. Schopenhauer provided a disinterested art and contemplative life as an alternative. Later, Nietzsche rejected Schopenhauer's approach claiming that it denies the basic nature of life as will to power, or endless desire to impose meaning and order on things, and instead simply tries to affirm the pessimistic side of life. (Love, 1986, 39)

In his aesthetics, Nietzsche focuses, according to Habermas, on how the individual in the "aesthetic phenomenon", sets himself free from norms, conventions and values, and generally goes beyond cognition, language and reason (PDM, 93). One of the things that Nietzsche takes from the Romantics is the differentiation of the aesthetic from those of science, morality and other realms, and also an emphasis on how it steps outside the bounds of reason. This aesthetic ideal focuses on ancient Greek tragedy, the identification of the aesthetic with the non-rational and emphasis on how Dionysus brings in a passionate, fragmented, non-cognitive element to reality. Nietzsche for Habermas introduces a new kind of critique of modernity, one that tries to step outside of reason, in order to critique reason. Hence;

*Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason's absolute other. And as a counterauthority to reason, Nietzsche appeals to experiences that are displaced back into the archaic realm-Experiences of self-disclosure of decentred subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality. (PDM, 94)*

What Nietzsche, would like to bring into the scene with his art is the value of life. How the world as a chaotic, non theoretical realm of experience, witnessing both joy and suffering and resisting inclusion into a grand theory, original plan, or final goal, is to be deciphered through art.

In Nietzsche's later philosophy the notion of the 'will to power' takes primary importance. This 'will to power' is the force of life that animates humanity's urge to create meanings that affirm and guide its life. Habermas claims that Nietzsche uses the 'will to power' to decipher the nature of our social organizations and arrangements, narratives and mythologies, our self image, the image of the world found in the greatest philosophical traditions, scientific inquiries, religions and so on. The philosophical traditions, scientific inquiries and religions culminated in a denial of this life, some by

denying this life in name of other worlds (religion for instance) or failing to provide a better alternative, for example science resulting in atheism and destroying already provided ideals like those provided in religion and mythologies. But the truth of this life is in the recognition that; “nature is essentially the will to power, a brutal and savage contest of strength characterized by... tragedy,, suffering ... affirming the values that enhance the will to power, saying ‘yes’ to life”.(Denise, 2008:213)

In this line, Nietzsche tries to go beyond reason, analyze modernity in terms of the will to power, and thereby criticize reason and modernity by introducing its other. (PDM 95-96)

As Habermas summarizes it, Nietzsche’s critique of modernity could be carried out along two directions or forms of interrogation. First, the idea of art or the non-rational separating itself from other domains and manifesting the emotional, passionate and generally life affirming values; and second, a critique of the metaphysical tradition and an exposure of its life denying values through the notion of the ‘will to power’. (PDM, 96-97)

Habermas thinks that Nietzsche’s two distinct ways of approaching modernity, have both been utilized .on one hand, the notion of how the ‘will to power’ manifests itself in different forms and in the process manages to exclude others, has been taken up by Bataille, Lacan and Foucault. On the other, a critique of metaphysics and pursuing an alternative in something mysterious and other than reason has been pursued by Heidegger and Derrida (PDM, 97). But, before, going deeply into the details of Bataille’s and Heidegger’s appropriation of Nietzsche, Habermas tries to show how Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* utilizes Nietzsche’s critique of reason.

## **2.2 Habermas and the Dialectic of Enlightenment**

*In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1982, 3)*

Habermas starts off, his discussion of Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of modernity, through a differentiation between the 'dark' and "black writers of the bourgeoisie" and by tracing the origins of Horkheimer and Adorno to "the black" ones (PDM, 106). The 'dark' writers were critics of modern society like Machiavelli, Hobbes and Mandeville, who still haven't lost complete faith in modern man and its reason. So, they tried to bring radical ideals with an aim of reformulating the foundations of Western society. On the contrary, what the 'black' writers like Nietzsche and Marquis de Sade, aimed at was, an annihilation and total destruction of the philosophical tradition. And alongside, the 'black' writers, "in their 'blackest book', *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno joined with these writers to conceptualize the Enlightenment's process of self-destruction" (PDM, 106).

As Habermas sees it, what motivates his discussion of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is not the continuing significance of the work these days, but how the same ideas of Nietzsche that were being expressed in Horkheimer and Adorno are today being presented in poststructuralism, and its farewells to modernity. So, Habermas wants to defend the modern project against such an attack.

Habermas outlines his discussion of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as revolving around four points. These are (1) Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of Enlightenment and hence modern society. (2) Its relation to Nietzsche's critique of modernity and reason in general, (3) how Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique differs from other critiques of culture, and (4) to what extent the Enlightenment itself is reflective. (PDM, 107)

Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of Enlightenment is part of their critical theory of society. As Thomas McCarthy sees it, especially for Horkheimer, the idea of critical theory gains its status in relation to its difference from 'traditional theory'. Critical theory, acknowledges and inquires into the position of researchers, their aims and goals in undertaking a research. It also focuses on how knowledge is produced conscious in a specific cultural context, and challenges, the view of theory as value free and devoid of any interests. Hence, as McCarthy sees it,

*unlike 'traditional theory', then, critical social theory takes as topics of investigation the reflexivity of social research, the division of labor-including scientific and scholarly labor- in which it is carried on, and its social functions... It reflects, in particular, on the contexts of its own genesis and application, that is, on its own embeddness in the social matrix out of which it arises and within which it will find its uses. (Hoy and McCarthy, 1994, 15)*

Besides differentiating itself radically from 'traditional theory', critical theory outlines various standards to be employed in an interrogation of a concept, theory or a social institution. Some of these standards include, identifying the goals of the critiqued, normative standards being internal to the target of criticism, and grasping that which is criticized "conceives itself to be". Critical theory also opens itself to critique and introduces 'no' external standards." (Sherratt, 2000, 527)

According to Habermas, the usual understanding of the Enlightenment is that it stands contrarily to myth since the enlightenment is said to dismantle the power of tradition, norms and conventions by relying on the force of reason. It is also seen as an antidote to myth, in managing to destroy the power of uncritical traditions and in turn planting a culture based on the exchange of good reasons. But, Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of the enlightenment, on the contrary tries to show how there is an intrinsic relation between myth and enlightenment, and that one could even 'relapse' into the other. Amongst other things, Horkheimer and Adorno used Homer's *odyssey* to show how enlightenment even existed in the ancient world.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, Homer's Odysseus is an example of the modern enlightened subject, showing amongst other things, finding oneself in a mythic, unsecured, unenlightened background and trying to acquire knowledge, become strong, secure and enlightened. Just like the so called modern world, tries to detach itself from pre-modern mythic background, Odysseus also tries to liberate himself in a mythical scene.

In the development of the subject, myths and enlightenment provide two ways of relating to the world. Myths were seen as collective ways of being, tracing meaning to uncritical grounds. Enlightenment on the contrary represented an individualistic, rational and future

oriented outlook towards the world. Hence, myth gains its identity standing in relation to enlightenment, and vice versa. The enlightenment's rise for Horkheimer and Adorno is related to a superseding and surpassing of mythic grounds. "Enlightenment has always taken the basic principle of myth to be anthropomorphism, the projection onto nature of the subjective. In this view, the supernatural spirits and demons, are mirror images of men who allow themselves to be frightened by natural phenomena" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1982, 6).

By using Homer's *odyssey*, Horkheimer and Adorno tried to depict a subject who has managed to control the world but is at the same time at wars with himself. Odysseus tries to exercise theoretical and practical knowledge over the world by increasing his understanding of the environment and also by practically being able to control his surroundings. But the more, he manages in controlling the world, the more he is depriving his nature. The basic ability of humans to relate to the world in general by experiencing it, is replaced by an instrumental relation that tries to manipulate the world. So, "Odysseus's loss of pleasure in the world entails loss of experience of the world as substantively meaningful." (Sherratt, 2000, 34-35) Hence, Habermas claims that, for Horkheimer and Adorno's the price of being enlightened is that of exploiting everything and being unable to cognize the world without utility.

Further, the modern world is not fully divorced from mythical backgrounds, since as a project it can only be defined in its exclusion of the pre-modern. Emancipation and maturity come at the price of suppressing one's *inclination towards experiencing the world. Hence;*

*The compulsion toward rational domination of externally impinging natural forces has set the subject upon the course of a formative process that heightens productive forces without limit for the sake of sheer self-preservation, but lets the forces of reconciliation that transcend mere self-preservation atrophy. [PDM, 110]*

For Horkheimer and Adorno, humanity's attempts at survival led in the final stage to an instrumental rationality that damaged other ways of relating to the world of objects and other subjects, and managed to establish instrumental rationality as the only way of

relating to the world. What's further expected of Horkheimer and Adorno, according to Habermas, is to show how this instrumental rationality managed to contaminate the modern value spheres of science, morality and law, and art.

In relation to science, Horkheimer and Adorno are convinced that modern science's insistence on exclusively cognizing and theorizing that which is to be exploited and utilized, is best depicted in positivistic orientations to science. Instead of trying to conceptualize things generally in terms of "their social, historical and human significance", positivism aimed at pinning down the exact properties of things and entities, so that they can be utilized. (PDM, 111) Horkheimer and Adorno extended their critique of positivism, to science in general, by claiming that all the sciences are arenas of instrumentality. Accordingly, "enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things in so far as he can make them. In this way, their potentiality is turned to his own ends". (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1982, 9)

Also, in relation to morality and law, Horkheimer and Adorno expressed their doubts toward a supreme authority that can be used as a criterion, emanating from either religion or pure reason itself, and instead focused on how relations of instrumentality and domination characterize the moral and legal spheres.

Finally, art instead of trying to declare its autonomy and reflexivity towards other spheres, has on the contrary tried to imitate and ally itself with the truths of the instrumental sciences, law and morality. This is best depicted in mass culture which organizes the masses into a dominant ideological structure.

*The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the dinner must be satisfied with the menu (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1982, 139).*

If this is true, then Habermas thinks that, the intersubjective communicative processes based on validity claims have been undermined. Weber's rationalization of the lifeworld

and emergence of the three value spheres and the correlating validity claims in everyday world will all be undermined.

Habermas admits that in modern capitalist societies the inclination towards minimizing all questions to issues of one's own interest and generally the interest to preserve oneself has increased. Still, the production of truth through distinct validity claims and the kind of 'give and take' ethos between the three validity claims and the three value spheres haven't completely been undermined. Hence, "the dialectic of enlightenment does not do justice to the rational content of cultural modernity that was captured in bourgeois ideals (and also instrumentalized along with them)" (PDM, 113).

Habermas further asserts that, the rationality of modern sciences goes beyond the utilizable, and the universal basis of law and morality have been realized in various global, regional and national institutions and laws, and the reflexivity of modern art that take the subject beyond an instrumental rationality, all haven't been exhausted.

### **2.3 From Critique of Ideology to General Critique of Reason**

Habermas goes on to look at what animated Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of Enlightenment, and in relation to this, why they had to abandon Marx's critique of ideology.

In mythical thinking and mythical societies, what is emphasized is how things stand in an intrinsic relation to the whole. Amongst other things, this excludes any division between one and others, and one and the objective world. In this context, "only demythologization dispels this enchantment... the process of enlightenment leads to the desocialization of nature and the denaturalization of the human world" (PDM, 115). In 'demythologization', the role of tradition is undermined, norms, conventions and rules are replaced by contestable claims to truth instead of a unitary whole, the world becomes differentiated into that of objects, norms and subjective, one. As Weber has shown, this "demythologization" results in the freeing of the lifeworld from the power of tradition, and in turn, the planting of different claims to truth, relating, to the objective, social and subjective worlds. So, where does the critique of ideology fit under this type of analysis?

As Habermas sees, it's only in the context of the rise of the value spheres of science, morality and laws and art replacing the power of traditions and myths, that one could make a critique of ideology, or question the extent to which the claims of the autonomous value spheres are contaminated by private or specific interests and agendas. Hence, "if one describes the process suspended between myth and enlightenment in this way, as the formation of a decentered understanding of the world, the place where the procedure of ideology critique enters into this drama can also be specified". (ibid)

In the critique of ideology, the production of truth is seen in terms of the powers that influenced the production of the claims to truth. Thus, ideology critique tries to undermine the status of the so called value spheres, as being free of uncritical accounts and solely being based on the force of reason. Habermas marks, the ideology critiques or the questioning of the various spheres of the modern project as its moment of reflexivity or being aware of its own historical background and reflecting on this. This changes for Habermas, when reason itself is questioned or the issue whether reason itself can liberate humanity or when the aporia of what it means to reason are emphasized. But, what animated such a critique of reason itself?

For Habermas, it's the frustration of Horkheimer and Adorno, in the failure of Marxist philosophy and its intentions. These include the inability of the masses to stage a revolution in the West, and the dominance of Stalinism and fascism, in soviet Russia and Germany respectively. (PDM, 116) Hence for Horkheimer and Adorno; "the impression could indeed get established in the darkest years of the second world war that the last sparks of reason were being extinguished from this reality and had left the ruins of a civilization in collapse without any hope" (PDM, 117).

Initially, Horkheimer and Adorno took on Marx's critique of ideology with their insight that philosophy usually ends up affirming the status quo and that it's not equipped with the necessary tools to revolutionize existing states of affairs. So, from Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno took the insight that the dominant ideas, institutions and frameworks are those of the powerful social class and that critique should be aimed at exposing how so-called 'emancipatory' theories and structures that supposedly stand for the whole society,

in practice only serve the privileged few. This Marxian orientation guided the Frankfurt school's critical social theory's interdisciplinary approach to society in the 1930s. But in the 1940s, this critique of society, turned from what reason serves in society, to what reason has led humanity to in general, Hence, Horkheimer and Adorno; "Pushed for a radicalization and self-over-coming of ideology critique, which was supposed to enlighten the Enlightenment about itself." (PDM, 118)

Horkheimer and Adorno, abandoned Marx's critique of ideology, since it was able to unravel not the destructive path that reason itself has led humanity into in its attempt to dismantle irrationality, but, how reason is directed by specific values and interests in a particular context. So, Horkheimer and Adorno moved to Nietzsche's critique of reason.

Habermas sees the position of Horkheimer and Adorno towards Nietzsche's 'will to power' and his critique of reason, as being 'ambivalent', they accepted Nietzsche's general critique of reason, and reason's fusion with domination and resulting in instrumentality. Still this proved problematic since, if all reason is repression then what about the reason of critical social theory? So, Horkheimer and Adorno were trying to find a space within which their critical, reflective and emancipative reason towards society can be justified (PDM, 120).

One of the areas where there is a strong relation between Horkheimer and Adorno, and Nietzsche is in relation to the development of subjectivity. According to Nietzsche, the development of 'consciousness' coincided with the suppression of instincts. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the modern subject is the one that has suppressed its 'id' in favor of 'ego' in Freud's terms. As Freud has it, in modern subjectivity, the id's inclination to "experience objects as pleasurable and also, importantly, as meaningful" (Sherratt, 2000 532) has been suppressed by the ego's drive to preserve the self by exerting control, and instrumentally manipulate things.

Further, Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer, share the idea that behind the modern sciences, morality and religion, lies humanity's urge to preserve itself, and the

manifestation of humanity's endless drive towards the world, manifesting itself in an instrumental relation to the world (PDM, 122).

Habermas claims that in Nietzsche, notions like the contestation of validity claims, and generally truth, are abandoned to that of the 'will to power' and the ability to impose meaning. Nietzsche expounds his analysis of the will to power and its degeneration into ascetic ideals in his *Genealogy of morals*. In this work, Nietzsche tried to make a historical analysis of different conceptions of the moral. He further claimed that the development of different civilization and their moral conceptions is related to a unique class of society which establishes its Hegemony, affirms life, and conquers the environment making itself the source of moral values. In his survey of the cultural history of humanity, Nietzsche identified two major types of morality i.e. 'master' and 'slave'. 'Master' morality is characterized by moral agents who know they are the 'measures' of things, they affirm their biological instincts for power and thereby impose meaning on things. On the contrary, we find in 'slave' morality one which is populated by individuals who have no respect for life, strife, struggle and competition. So, with his genealogy;

*Nietzsche has in hand the conceptual means by which he can denounce the prevalence of the belief in reason and of the ascetic ideal, of science and of morality, as a merely factual victory (though of course decisive for the fate of modernity) of lower and reactionary forces. (PDM, 126)*

According to Habermas, in developing a critical theory of society that denounces reason while simultaneously utilizing it, Horkheimer and Adorno are left just like Nietzsche in an uncomfortable position i.e. what is the basis of critique. If all reason is exploitation then how could reason be used to emancipate society? Habermas thinks that, Horkheimer and Adorno are left with two alternatives.

First, Horkheimer and Adorno can appeal to Nietzsche's theory of power and recognize the fusion of reason and power, and as in the case of Foucault, identify power/knowledge nexuses. Still this has a defect of having no basis and foundation for theory. For, even to identify power/knowledge nexuses, one needs a normative ground. The second alternative, is taking a skeptical attitude towards reason, metaphysical speculations and absolutist abstractions.

Habermas admits that Horkheimer and Adorno's abandonment of ideology critique is justified, since the Marxian proletariat no longer holds a potential for change. The results of the various struggles haven't crystallized towards a unified program, and so on. Still, as an alternative, Habermas expounds the idea that critique should be grounded on everyday validity claims and the distinct claims that are raised and contested in them.

## **2.4 Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, and the Entryways into Postmodernism**

According to Habermas, the ambivalent acceptance of Nietzsche by Horkheimer and Adorno, was replaced by Heidegger and Bataille's appropriations of Nietzsche that laid the grounds for postmodernism and specifically, poststructuralism. Here, we will look at how Habermas sketches such connections between Nietzsche, Heidegger and Bataille, and how this has been handed down to poststructuralism. Habermas on his lecture on Heidegger, in PDM discusses three major points in relation to Heidegger's philosophy, to show how the latter finally "arrives at a temporalized philosophy of origins" (PDM, 131). These are the relation between Heidegger and Nietzsche, Heidegger's *Being and Time*; and the affiliation of Heidegger with Nazism.

For Habermas, the fact that Heidegger's philosophy arrives at an analysis of beings through time that ends up in tracing everything to Being, can easily be seen in the "four operations that Heidegger undertakes in his confrontation with Nietzsche" (ibid). First, Heidegger restored to philosophy its traditional status of being the highest authority on truth. As Habermas sees it, what the young Hegelians had affected was the primacy of the particular and the material over the ideal, concrete relations against thought, sensibility over reason and the immediate over the conceptual. The result of this was, philosophy lost its status as the judge of all truth claims. Heidegger again empowered philosophy by calling for an ontological analysis, analyzing things in their wholeness through a horizon and interpreting them; in trying to contemplate how being manifests itself in beings and how the existential structure of these beings as a whole could be laid out. Traditionally metaphysics has taken over the task of interpreting 'beings'. So, Heidegger tried to destruct the 'history of metaphysics', by reminding it of its 'forgetfulness' of Being, and

philosophy was given the task of unraveling this forgetful metaphysical tradition. Still, how does this affect Heidegger's critique of modernity?

Secondly, at the same time, Horkheimer and Adorno were writing the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which criticizes Western rationality for being immersed in an instrumental rationality, Heidegger was also depicting "European modern dominance of the world" (PDM, 132), as being the result of the 'will to power' and its excessive manifestations. The 'overman' as expressing the truth of 'will to power' and 'eternal recurrence of existence' was manifesting itself in the truth of the European dominance of the world. This dominance resulted in a fierce struggle to manipulate the materials of the world. Hence, "Heidegger sees the totalitarian essence of his epoch characterized by the global techniques for mastering nature, waging war, and racial breeding." (PDM, 133)

Heidegger locates the modern 'European Man' and his dominance of the world as a logical result of the modern conception of man as it is developed from Descartes to Nietzsche. In modern philosophy, man became the center and measure of things. This was pioneered by Descartes' thinking 'I', and culminated in Nietzsche, as man becomes the one who expresses the truth as 'will to power' and existence as 'eternal recurrence'. The 'overman' becomes the one who actualizes the 'will to power' in its fullest sense, by exploiting others, including other humans. As William J. Richardson sees it, Heidegger conceived man for Nietzsche in the sense that;

*If the Being of beings is will unto power, what must be said about the nature of man? His task is to assume his proper place among the ensemble of beings according to the nature of Being which permeates them all. More precisely this means to... endorse with his own will, this dominion over the earth of universal will by assuming the responsibility of achieving to the limit of his possibility the global certification in which the truth and value of all constants consist. (Richardson, 1967, 373)*

For Habermas, this understanding of Heidegger of the interpretation of Being in a being that actualizes itself, and is at the center of all things, made Heidegger unable to differentiate between the positive and negative sides of the modern project.

Thirdly, it's Heidegger's analysis and the fact that he is trying to burse out of the modern period that leads to his destruction of the metaphysical tradition. The philosophy of modern period started with Descartes' cogito and culminated in Nietzsche's attempt to think of Being, as a universal desire for power that's best expressed in man's urges to actualize its inclinations. Further, Heidegger saw the present as chaotic and questioned whether it heralds the beginning of another period or consummation of the historical process. So, Heidegger conceptualized the need to decipher the nature of the present, and in his philosophy of Being tried to salvage the present. Still, Nietzsche's desire to revive the present through the revival of a past ideal like 'Greek tragedy', is replaced by Heidegger's vision of how the future comes out of a proper relation with the past and the present. This idea of the coming future and the reformulation of the metaphysical tradition in its forgetfulness, as Habermas claims were influenced by "romantic models, especially Holderlin, the thought figure of the absent God. So as to be able to conceive of the end of metaphysics as a 'completion', and hence as the unmistakable sign of another beginning" (PDM, 135).

Further, Nietzsche's Dionysus is taken over by Heidegger's Being, specifically in the 'ontological difference'. Heidegger differentiated between the ontological or the concern with Being as such, and the ontic or contemplation of beings in their particularity. In this scheme, both 'Being' and 'Dionysus' are what are absent, and manifest themselves in the particular. In Heidegger's case, Being manifests itself in things and entities, while in Nietzsche, Dionysus shows itself in the passionate, emotional and non-rational. Hence, "only Being, as distinguished from beings by way of hypostatization, can take over the role of Dionysus." (ibid)

Finally, Heidegger does not escape the philosophy of the subject in his attempt to destruct the metaphysical tradition, since he is still, trying to employ Husserl's phenomenology as the method that excavates the existential structures within which Dasein is said to dwell daily.

Heidegger criticized the traditional approach to knowledge, the subject/object distinction and presupposed an idea that Being comes before knowing and that knowing is just one

form of being. For Heidegger, to be in the world doesn't mean, I am here and they are there, we are not here dwelling in an attempt of grasping other dwellers, we are dwelling with others. In other words, to know that one is there in the world, Dasein doesn't need to objectify the others, its there and this implies being there with others.

According to Habermas Heidegger takes on Husserl's phenomenological method of investigation with an aim of unconcealing the truth of Being. This entails trying to phenomenologically dig out or lay out an experience, the existential structures through which being manifests itself. For Richard Polt, there are two major notions that Heidegger appropriated from Husserl's phenomenology. These are, first, 'Evidence', or that there are conditions in which phenomena manifests itself and that the task of the phenomenologist is to make the hidden truth manifest itself, second, 'categorical intuition', or that through beings we can have an insight into what underlines and can never be grasped in itself i.e. Being (Polt, 1999, 14-15).

The difference between Heidegger and Husserl is the distinction between Being as such and beings, and then trying to apply the phenomenological method to Being itself. Still, Heidegger for Habermas "does not free himself from the traditional granting of a distinctive status to theoretical activity, to the constative use of language, and to the validity claim of propositional truth." (PDM, 138)

So, what are some of the consequences of Heideggerian philosophy for the critique of modernity and the modern project in general? First of all, as Habermas sees it, the need for a unifying force other than religion which was supplanted by artistic, mythological and rational ideals, was replaced by Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical tradition and its forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger emphasized on the difference between the ontic and the ontological. For Habermas, this results in an inability to address problems that arise in everyday world, and possibilities of unifying, emancipatory, ideal being generated. Secondly, Heidegger's conception of modernity is divorced from specific practical, concrete questions that are addressed by the various sciences which are oriented towards specific validity claims. Hence, "the critique of modernity is made independent of scientific analysis". (PDM, 139) Finally, Heidegger arrives at a kind of an acceptance

of current realities in conceiving Being itself as beyond what can be described and conceptualized, and could only be deciphered indirectly. Accordingly, “[t]he propositionally contentless speech about Being has, nevertheless, the illocutionary sense of demanding resignation to fate” (PDM, 140). Habermas goes on to specifically look at Heidegger’s earlier position as developed in his *Being and Time*.

Heidegger in his *Being and Time* claimed that his interrogation of Dasein was aimed at revealing the truth of Being as such, and to this extent criticized the metaphysical tradition for focusing on beings and not Being. The Dasein Analytic was supposed to be the foundation. For Habermas, this gives one an inadequate background of the context in which Heidegger developed his ideas in *Being and Time*: This context is for Habermas; “the post idealism of the nineteenth century,” and specifically “neo-ontological wave that captured German philosophy after the first world war, from Rickert through Scheler down to Hartmann.” (PDM, 141) It was a scene in which, Kantianism and pre-Kantian forms of philosophizing were being abandoned in favor of forms of thought that emphasized the concrete and the particular.

The paradigm of the subject that is at the center of thought transcends itself, reflects on itself and the world, and was starting to dissolve. Eventhough “the idea of a subjectivity that externalizes itself, in order to melt down these objectifications into experience, remained standard” (PDM, 142). Heidegger’s approach is seen as one of exposing how the metaphysical tradition has been focused on things and entities rather than Being as such. Still he tried to preserve some aspects of the tradition like the analysis of phenomena, from Kant’s critique of reason to Husserl’s phenomenology.

In *Being and time*, Heidegger explicitly states that the various sciences like anthropology, psychology and biology aren’t adequate enough to carry out the Dasein Analytic. The only focus is on the ontic, and not the ontological, by treating humans as a “thing, substance or subject”. (BT, 78) But for Heidegger Dasein is unique in the fact that it is to be situated in the ways it tries to realize itself in the future, or the fact of it’s a possibility. Still, Heidegger according to Habermas, when trying to explicate the nature of Dasein as being-in-the-world, resorts to the strategy of analyzing the subject, by going beyond it

and looking at what is it that makes its existence possible (PDM, 143). By being-in-the-world, Heidegger stressed that, Dasein's being in the world doesn't entail being inside the other or in something. "We are inclined to understand this being in as being in something." (BT, 79) Dasein's world is of being there with others and dwelling with them, being found alongside them.

Habermas goes on to look at how Heidegger establishes the primacy of Dasein and what makes Dasein the center of analysis. First of all, Heidegger distinguishes between the ontic and the ontological, and bestows Dasein an ontological priority. For Heidegger, Dasein like other beings occurs as an entity, but it doesn't just occur, since it is oriented towards that understanding of Being itself. Dasein is the only being whose being is at issue and it inquires into Being by inquiring the Being of one's being. So, while ontically it is a being that's concerned with its being, ontologically it's concerned with Being as such this is to be situated in the context of its ontical questioning and uniqueness, leading to an ontological insight. As, Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*, "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its very being, that Being is an issue for it." (BT, 32)

Secondly, Heidegger expounds his idea of phenomenology as the method that it is to be used in the Dasein project. For him phenomenology is not submitting a thing to theory or a philosophical doctrine from which truths are extracted, but a way or method of approaching things.

Only as phenomenology is ontology possible for Heidegger. The phenomenological method is to unmask the various ways in which phenomena are concealed. Some of the ways through which phenomena could be concealed include 'undiscoverdness', 'being buried' and 'disguised'. In 'undiscoverdness', a phenomenon has always been concealed and is in need of a revelation. In 'being buried', a phenomenon has been discovered but is again concealed. Finally, in 'disguising' the phenomenon has been represented as something which is not really its nature and when one tries to identify with the things it's disguised to. (BT, 60)

In the final analysis, phenomenology is a way of carrying out a hermeneutics or an interpretation of Dasein in its dwellings. The theme is Dasein, and it will be interpreted as it dwells in the world with other entities. It is to be interpreted in its dwellings alongside other entities in the world.

Finally, in an 'existentialist' tone, Heidegger interprets Dasein in terms of its choice to actualize itself or not for Heidegger, Dasein dwells with a potential of 'authentic' or taking up its existence consciously towards Being. In contrast in 'inauthenticity' Dasein forgets its ontological significance in its tendency to identify itself in terms of other things it encounters in the world. Dasein is the one through which the meaning of Being is to be interrogated since it turns out to be the one that raised the issue of Being.

For Heidegger, whenever we ask or pose a question, it is about something and not nothing, and this in turn implies that we have to examine something for an answer, and in the final analysis we have some objective of asking. To put it differently, there is some purpose behind questioning and this can lead to a thing questioned and also a questioner further, one is to interrogate beings in their Being, to arrive at the truth of Being. But which being? It's Dasein since; it's the only being whose Being is its issue. Hence, for Heidegger, as Habermas puts it; "[t]he human being is an entity with an ontological nature for whom the Being question is an inbuilt existential necessity" (PDM, 145).

As Habermas summarizes it, by bestowing Dasein an ontico-ontological significance, reducing all possible ontology to phenomenology, and interpreting Dasein in terms of its 'authenticity' or 'inauthenticity', Heidegger established his Dasein Analytic. Heidegger also established the primacy of existence against knowing; interpretation against reflection. There was also a focus on how the subject reflects upon itself and transcends one's own self. Dasein has a special insight into Being in trying to contemplate its own existence. Heidegger tried to lay out the meaningful structures within which Dasein is said to dwell. Finally, Heidegger also tries to solve the problem of existence through his notions of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'.

One of the crucial moves that Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*, for Habermas, is from conceiving Dasein as basically different from things 'present-at-hand', to Dasein as being thrown into the world of others. Earlier, in his discussion of being-in-the-world, Heidegger claims that the nature of Dasein lies in its 'to be' or 'mineness' or the fact that it inquires into Being as such and is also characterized by a choice, that makes it authentic or inauthentic. This makes Dasein different from things, 'Present-at-hand' which are only tools, entities, and hence have no ontological significance. Later on, Heidegger comes to see how the question of the 'who' in the existential character indicates the presence of others. Thus, we do encounter other beings in the environment that we live in. Habermas sees this as how "Heidegger extends his analysis of the tool-world, as it was presented from the perspective of the actor operating alone as a context of involvements, to the world of social relationships among several actors" (PDM, 148-149).

Heidegger tries to show how being-in-the-world implies being constrained by others in his discussion of 'oneself' and the 'they'. He shows, how the ways in which we act in the world is shaped by others. Thus the way in which we behave is constructed by the one (das man) not by each Dasein privately for itself. We are thrown into the world and the inherited horizons necessarily constrain us. The 'das man' is the one that provides possibility for the individual in the socialization process.

As Habermas sees it, the notion of a shared lifeworld in which communicative rationality could be built is not developed in Heidegger. This is because, the context into which one is thrown is seen as a conservative state that constrains oneself in its inclination to make oneself authentic and establish a unique relation with Being. Hence;

*Heidegger does not take the path to a response in terms of a theory of communication because from the start he degrades the background structures of the lifeworld that reach beyond the isolated Dasein as structures of an average everyday existence, that is, of inauthentic Dasein. (PDM, 149)*

In emphasizing being beyond knowing, the focus in Heidegger becomes on Dasein. In turn Dasein returns to the subject as in the philosophy of the subject, as a point of analysis.

For Habermas, Heidegger's ontology, in trying to sketch Dasein's dwellings, and philosophy of the subject, in focusing in how the subject knows the world, managed to negate the accumulated meanings that give background and contexts for discussing issues for individuals and also the everyday communicative processes. In the final analysis, Heidegger failed to see that truth and meaning are not something that passes through, but, is produced. Hence; "He fails to see that the horizon of the understanding of meaning brought to bear on beings is not prior to, but rather subordinate to, the question of truth." (PDM, 154)

One of the controversial issues surrounding Heidegger's philosophy is its political implications, and specifically how it justified the Nazis. For Habermas one can witness in both Heidegger's lectures and addresses during the Nazis period, and the implicit ideas developed in *Being and Time*, how there is an intrinsic connection between Heidegger and the Nazis.

In relation to the Dasein Analytic , in *Being and Time*, Heidegger applied it to show how the individual stands in a world in relation to other individuals and entities, and how one's existence could be deciphered in time, i.e. in its 'thrownness', dwelling and projection of a future . But, during the Nazi period Heidegger interprets Dasein as a collective group or society as a whole, and how this collectivity is moving in time, into the future. Further, after being elected as the "rector of Freiburg", in his inaugural address to students and professors, Heidegger stressed how the Germans as a whole are called on by their leaders, to actualize their collective potentials, to take their proper place in history, to become authentic and consolidate their unique place in history. As Habermas sees it;

*Whereas earlier the ontology was rooted ontically in the existence of the individual in the lifeworld, now Heidegger singles out the historical existence of a nation yoked together by the Fuhrer into a collective will as the locale in which Dasein's authentic capacity to be whole is to be decided (PDM, 157).*

Habermas also locates Heidegger's affiliation with Nazism in the latter's views towards technology. During the Nazi period, Heidegger called on Germans to employ technology, to further the national socialist movement and Germany's Greatness, but later, Heidegger

came to view technology as a will to power manifesting itself in domination and exploitation of the planet and hence leading humanity into destruction (PDM, 159-160)

Richard Polt expresses how Heidegger already begun to doubt the national socialist revolution in his “private notes” in 1939. Heidegger wonders, where the nationalist movement is going, its place in history, from where it obtains its standards for collective movement and so on. Hence, for Polt, “Heidegger’s frustration is obvious. A revolution that had appeared to promise a rebirth of the German spirit, has turned out to be dogmatic and totalitarian” (Polt, 1999, 158).

## **2.5 Bataille and Bursting of the Conventional**

What underlies most of Bataille’s undertaking was getting beyond the conventional, the given standards and the normal. To this extent, Bataille conceives of the real human as the one that is willing to go beyond the limits, or the one that pushes the extreme to go beyond the conventional. Habermas categorizes, Bataille not under the reformers but radical critics of modernity. Habermas thinks that this radical critique of Bataille specifically focuses on the ethical side of life rather than a general critique of reason.

Habermas traces the origin of Bataille’s critique of modernity, to the development of the latter’s concept of “the heterogeneous” at “the end of the 1920’s” (PDM, 212). Here, Bataille launched his attacks on the capitalist society, ordinary day to day life, and the sciences in favor of a kind of experience that goes beyond the standards set by all these authorities, and hence limit the human experience. For Habermas, Bataille here is echoing the surrealist notion of experience which tries to go beyond an interested, instrumental, exploitative relation to the world, abolishes given standards of right and wrong, and brings a new kind of aesthetic dimension into focus.

As Habermas sees it, Bataille in his ‘the Heterogeneous’ focused, on those categories that don’t fit into our day today lives, these are elements that are excluded from normal life, taboo, sinners “outcasts and the marginalized... pariahs and the untouchables, the prostitutes or the lumpen proletariat, the crazies, the rioters, and revolutionaries, the poets or the bohemians.” (ibid) Habermas thinks that Bataille’s category of ‘the

Heterogeneous' as those excluded from the ordinary bounds of our lives, also include "fascist leaders [and their] heterogeneous existence." (PDM, 213)

According to Habermas, going beyond things like political affiliations, methods of interrogation and styles of writing, one could establish certain similarities between Heidegger and Bataille. Accordingly, both conceived modern society as based in a decadent form of rationality that resulted in their times "into a totality of technically manipulable and economically realizable goods" (ibid). Still, Bataille's critique of modernity like that of Heidegger is not aimed at a critique of epistemology that yields an exploitation of the world. Rather, it's a specific kind of "ethics" behind capitalism, that's at the center of Bataille's analysis.

Bataille's focus is geared towards liberating the subject from the routines of daily life and the rationality of capitalism, into a context in which the destruction of conventionality will lead one into a genuine moment. This is a moment, and experience that has been suppressed, and excluded from our networks of truth and rightness. Unlike Heidegger's ontological difference between Being and beings, and how the whole analysis is focused on a remembrance of Being, Bataille aims at setting the subject free, and asserts that, going beyond the limits set for the subject is the essence of "liberation to true sovereignty" (PDM, 214) Seen from this angle, Bataille was able to utilize Nietzsche's ideals of how the aesthetic frees, and how the 'overman' leads to a new 'transvaluation of values'. Heidegger was unable to appropriate these Nietzschean insight, for Habermas, since his focus was geared at how Being will be grasped through a specific comportment of the ontical i.e. Dasein. Accordingly; "For Bataille, as for Nietzsche there is a convergence between the self- aggrandizing and meaning-creating will to power and a cosmically moored fatalism of the eternal return of the same. " (ibid)

Also, Bataille and not Heidegger was able to appropriate Nietzsche's dissolving and defiance of all authority in the aftermath of the down fall of all ascetic values, in his attempt to liberate the subject from conventional standards. Heidegger was not able to utilize Nietzsche's destruction of the metaphysical system in his attempts to trace everything to the forgetfulness of Being.

Habermas thinks that Foucault is justified in claiming that Bataille operates in a world where all the metaphysical, religious truths have lost their vitality, and that to this extent, Bataille directs his attention towards the annihilation of conventional standards that are products of human beings themselves, like capitalism. Instead of trying to expose the great philosophical and religious traditions, Bataille focuses on how the erotic, sensual experience sets the subject free from a post-metaphysical world where man is chained not by other worldly philosophies but exploitative, manipulable relations to the world that essentially limit the bounds of the subject's experience. Thus, "Bataille does not delude himself about the fact that there is nothing left to profane in modernity." (PDM, 215)

Habermas, now that he has established Bataille's project of emancipating the subject in a world where the great metaphysical systems have been destructed, would like to show how Bataille analyzes fascism and modernity. To this extent, "Bataille sees modernity embedded in a history of reason in which the forces of sovereignty and labor are in conflict with one another" (ibid). Bataille sketches the development of complex societies in humanity's history as the further degradation of freedom and sovereignty. So, how does Bataille try to sketch the move from a "reified society to a renewal of sovereignty" (ibid).

According to Habermas the rise of fascism and national socialist movement in Europe was seen by some as positive and others negative. It also served as the catalytic force for the theories of Heidegger, Bataille, and Horkheimer. In this context, in his work *The psychological structure of fascism*, Bataille try to go beyond Marxist categories of thought, and tries to analyze the new movements in Italy and Germany not as based on class struggle but the psychological forces found behind such movements in history, especially the unique relation that exists "between the masses mobilized by plebiscites and their charismatic or Fuhrer figures" (PDM, 216).

In a Marxist tone, Bataille asserted that before revolutionizing the modes of production and societal organization by a movement like fascism, capitalism needs to "collapse because of internal contradictions" (PDM, 217). Bataille was interested in studying the extra elements, elements out of the bounds of Bourgeoisie society that fascism will bring

into the scene in such a revolution. Bataille tried to analyze how violence introduces a different, strange element by destroying boundaries.

Generally, Bataille analyzed modernity in terms of how a one-sided focus on reason led to conventional norms, values and standards. Rather than trying to modify the modern project by criticizing its reason, Bataille focused on going beyond the ethics of modernity by a violent force that goes beyond fixed boundaries. Hence;

*Bataille seeks an economics of the total social ecology of drives; this theory is supposed to explain why modernity continues its life-endangering exclusions without alternatives, and why hope in a dialectic of enlightenment, which has accompanied, the modern project right down to western Marxism is in vain. (ibid)*

According to Habermas, Bataille works under Durkheim's distinction of the 'profane' and 'sacred'. The 'sacred' represents the tendency to go beyond the convention and regularity and the 'profane', as the uniform aspects of day to day life.

In capitalist society, labor (the creative power) becomes homogeneous by being measured in terms of 'time' and 'money'. The uniformity of labor is further established by 'science' and 'technology' that create a world where identical, similar things are produced based on the demands of the capitalist and the fixing of the process of production of an object by standards given by the bourgeoisie. What the unique leaders and followers of fascism introduce is a negation of this uniformity and regularity. Hence, "against the background of interest oriented mass democracy, Hitler and Mussolini appear to be the totally other." (PDM, 218)

Habermas thinks that Bataille is especially interested in how the appropriation of the violent, the spontaneous, and the negated experience by fascism disrupts capitalist modes of organization. Bataille is also fascinated by how elements of order and chaos, uniformity and disruption, are found alongside one another in fascism. On the one hand, sacrifice for the totality, performance of duties, and on the other, collective upheavals, festivities and absolute rule of the 'fuhrer' are found along one another expressing the spirit "of true

sovereignty” (PDM, 219). Habermas goes on to make a contrast between Bataille’s and Horkheimer and Adorno’s views on fascism.

One thing common to both Bataille and Horkheimer and Adorno, is the focus on studying the psychological dimension of fascist rule as it is manifested in its arousal of the masses and the collective force. For Horkheimer and Adorno, Fascism arouses the suppressed urges and passions of the subjects in modern society, under a collective ideal and vision of a common destiny. So, first Bataille, Horkheimer, Adorno, focused on suppression, and later, the strategic arousal of suppressed urges. The difference is that, for Horkheimer and Adorno the result of such an arousal is delusion or false happiness, whereas for Bataille the arousal is a moment of empowering the subject to go beyond the conventional and thereby a freeing. Hence, “in the erotic and in the sacred, Bataille celebrates an ‘elemental violence’.” (PDM, 220) As Habermas sees it, such position of Bataille runs into the difficulty of failing to distinguish between an emancipatory ideal that utilizes the passions of the masses for revolutionizing current states of affairs versus the subsuming of such a revolutionary undertaking in the final analysis under a dictatorial, totalitarian rule. Habermas goes on to look at how Bataille tried to subsequently come up with a critique of modernity that bridges the gap of the “transition from reification to sovereignty”. (PDM, 221)

According to Habermas, in his 1933 treatise on *The concept of waste* alongside Marxist forms of analysis, Bataille conceives labor as the way through which humans make themselves by making products. But rather than focusing on how humans have been deprived of their labor in capitalism. Bataille focuses on the difference between merely producing for survival and a ‘luxurious’ way of laboring where one goes beyond the basic necessities and produces surplus, and locates ‘sovereignty’ and ‘authenticity’ of the subject on the latter. For Bataille, and not Marx, producing beyond necessity is an expression of freedom and a sign of going beyond the conventions. Hence, Bataille according to Habermas;

*[f]ears that true sovereignty would also be suppressed in a world of material abundance as long as the rational,-according to the principle of balancing payments-use of material and spiritual goods did not leave room for a radically different form of consumption-namely, of wasteful expenditure in which the consuming subject expresses himself (PDM, 222).*

Based on this analysis one of the defects of modern capitalist society is its tendency to subsume everything into the production process and this has a subversive effect of destroying entertainment and pursuing of luxury as an expression of Freedom. Alongside these lines, for Bataille; “[t]he essence of sovereignty consists of useless consumption of ‘whatever pleases me’ (PDM, 224).

Habermas thinks that using the thesis of the intrinsic relation between “sovereignty and power”; to explain how capitalist relations of production for profit emerge, is not sufficient to show how throughout human history the ‘sacred’ have been excluded.

In favor of the ‘profane’, Bataille also cannot appeal to Marxian categories of thought, since his analysis already deviates from that of Marx in the attempt to go beyond reason, the conventional, and the fixed standards. It also deviates in emphasizing how the problem of labor is not of being subsumed into capitalism from expression oneself to surplus production, but instead from entertaining of the luxurious as an expression of one’s superiority to an endless pursuit of surplus production under capitalism. Instead, Bataille appeals to Weber’s thesis of protestant ethic and rise of capitalism and applies it to how the ethical determines negation of the sacred. Habermas thinks that this can be broken down to three points, humans are different from other animals not just in the fact that they create themselves through labor, but also in the fact that their actions, desires, and wishes are constrained by the standards and conventional ways of being that are found in the world they inhabit. (PDM, 230) In this context, Bataille’s ‘excess’ is going beyond the forces and standards that limit the freedom of the individual.

One should conceive the conventional rules and standards beyond their role in keeping the societal order in tact. Instead, the focus should be on how their transgression leads to new ways of experiencing the world and ways of being.

One can also sketch the development of a practical reason and moral rules from ancient times to the present, which succeeded in making individuals, conform to different ethical ideals, and hence bound to conventionality.

In the final analysis, Bataille like Nietzsche is faced with the problem of trying to go beyond reason, and the limits set by norms but still not being able to come up with a theory that can comprehend this. What kind of theory can go beyond discourse, if all discourse is repression, and if there is a need to burst out of the boundaries of language, then what kind of theory could account for this?

## CHAPTER THREE

### Habermas and Postmodernism

#### 3.1 Habermas and Postmodernism

What motivated Habermas's discussion of the philosophical discourse of modernity is the postmodernist movement as it grew out of what was referred to as the poststructuralism of especially Foucault and Derrida. As we will see in the next chapter, Habermas basically tries to preserve and reformulate the values of the Enlightenment and the modern process of rationalization in general, by strengthening the communicative rationality which is implicitly being practiced in the day to day lives of modern societies. Along these lines, Habermas developed a critique of the postmodernist movements of Derrida and Foucault in particular. What is postmodernism, and why does Habermas view it as a threat to modernity, Enlightenment and communicative rationality? In this chapter, I will focus on Habermas's discussion of Foucault and Derrida's critiques of modern society and philosophy in general with an aim of sketching how the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and in general the radical critics of modernity, have been developed by Foucault and Derrida and how Habermas views such threats to his own project of communicative rationality.

The word postmodern is usually employed to specify intellectual positions which in one way or another tried or managed to degrade or undermine the assumptions which lie at the core of Western civilization especially modern society. Thus, the postmodernist venture exposed and severely criticized capitalism, globalization, anthropocentrism and metaphysical speculation amongst others. As Walter Truett Anderson sees it,

*The word 'postmodernism' is floating around rather freely these days, and it means different things to different people. To some, it means funny architecture, to others, French intellectuals you can't understand; to still others, anything weird, campy, trendy or high tech. Some people equate it with the idea that all values and beliefs are equal (Anderson, 1995, 7).*

As Anderson sees it, besides tracing the emergence of the postmodern historically, one way of addressing the postmodern issue, is focusing on distinguishing between 'postmodernity' and 'postmodernism'. 'Postmodernity' constitutes the state in which our basic values, 'grand narrative', metaphysical systems, historiography, and our lives in general are currently being questioned. In this context, 'Postmodernism' relates to the various theoretical formulations trying to articulated this chaotic and fragmented situation, and trying to translate it and make it part of their theoretical explications and critiques.(ibid,6-7) So, what are some of the proposed postmodern solutions?

Jean Francois Lyotard's *The postmodern condition, a report on knowledge*; is usually taken as a pioneering work in terms of introducing the term postmodernism in philosophical circles. Lyotard pictured the postmodern condition as one in which uniform conceptions of history; universalistic ideals of science and knowledge, religious narratives, metaphysical stories have lost their capacities to stand as adequate guidelines for our lives. This in turn has led to the emergence of different narratives, stories and guidelines.

The *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, tries to locate the postmodernist movement, as revolving around seven major forms of orientations. All these approaches stood against Western modern man's sense of identity and the world, which is depicted in modern rationality. Lyotard's exposition of the emergence of diverse narratives and the lack of adequate overarching guidelines constitutes the first angle of this postmodernist venture. Secondly, one has Foucaultian approaches that displace the subject and shows how the subject has been constructed in various discourses. These approaches focus on how various discourses replace one another throughout history and generally try to specify how knowledge and power produce subjectivity.

Thirdly, we have Gilles Deluze's "productive difference", which critiques rationality and emphasizes sensibility, difference and diversity. Fourthly, there is Derrida's broader interrogation of texts as operating in dichotomies and searching for an absolute ground. Derrida also criticized the ideas of a pure discourse and uniform language in favor of the infinite referral of meaning. Fifth, one finds, Jean Baudrillard's, 'Hyperreality'. Here the

focus is on how images and identities are created and recreated in various contexts and mediations. Thus, the look for an original state or 'reference' is abandoned.

Sixthly, one finds "Postmodern Hermeneutics", as a major part of the postmodernist critique. Here, heterogeneous experience which constitutes the current condition is seen as a stock of diverse texts signifying various meanings. Once these diverse texts are acknowledged there is an equal search for the continuities and discontinuities between different texts. Finally, one finds "postmodern rhetoric and aesthetics", which "involves sharing or participating in differences that have opened between the old and the new, the natural and the artificial, or even between life and death". (*Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, postmodernism). Still, what is it that unifies these diverse orientations?

As Lawrence Cahoon, in his *from modernism to postmodernism, an anthology* sees it; there are certain traits that unify the postmodernists. These include, dynamism in terms of signs, abandoning the search for origins and focusing on frameworks of construction and interpretation. Further, postmodernists usually argue that "knowledge is something humanly made" coupled with the contextualization of values and norms and critique of exploitative, 'repressive' forms of rationality. Finally most postmodernists employ a "notorious difficult writing style". (Cahoon, 2003, 10-12)

As Richard Rorty sees it, one way of recasting, the modern/postmodern debate is to situate it in terms of the Habermas/Lyotard controversy. While Habermas working within Kant, Hegel and Weber's views, focuses on the development of three value spheres, the emergence of a distinct consciousness of time, and rationalization of the lifeworld; Lyotard, on the other hand, describes the downfall of 'grand narratives' and overarching, all encompassing forms of speculations. Lyotard for Habermas leaves the scene with no basis for critique, while Habermas for Lyotard presents nothing but another 'grand Narrative' in his communicative rationality. For Rorty;

*From Lyotard's point of view, Habermas is offering one more metanarrative, more general and abstract narrative of emancipation'...than the Freudian and Marxian metanarratives... for Habermas, the problem posed by 'incredulity toward metanarratives' is that unmasking only makes sense if we preserve at least one standard for the explanation of the corruption of all reasonable standards' (Rorty, 1984,32)*

In the following sections, we are going to look at Habermas's critique of Derrida and Foucault's analysis of modernity.

### **3.2 Deconstruction versus Communicative Rationality**

In developing a position that tries to reform Western modernity, Habermas came up with a communicative rationality that excavates reason as a communicative tool and is critical of the different dimensions of life, and thereby furthers the project of modernity. In his work, *PDM*, Habermas tries to show where the critics of modernity have been misguided. He shows that their misunderstandings are largely situated within the assumptions of the paradigm of consciousness or philosophy of the subject. In the philosophy of the subject, the focus is on the autonomous ego which is used to build grand systems and theories. As an alternative, Habermas tries to conceive knowledge, rationality and truth generally in terms of the participation of free individuals in a communicative process, where empirically testable and disputable claims are to be raised. In this regard, Habermas appealed to universal pragmatics which purports to articulate the universal and unavoidable presuppositions that are operative in the successful employment of speech acts oriented to achieving mutual understanding.

One of the prominent authors in the project of modernity was Fredrick Nietzsche. Nietzsche's contribution could be seen in his two major arguments. First, reason as developed in the project of modernity has become oppressive and instrumental. Second, the idea of philosophical discourses as something pure, logical and argumentative goes against the actual fact that those rhetorical and logical, artistic and argumentative, elements are found within them. Thus metaphors, rhetorical elements and hidden agendas are also found in philosophical texts.

As Habermas sees it, one of the followers of Nietzsche's idea that, philosophical discourses are not about logic and argumentation, but employment of the better rhetoric against lesser ones, is Jacques Derrida. One could see how Derrida's general project of deconstruction stands against Habermas's communicative rationality in two senses. First Derrida negates communicative rationality and the three validity claims by emphasizing the infinite referral of meaning and showing that everyday communication is affected by

abnormal, poetic and artistic uses of language. Secondly, he Undermines Habermas's understanding of the specialized forms of inquiry, and specifically the status of philosophical discourse, by arguing that, there is no distinction between logic and rhetoric, and that all texts can be analyzed in literary-rhetorical terms.

First, I will try to expose Habermas's discussion of Derrida's overall project of deconstruction and particularly his views on meaning, to show how Habermas tries to defend himself against the above mentioned Derridean allegations. To this extent, I will discuss chapter VII. "Beyond a temporalized philosophy of origins: Jacques Derrida's critique of metaphysics" and "excursus on leveling the Genre distinction between philosophy and literature", as found in Habermas's work, PDM.

### **3.2.1 Heidegger's 'Destruction' and Derrida's 'Deconstruction'**

According to Habermas, both Heidegger and Derrida, tried to make a general analysis of the philosophical tradition with an aim of trying to show the limitations and the extent to which the metaphysical tradition can be justified. For Heidegger, analysis of the whole meant looking at history of metaphysics, exposing its 'forgetfulness' of Being, and trying to establish a new analysis in the Dasein Analytic. In Derrida, what we have is a criticism of the whole metaphysical tradition as trying to base itself in an absolute, certain, truth that is to be expressed in speech and serves as a foundation for all discussions. So, deconstruction, takes a form of destructing the history of philosophy by exposing its foundations, criticizing its dichotomies and finally emphasizing an intrinsic relation between the different oppositions and show how meaning is produced through these relations. Habermas claims that there is an affinity between Heidegger's destruction and Derrida's Deconstruction. (PDM, 161-62) Eventhough, Derrida followed Heidegger in making an analysis of the whole metaphysical tradition and arguing for its exposure, still he was against the kind of views Heidegger developed on his later years towards Being, language and truth.

So, why did Heidegger turn to language? In his Dasein Analytic, Heidegger tried to construct the structures that made possible Dasein's visibility and day to day life. But, later, Heidegger bestowed to language a status of revealing the status of an absolute truth,

i.e. the truth of Being. As, Habermas puts it, Derrida was against Heidegger's tendency to see language as starting with a truth of Being. This "metaphorics of proximity, of simple and immediate presence" is what Derrida rejects, according to Habermas. Here we can ask, to what does Derrida refer to by the metaphysical tradition. For, Derrida, metaphysics is mainly characterized by two main assumptions. Looking for an absolute and certain ground to base our discussions of truth, morality, reality, knowledge, values and so on; and also a binary, oppositional way of thinking, where one part of the dichotomy is said to be inferior to the other. (Ryan, 1982, 10) So, has Heidegger succumbed to the metaphysical tradition? For Derrida, First, even though there is distinction between Being and beings in Heidegger, still the focus is on forgetfulness of Being. The whole tradition has been focused on contemplating beings and entities for Heidegger. Instead he tries to address the concealed issue of being as such. Dasein is only significant in so far as it is able to address this ultimate forgetfulness. Also, Heidegger's insistence on grounding everything on an ultimate reality is seen in his later views on language where beings are not active producers of truth but only channels through which the truth of Being is manifested in the language they speak.

Habermas is also against Heidegger's understanding of language, because this kind of analysis is against his idea that, truth is to be found in the three validity claims and the ability of participants in an intersubjective communication to convince each other through the raising and defending of these claims. This is because, in Heidegger, truth is not something we produce, but simply a manifestation of a higher reality.

Acknowledging the limitations of Heidegger's analysis, Derrida according to Habermas, turned his face to an analysis of language inspired by structuralism. Derrida took from structuralism its insistence on analyzing meaning not based on some external, absolute, metaphysical criteria but simply by looking at how meaning is produced in relation to "the structured relationships between elements (such as sounds and words) within" a language system (Edgar, -112). Still, the Structuralist ideal of trying to come up with objective structures that can be used to analyze day to day language was rejected by Derrida. Instead, Derrida's attempt was to expose the foundations of language as being

metaphysical in their Nature (PDM, 163). Still, how could one criticize metaphysics by criticizing language?

As we saw earlier, one of the ways through which Derrida characterized metaphysics, is in terms of thinking in dichotomies of superiority and inferiority. Here Derrida focused on the speech/writing binary, where speech is favored. Derrida wanted to apply his Deconstruction against this Binary. But, first what is deconstruction? Deconstruction is an attempt to expose the nature of texts, and according to some, it takes the form of exposing binaries, reversing the relation between the binaries, and finally showing that the two components of the binaries are not inferior or superior to one another but are simply interdependent, since meaning is produced by them excluding and differing from one another (Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy, Jacques Derrida, 13), Habermas, tells us that Derrida aims at deconstructing the speech vs. writing binary that has been dominant throughout Western thought and thereby criticize the metaphysical tradition. This binary is related to what Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence”.

The metaphysics of presence is searching and grounding all claims to truth on unshakable grounds. Some of the ideals that functioned as ultimate foundations include “forms, principles of logic, clear and distinct ideas, impressions, categorical imperatives.” (Melchert, 2002, 704) But, which type of language is best suited to express this truth, spoken or written? Derrida tells us that it’s assumed in the metaphysical tradition that speech directly copies the absolute truth from the mind and utters it while writing is something that tries to imitate speech. So, Habermas claims that, “since the logos, as we shall see, constantly indwells the spoken word, Derrida wants to confront the logocentrism of the west in the form of Phonocentrism” (PDM, 164). The main assumption in Phonocentrism was that, first we grasp absolute truth, then speech conveys this truth, and then writing imitates these sounds. So, speech and logos (reason) are related to one another. In his deconstruction (i.e. not abolishing altogether but exposing and showing interdependency through difference) Derrida tries to come up with an idea that a new concept of the neglected form of writing and generally language needs to be developed. This is where hidden strategies, metaphors, literary elements are to be emphasized beyond logic and arguments.

One of the things that Derrida tries to show is that, rather than trying to establish a relation of superiority and inferiority, between speech and writing, both are shown to be subjected to the production of meanings in relation to other linguistic components and not the objective world. Further, possibilities of interpretations and misinterpretation and infinite interpretation are found in both. Also, meaning cannot be fixed either in speech or writing. (Melchert, 2002, 706)

Habermas tried to show the move that Derrida has made from Heideggerian approach to a Structuralist one, in terms of a move from a “metaphor of the book of nature or the book of the world...to traces of it” (PDM, 164). The idea by the “book of the world” is that the world has an ultimate plan, an absolute foundation of truth and firm ground that is to be discovered through humans. What Derrida in turn focuses on, is that there is no ultimate foundation, originality, first position, but just fragmented traces. So, what is a trace? “Derrida calls the words I use traces. A word is not an atomic unity isolated from everything else rather, a word is simply a trace of all those relationship in all those networks that make it signify what it does.” (Melchert, 2002, 706) This idea of not seeking or looking for an ultimate foundation, but only for fragmentary pieces, was according to Habermas, a characteristic feature of artistic, philosophical and critical ventures of the nineteenth century.

Habermas recognized the fact that Derrida abandoned the Heideggerian Notion of Being expressed through Dasein’s language, and generally Phonocentrism, where speech is supposed to manifest the ultimate Truth. Still, Derrida’s focus on the linguistic world of diverse interpretations and the production of meaning through ‘difference’ is not able to account for what Habermas calls the raising and defending of different validity claims. Habermas focuses on the linguistic world, still validity claims are being raised in relation to the external, social and subjective worlds, and also our claims are testable. The fallibilistic nature of the claims is also emphasized.

### **3.2.2 Derrida's Criticism of Logocentrism and Phonocentrism**

Habermas goes on to explicate Derrida's discussion of Husserl, to see whether or not he escapes from the philosophy of the subject. Accordingly, Husserl tried to come up with an idea of truth, that's not produced through linguistic interaction and raising of claims in a given context, but one that sees truth as a grasping of pure meaning by the ego. As Michael Ryan puts it, "the foundation and center of Husserl's phenomenology, is the present moment, a unique and original point of plenitude from which repetition... and difference supposedly derive" (Ryan, 1982, 25). Here, what we have is a grasp of absolute and ideal meanings.

Crucial to Husserl's theory of meaning and truth, is his distinction between 'signs' and 'indications'. In, 'signs' what we have is a grasp of ideal meanings which are the sources of meanings that one employs with certainty in everyday interactions and understanding of things. 'Indications' are meanings produced as a result of the influence of the immediate environment and other actors. 'Indications' also refer to the kind of associations of meanings that can be associated with different contexts, even though not necessary (PDM, 167-68). In 'indications', what we have is not the absolute meaning grasped by the conscious intuition, but something that's a result of the contestation of different claims and the production of meaning as an effect of empirical conditions. As Habermas sees it, for Derrida, Husserl's abandonment of indications in favor of signs is an attempt to address the fluctuation of meaning, which results as different interpretations of meanings are being, generated (PDM, 168).

As Habermas sees it, the ego is taken as transcendental and capable of gaining absolute truth in Husserl. This absolute truth is to be expressed in speech, and in terms of Husserl's distinction between 'signs' and 'indications', what guarantees the fixation of meaning in an intersubjective communicative process is that of the ego's grasp of signs. Signs are ideal and not something that could be changed in a process of communication. So, even if meaning of indications tends to vary on a given context, still signs guarantee the permanence of meaning amongst the communicators (PDM, 169).

In terms of truth, as Habermas sees it, the interlocutors are not producing truth through the raising and defending various claims in on empirical grounds or claims are to be tested, but are simply conveying a permanent and fixed meaning. Habermas thinks that if meaning, as we saw in Husserl, is something interior and fully grasped, then the use of language and contestation of claims is undermined. The notion of truth and meaning as something contested and argued for, gets lost in Husserl. Further, in comparing Husserl with Wittgenstein, Habermas claimed that the idea of ideal and real meaning as it is contested in intersubjective validity in Wittgenstein becomes in Husserl, that of employing absolute and certain meanings in a context devoid of error. (PDM, 170-71) Habermas sees Derrida as more and more focusing on a world of meanings where meanings are established by excluding and differing from one another, in his attempt to eradicate the notion of the non-linguistic ideal world determining and setting the ground for the linguistic one.

Habermas further elaborates on Derrida's critique of ideal meanings in Husserl uncoupled from the ever flow of meaning. Accordingly, like Husserl claims, if the transcendental ego is said to convey the ideal truth in language which takes a form of speech, then language's use becomes that of 'stating facts' and not reaching understanding "by different ways of interpreting truth and reality".(PDM, 172).

One of the things, that Husserl focused on, in his theory of meaning, was an idea of objective ideal expressions into which subjective ones are to be reduced in the final analysis. Derrida equated this tendency with Phonocentrism that is to be linked with logocentrism. Hence, rather than focusing on how meaning is produced through different interpretations in various contexts, the focus is on general structures and ideal meanings which are to be expressed in speech and are held to be derivative of presence, the truth that appears to the conscious intuition of the transcendental ego. What Derrida objects strongly to is the notion of a 'present moment'. Accordingly "experience as experience of the present is never a simple experience of something present over and against me, right before my eyes as in an intuition, there is always another agency there. Repeatability contains what has passed away and is not longer present and what is about to come and is not yet present. (Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy Jacques Derrida,

78.). Just like in language, meaning is situated in terms of a system of differences rather than by direct significations of meaning. Experience is always embedded in relation to the past and future. Hence there is no such a thing as single presence. “the simple presence of an undivided object that is identical with itself falls apart as we become conscious of the net of ‘protentions’ and ‘retentions’ in which every actual experience is embedded” (PDM, 174). What this means is that, rather than trying to isolate a given experience, Derrida tries to situate every experience within ‘protention’ i.e. anticipation of future and ‘retention’, the memory of the recent past. So, there is no such a thing as an undivided, uncontaminated present moment, that’s to be grasped by the ego.

Husserl, just like most proponents of the metaphysical tradition, tried to extract meaning from a supposedly ideal and absolute meaning that is supposed to be grasped by the subject. Husserl was mistaken in trying to divorce the sign from the signifier and in looking for something fixed and permanent, and not realizing that meaning is found on a system of differences, and absolute meaning can never be grasped out of relations of difference and exclusion (PDM, 175). What Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* tried to do is show how the insistence on speech is situated on a deeper metaphysical search for a firm and stable foundation.

The logocentrism tendency of the metaphysical tradition focuses on the search for something absolute clear and self-evident, while its Phonocentrism emphasizes how speech is able to convey this i.e. the highest truth, more than writing. Hence “To this degree, Phonocentrism and logocentrism are akin to one another” (PDM, 176).

### **3.2.3 Differance and Arche-Writing**

By ‘differance’, what Derrida meant is that, meaning is established in a set of differences from other words, (so difference), and also one can not get at absolute meaning since meaning is always delayed and transferred to another word that made the meaning of the word in analysis, possible. So, meaning its also deferred (PDM 178). Derrida’s ‘differance’ can be further elaborated by what he calls ‘arche-writing’. Beyond claiming that, one can not isolate a sign from the system of other signs and claiming that one can never arrive at the absolute meaning of a sign, Derrida goes on to claim that its an infinite

process of referring to other things in terms of space and time that makes things visible, that makes language, speaking and writing possible. What Derrida means by 'arche-writing' is not the idea of writing as we conceive it commonly e.g. writing on a paper. 'arche-writing' is the already existence of things in system of difference, the heterogeneity that makes possible the grasping of things in terms of their relation to each other. So,

*this writing, which is prior to any subsequent fixing of sound patterns, this... (arche-writing) makes [it] possible to speak, without the help of the transcendental subject, the world differentiations between the intelligibility of meanings and the empirical element that come to appearance within its horizon, between the world and what is within the world (PDM, 178).*

Instead of the ability of the transcendental ego to grasp ideal meanings in Husserl, we have in Derrida's 'arche-writing'. This is, the system of differences, the state of heterogeneity that makes the grasp of meaning in terms of relations of difference possible, and also makes impossible the decipherability of absolute meaning. Still, Habermas criticizes Derrida for not abandoning the search for ultimate foundations in the philosophy of the subject, since Derrida's analysis traces meaning, perception, language and so on, to arche-writing. This is the heterogeneity that makes heterogeneity of meaning possible (PDM, 178-179).

Habermas traces, Derrida's focus on relations of difference to what he appropriated from Saussure's linguistics, Saussure's central focus was on how meaning is produced in relation to how components of language which are arbitrary, stand in relations of differences from each other. Saussure saw sounds as components of language that relate directly to contents of our mind, while writing as something unnatural and derivative. Derrida saw Saussure's idea that signs are arbitrary and "there is a natural attachment between speech and mental experience" as something contradictory. (Internet encyclopedia of philosophy, Jacques Derrida, 6-7)

It's the idea of the decidability of meaning based on interpretations, within the linguistic world that Derrida took from Saussure. So, meaning is to be determined in relation to

other possible meanings. Beyond the Structuralist focus on the phoneme and its relation to other phonemes, Derrida added that both speech and writing are susceptible to same errors and relations of differences, and that 'arche-writing' is something beyond all forms of language either 'writing' or 'speech' (PDM 180). Derrida, as Habermas sees it, claims that what makes language possible, either in 'Phonemes' or 'graphemes' is arche-writing. This makes the world possible in terms of making, meaning, and perception possible. So, even before meaning, there is what makes the meaning possible.

Habermas saw Derrida as following Nietzsche's insistence on the 'Dionysian motif'. This for Nietzsche involves focusing on the emotionally excessive, ambiguous and tragic rather than rationality and logic. Art was to be separated from science and morality, expressing itself the Dionysian tendencies. In Derrida, the Dionysian spirit is to be expressed in criticizing all the sciences as having rhetorical elements, emphasizing the state of heterogeneity and 'difference', and calling for a heterogeneous literary analysis (PDM, 181).

In his idea of interpretation, meaning and relations of difference, Habermas thinks that Derrida is based in the Jewish tradition. One of the characteristic feature of Jewish thought, especially under the 'cabalists' was the focus on diverging interpretations made by each generation on the original revelation, and the idea that there is no such a thing as an absolute truth and divine revelation but on how the divine word keeps on being interpreted, "for the truth has not been fixed it has not been made positive once and for all in some well circumscribed set of statements" (PDM, 182).

Derrida, in speaking of meaning, claimed that interpretation is something that can never be exhausted and is some thing that goes on infinitely. Derrida also took from Jewish thought, the idea of making infinite meaning visible to human infinite interpretation. So, Habermas claimed that "The aleph of Rabbi Mendel is akin to the soundless 'a' of 'difference', discriminated only in writing, for in the indeterminacy of this fragile and ambiguous sign is concentrated the entire wealth of the promise". (PDM, 183) Just like Rabbi Mendel and Moses managed to facilitate the transfer of divine truth into human language where it is to be continually interpreted through generations, Derrida also in his

'differance' insisted that meaning always comes through difference and therefore deference i.e. meaning always comes.

Habermas characterizes the wholesale rejection of the reason of the modern project in terms of what he calls, 'performative contradiction'. For instance, Heidegger used concepts, terms distinctions and categories of the metaphysical tradition as his tools of critique, while criticizing the tradition. Postmodernism tried to reject the reason of the modern project as being anarchistic and repressive amongst other charges. But, this is to be contradicted in what these postmodernist critiques are doing in practice which is, making normative claims, offering arguments, employing reason and so on. Martin J. Matustik, saw Habermas's idea of performative contradiction as, something;

*Concretely defined within its existential context, an argument that attacks all rational argumentation, that reasons against reason as such, that wholly blackmails any claim to truth, that concludes in a rejection of normative Judgments that sincerely undermines the possibility of authenticity in discourse, is in contradiction with its own performance.*  
(Matustik, 1989, 146)

Habermas tried to relate Derrida's deconstruction with Adorno's negative dialectics with an aim of showing how Derrida developed his view of the relation between philosophy and literature. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* is not the negation of the present as a move towards final unity as Hegel did, but a dialectical negation of the actual and existing. This is something that leads to a better understanding of the context through which identities emerge and the look for the positive other by negating the given. (PDM, 186) Habermas sees in both Derrida and Adorno; an emphasis on how what is presented as given has a potentiality of referring to the hidden, rather than literal. Further broken pieces seen as insignificant will lead to the exposure of structures and grand systems. What is seen as inferior and excluded is the departure of analysis coupled with a negation of original grounds and arriving at a final unity. (PDM, 187)

### **3.2.4 Derrida and Leveling of the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature**

One of the dichotomies of superiority and inferiority that Derrida focuses on is that of logic and rhetoric, and he wants to question and reverse the relation. Habermas sees this, as Derrida's attempt to avoid self-referentiality in the critique of reason. This is to be accomplished by abolishing any distinction between philosophy and literature and trying to bring logic and argumentative reason under a general analysis of text and literature by way of deconstruction. In relation to this, Derrida tried to appropriate Nietzsche's idea that philosophical texts are not mainly about arguments but employment of the better rhetoric against the lesser ones. (PDM, 188) What deconstruction tries to do is show that philosophical texts could be analyzed in literary terms just like every other text.

Here, what we have is exposition of the different binaries in the text, which shows how contradictory claims are present, and the analysis of rhetorical meanings lead to affirmation of relations of difference. Hence, Derrida, according to Habermas is claiming that: "[b]lindness and insight are rhetorically interwoven with one another" (PDM, 189). In most so called philosophical texts, there is a tendency to focus just on the logic and arguments. What Derrida is claiming is that the rhetoric, strategies, metaphors, hidden agendas also need to be emphasized. So the recognition of elements other than logic will lead to a general analysis of texts with an aim of exposing their biases inscribed in their binaries and how both elements of rhetoric and argumentation are to be found on texts in general.

As Habermas, sees it, the success of this attempt is based on how far, Derrida manages to show that the assumed distinction between philosophy and literature is wrong and that, instead, philosophical texts should be analyzed as forms of literature where the possibility of an infinite number of interpretations, is to be emphasized. Further, what deconstruction tries to do is make a general analysis of texts. A text is generally seen as a heterogeneous state where making clear cut distinctions between what is pure and impure, rational and irrational, argument and rhetoric, clear and disputed, is made problematic by the fact that everything is interwoven and related with one another. This is what Derrida would see as

the 'universal text' or the prior text before texts. Hence trying to make clear cut distinctions, as the one between logic and rhetoric, stands against this ground of relations through difference. What the idea of logic implies is that one should use certain criteria and rules in relation to a philosophical discourse, while in focusing on rhetoric, the fact that there is a relationship that makes any clear cut distinction problematic, is emphasized(PDM, 190).

As Habermas sees it, Derrida's deconstructive project should be seen in light of his attempts to avoid 'performative contradiction'. Rather than trying to criticize reason by using reason, Derrida claims that rhetorical and logical elements cannot be clearly separated in a philosophical text and that a philosophical text just like any other text should be criticized by literary forms of analysis. If there is no distinction between philosophy and literature, then a critique of philosophical texts, just like other texts is not to be confined to the rules of logic but to an analysis of works of literature in general. Habermas asserts that the truth of Derrida's deconstructive venture is based on three assumptions which are intrinsically related with one another.

1. Literary criticism is not primarily a scientific (or scholarly: ..) enterprise but observes the same rhetorical criteria as its literary objects.
2. Far from there being a genre distinction between philosophy and literature, philosophical texts can be rendered accessible in their essential contexts by literary criticism.
3. The primacy of rhetoric over logic means the overall responsibility of rhetoric for the general qualities of an all embracing context of text, within which all genre distinctions are ultimately dissolved. (PDM, 190-191)

As we can see from these three points, criticism is seen not in terms of objective validity and value free assumptions but of an artistic and literary nature in general. There is no clear demarcation between works of literature and philosophy. So, all works including philosophy should be categorized under literature and literary criticism should be the proper way of interrogating texts. Finally, since rhetoric is present in every discourse and forms of inquiry, and its not about conforming to some absolute standards, then the idea

of science and philosophy as something objective, certain, valid, free of rhetoric, as employing experiment and logic against personal values and rhetoric is to be questioned.

In deploying literary criticism, what Derrida's deconstruction tries to do is, question the so-called logical consistency and validity of philosophy and science, and show that in both everyday communication and special forms of inquiry, rhetorical elements are found intertwined with different arguments and propositions. Accordingly, literary criticism in deconstruction is not about applying a scientific method, in the sense of validity, objectivity, and so on. Literary criticism questions ideas of autonomous forms of inquiries, for instance art, and tries to show the interplay of different elements, logical and rhetorical in a given discourse. Generally it has a task of criticizing the metaphysical tradition's search for absolute origins and final foundations, the prioritizing of speech over writing and so on (PDM, 191).

What all this implies is that, literary criticism is not something that tries to contemplate the secondary, artistic, imaginative use of language. On the contrary, literary criticism becomes the highest form of criticizing and evaluating all texts, exposing their tensions, hidden strategies and showing the existence of different forms of justification. If, philosophical texts are to be analyzed just like every other text through literary criticism, or the kind of criticisms relating to works of literature, then the critique of metaphysics becomes analogous to critique of literature, since critique of metaphysics falls under philosophical criticism. Now as Derrida claims philosophy is subsumed under literature. Habermas, using Jonathan Culler, further argues that, this implies that literature, gains the status of philosophy, if literary criticism is employed as a critique of metaphysics (PDM, 192).

Throughout his deconstructive project, Derrida claims that literature is not entirely about fiction and imagination, and only about artistic contemplation. Philosophy is also not only about logic and argument but also metaphors and rhetoric. In elevating literary criticism beyond and critique of literature to criticism of all texts, which include philosophical and scientific inquiries as well, Derrida, as Habermas sees it, tried to escape from the exclusive employment of logic towards interrogation of philosophical texts.

Instead, he tries to employ literary criticism as a general critique of literature now containing scientific, logical, moral, artistic, metaphorical and other elements (PDM, 193).

Habermas goes on to discuss the idea of the normal and unusual usage of language, in order to defend his idea of communicative rationality with its three validity claims under a normal everyday communication. To achieve this, he looks at the Derrida-Searle debate as it is developed by Jonathan Culler. As Culler sees it, “meaning is context-bound, so intentions do not in fact suffice to determine meaning; context must be mobilized. But context is boundless. So, accounts of context never provide full determinations of meaning” (Zima, 2002, 46).

Searle developed Austin’s insights in relation to his view of the ordinary usage of language in everyday interaction. As Austin sees it, beyond conveying information, a speech act, also has an ability to bond those communicating. So what Austin, tried to do was, assume that in everyday communication, there are two kinds of uses of language. The ordinary one, whose participants use language “simply and literally as possible” to communicate and the abnormal one, where utterances are usually taken out of context and interpreted in various ways. Austin’s argument was that, what makes everyday communication possible is the ability of participants to use words in a common, literal, straight manner and in terms of communication, ignoring the unusual, out of context interpretations. Derrida was against Austin’s insistence in developing a theory of communication only based on the common use of language and tried to appropriate the abnormal and rare uses of language, into his theory of meaning. So;

*Derrida accuses Austin of neglecting the citation function”... of language (example, parody, pastiche, irony) and of assuming the transparency of the authorial intention, the definiteness of the utterance, as well as the presence of a contextual totality (Zima, 2002, 46).*

Searle further developed Austin’s idea of the two uses of language, by claiming that even though it is evident that language can be used in indirect and out of context, ways, still what this abnormal usage suggests is that the main purpose of language as it is used in

our day to day lives, is to convey a direct and literal meaning that makes communication and understanding possible.

As Culler sees it, Derrida raised three main objections towards Searle's speech act theory. First, any speech act can be quoted and be analyzed in another context and the idea that meaning will be the same in another context, is something fictional. Habermas criticized Derrida for failing to recognize that what Austin meant by the fixation of meaning in everyday communication and the normal use of language, is based on idealizing presuppositions that are present in every communicative action (PDM, 195-196). Second, Derrida argued that, for a normal speech act to be successfully employed, meaning needs to be arrested, and this to be done by presenting general rules and conditions under which a given utterance is to be employed and analyzed. But speech acts can have different meanings depending on the contexts. Here, Derrida speaks of 'grafting' i.e. that a speech act can be quoted in another context. So, the contexts are infinite and one cannot come up with a theory of the employment of speech acts specifying where and how they should be employed since meaning is contextual, and the contexts are many. Here, Culler supports Derrida's argument by claiming that even the "intentions of the speakers...are to be interpreted in different contexts." (PDM, 197) Searle objected to Derrida's second argument, by asserting that, what prevents flux and fluctuation of meaning is not found in what is uttered, but the general assumptions in which it is uttered. So, when using speech acts on a day to day level, participants are operating within a set of assumptions that define what something normally means and does not mean. Further, the assumptions within which speech acts occur, are not theoretical constructs that are built to arrest meaning, but necessary assumptions behind the process of communication. Finally, Derrida, against Searle argued that, it is the potential of the text to be interpreted in many ways and not our intentions and assumptions that make different interpretations possible. So, the text by itself plays a context creating function.

As Habermas sees it, as long as participants in an intersubjectivist communicative process are oriented towards understanding, then meaning will not be deferred. Wrong interpretations and abnormal usages of language could be simply identified as something that hinders consensus and understanding. Idealizations that are found beyond

communicative action and the fact that the various claims raised during communication are open to critique, and can be empirically tested will easily help to “distinguish between ‘usual’ and ‘parasitic’ uses of language” (PDM, 199). By ‘parasitic’, Habermas meant that the normal use of language in everyday communication is for reaching understanding. Other artistic, metaphorical and non-literal usages of language are derived from the normal usage. Further, even though ‘parasitic’ usages of language prevail in everyday communication; still actors are able to bypass these usages since they are oriented towards reaching understanding.

By revising the Derrida/Searle debate and employing his arguments as well, Habermas believes that, he managed to defend his communicative rationality with its validity claims. In everyday communication the infinite flow of meaning, poetic and rhetoric elements are put aside for the sake of understanding. Having done this, Habermas wants to refute the idea that there is no distinction between logic and rhetoric and that all texts can be analyzed on literary and rhetorical terms. The issue as, Habermas sees it, is the acceptance that all language contains literary and rhetorical elements, while at the same time defending philosophy and the special forms of inquiry against the domination of literary elements, and hence the viewing of their validity claims as something impure and contaminated with artistic and metaphorical elements.

Habermas, claims that Derrida’s general notion of text as a mixture of Heterogeneous elements, makes him blind to the fact that in everyday communication there is the possibility to raise and defend claims in reference to the three validity claims, and that the various specialized forms of inquiry are also oriented towards solving specific problems (PDM, 205). Habermas thinks that there is an affinity between Rorty and Derrida in relation to their views on language, communicating subjects. In Rorty, the languages of the sciences and other forms of inquiries create the contexts that necessarily determine everyday communication. Further, the capacity of validity claims to be challenged inherited horizons is unacknowledged. (PDM, 206) Furthermore, both Derrida and Rorty, failed to distinguish between everyday interaction in which distinct validity claims are raised, and the various forms of inquiry that are geared toward solving specific problems (PDM, 207).

Derrida is accused by Habermas of failing to distinguish between how language has a capacity of making the world visible and intelligible and how it can be used to solve specific problems. So, Derrida in his general notion of a 'text' tried to merge all the sciences, including philosophy, criticism, art, literature and so on under one category of literature. Habermas claims that on the one hand, we have everyday world of communication based in the different validity claims, while on the other, the various specialized forms of inquiry that are geared at solving specific problems. Philosophy and literary criticism are found between the two. Literary criticism connects everyday world and the artistic realm, while philosophy, is related to the forms of inquiries in having a universalistic dimension. Philosophy facilitates disputation of claims between everyday world and specialized inquiries. (PDM, 207-208)

Habermas admits that rhetorical and poetic elements are found in every discourse. Still they are marginalized and only become dominant in poetic discourse. So, such rhetorical and artistic elements don't have an effect in the inquiries, claims and methods of the various forms of inquiries. Accordingly, in both everyday communication and the specific forms of inquiry the rhetorical elements can be found but are marginalized. What about in philosophy and literary criticism? Philosophy and literary criticism play the role of presenting the claims and findings of the specialized forms of inquiries to everyday world and also presenting claims raised in everyday world to the domain of specialized inquiries. So, it's because literary criticism and philosophy play a role in mediating between the two realms, that their language is rich in artistic, literary, argumentative, logical and generally diverse elements. Still in, both literary criticism and philosophy, poetic function is marginalized, and the major focus is on the critical analysis of texts and philosophical interrogation rather than something artistic and poetic. (PDM 209-210)

Finally, Habermas claimed that trying to avoid 'performative contradiction', by trying to include philosophical texts under literary ones, and then calling for a general literary analysis of texts, tends to rob philosophy of its power to critically reflect on everyday discourse and the sciences. Hence; "[w]hoever transposes the radical critique of reason

into the domain of rhetoric in order to blunt the paradox of self preferentiality, also dulls the sword of the critique of reason itself” (PDM, 210).

In Habermas’s exposition of Derrida’s general project of deconstruction, we started the analysis by taking a closer look at the views of Heidegger and Derrida towards the metaphysical tradition. Accordingly, eventhough, amongst other things, Derrida followed Heidegger in making an analysis of the whole metaphysical tradition and exposing its pretensions and contradictions, still Derrida was against Heidegger’s philosophy of language that saw Dasein as a channel through which the absolute truth is being expressed. This was for Derrida an example of the metaphysical tradition’s search for absolute and firm origins and the favoring of speech as a direct copy of the contents of the mind, and writing as an attempt to preserve speech. Derrida’s deconstruction also tried to identify, reverse and dissolve different dichotomies.

Derrida was against Husserl’s idea of how ideal meaning is to be grasped by the ego through conscious intuition. Instead he focused on ‘difference’, how meaning is produced through relations of difference and also that meaning is never exhausted, and hence ‘deference’. Amongst other things, Derrida took from Saussure the focus on linguistic world and also from the Jewish tradition, its insistence on interpretations of texts and the idea of a new interpretation as always coming.

Specifically, Habermas criticized Derrida’s idea that communicative rationality is obstructed by the contaminating effects of abnormal and poetic uses of language, and the infinite numbers of meanings, by arguing that in every day speech, poetic and rhetoric elements are put aside, and that the focus of participants is instead on reaching understanding by forwarding validity claims that are testable and are based on idealizing presuppositions. Habermas also argued against Derrida’s abolition of the distinction between literature and philosophy, and the idea of the presence of rhetorical, metaphorical elements in every inquiry and discourse. Habermas has argued that rhetorical elements are found in every realm. Still they are put aside in favor of forwarding validity claims or addressing specific problems, except in poetic discourse.

### **3.3 Communicative Rationality versus Disciplinary Power, Habermas's Critique of Foucault's Understanding Of Modernity**

*I know that modernity is often spoken of as an epoch, or at least as a set of features characteristic of an epoch situated on a calendar, it would be preceded by a more or less native or archaic premodernity, and followed by an enigmatic and troubling 'postmodernity'.. thinking back on Kant's text, I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history... modernity is the attitude that makes it possible to grasp the 'heroic' aspect of the present moment. ( Foucault in Rabinow, 1984,39-40)*

As Habermas sees it, there isn't a direct relation between Foucault and Bataille, as one finds between Heidegger's destruction and Derrida's deconstruction. Bataille and Foucault don't even belong to same schools of thought and orientations. Still, one couldn't deny that Foucault's interest in Bataille was high and that this owed to the latter's critiques of modern sexuality and his unique use of different forms of literature to burst the conventions of language and rational discourse. As Foucault himself admits it, what's common to his appropriation of different philosophical orientations and schools of thought, is the idea of going beyond the confines of the philosophy of the subject.

For Habermas, one thing common to both Foucault and Derrida, is their earlier appropriations of structuralism, as a general critique of modernity and its philosophy of the subject, and specifically as "a critic of the phenomenological-anthropological thought" (PDM, 239). Still, rather than approaching Nietzsche through Heidegger's destruction of the metaphysical tradition, Foucault appealed to Bataille-Nietzsche's critique of modernity as one that excludes certain groups and ideals like the mad and outcasts. Foucault further appropriated Bachelard's historical critique of the sciences, himself focusing on the social sciences. Habermas thinks that Foucault's insights from Levi-Strauss's Structuralism, Bataille's critique of an excluding reason, and Bachelard's inquiries into the history of science, are witnessed in Foucault's first major work *Madness and Civilization* (1961).

The Structuralist method of interrogating discourses and desire to gain objectivity is used by Foucault to unmask the various medical sciences. Further, by inquiring into the history of madness, Foucault tried to show how 'madness' which had been conceived as a viable alternative to reason in the past, has come to be seen as an abnormal state of mind "since the end of the eighteenth century" (ibid). He looks at the inauguration of the various discourses that changed 'madness' from an alternative to reason, to an unhealthy mental state. Accordingly beyond an exposure of the various sciences in light of how they succeeded in constructing 'madness' as something abnormal and dangerous, Foucault supplies his readers with a critique of reason as such. This is a reason that excludes and there by establishes itself as the only way to approaching reality. Hence;

*making madness clinical, which first renders mental illness a medical phenomenon, is analyzed by Foucault as an example of those processes of exclusion, proscription, and outlawing in whose traces Bataille had read the history of Western rationality. (ibid)*

### **3.3.1 Reason and Madness**

Foucault's intentions in *Madness and Civilization* were that of going beyond the conventions, regularities and boundaries of Western thinking. By doing so, Foucault had an intention of appropriating what was forbidden, considered immoral, what's usually rejected what's considered outdated, what's considered abnormal. What's found beyond the sane, western world may be Schopenhauer's eastern mysticism, Nietzsche's Greek tragedy, Freud's 'dream sphere' and Bataille's transgression of the conventional. Habermas sees, Bataille's dissolution of the homogenous with an experience that goes beyond the boundaries, being echoed in Foucault's critique of reason as that conventional boundary which excludes, and madness as a possibility of going beyond the conventions set by reason. Foucault admits the trouble of grasping the truth of madness and instead of trying to grasp its cognitive content, turns his attention to those moments in history where reason managed to establish its sole dominance and exclude other alternatives.

Foucault, in his move from *Madness and Civilization* to *The Birth of the Clinic*; starts focusing less on specific practices and more on concepts like "space, language and death". (Gutting, 2005, 7) Further, history is not to be analyzed based on the conscious

intentions of those residing in it, but on how the actions of subjects are taken as clues to what underlies and dictates their actions. Thus, Foucault gives up the critique of subject centered reason through an interpretation of damaged texts and the search for the excluded and outlawed. This is the abandonment of the search for autonomous texts in history which can stand by themselves. Instead Foucault starts looking for what is that which makes the texts appear as they do. Accordingly;

*“The meaning of a statement would be defined not by the treasure of intentions that it might contain, revealing and concealing at the same time, but by the difference that articulates it upon other real or possible statements, which are contemporary to it or to which it is supposed in a linear series of time”. (PDM, 241)*

For Habermas, while the division of history into periods characterized by different traits remains throughout Foucault’s work, the relation between “discourses and practices” and whether one animates the other, whether there is an asymmetrical relation between them, or they are equally determinant of one another, remains ambiguous in Foucault.

In sixteenth century, even though reason was still the highest authority; *Madness* was also thought of as unveiling the limitations of reason. The role and conception of *Madness* changed according to Foucault with establishment of “confinements around the middle of the seventeenth century” (PDM, 243). Gradually at the beginning of Nineteenth century, the emergence of mental institutions equipped with medical personnel, replaced the ‘confinements’ of seventeenth century. This for Foucault marked the rise of an absolutistic subjectivistic reason that took full control of man’s relation to the world, and thereby managed to crush other alternatives. With the emergence of a strict division between reason and madness, *Madness* came to be conceived as a degradation of reason and a general label under which the other of reason, was to be categorized and excluded. As Vincent Barry summarizes it, Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* deals with;

*the division of reason and unreason and the associated exclusion of particular populations, [the] emergence and development of specific institutional structures of exclusion, and the emergence of new forms of knowledge upon the conditions provided by the above (Barry, 2002, 16).*

One of the ideas that Foucault developed as early as *Madness and Civilization* is that of forms of exclusion, supervision and disciplining. Foucault's ideas of a modern form of disciplining as established through schools, penitentiaries and so on, were developed, as Habermas sees it, where Foucault depicts how certain mental and medical institutions emerged trying to establish the truth of the hierarchically inferior division between reason and *Madness*. The difference is that, while in *Madness and Civilization*; Foucault sketches how the mad and generally *Madness* came to be excluded and neglected, in later works such as *Discipline and Punishment* and *The history of Sexuality*, he shows how modern reason in general resulted in a repressive power that employs different mechanisms to organize the whole of humanity into its domains, and in the process, crushes any other alternatives.

As Foucault sees it, "the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination." (Rabinow, 1984, 188) Accordingly, modern society constitutes a disciplinary system which operates by using observation as a way of controlling actions, establishing criteria for measurement and finally testing the conformity and subjugation of subjects. Instead of an intersubjective arena where different claims to truth are entertained, modern society for Foucault is one that disciplines its subjects through different ways of accomplishing its goals.

Foucault saw a direct relation between specific practices and the various human sciences. While the practices made available a 'self' to be experimented upon, the sciences endorsed the practices by creating a reservoir of scientific techniques, terms and solutions.

Thus, in *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*: all the way up to *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault witnesses how modern subjects have been treated by different practices, institutions and sciences as patients who aren't fit to participate in the normal, ordinary lives of modern societies. Thus, for Foucault, "in appearance, the disciplines constitute nothing more than an infralaw. They seem to extend the general forms defined by law to the infinitesimal level of individual lives; or they appear as methods of training

that enable individuals to become integrated into these general demands” (Rabinow, 1984, 211-12).

For Foucault, the move from treating the mad in ‘confinements’ to institutions by providing a clean, suitable, medical personnel and treatments paved the way for a better inspection, control and research over the mad. The institutions led to the emergence of various sciences on madness and the depiction of madness as a danger for our society and reason in general.

Habermas is especially interested in looking at the extent to which Foucault’s criticism of Western institutional and disciplinary rationality through an exposure of the genesis and development of the various sciences, in the form of archaeology and genealogy manages to avoid the paradox included in a total critique of reason which utilizes reason in the process. Since Foucault abandoned any recourse to rational argumentation and intersubjectivity, he appeals to archeology.

Foucault’s archaeology looks for the specific elements in a particular context and then tries to identify the underlying structures and to this extent it’s descriptive. Instead of looking for an objective foundation for validity, archaeology tries to look at what it is that dictated and informed the facts and specific aspects of history. Contrary to the philosophy of the subject’s insistence on an autonomous, free, active subject reflecting on itself, the world, and in general becoming the core of analysis, for Foucault the subject’s reflection is not free. It’s dictated and resides under the influence of certain powers.

### **3.3.2 Archeology and Genealogy**

Foucault identified his archaeology in terms of the ‘geology,’ and ‘psychoanalysis’ metaphors. The ‘geology’ metaphor is looking at what is left as a result of the dictation of various forces and tries to find what underlies it. ‘Psychoanalysis’, refers to trying to specify’, “[t]he underlying structures of an unconscious and as discovered only through analysis of linguistic events of which we are aware.” (Gutting, 2005, 33-34). Rather than interpreting autonomous individual texts standing in history, the focus in Foucault’s

archaeology is to look at and identify the conditions under which the various elements come together.

One of the most acknowledged moves in Foucault's works, is one where genealogy was introduced trying to overcome the limitations of the archaeological method. Archaeology helped to replace the primacy of the subject by identifying various discourses within which the individual subject is constituted. It can be used for comparing the different discursive formations of different periods. "Still, its only genealogy, that can address the concrete, particular, specific causes that necessitate shifts from one discursive formation to the other". (*Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, Michel Foucault, 2008, 6)

Habermas thinks that, Foucault's genealogy is related to that of Nietzsche's. Genealogy can succeed in criticizing reason through a critique of the sciences, if it escapes the fate of those sciences that it is trying to criticize. Genealogy needs to escape the bounds, horizons and assumptions of modernity and Enlightenment. So, Foucault appealed to Nietzsche's critique of modernity with an aim of rejecting modernity as the novel age that leads humanity into progress and detaches itself radically from the past.

Foucault's intentions according to Habermas were three. First it was, "to leave behind modernity's presentist consciousness of time" (PDM, 249). Foucault was against a conception of history that exaggerates the role of the present. Rather than looking for objective, ultimate causes for history and the present, Foucault in his genealogy focuses on the many particular and specific causes that led to the formation of different discourses throughout history. Secondly, Foucault wanted to abandon hermeneutics. Foucault questioned whether facts in history could give us an insight into history and whether the interpretation of different texts was the solution. In contrast, Foucault's genealogy tries to reconstruct the underlying structures by linking various elements; his genealogy tries to show how the various clues are part of contingent, specific, particular practices. Finally, Foucault wants "to put an end to global historiography that covertly conceives of history as a macro consciousness." (PDM, 251) Rather than conceiving of history as universal process through which humanity is moving, Foucault focuses his attention on the emergence and dissolution of divergent discourses throughout history.

Foucault also rejects Hegelian history, where all contradictions are to be resolved in the end. The old conception of history as product of conscious subjects was not able to disclose the underlying discourses determining subjectivity. This is what Foucault's archaeology tries to do i.e. collecting different facts in history and then trying to identify the underlying structures dictating specific practices. Hence, the Archeologist;

*by going back to the rules constitutive of discourses , he ascertains the limits of any given universe of discourse; its form is bounded by the kinds of elements that it unconsciously excludes as heterogeneous-and to this degree, the rules constitutive of discourses also function as a mechanism of exclusion (PDM, 252).*

History is a ground where one exhibits the rise and fall of different forms of discourse. For Enrhard Bahr, “ Foucault borrows the concept of ‘serial history’ from the French Annales School which makes history appear as an arbitrary succession of various discourse formations... historical interpretation is replaced by discourse analysis” (Bahr, 1988, 101).

In the final analysis the concept of ‘power’ surfaces behind Foucault's critiques on reason and modernity. Just like Heidegger and Derrida tried to apply Nietzsche's critique of reason into an exposure of the metaphysical tradition, Foucault tries to approach reason through a critique of history and the sciences. Whereas Heidegger and Derrida seek a critique of reason in what is forgotten and in what is deferred, Foucault tries to come up with an archaeology and genealogy that goes beyond the bounds of the various sciences and exposes their exclusionary consequences. Habermas further added that, Foucault's archaeology and Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical tradition, share a common theme of identifying various structures, assumptions, interpretations underlying either specific practices in history or an understanding of Being. But Foucault's genealogy differs in trying;

*to explain ‘the discontinuous succession of the sign-systems (ungrounded in themselves) that coerce people into the semantic framework of a determinate interpretation of the world’-and indeed it explains the provenance of discourse formations from practices of power that are entwined with one another in the ‘risky game of overpowering. (PDM, 255)*

Heidegger forwarded the concept of Being as one that makes the world intelligible but still wanted to reject any ahistorical, apriori, explanations. Foucault tries to avoid this with his concept of power, and for Habermas this theory consists of three elements. Seeing power as that which is intertwined with truth and discourse, talking of new power relations, new relations of truth, discourse and power, so that power will not be held as a framework to which one ideally resorts to but one in touch with history; and finally, Foucault inscribes his theory of power as one focused on particular power/knowledge nexuses, to be identified in practical relations throughout history (PDM, 256). As Charles Lemert sees it, Foucault's power/knowledge nexus;

*Consequences are the following: power-knowledge assumes that power is not from the top down, from a dominant class upon a dominated class; power is immanent, diffused throughout society, on all levels. Second, knowledge... is not ideal and abstract but material and concrete.. Third... Science, as a form of knowledge.. is embedded in power relations. (Lemert, 1982, 136)*

Habermas goes on to look at Foucault's *The order of things* to shed light on Foucault's 'analytic of finitude' and the transition from his 'will to knowledge' to 'power'. For Foucault, Renaissance thinking still manifested a notion of a universal order in which everything has its place. In terms of knowledge and language, the Renaissance period, rather than focusing on how words or signs relate to objective entities, focused on the relation between signs and words, and how language by itself form a system of signs, and specifically how, "each signature refers to other signatures" (PDM, 258). Contrarily, from the rise of modern philosophy of the subject in Descartes to Kant, the focus is on what possibly resides within the domain of knowledge. Thus, signs represent what can be cognized and thought of. Gradually all forms of knowledge come to be concentrated on the represented, and hence divorced from the process of representation. Hence, in the classical age; "Knowledge is completely dependent on the representational structure of language, without being able to integrate the process of representation itself (the synthetic performance of the subject doing the representing)" (PDM, 259).

In Kant's ascription of the noumenal as the unknowable, the ability of metaphysics to guarantee the truths of language becomes problematic. Thus the idea of gaining an

objective, infallible access to truth through language is to be doubted. Instead, the focus is on the finite subject and its place in the world. This is what Foucault calls the analytic of finitude. As Lemert sees it;

*for Foucault, the finitude of man and the finitude of knowledge involve each other and both are social inventions formed in the nineteenth century... The birth of the human sciences is coterminous with the anthropological idea that man is the center of history but this history is one that conditions and limits man (Lemert, 1982, 127).*

As Habermas sees it, Foucault's understanding of modernity begins with how a finite historical subject tries to reflect upon itself and the world, and becomes the foundation for everything. This subject is also dictated or dwells under the influences of history and the various discourses. Further Foucault expounded Nietzsche's 'will to knowledge' as expressing the nature of knowledge being enshrined in diverse specific practices and concrete relations. By 'will to knowledge', Foucault according to Lemert meant that "actual knowledge in society is a political activity which attempts to mask the role of power in knowledge" (Lemert, 1982, 137-38). By claiming, in his 'will to knowledge', that there are specific interests, techniques and practices animating the various sciences, Foucault according to Habermas exposed himself to some difficulties.

Foucault, as Habermas sees it, might have been trying to avoid any alleged relations of his "archeology of the human sciences" with "Heidegger's critique the of metaphysics of the modern age", (PDM, 266) via the similarity found in both thinkers in analyzing the modern age by dividing it into different epochs guided by different epistemological structures or interpretations of Being. Still, Foucault clearly rejected Heidegger's philosophy of Being that traced everything to the remembrance of Being, and to avoid this moved from identifying the underlying structures in his archaeology to analyzing power/knowledge relations in his genealogy. Foucault was again trying to clearly differentiate his position from that of structuralism. As clearly seen in his, *The order of things*, Foucault according to Habermas, was clearly against attempts to build general structures without taking into account specific, historical conditions and facts. Hence, Foucault was against structuralist modes of analysis that "refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying." (PDM, 267) There

are also problems related also to the archaeological method of approaching the sciences i.e. how Foucault could integrate the findings in the various sciences and particular findings and discourses when he delimited their boundaries.

In order to escape all these difficulties, Foucault tried to elaborate his archaeology that identifies what dictates practices in history with a genealogy that identifies small causes, factors, knowledge and power relationships that serve as factors for change from one discourse to the other. By this move, Foucault was able to escape the difficulties faced by Heidegger's critique of metaphysics in tracing everything to the forgetfulness of Being, and Structuralism which failed in trying to establish universal, objective structures underlying discourses and practices. Structuralism failed to stay in touch with the concrete, practical and the historical. Still, Habermas doubts whether Foucault's analysis of concrete power /knowledge relationships applies to his own genealogy, the position it holds in society and what kinds of power it serves,

The success of Foucault's analysis, for Habermas, in going beyond Structuralism and Heidegger's philosophy of Being, owes to the move from 'will to knowledge' to 'power' in general. In his 'will to knowledge', Foucault postulated that generally in every society knowledge is related to practices of power. But going beyond this, he tried to show that empirically one can identify power/knowledge relationships in various discourses (PDM, 269-270).

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault locates the development of a modern form of disciplining power to an establishment of modern prisons and reform systems that introduced modest forms of punishing offenders, but still managed to establish effective form of control through various forms of surveillance and control. As Garry Gutting sees it, what differentiates modern and premodern approaches to punishment, for Foucault is;

“  
(1), *punishment is no longer a public display.* (2) *What is punished is no longer the crime but the criminal.* (3) *Those who determine the precise nature and duration of the punishment are no longer the judges but the experts (psychiatrists, social workers, parole boards) who decide how to implement indeterminate judicial sentences* (4) *the avowed purpose of punishment is no longer retribution but the reform and rehabilitation of the criminal.* (Gutting, 2005, 80)

For Foucault, at the heart of the new disciplinary prison system lays the 'Panopticon'. The 'Panopticon'; besides creating subjects that conform to the law, also functions as a method of creating subjects who are easily manipulated through various procedures. Further, beyond the prison system, Foucault interprets the Panopticon, as a paradigmatic example of how the modern form of knowledge tries to create selves which are easily observed, controlled and manipulated through various institutions like those "in factories and workhouses, in barracks, schools, hospital, and prisons." (PDM, 272) The human sciences played the role of creating subjects which are manipulated through the various institutions and also studied by specific forms of inquiries. Still, Habermas thinks that Foucault's analysis needs to go beyond asserting how the human sciences and the various institutions succeeded in creating easily manipulable subjects. It needs to show that the concrete power/knowledge relationships that exist in society affect our knowledge of reality and the kinds of validity claims that one forwards towards the objective world, thus affecting the various sciences.

As Habermas sees it, Foucault's "genealogy of the human sciences," tries to lay out the 'empirical' and 'transcendental' conditions that made the human sciences possible. Accordingly, the sciences are concretely related with specific forms of power, serve various institutions, and are based on various practices.

Habermas thinks that Foucault's theory of power does not succeed in stepping out of the bounds of the philosophy of the subject. This is because what characterizes the subject of the philosophy of the subject, in relation to its orientation towards the world, is how it tries either to cognize or manipulates external reality. Along these lines, Habermas argues that Foucault's theory of power shares the philosophy of the subject's intent, in trying to manipulate and control the world. Hence, Foucault's analysis that locates the subject as being immersed in power/knowledge relationships borrows its insights from the philosophy of the subject's interested, exploitable orientation towards the world. Even though in Foucault, it's the power/knowledge nexus that takes on the task of establishing this externally interested relation towards the world.

### 3.3.3 Presentism, Relativism and Cryptonormativism

Foucault through his genealogy tries to overcome the limitations of the human sciences. These sciences are involved in creating subjects which are objects to be controlled and are immersed in power/knowledge relationships. Foucault's genealogy emphasizes an examination of structures beyond interpretation of historical texts and focuses on the emergence and replacement of various power knowledge relationships in history, rather than truth reached as a result of the contestation of validity claims. Hence;

*[t]o the extent that it retreats into the reflectionless objectivity of a non-participatory, ascetic description of kaleidoscopically changing practices of power, genealogical historiography emerges from its cocoon as precisely the presentistic, relativistic, cryptonormative illusory science that it does not want to be. (PDM, 275-276)*

Foucault in his genealogy was trying to avoid the kind of involvement a specific form of inquiry finds itself intertwined thus serving particular power/knowledge relationships and specific practices. Rather than focusing on practices of conscious subjects creating history in a given moment, the genealogist tries to identify underlying practices and specific power/knowledge relationships within which actions of individuals occur.

In this sense, history is generally seen as an arena in which various forms of power/knowledge relationships replace one another and Foucault's genealogy is supposed to identify these power/knowledge nexuses without itself being involved in such a nexus itself. But as Habermas sees it;

*Against this self-understanding that holds fast to objectivity, the first glance in any one of Foucault's books teaches us that even the radical historicist can only explain the technologies of power and practices of domination by comparing them with one another-and by no means by taking any single one as a totality on its own. (PDM, 277)*

Thus, Foucault's genealogy is also involved in power/knowledge relationships in trying to divide history into various epochs in his works and then analyzing each in terms of a disciplinary power. So, Foucault's starting point of analysis is that the various forms of knowledge and sets of practices are also immersed in power relationships. Hence, Foucault's genealogy is not without its own sets of presuppositions.

Foucault's genealogy doesn't escape the charges of relativism. Genealogy tries to take the role of unmasking and analyzing concrete, historical power/knowledge relationships. In this context; truth claims are raised and justifiable only as relative to specific power/knowledge nexuses. What about Foucault's genealogy and its supposedly objective, value free intentions to unmask the various sciences? Isn't it also involved in a specific power/knowledge relationship? And if so, isn't it also relative? Foucault tries to avoid this by appealing to what is neglected in the domains of the ordinary forms of inquiries. This for Foucault; "... is a question of the implicit knowledge of 'the people' who form the bedrock in a system of power, who are the first to experience a technology of power within their own bodies". (PDM, 280)

Foucault's genealogy tries to identify those which are dictated in power/knowledge nexuses without itself being immersed in such a nexus. But in trying to identify these discourses and sciences affiliated with concrete practices, Foucault's genealogy only turns out to be within a specific and relative power/knowledge nexus.

Foucault's genealogy is opposed to the so called 'value free' status of the various sciences and tries to go beyond the normative, value laden, claims and inquires of the various sciences in order to describe the concrete power/knowledge combinations and sets of practices and inquiries they are involved in. Not hierarchization between discourses but pure description is the goal. But in practice, Foucault's works according to Habermas are "permeated by a solidarity and an engagement be they difficult to define, for the madman and the criminals" (Isenberg, 1991, 304).

As Bo Isenberg, in his essay *Habermas on Foucault, critical remarks* puts it, Habermas's critique of Foucault is directed methodologically in identifying the presentistic, relativistic and cryptonormative natures of Foucault's archaeology and genealogy. Descriptively towards, showing the short sightedness of Foucault's analysis in only focusing on power, repression, discipline and failing to acknowledge emancipatory potentials found in communicative rationality. And, finally, politically; "... In a two fold discourse-it is at once irrationally anarchistic and conservative-which encourages non-commitment or, at best, an irrational struggle without fundament and goals." (ibid, 307)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Habermas, Reforming Modernity

In the last three chapters we tried to look at Habermas's conception of the inauguration of the modern project, the various kinds of critics that has accompanied it, and how these are being echoed in current movements like poststructuralism. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of Habermas's idea that the modern project is not completed, and that rather calling for annihilation of modernity the task should be one of strengthening the implicit communicative rationality of the modern project against subsystems of money and power. Our discussion of Habermas's reformulation of and hence the preservation of the ideals of modern reason, will be devoted to the last two lectures in Habermas's *PDM*, and also ideas pertaining to modernity selected from; *The postnational constellation*, *postmetaphysical thinking* and *Religion and Rationality*.

#### 4.1 Communicative Rationality as the 'Unpursued' Path in Modernity

One common way of justifying the sciences is to see them as the logical implications of the subject's reflection. Thus, the sciences are understood as the results of the subject's attempt to understand itself and the world. Still this has resulted in the long run in 'scientism'; the idea that the natural sciences provide the only available route to knowledge. Foucault rightly asserted this for Habermas. Still, he did not adequately address the extent to which his own genealogy detaches itself from the other sciences and there by succeeds in establishing its status as a value free unmasking methodology. In the final analysis, Foucault's genealogy for Habermas turns out to be everything that it has criticized of the various sciences. Hence;

*presentism, relativism, and cryptonormativism are the consequences of his attempt to preserve the transcendental moment proper to generative performances in the basic concept of power while driving from it every trace of subjectivity. This concept of power does not free the genealogist from contradictory self- thematizations (PDM, 294-95).*

As an alternative, Habermas proposes a new reading, a new critique of the human sciences and of reason that would go beyond the aporias faced by the radical critics of

modernity from Nietzsche, passing down to poststructuralism. The radical critics of modernity failed to recognize that there was a possibility of another critique of subjectivity and hence an alternative to it, within the philosophical discourse of modernity. From the young Hegelians, Nietzsche, all the way up to poststructuralism, there was an alternative of a communicative rationality which was not pursued, and Habermas tries to reconstruct this path. Thus he remarks, “it behooves us to retrace the path of the philosophical discourse of modernity back to its starting point- in order to examine once again the directions once suggested at the chief crossroads. This is the intention behind these lectures. ” (PDM, 295)

Hegel and Marx try to step outside of the confines of the philosophy of the subject by envisaging an ideal where under the state or communism, citizens will become equal, free, and realize their potentials, cooperating with one another.

Heidegger and Derrida should have avoided appealing to ontico-ontological significance of a being that can give an insight to Being itself as such, and a heterogeneous state determining all meaning. Instead they should have resorted to the communicative paradigm. As we have seen in Heidegger, Dasein has a unique place as a being that interrogates Being as such, and thus was taken as a point of departure. Habermas urges the interlocutors in the philosophical discourse of modernity to abandon the subject-object metaphysics, where the subject is oriented towards an objective possible state of affairs, and instead tries to strengthen the communicative action taking place between individuals in modern societies. Hence, he remarks, “I have already suggested that the paradigm of the knowledge of objects has to be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action.” (PDM, 295-296)

Habermas sees in Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault a rejection of the subject that establishes its primacy by its reflection on the world. But, whereas Heidegger and Derrida tried to make some compromise, by establishing the Dasein Analytic, and show how the subject participates in a Heterogeneous deferred meaning formation ;Foucault on the contrary tried to completely denounce the subject in placing it under concrete, material, and specific power/knowledge relationships. From Habermas’s point of view,

the divisions between empirical and transcendental, Being and beings, noumenal and phenomenal, all point to the fact that, the reason of the modern project is 'exhausted'. All these distinctions are attempts to preserve the philosophy of the subject under different formulations. Some situated the subject as locus of possible cognition. Others show that the subject is completely autonomous, while there are also some that place the subject under different repressive relations. But all these are exhausted for Habermas since as we have seen in the last three chapters no attempts have been successful to come up with a strong alternative. The solution is making the move to communicative rationality and intersubjectivity. Hence Habermas remarks that, "[t]he paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted. If this is so, the symptoms of exhaustion should dissolve with the transition to the paradigm of mutual understanding." (PDM, 296)

The essence of communicative rationality lies in how language coordinates actions; how actors in an intersubjective communicative process tend to respect some rules and in the process how understanding is to be achieved.

In the communicative paradigm, when a speech act is forwarded, the one to which it is directed, recognizes it and thereby offers a reply establishing an intersubjective communicative process. What makes this communicative process possible are the shared backgrounds of meanings and idealizing presuppositions that guide communicative processes, and also the fact that those in communication are, oriented towards consensus. This differs radically from the paradigm of consciousness where a relation is to be established to a possible state of affairs. Habermas thinks that in the communicative paradigm, the subject is no longer viewed as being divided between empirical and transcendental domains. Accordingly, Habermas claims that in communicative rationality, "no mediation is possible between the extramundane stance of the transcendental I and the intermundane stance of the empirical I" (PDM, 297).

The ego finds itself in an intersubjective communicative arena and it affirms itself by presenting its validity claims. For Habermas, a speech act as the smallest unit of everyday communication, serves as a platform for raising validity claims, or the claims of individuals in asserting that what they are claiming is true and that they can provide

reasons for it in relation to the objective, social and subjective worlds. Hence, the “ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter.”(ibid) This differs from subject-object metaphysics where everything becomes a possible state of affair to be known in the objective the world. Instead in communicative rationality, the ego becomes the one which founds its claims in a world of other possible claims, oriented towards the objective, social and subjective dimensions.

One consequence of this, for Habermas is that ‘transcendental philosophy’ which analyzes the cognitions of the subject and its relation to the world, gets replaced by the reconstructive sciences which try to identify what’s implicitly being practiced in communication, and the accumulated pool of meaning that makes communication possible. This manages to go beyond the ‘empirical’ vs. ‘transcendental’ distinction typical of the metaphysical tradition, since what are analyzed in the reconstructive science is not what goes beyond everyday life and its communicative potential, in a mystical, ideal, isolated world of reasoning and individuality. Habermas, in referring to ‘reconstructive science’, is speaking of a universal pragmatics which, “as a reconstructive science, investigates the ‘universal and unavoidable presuppositions’, that are operative in the successful employment of speech acts oriented to achieving mutual understanding” (Badillo, 1991, 56). Further, Habermas took from Piaget the idea that “reconstructive and empirical assumptions can be brought together in one and the same theory.” (PDM, 298)

In Habermas’s communicative rationality, the lifeworld is what integrates the individuals as a whole by forming a common meaning. It’s the context in which individuals dwell and affirm their uniqueness by presenting their claims. The lifeworld is to be deciphered through everyday communicative action, but by itself, its “always only ‘co-given’ and has to evade thematization” (PDM, 299). One could easily look at speech acts and validity claims, and identify an intersubjectively communicative process, but the lifeworld on the contrary, is what lies behind everyday communication, supplying materials to be reflected upon and a shared meaning that ties individuals and brings them into a communicative arena. Habermas admits that an argument could be made that the life world is not something controlled and managed by individuals, but that individual’s

necessarily took on the backgrounds they inhabit and are products of the ways in which they are influenced by their contexts. Simply, it could be argued that the lifeworld reaffirms itself through “the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialization of succeeding generations.” (ibid)

According to Habermas, most types of reflection that try to free the subject through such reflection, end up placing individuals under hegemonic systems and repressive relations or concrete power/ knowledge relationships. As an alternative, Habermas tries to provide a sharp distinction between a shared background and the unique domain of individuality, and between that which keeps society in tact, forming a shared background and how history is also gradually formed. But, before looking at these issues in detail, Habermas first tries to shed some light on a critique of reason forwarded by the Bohme brothers.

For the Bohme brothers, Kant’s division of reason into three possible inquiries, into the theoretical, practical and the aesthetic, had the consequence of excluding the non rational. As Habermas sees it, this kind of analysis was already developed in the critiques of Hegel, Schelling and Holderlin, which stood against; “[t]he opposition of faith and knowledge, of infinite and finite, the separation of spirit and nature, of understanding and sensibility, of duty and inclination.” (PDM, 303)

This critique of a divided reason also constituted a critique of current forms of state and religion that failed to unify the various dichotomies between private and communal interests, individual and commonality, and so on. Most importantly, Hegel devoted his whole philosophy to construction of a reason that unifies the various dichotomies, showing that the divisions are part of the development of thought. For Bohme brothers, the same exclusive intentions witnessed in Kant’s three critiques are also found in Hegel. Here reason realizes itself without trying to appropriate the other of reason “in its irreducibility”. (Ibid)

Habermas asserts that this critique of the Bohme brothers was initially raised by the young Hegelians who tried to establish the primacy of the concrete material and the particular. For the young Hegelians, the other of reason, was the material and the specific.

For Bohme Brothers reason as it finds its clearest expression in Kant and Hegel's philosophy, tries to establish itself as the only route, crushing any other alternatives. But, Habermas thinks that, this critique of reason, only applies to the subject object metaphysics and the reason of praxis philosophy.

For Habermas, simply offering deconstructive readings on the philosophy of the subject is not enough, on the contrary a completely new paradigm must be proposed. Here, Habermas remarks, "a paradigm only loses its force, when it is negated in a determinate manner by a different paradigm, that is, when it is devalued in an insightful way; it is certainly resistant to any simple invocation of the extinction of the subject". (PDM, 310) Further, the task of deconstruction must not be of exposing the excessive rationality of the metaphysical tradition and its ill consequences, but of strengthening the implicit form of rationality cultivated in an intersubjective communicative arena. Habermas also rejects the critique of logocentrism pioneered by Nietzsche and furthered by Heidegger's Being, Derrida's deconstruction and Foucault's power/ knowledge nexus. This is because, this critique only succeeded in affirming that the subject is powerless, ontic and the result of different forces. Hence, the critique of logos for Habermas, "draws... the conclusion that the subject positing itself in knowledge is in fact dependent upon something prior, anonymous, and Transsubjective- be it the dispensation of Being, the accident of structure formation, or the generative power of some discourse formation" (Ibid).

## **4.2 Some Consequences of the Communicative Paradigm**

Habermas tries to introduce an alternative critique of logos in his communicative paradigm. As he sees it, this critique tries to put reason in touch with the historical and the finite, sees language as coordinating the actions of individuals and serving as a communicative platform and finally views the logocentrism of the philosophical tradition as weakening the implicit communicative potentials already found in modern societies. The communicative paradigm strictly opposes the insistence of the philosophical tradition in being oriented towards only the objective world of possible states of affairs and thereby excluding the social and subjective ones. As Habermas sees it, in the previous paradigm, "ontologically the world is reduced to the world of entities as a whole ...epistemologically; our relationship to that world is reduced to the capacity to know

existing states of affairs... Semantically, it is reduced to fact stating discourse in which assertoric sentences are used and no validity claim is admitted besides propositional truth” (PDM, 311).

Habermas thinks that, we need to abandon the kind of ontological, epistemological and linguistic views that hold onto the view that knowledge is of knowing the objective world. Rather, the focus should be on how language serves communicative functions. Here, the basic focus is on speech acts and the three distinct validity claims found in them, relating humans to three possible dimensions and leading to the raising and contestation of different claims , Hence;

*elementary speech acts display a structure in which three components are mutually combined; the propositional component for representing (or mentioning) states of affairs, the illocutionary component for taking up interpersonal relationship; and finally, the linguistic component that brings the intention of the speaker to expression. (PDM, 312)*

Habermas goes on to look at the consequences of the communicative paradigm he has just outlined through speech act theory to “(a) the theory of meaning (b) the ontological presuppositions of the theory of communication, and (c) the concept of rationality itself ... to a new orientation for the critique of instrumental reason” (Ibid).

#### **A. Consequences for the Theory of Meaning;**

The truth condition semantics theory of meaning, tries to locate meaning in terms of specifying “conditions under which it is true”. (Ibid) But this kind of analysis, limits meaning to that of propositional truth. Habermas accepts the claim of truth conditional semantics theory, that meaning needs to be situated and explicated in terms of its practical use in day to day life. But whereas truth condition semantics focuses on the relation to the objective world, Habermas purports to explain the three distinct validity claims that are found in a speech acts. Hence, according to Habermas, “it holds true not only for constative speech acts, but for any given speech act, that we understand its meaning when we know the conditions under which it can be accepted as valid.” (PDM, 313)

## **B. Consequences for Theory of Communication.**

If with the rejection of linguistic theories that restrict meaning to objective reality, we are to arrive at a conclusion that there are three distinct validity claims i.e. constative, regulative and expressive, then this also has consequences for the philosophy of consciousness. This philosophical orientation holds that the world is populated with possible objects and that in either communicating or cognizing the world, humans try to relate and raise claims to these possible states of affairs. But, if we are to accept that in every communication, in every speech act, one employs three distinct claims to reality, then the paradigm of philosophy of consciousness loses its value. Accordingly, as Habermas sees it, “with any speech act, the speaker takes up a relation to something in the objective world, something in the common social world, and something in his own subjective world.” (PDM, 313-314).

## **C. Consequences for Theories of Rationality**

In the previous paradigm, rationality refers to orienting oneself to possible world of objects and trying to cognize and expresses our truths in language. Habermas makes a plea for rejecting this understanding, and instead views rationality as a process of forwarding criticizable and defensible claims to truth in language relating to the objective, social and subjective worlds. Habermas argues

“as soon as we conceive of knowledge as communicatively mediated, rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition”. (PDM, 314)

## **D. Consequences for a Critique of Instrumental Rationality**

The orientation of the philosophical tradition towards a world of possible entities and the exaggerated role of the isolated subject are results of the undermining of the communicative paradigm. Hence “subject-centered reason is the product of division and usurpation, indeed of a social process in the course of which a subordinated moment assumes the place of the whole, without having the power to assimilate the structure of the whole.” (PDM, 315) Along these lines, what the critiques of Horkheimer, Adorno and Foucault failed to acknowledge in asserting that humanity is trapped in instrumental

rationality and specific power/knowledge nexuses, is that it was in the background of an intersubjective communicative process that instrumental rationality arose. Habermas claims, “[t]he communicative potential of reason has been simultaneously developed, and distorted in the course of capitalist modernization” Ibid).

Habermas opposes Weber’s analysis of the rationalization of the lifeworld as replacing the context of the life world with a purposive rationality. Habermas argues, “communicative reason is directly implicated in social life- processes insofar as acts of mutual understanding take on the role of a mechanism for coordinating action.” (PDM, 316) So the new critique of instrumental rationality is one that tries to strengthen the role of communicative rationality in the rationalization of the life world and avoid its distortion by the purposive rationality of capitalism.

It could be argued that as in Marx social practice mediates labor and nature, communicative action also connects “lifeworld and everyday communicative practice and that both “conceive of rational practice as reason conceived in history, society, body, and language” (PDM, 317).

Recent attempts to revive praxis philosophy are aware of the trap the previous praxis philosophy fell into, i.e. ‘productivism’, considering everything as being there for utilization. One of the current achievements in praxis philosophy is the fact that it has also made the appeal to language in asserting in some cases that language is the medium in which subjects express their deepest concerns and provide answers to the fundamental questions, and in the others, claim that language provides answers and frameworks by which subjects are to lead their lives.

For Habermas, what’s common to Heidegger’s view that the truth of Being passes to Dasein through language and Derrida’s view that exclusion and hence mutuality establishes meaning, is that in all these cases what is provided as a network of meaning is divorced from what is found as a dynamic potential in daily existence and employment of language. Hence Habermas argues that, “all these concepts have in common... the peculiar uncoupling of the horizon constituting productivity of language from the

consequences of an intermundane practice that is wholly prejudiced by the linguistic system. Any interaction between world disclosing language and learning processes in the world is excluded” (PDM, 19).

Praxis philosophy tried to overcome these difficulties by coupling the process of labor to the process by which concrete individuals establish themselves. Rather than asserting primacy of ideas or practice, Habermas claims that it’s in the given context and backgrounds of meanings that one reflects and that what is reflected also affects the backgrounds. Since praxis philosophy, considers validity only in terms of productivity and utility, and is hence not able to account for the social and personal realms. As an alternative, Habermas proposes that, “A totally different perspective results when we transfer the concept of praxis form labor to communicative action” (PDM, 321). Here, a mutual relation is affirmed between the lifeworld which provides the symbolic backgrounds in which reflection takes place and everyday communicative practice that continually modifies and redefines this background.

After establishing how his communicative paradigm departs from the linguistic turn and praxis philosophy, Habermas tries to look at the extent to which his own paradigm is immersed in idealism, via the claim that the supposed universal nature of validity claims goes against material relations. As Habermas sees it, materially through the actions of individuals the world is also reproduced instrumentally, but its the everyday communicative practice that also determines what the instrumental relations looks like. Hence, “instrumental actions are interlaced with communicative ones insofar as they represent the execution of plans that are linked to the plans of other interaction participants by way of certain definitions of situations and processes, of mutual understanding” (PDM, 322). Communication takes place in a particular context but still having claims that present universal validities to truth.

The fact that communication takes place at a particular, specific historical scene, gives Habermas’s theory of communicative action a practical tone. In communication, there is an assumption of symmetry; eventhough there might be contaminating elements like power relations that could damage intersubjectivity. Habermas admits that communication takes

place in history and in concrete relations and that it is influenced by these elements. Still, what communicative action introduces is a certain kind of distancing achieved by the rationalization of the lifeworld, to question history, our backgrounds, inherited authority and generally the irrational.

Habermas tries to lay out certain features that unite the radical critics of modernity against whom he is trying to defend modernity. One thing typical of these radical critics of modernity, is trying to affirm themselves as positionless and also reject the 'categories' of thought inherent to the modern project. The critics try to resist categorization into any special forms of inquiry or forms of religious thinking. Here, a problem arises with this critics who try to resist any categorization and only make it their business to undermine well thought out philosophical positions. This occurs in the academic scene, where the works of the critics are grouped under certain categories. One consequence of the urge of radical critics to step out of former boundaries according to Habermas is that, "... the self referential critique of reason is located every where and now where so to speak, in discourses without a place, renders it almost immune to competing interpretations". (PDM, 337)

One other characteristic of the radical critics of reason is that their assumptions go beyond just being the 'other of reason'. (ibid) Whether the critique towards modernity is presented in form of an exhausted ideal, cultivation of instrumental rationality, 'will to power', excluding difference, and so on, still the radical critics all manifest "a special sensitivity for complex injuries and subtle violations". (ibid). This sensitivity is what's portrayed in Hegel's ideal of the ethical state, where individuals go beyond their private interests for an embrace of individual/ state harmony in the state.

A third uniting feature of the radical critics of modernity is that, eventhough their starting point of analysis might differ, still in the final analysis, all had an aim of completely undermining and rejecting the ideals of modernity. This has further resulted in failing to distinguish between the positive and negative sides of the Enlightenment, and putting oneself in a position to preserve the positive and reject the negative. The radical critics

failed in this aspect since they have already abandoned the concepts by which modernity tried to carry out a critique of different ideals and institutions. In this context;

*enlightenment and manipulation, the conscious and the unconscious, forces of production and forces of destruction, expressive self Realization and repressive desublimation effects that ensure freedom and those that remove it, truth and ideology now all these moments flow in to one another. (PDM, 338)*

The radical critics also failed to acknowledge the process of rationalization by which the modern project was able to achieve some distancing from the pre-modern. This is seen in their look for Novel, emancipative ideals in the pre-modern period.

One further defect of the radical critics, is that they haven't given sufficient place for 'everyday practice' (PDM, 339) Contrarily to the primacy bestowed to everyday life and its potential for serving as a starting point of analysis in Marx; Pragmatism, Phenomenology and hermeneutics, the radical critics for Habermas inherited from Nietzsche the search for the mysterious enigmatic and what transcends common man. This results in the abandoning of the everyday practice. Habermas as a solution proposes his communicative action which starts with the speech as its employed in day to day life and containing in them three distinct ways of relating to the objective, social and subjective dimensions of truth and reality. Further the three validity claims relate to the value spheres of science, morality and art.

As Habermas sees it, three important points could be spelled out in relation to the critique of the reason of the modern project (1) it's the differentiation of reason into the value spheres of art, science and morality that could bestow the arts the capacity of hosting the authentic form of relating to reality. In his, theory of communicative action, Habermas maintains that;

*as soon as science, morality art have been divided into autonomous spheres of values each under one universal validity claim truth normative rightness, authenticity or beauty, objective advances, improvements, enhancements become possible in a sense specific to each (TCA 1, 176-77).*

(2). It's the "increase in knowledge" that led to the emergence of distinct value spheres. (PDM, 340) (3) The question as to whether everyday practice is being negated or cultivated should be answered based on the kind of relation (symmetrical or asymmetrical) that exists between everyday world and the special forms of inquiry.

### **4.3 The Lifeworld and Everyday Communication**

What mediates the realms of everyday world and special forms of inquiries as we have seen in chapter three are 'criticism' and 'philosophy'. 'Criticism' and 'philosophy' keeps one way of relating to reality, it might be the scientific, moral or aesthetic, from being dominant. Habermas asserts that, dominance of a single validity claim or forms of inquiry;

*lead to the aestheticizing ,or the scienticizing, or the moralizing of particular domains of life and give rise to effects for which expressivist countercultures, technically carried out reforms, or fundamentalist movements can serve as drastic examples (PDM, 340).*

For Habermas, the solution is further developing the potential already inherent in modernity, and this is the communicative rationality of everyday practice. Further, this should be a kind of rationality being able to free everyday communicative practice from instrumentality and also from a metaphysical, absolutistic, reason devoid of particularity. Still Habermas asks "if the basic concept of communicative action replaces that of social labor, is the totality, perspective built in to that concept radically altered?" (PDM, 341)

The Marxian concept of praxis is one that mediates subjectivity (of individuality) with what is labored up on (objectified nature) in what Marx calls "nature in itself" (Ibid). In the final analysis, both the process of laboring and the objectified nature are subsumed under a process of production. Hence it could be argued that its nature that manifests itself through the process of labor in which individuals create themselves by creating things. Habermas argues, "Marx did not escape the totality thinking of Hegel. This changes if social praxis is no longer thought of primary as a labor process" (PDM, 342).

On the contrary, Habermas claims that his theory of communicative action is one that entertains a mutual relation between everyday world and the lifeworld, instead of one being subsumed into the other. Further, Habermas also objects that it's the life world or every day practice that has primacy. The lifeworld doesn't dictate or provide normative criteria by which everyday world is to function. Hence "To the degree that the yes/no decisions that sustain the communicative practice of everyday life don't derive from an ascribed normative consensus, but emerge from the cooperative interpretative processes of the participants themselves, concrete forms of life and universal structures of the life world become separated" (PDM, 343). As Finlayson puts it;

*"The lifeworld has several functions. It provides the context for action... on the one hand; it is a force for social integration. At the very same time the platform of agreement that the lifeworld provides is the condition of the possibility of critical reflection and possible disagreement."* (Finlayson, 2005, 52-53)

For Habermas, just as in everyday speech acts, there are three distinct claims to truth and reality, also the lifeworld as forming the context within which everyday communicative practice takes place has three major parts. First, there is what Habermas calls 'culture'. It's the stored knowledge from which individuals pick out materials to be argued up on. It's the common knowledge that one draws on in such communicative practices. Secondly, there is 'society'. This is the sense of common identity or oneness that those residing within a community share. Finally, one finds 'personality'. This constitutes the kinds of assumptions that leave out a space for individuals to distance themselves from commonality. This is achieved by individuals spelling out their positions and hence, affirming themselves.

The lifeworld is continually modified by inputs from everyday practice. Habermas maintains that "cultural reproduction" guarantees that the lifeworld is continually renewed forming the horizon for the discussions of individuals in everyday communicative practice. Thus "social integration" [t]akes care of the coordination of action by means of legitimately regulated relationships and lends constancy to the identity of groups" (PDM, 344). Finally, through, socialization the actions of individuals are continually merged with that of the lifeworld.

*rationalization appears first as a restructuring of the lifeworld, as a process that exerts an influence on every day communication by way of the differentiation of knowledge systems, and that thus affects the forms of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization. (TCA1, 341)*

Here Habermas ask, what would happen to the lifeworld in the long run, in face of a communicative practice that raises radical issues and disputes their validity in a day to day level. In pre-modern form of life tradition and authority were what dictated the everyday world and the lifeworld. On the move from pre-modern to modern forms of life, generally in “cultural level” the basic traditionally conservative concepts that lay at the ground of the horizon begun to shift into concepts to be reflected upon, principles to be argued on the “societal level”. Thus, new general roles and universal moral insights began to emerge out of those particular voles based on religion, authority and myth.

Finally “on the level of personality” the cognitive structures acquired in the process of socialization are dissociated ever more emphatically from the contents of cultural knowledge with which they were initially integrated in “concrete thinking” (PDM, 345).

Communicative rationality is a process through which individuals participate in a mutual search for the truth and are hence primal, and also one in which, it’s the communicative process that leads to the affirmation of individuality. Habermas remarks; “in the structurally differentiated lifeworld, we merely acknowledge a principle that was in operation from the beginning: to wit that socialization take place in the same proportion as individuation just as inversely, individuals are constituted socially” (PDM, 347)

Hence, the role played by tradition in keeping society intact is replaced by an intersubjective process through which the lifeworld is continually being reflected upon. In the process individuals find themselves in an intersubjective communicative process that affirms both individuality and community. One of the things that make the communicative paradigm distinct is that, it rejects both the focus on microconsciousnes in form of the isolated individual that reflects on and dwells in the world, and also macro consciousness which puts individuals under societal classes, power relations and so on.

Instead of subjecting individuals to different relations of production and envisaging their emancipation in a class struggle, Habermas asserts that the main task of a critical theory of society should be strengthening everyday communicative practices from the instrumental rationality. Hence for Habermas, social pathologies facing modern society like the “loss of meaning, conditions of anomie, and psychopathologies are... result ...of economic and bureaucratic rationality, of cognitive instrumental forms of rationality generally” (PDM, 348). Here, Habermas is speaking of the colonization of the lifeworld. But what is the colonization of the lifeworld?

*... to begin with the steering media of money and power became uncoupled from the lifeworld. As the net works of instrumental action increase in their density and complicity so they gradually intrude into the life world and absorb its functions. As the domain of the life world shrinks a whole gamut of what Habermas calls' social pathologies arise. (Finlayson, 2005, 56)*

Habermas asserts that a charge could be made that his communicative ideal is abstract and that it doesn't take into account material relations. To escape this charge, Habermas tries to show how his TCA is able to explain how in the modern period a market economy intertwined with state monopoly emerged, and now this state imposes its logic of instrumentality over the communicative practice of everyday world. Here Habermas acknowledges Marx as pioneering the analysis of the “conflict between system imperatives and life world imperative, in the form of dialectic of dead labor and living labor, of abstract labor and concrete labor” (PDM, 349).

The rationalization of the lifeworld means also the increasing of everyday communicative practice. Still where does material productions fit? For Habermas, “changes in conditions in the material substrate” (PDM, 350) are not of communicative language but of especial forms. That is, actions related to production in the material world are not of actions coordinated by communicative language. This need for a special kind of language related to material production is addressed by the language of money. For Habermas, language of money;

*has branched off from normal language as a special code that is tailored to special situations (of exchange) it conditions decisions for action on the basis of a built in preference structure (of supply and demand). In a way that is reflective for coordination but without having to lay claim to the resources of the life world (PDM, 351).*

Still, besides serving the function of establishing a new form of communication that coordinates the world of production, money also is .the route through which a system instrumentality finds, its way into the everyday world of communication. Production process led to cultivation of wage labor that's further related to that of 'taxation': by the state. The consequences for Habermas are, the increasing dependence of the state on the economy and also production become centered on the cities in form of wage labor. This signified "the first exemplary case of a systematically induced reification of every day practice." (Ibid) This led to the emergence of a system that continually threatens the lifeworld through its instrumental rationality. Many solutions have been proposed for "reification of life forms" (PDM, 352). The most prominent ones constitute Hegel's ethical totality and Marx's communism. Still both Hegel and Marx's focus on the subject and how it stands on the macro subject .e. the state or under relations of production, leave out intersubjective relations.

Habermas characterizes modern societies as the hosts of public spheres, and he sought to locate this in everyday centers of communication. Modern societies, are such that through,

*technologies of communication such as book publishing and the press, first of all and then radio and television make utterances available for practically any context, and make possible a highly differentiated network of public spheres local and transregional, literary, scientific, could political within parties or associations, media dependent sub cultural (PDM, 359-60).*

This echoes and constitutes a reformulation of the ideas Habermas developed in his earlier work, *The structural transformation of the public sphere. An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society*. Here, Habermas historically traces the development a space with in public life within which supposedly free and equal discussions were raised that had the chance of countering and influencing the ideals of the political apparatus. So,

what were some of the characteristics of these spheres. As Pauline Johnson sees it, for Habermas,

*[t]he distinctive authority of a public of private individuals articulated itself through three related norms. First, reasoned argumentation not the status or authority of the speaker was to be the sole arbiter in debate... second, nothing was to be protected from criticism... finally, constituting themselves as a form of association predicated up on a shared interest in the autonomy of private individuals, the norms of the public sphere were intolerant of all cliquish inclinations in which merely private interests might seek to assert their combined weight and influence (Johnson, 2006, 23-24).*

Still, Habermas noted that in reality participation in the public sphere was only limited to the educated and wealthy. Further with the emergence of the numerous forms of mass media, the views of the masses came to be manipulated. Developing a sphere through which free and equal discussion could be carried out is what Habermas further developed in his TCA, under the concepts of communicative action, validity claims and everyday intersubjective communication. As Pauline Johnson puts it, realizing that the bourgeois public sphere is in reality manipulated and based on asymmetrical relations, for Habermas;

*[t]he challenge is to discover an immanent tendency in modern society toward a re-institutionalization of the public sphere. This would have to be a trend that could resist the processes that have conspired to unseat the hopes of democratic enlightenment (Johnson, 2006, 30).*

The public spheres are arenas in which diverse views are entertained and positions are articulated. This for Habermas is the characteristic Feature of the Enlightenment. Still what's that agent that enforces the insights from the public spheres? It's commonly assumed that the state represents the will of the people, and that it expresses their wishes. Along these lines 'collective action' signifies how the wishes and desires of citizens are realized through the machineries of the state. But, this is to be highly doubted given the interrelation between state and economy in modern societies.

After surveying various forms of the relation between the state and the economy, Habermas comes to argue that the solution lies in autonomous public spheres. Habermas

tries to look at how the view of a proper state apparatus that balances the relation between capitalist structures and everyday practice, has undergone considerable transformation. The “social welfare state” tried to exert an enormous control not on only economic sphere but on generally the lives of its people, with an aim of promoting the common good. But this has not been successful. This has led to the realization that; “[t]he legal administrative means of translating social welfare programs into action... are connected... with praxis that involves isolation of facts, normalization, and surveillance” (PDM, 362).

In another view of the state, the public sphere comes to signify the political arena. This is a space where a society distances itself from the political and economic spheres and reflects on its foundations collectively. Not only the economic but also the political arena is seen as cause of problems not an agent that enforces strategies as a solution. For Habermas, the solution lies in “building up restraining barriers for the exchanges between system and lifeworld and of building in sensors for the exchanges between lifeworld and system” (PDM, 364). Public spheres must draw their potentials from the lifeworld and its rational contents of the scientific, moral and aesthetic dimensions must continually draw on materials from the life worlds, reflect on them and counter the systems of money and power.

Robert Peter Badillo located Habermas’s communicative rationality as one that goes behind the objectivist/relativist dichotomy. For Habermas, objectivism and relativism constitute unsatisfactory reactions to modernity. Unsatisfactory since while relativism “carries the burden of self referential, pragmatic contradictions and paradoxes that violate our need for consistency”, objectivism also “is burdened with a foundationalism that conflicts with our consciousness of the fallibility of human knowledge” (Badillo, 1991, 11-12). Rather than asserting that reason is only confined to relative, plural contexts and that it doesn’t possess a unifying character and also assume that reason is universal, highly theoretic and a force elevated beyond particularity, Habermas tries to come up with an ideal of reason in language which has both particular and universalistic dimensions.

According to Habermas, the traditional conception of philosophy, i.e. first philosophy which is supposed to render a totalizing abstract knowledge into what underlies the nature of things, has failed. But this doesn't entail that an empirically tested theory of rationality could not be universal. This implies that any universal claims can only be validated by testing against counterexamples in historical and geographical contexts.

#### **4.4 Religion and Modernity**

In his, *Religion and rationality*: Habermas tried to address the issue of religion and how it stands to modern society's secular validity claims, employed in day to day interaction for achieving mutual understanding. But why is the issue of religion crucial to discussions of modern societies?

As Eduardo Mendieta puts it, religion is the platform around which crucial issues of modern societies, like "reason as a universal standard and the inescapable fact that reason is embodied only historically and in contingent social practices, that reason as universality was, if not discovered, at least enunciation as a teleological standard by religions. In an age of accelerating homogenization and simultaneous manufacturing of difference... religions are articulated as the last refuge of unadulterated difference, the last reservoir of cultural autonomy" are discussed. (Habermas, 2002, 1) For Mendieta, the challenge that Habermas is faced with is explaining how the meaning enshrined in pre-modern forms of life is transferred into modern ones, through a process that implanted a secular culture based on three claims to truth and three equivalent spheres addressing particular issues.

Through rituals, the meaning stored in religions becomes part of the day to day lives of modern societies, which then becomes material for reflection. Hence, "it is not that political or social power compels religion to surrender its grip over the cowed masses. Rather, in as much as religion itself is ritualized, and then made part of a tradition, which is then reflexively appropriated and rendered accessible to criticism, religion itself compels subjects to adopt universalizing and critical attitudes to wards its own myths and theologemes". Further, Habermas for Mendieta, pictured the modern scene as one in which religions no longer held exclusionary claims to truth, but one where each religion

stands in relation to a plurality of religious and secular outlooks. In this context, what is fundamentalism? For Habermas, this is to entertain absolutistic religious outlooks that limit the horizon of intersubjectivist communicative processes by providing uncritical, uncontestable views, tracing meaning to tradition and authority.

Habermas maintains that his postmetaphysical approach to truth, knowledge and reality in general is based on the everyday communicative practice of modern society's claims to truth that are contestable. Hence for Habermas, "postmetaphysical thought differs from religion in that it recovers the meaning of the unconditional without recourse to God or an absolute" (Habermas, 2002, 102).

Habermas argues that his epistemological position and the reason that he is trying to identify in modern societies is postmetaphysical. Its postmetaphysical in the sense that it's a reason located in the day to day activities of societies in a particular historical context, and even though the claims raised in such daily communications have a universal significance, still in the final analysis they are to be traced to particular communicative grounds. As William Mark Hohengarten in the introduction to Habermas's *post-metaphysical thinking*; puts it, validity claims are;

*Universal, in two senses first, each of them is raised, either implicitly or explicitly in every speech act they are universal formal features of linguistic communication... Secondly, each also lays claim to universal validity for what it claims, to be true, right, or truthful.... validity means validity for every subject capable of speech and action (1998, PT, ix).*

Maeve Cooke emphasizes that Habermas's concept of reason is "postmetaphysical yet non defeatist" (Cooke, 1997, 37). Cooke asks, what is it that makes it postmetaphysical? Accordingly it's the tendency of Habermas's communicative rationality to questioning the accepted views of rationality based in subjective reflection. In itself, reason was seen as an all encompassing spirit. Rather Habermas tries to identify reason as embedded in language and the day to day communicative practices of modern societies.

Habermas came up with an epistemological position, in which claims to truth are to be traced to their particular origins. Thus reason is located practically in day to day

interaction based on language. There is also a focus on what underlies or what makes possible everyday communication instead of the process through which the subject attains certainty. Philosophy's analysis is located not on abstract contemplation and theorizing but on everyday claims to truth. Thus Cooke located the postmetaphysical nature of Habermas's theory of rationality in the fact that its "(a) defined formally and procedurally, (b) construed fallibilistically, (c) situated historically, (d) derived from everyday practices of communication and thus non-subjectivistic, and (e) multi-dimensional." (Cooke, 1997, 43)

Cooke further asserted that, Habermas's theory of rationality could be seen as 'non defeatist' in two senses. First, its notion of validity is one that goes beyond relativism, in identifying validity claims which are raised in a particular context but still hold as universal in being located in all forms of such communications. They are universal in also raising claims which are supposedly true for every one, and hence could be argued for or against. Secondly, communicative rationality also envisages a reason through which individuals affirm and emancipate themselves by raising and defending their claims freely against one another. Thus Cooke maintains that Habermas communicative paradigm is also 'non defeatist', in;

*[t]hat it has a utopian content; this, is the idea of an 'undamaged subjectivity and intersubjectivity' that would allow individuals to reach understanding with one another with out any coercion and would permit the development of individual identifies at harmony with their inner selves (Cooke, 1997,44).*

#### **4.5 Modernity; a Synopsis**

Habermas summarizes most of the ideas raised in his PDM, in a chapter, "*conceptions on modernity: A look back at two traditions*"; in a later work entitled *The postnational constellation, political essays*. In this chapter, Habermas tries to show why the discussion of modernity was clearly articulated in philosophical circles, by trying to address three major issues. These are,

*(1) when, and why, did philosophers become interested in the interpretation of the specific condition of modernity? (2) Why do these philosophical interpretations take the form of a critique of reason? (3) Why did philosophy ultimately cede the on going task of an interpretation of modernity to social theory? (PC, 130-31).*

chronologically speaking, Habermas dates the use of the word modern to “late fifth century”, where Christianity tried to distinguish itself from the “pagan Roman past” (PC, 131). What especially interests Habermas is how the term modern subsequently comes to signify the notion of a present and supposedly radical moment which tries to detach itself from the alleged backward and unenlightened state of the past. Further, the establishment of the uniqueness of the present was to be affirmed by seeking an enlightened, glorious moment to be pursued. This is seen in how the renaissance tries to appeal to the glorious moment of enlightened Greece, and hence detaches itself from the past.

Habermas further notes that “around 1800” a consciousness of modern time began to emerge, which instead of trying to appeal to a glorious past, divided history into ancient, medieval and modern, and then tried to establish the present as the modern which surpasses the darkness of the medieval stage. In the aesthetic quarrel between the protagonists of modern and ancient art, the issue of modernity was further articulated. It is only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that philosophy tried to conceptualize the modern, as its subject of thought, as such. This is signified in Hegel’s philosophy that located the modern, in terms of how the present moment is clearly established in the great achievements in history like the French revolution that stood contrarily to medieval past and also the idea of a novel stage in human history where all contradictions were to be resolved. Accordingly; “History is now experienced as an all encompassing, problem generating process, and time as a scarce resource for mastering the problems that the future hurls at the present this head long rush of challenge is perceived as the ‘pressure of time’” (PC, 132).

Concerning the second issue, one of the problems modernity was faced with, was evolving its own criteria of right and wrong. Since modernity equated the medieval age to blind submissions to authority and tradition, it equates its vision with those of reason. Philosophy was particularly trying to articulate where the progress of humans by the

power of reason was going and should go. Habermas claims, “as the custodian of reason, philosophy conceives modernity as a child of the enlightenment” (PC, 133).

Finally, For Habermas, Max Weber traces the origin of modern society to a process where traditions of authority and religion were replaced by a culture that solved basic issues by a reason divided into the “value spheres” of science, morality, and art. But for Weber, this process soon resulted in an instrumental rationality under the apparatus of “state and economy”. While the state institutes a system where individuals are grouped under their specific tasks, the economy utilizes this specified labor under different forms of productive processes in the capitalist era. In this scenario’ the only emancipatory ideal was held to be, “the strong, self reliant subject..., in lucky instances, succeed in forming a coherent life project of its own, in opposition to a rationalized, and fragmented society” (PC, 140).

Weber’s themes of the subordination of individuals under larger structures of repression was to be further developed by Horkheimer and Adorno amongst others, who portrayed a society trapped by instrumental rationality and how reason which is the only emancipatory ideal proved aporetic in the final analysis. The instrumental rationality functioned through the various sciences, arts, morals, laws, entertainment, and so on, to create a society full of conformists.

Out of this aporia, the critique of modernity comes to the point that, it has to give up either the empirical analysis exposing how the modern project practically functioned, or the theoretical critique of reason, equating reasoning with instrumentality as such. Hence, “[t]he end of the cooperative division of labor between philosophy and social theory means uncoupling a criticized self understanding of modernity from a empirical observation and descriptive account of its tendencies to social critics” (PC, 142).

Weber’s empirical explanations of a society trapped under an instrumental rationality, were divided into and hence further developed by, “rational choice theory” which characterizes modern individuals as employing strategic actions aimed at achieving individualistic interests, and “systems theory” portraying how various structures

functioned to dictate individuals. (PC, 142) In philosophical circles, in Heidegger and Wittgenstein;

*reason is equated with operation of an objectifying and manipulating understanding with “representational thinking” and philosophical abstraction with the controlling power and discipline of self maintaining, narcissistically self assertive subjectivity. (PC, 143)*

The ideas of Heidegger and Wittgenstein are being echoed in postmodernist attempts at a critique of modernity. Habermas summarizes his critique of postmodernism by claiming that its critique of reason and specifically modern reason as anarchistic and repressive representing hidden intentions and motives is too exaggerated to the extent of not being able to recognize the positive sides of the Enlightenment. Further, even to assert that there are diverse rationalities embedded in particular contexts the post modernist needs to go beyond relativism and assert that reason is universally embedded in various contexts. Hence, “to interrupt its own self preferentiality, a relativistic position must make an exception of the stated principle of incommensurability, precisely in the performative act of asserting it.” (PC, 150) Habermas in turn, proposes his communicative rationality that looks at everyday practice, communicative action, and tries to identify what made this communication possible, at what background it’s being conducted, and how it furnishes a theory of rationality based on the raising and contestation of various claims to truth.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Habermas's Discourse of Modernity Examined**

We started our discussion of Habermas's discourse of modernity by looking at what is it that invoked his defense of modernity. Habermas, as we saw in chapter one conceived of postmodernism as calling for a destruction of modern values and an inauguration of the postmodern. As a way of proposing a new solution, Habermas tried to reconstruct the philosophical discourse of modernity i.e. the diverse philosophical discussions centered on the status of reason in modern history, the dawning of a new emancipatory era and its discontents.

Habermas tries to locate the unpursued path in modern rationality which is communicative reason. This is a reason fuelled by the rationalization of the lifeworld in relation to pre-modern grounds of tradition and authority. Habermas's rationality is based on the day to day communicative practices of modern societies, their standard speech acts and the distinct claims raised in relation to the objective, social and subjective dimensions of reality. Habermas admits that especially with the advent of capitalism, the lifeworld and everyday communicative action are more and more threatened by the instrumental rationality of state and economy. Still, whereas the radical critics equate, in some cases, reasoning with repression, and in others, call for the renewal of archaic, heterogeneous forces out of the bounds of the modern, Habermas sees the only alternative as one of strengthening the lifeworld and everyday communicative action as the locuses of critical reflection and hence grounds for the emergence of a critical theory of society.

In this chapter we are going to discuss four major issues. First of all, the extent to which Habermas's readings of the major authors in the discourse of modernity has been correct, is examined by briefly presenting charges of various critics which argue that Habermas misreads the interlocutors in the discourse of modernity. Secondly, the views of critics not included in Habermas's discourse of modernity, but who still have a huge importance for the discourse of modernity in general and Habermas's discussion in particular, will be

exposed. Thirdly, I will outline some of the shortcomings of Habermas's discourse, and Finally, I will argue for the positive aspects of Habermas's approach.

### **5.1 Habermas's Discourse of Modernity and Charges of Misreading**

In this section, I will briefly present charges of misreading on Habermas's discussions of Weber, Hegel, Derrida, Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger and Bataille in the PDM.

Austin Harrington tries to look at Habermas's appropriation of a universal process of rationalization from Weber's sociology of religion. Harrington tries to examine the extent to which Habermas's attempt to extract the intersubjective communicative process of modern societies from Weber's "theory of social evolution", remains faithful to Weber's original ideas (Harrington, 2000, 84). Harrington asks, did Weber really regard the process of rationalization which takes foot in the West as representing the highest stage in the rationalization of humanity in general, or was he trying to point out the unique aspects of the rationalization of the occident.

Harrington admits that Habermas certainly developed the optimistic aspects of Weber's work, when he tried to develop the spheres as hosting a distinct rationality, instead of Weber's celebrated thesis that modern society is being trapped in an instrumental rationality. Habermas also diverged from Weber's intention, when focusing in his emancipatory ideal not on the courageous individuals which "devote themselves to their chosen value axioms", but on the everyday communicative action of modern societies which hosts critical and emancipatory claims towards the objective, social and subjective dimensions of reality. (ibid, 87) As Harrington sees it, the Habermasian analogy between Kant's three critiques i.e. of pure reason, practical reason and judgment and the three value spheres in Weber,( i.e. theoretic, practical and aesthetic ones) is flawed. This is because Weber enumerated "five spheres; the economic, the political, the aesthetic, the erotic and the intellectual." (ibid, 88)

Also, Habermas's attempt to extract universal moral principles from Weber's empirical observation on the development of a protestant ethic are questionable, since Weber by no means took these principles as being universal or laying objective grounds for discussion

of moral issues. Harrington adds, even though the intention of Weber's empirical inquiries into the rationalization of the occident were aimed at grasping the extent to which this process managed to implant a universal structure, still it should be noted that Weber called for a further empirical inquiry and held that the universal significance of the West, is debatable. Also Habermas's insistence on the creation of a ground where a single value sphere addresses a specific validity claim is questionable, since "it is possible to challenge one sphere from the standpoint of another sphere in a way that is not a priori refuted by the terms of the first sphere" (Ibid, 95). on our day to day lives we usually make aesthetic judgments about the moral, moral judgments about the scientific and so on. Thus, the idea of a single validity claim addressed in a distinct realm is questionable. Weber's ideas on the universal significance of rationalization in the West could be interpreted as instances of a civilization that strives for universality and not necessarily a civilization that implanted its lasting influences on humanity in general.

As we have seen in chapter one, at the heart of Habermas's ideas on the inauguration and development of modernity, was the role given to Hegel as the one who pioneered the attempt to grasp what modernity is, by looking at the historical process through which modernity concretely established its own status and inquiring into the issue of normativity in the modern project. Fred Dallmayr expresses some of his reservations towards Habermas's appropriation of Hegel. As Dallmayr sees it, there is no clear distinction between the "young" Hegel which expounded his views on religion, aesthetics and mythology and the "mature" Hegel who tried to accommodate everything into the "spirit". In other words, Hegel remained faithful to his earlier ideas, even though he developed his ideas in a larger context. (Dallmayr, 1987, 699) Dallmayr remarks that;

*Hegel never abandoned his early views on "ethical totality or did he dismiss the notions of public religiosity the 'nexus of guilt' or the function of art as emblems of an ethical social bond. He simply proceeded to reformulate these notions in accordance with the needs of this overall system (Ibid).*

Also, for Dallmayr, Habermas's interpretation of Hegel failed to fully capture the progress of reason in history and thought, and instead focused on the right Hegelian

interpretation of pointing out the universal significance of Hegelianism or the left Hegelian attempt to put reason in contact with the concrete.

As we have seen in chapter three, Habermas accuses Derrida of trying to destroy the distinction between philosophy and literature. Habermas also sees Derrida's threat as of emphasizing the aesthetic aspects of language and interpretation in general. Sandler wonders whether there is such a distinction taking into mind the usual employment of metaphor and non-literary forms in most philosophical texts. Simply invoking the instance of Plato's Dialogues will show that the nature of these works as artistic forms and philosophical conversations is equal. So, "how are we to decide which function of language is the dominant in Plato's dialogs" (Sandler, 3). Hence the view that philosophy is rational argumentation, and literature 'fictitious' needs to be questioned.

Sandler situates Derrida's project as one of introducing a moderate approach that emphasizes both literal and non-literal elements and giving a voice to the various contexts in which meaning is formed. The tendency of the Western philosophical tradition, to strictly insist on the argumentative nature of philosophy, excluding other elements dates all the way to platonic dialogs where, "the wonderfully comical and humorous nature of most dialogs is also discarded and only reappear as Socratic irony when the argument derived from the text clearly contradicts the line of argument traditionally viewed as Platonic" (Ibid, 5).

Sandler adds, Habermas, is right in pointing out that in Derrida, "literature and literary criticism" are conflated. But, this is just Derrida's way of finding a form of writing that gives a sufficient space to diverse aspects of meaning formation, while simultaneously being critical of other forms of writing. This was not clearly addressed by the existing metaphysical tradition which operated on a theoretic, binary form, amongst others. For Sandler, the insistence of Derrida on not being authoritative, fixing meaning and hence making texts open could easily be demonstrated by looking at the terms he employs like "differance" which are neither words nor concepts" (Ibid, 8).

Habermas's analysis of Derrida also errs in not directly interrogating Derrida's works but secondary interpretations and the application of deconstruction in American universities. Further, trying to come up with an inclusive form of writing that goes beyond argumentative and non argumentative forms is essential as a critique to restrictive theories of meaning and the binary operations of the Western metaphysical tradition, which Habermas did not give a sufficient voice to.

For Thomas Blebricher, most of the defenses of Foucault against Habermas's severe attacks in the PDM are focused on showing that the former has been misread and that he could be defended against such charges of 'presentism', 'relativism' and 'cryptonormativism'. Still, what's lacking in such defenses is a broader understanding of what caused Habermas's misreading in the first place. Blebricher identifies two major causes for such grave misunderstandings. These are, first reading Foucault's later works through his archaeological method and two, misreading Nietzsche's genealogy and then reading Foucault through Nietzsche's genealogy. Further, Habermas attacks the objectives tendencies of Foucault's genealogy when in fact the latter sees genealogy as forwarding "very modest truth claim of a peculiar character." (Blebricher, 2005, 1-2)

As Blebricher sees it, Habermas's readings of Nietzsche could be traced to the Former's *knowledge and human interests*, where Nietzsche is credited with developing a this-worldly, practical, approach to knowledge and truth. Nietzsche is interpreted as criticizing metaphysical conceptions of truth and putting knowledge in touch with practical interests. Still, Habermas was also critical towards Nietzsche, since he interpreted the latter as advocating "a perspectivism of values" where all we have is different interpretations, different ways of cognizing and bringing reality into our control, and that there is no good and bad, right and wrong. Blebricher maintains that;

*While both philosophers agree in their critique of the positivists sciences that deny the link between knowledge and interests, Habermas treats the 'illusions' of mankind [and makes the] difference between the useful illusions of causality and other rather dream like illusions the implementation of which necessarily fails in the face of the materiality of nature (Ibid 5).*

Both Habermas and Nietzsche recognize this-worldliness of all values and claims to truth. Still, Habermas interprets Nietzsche as blurring the distinction between perspectives that enhance life and those that devalue it. Habermas interprets Nietzsche as bestowing an equal value to all perspectives. Later, Habermas's views towards Nietzsche became harsher. In *PDM*, Nietzsche's views were reduced to introducing a destructive reading of modernity, and anticipating the postmodernist movement which stood against the values of reason and Enlightenment. For Blebricher, what especially worries Habermas is the destruction of the clear cut distinction between the theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres, the emphasis on a heterogeneous meaning formation and reduction of all statements to that of "artistic preferences" (Ibid, 6).

As we have seen in chapter three, Habermas locates two paths out of Nietzsche's critique of modern reason. These are (1) a critique of reason in terms of a will to power, and (2) seeking an alternative in reason's other. For Blebricher, "it is this clear cut distinction between two strategies and two respective "paths" into postmodernity that lies at the bottom of Habermas's mistaken or at least impoverished account of Foucault" (Ibid).

Blebricher adds that both Nietzsche and Foucault focused on the emergence of diverse conception of the moral, the aesthetic and generally truth in human history, without assuming objectivity or continuity between various conceptions. Further, Foucault's genealogy didn't claim to have an objective standard by which the various discursive formations could be viewed. Foucault himself was aware that his own method was a particular power/knowledge formation and that a science having "an outside perspective" was not realizable (Ibid, 11). Still, Foucault was also looking for a way through which he could go beyond a description of such formations and offer an emancipatory critique.

Blebricher argues that Nietzsche's critique of modernity should not be reduced to 'aestheticizing' or of reducing all questions to that of tastes. Nietzsche's project also contains diverse insights from scientific, artistic and biological backgrounds. Further Habermas's reading of Foucault like that of Nietzsche tries to reduce Foucault's project under labels such as power/knowledge nexus. Hence, both Nietzsche and Foucault tried to introduce a new form of critique that offers a 'hybrid' approach (Ibid, 15). In both

Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogy there is an attempt to combine different forms of interrogations and insights, and Habermas's critique misses this point.

Habermas shortsightedly assumed that Foucault was trying to extract the scientific element of Nietzsche's works. This is the attempt to identify various formations and apply it to genealogy that sees itself as an objective science gazing at power/knowledge formation. For Blebricher, Habermas didn't deliberately distort the ideas of Foucault to consolidate his communicative paradigm. Rather, Habermas erred in reading Foucault through his interpretation of Nietzsche. Thus, "Habermas's misunderstanding of Foucault does not have to be seen as an intentional misreading, neither are we dealing with a strategic deformation of the Foucaultian oeuvre, the creation of a straw man." (Ibid, 17)

As we have seen in chapter two, Habermas charges Heidegger's philosophy of Being as being unable to address problems that arise in everyday world, not establishing a place for scientific analysis, and being fatalistic. For David Kolb, Habermas needs to address the difference between his theory of communication action where one finds himself in an intersubjectivist communicative arena which is open to argumentation, and Heidegger's 'temporality' where Dasein is thrown into a horizon that necessarily determines its destiny in providing the existential structures through which one dwells. Further, in Heidegger, there is a place for the individual in the sense that the individual reaffirms himself by creating meanings out of the inherited horizon. Also, the claims raised in a particular horizon can have a universal significance, even though they are necessarily measured with their respective horizons (Kolb, 1992, 689).

Heidegger, as Kolb sees it, should not be interpreted as conceiving Being as restrictively supplying the frameworks through which we lead our lives, but the space one is thrown into and gains 'authenticity' or 'inauthenticity' in its attempt to actualize its unique onto-ontological significance. Put in simple terms, there is enough space for one to define oneself within a horizon. Hence "Heidegger's destructive point is not that validity claims are world bound but that the limited revelation of Being within a world is what makes possible any cognitive or practical claims at all." (Ibid, 690)

Andrew Stein raises doubts about Habermas's reading of Bataille, and tries to offer an interpretation that situates Bataille's philosophy in the historical context in which it developed. As Stein sees it, Habermas's analysis is flawed in trying to contextualize Bataille in terms of German history "rather than French intellectual history" (Stein, 1993, 21). Bataille's attempt to go beyond the conventional boundaries of Western thought is interpreted as representing a Nietzschean fascism and irrationalism, and Stein tries to defend Bataille from such charges.

For Stein, what motivates Habermas's reading of Bataille amongst other factors is the revival of thinking in Germany which tries to evade responsibility over crimes against the Jews. Habermas advocates a responsibility for history and proposed a tradition which will take root in a transparent and accountable public sphere. Along these lines, Habermas sees in Bataille the rebirth of an authoritarian, Fascist German philosophy developed before the Second World War by appealing to the ideas of Nietzsche. According to Stein, for Bataille, Nazis and Nietzscheanism were not equivalent since in Nazism there is a homogeneous population led by the head of the system, while "Nietzscheanism exploded the authoritarian will that leads to fascism and all ideal metaphysics" (Ibid, 42). Bataille was interested in studying the psychological aspects of fascism and wondered how fascism was able to "mobilize the aggressive instincts of the masses" but this admiration did not lead Bataille into advocating fascism. (ibid)

Stein also questions the degree to which Bataille is an irrationalist, and stood against science and rationality. Stein argues, Bataille was trying to develop a science of heterogeneous states and how these states are being expressed in various practices and institutions. Bataille's science was 'heterology'. He studied excess and deviation "not as pathology" but as ways of going beyond repressive religious, capitalistic, conventional boundaries. (Ibid, 49) Further, in 'heterology', reason was seen as the opposite of unlimited experience, a way of analyzing how this excess is being manifested in various institutions and practices, and also a boundary and "limit" to excessive experience. (Ibid, 50)

Generally, against Habermas's charges, Stein argued that Bataille clearly denounced fascism, and that there is also a place for science and rationality in Bataille's 'heterology'

which criticizes excessive rationality and tries to awaken suppressed energies, as a viable alternative.

## **5.2 Critics outside Habermas's Discourse of Modernity**

### **5.2.1 Dussel and Transmodern Perspectives of Modernity**

Dussel charges prominent Western philosophers like Habermas and Taylor for assuming that modernity is “essentially or exclusively European phenomenon.” (Dussel, 1993, 65) Some Eurocentric philosophers asserted directly that modernity's origin and development is limited to the West, while others try to show that the West, especially Europe, is the culmination of a process of world progress and refinement.

What Dussel tries to show is that, at the heart of Europe's understanding of modernity lies an unacknowledged and deliberately ignored relation with those parts of the non-Western world that contributed to the development of the West. Rather than locating the inauguration of the modern period in terms of a process of rationalization or a distancing from religious, mythical, traditional backgrounds, Dussel situates modernity as a project that defines itself in relation to an inferior other. This is an ‘other’ that it borrows materials from, but still declares irrational, traditional, mythic, medieval, pre-modern, and so on.

This biased understanding for Dussel still persists in various Western critics of the modern project. So a profound critique should emanate from those oppressed, exploited and defined as the other of modern Europe. For Dussel, this “is a question of uncovering the origin of ‘the myth of modernity’ itself.” (Ibid)

Dussel tries to make it clear that he is not trying to completely undermine reason as such. On the contrary, what he proposes to do is expose the biased foundation of Western modernity and how it constitutes an oppressed other at the heart of its self understanding. Understood in this way, Dussel claims that what he envisions is a critique of an oppressive modern reason, rather than a total critique of reason. Dussel dates “1492 as ‘the date of the birth of modernity’; although its gestation involves a preceding process of growth”. (ibid, 66)

The modern period arose when Europe was strong enough to define its other, when Europe created a conception of an 'other' that consists of all the attributes that it distances itself through a process of rationalization. Hence, with the inauguration of modernity, Dussel witnesses, both the coming to the scene of a Eurocentric rationality that tries to impose itself as the universal standard, and also the suppression of an 'other' which is conceived as the other of an enlightened modern Europe.

Dussel thinks that beyond failing to acknowledge the inauguration of modernity in relation to a utilized and suppressed other, the greatest threat of Eurocentric modernity lies in the fact that Europe still considers itself as the model to be imitated and the highest stage in the development of humanity towards progressive ways of being. Dussel calls this, the "fallacy of developmentalism" and it states that "the path of Europe's modern development must be followed unilaterally by every other culture" (Ibid, 67-68).

Dussel interrogates Kant's understanding of Enlightenment as the urge to actualize one's reasoning against an uncritical bondage to an authority. Dussel asks who's maturity was Kant talking of; is it the European or the other. Also at the heart of modern Europe's understanding of itself is the ideal of a universal history, or "movement of history from east to West 'which excludes' Latin America and Africa from the movement of world history, situating them like Asia in a state of 'immaturity' or 'childhood'." (Ibid) If history is said to move from the "east to west" African and Latin America, are directly excluded. Also, Asia the East is only significant in so far as it shows how history develops in its primitive, rudimentary forms.

For Dussel, Eurocentrism passes all the way to Habermas's communicative rationality. Habermas echoes Hegel in assuming that the modern age develops on the ground laid by movements like "Reformation,, the Enlightenment and the French revolution," and also ignoring the fact that modern Europe defined itself in relation to a degraded, exploited, manipulated other through its imperialism (Ibid, 74).The conception of modern European self did not develop in relation to a celebration of plural selves. On the contrary it was a self that conceived itself as the heart of progress, emancipation, and an ideal to be pursued by the inferior other.

Dussel summarizes under “the myth of modernity” the seven assumptions behind Eurocentric modernity. These include; (1) Europe constitutes the most refined form of humanity and the most developed stage in human history. (2) Europe carries the burden of enlightening the uncivilized. (3) Europe has gone through the movement from ancient, medieval to the modern period (from traditional authority to public reasoning) that it preaches to its other. (4) Europe has the right to modernize the backward world by any means necessary. (5) “[T]his violence which produces victims, takes on all most ritualistic character.” (6) The other of Europe is in a “state of guilt,” for it’s not yet modernized. Hence, modernity imposes itself on the primitive other. (7) This other may be the “immature, [Or the] weaker sex.” (Ibid 75)

Dussel thinks that his critique of modern reason shares the postmodernist attempt to expose a repressive rationality. Still it significantly differs in proposing not a critique of reason as the postmodernist does, but one of an exploitative rationality. Dussel maintains that his critique of modernity“, does not deny the rational kernel of the Universalist rationalism of the enlightenment, only its irrational moment as sacrificial myth” (Ibid).

Dussel calls his critique of modern reason, ‘transmodernity’ and this constitutes first an exposition of a biased, oppressive, rationality that establishes itself in relation to a suppressed other, and secondly, new relations with citizens of the world that involves relations amongst equals.

For Dussel, before Descartes cogito and assertion of the thinking self as the center of thought, there was already the ‘I conquer’, which would show how Europe consolidate its power in relation to the other it conquered. This constitutes establishing one’s primacy through the domination of others. (Dussel, 1996, 20)

Dussel tries to locate relations of superiority inferiority and center/ periphery through the analysis of speech acts. Following Levinas, Dussel claims that discourse should start and take its origin in the ‘other’ implying the excluded in Dussel’s own philosophy of liberation.

For Dussel, the issue of communication starts with the question of whether full comprehension of meaning and ideas is possible between those communicating. Due to factors like efficiency in formulating one's opinions, the one presenting claims from the marginalized position may not clearly articulate his ideas. Also, the extent to which the speaker is able to master the language of the listener and the contexts in which it's uttered, have an effect on the possibility of communication. A better understanding is achieved after the biases of the listener are filtered out, and when we arrive at a stage where the privileged recognizes the oppressed as equal partners who have been disregarded in history.

The excluded challenges the normative standards inherent to the biased structure, it exposes, the unjust hierarchies, standards and criteria's that functioned in establishing the marginalized other. Communication is not fully intelligible, and the accepted standards are questioned. Still, communication takes place on the ground that the speaker honestly presents his views and that this could be argued upon. Further, the speaker also challenges current ethical frameworks since they are the ones which practically functioned to establish his/her otherness and marginality.

Above all in communication, the excluded who presents his views enters into a social relation with the privileged listener. Still, while all communication is a kind of practice, not all practice could be reduced to communication. The direct relationship between the speaker and listener goes beyond communication. (ibid, 32)

As Dussel sees it, humans always find themselves in a background of instrumentality, and beyond communicative action, what ties humans together are material, economic relations. Beyond communication, humans find themselves in a world of material signs, which lay at the heart and are materials dwelt upon in communication processes. For Dussel, 'economics' is not a systems imperative that threatens the lifeworld with its instrumental reasoning. On the contrary, it's the background in which communicative action takes place, and signifies the material relations of human beings. Further, what animates this material relation is the "p*riori* community of producers, to reproduce life." (Ibid, 35)

What the 'interpellation' the presenting of the claims of the oppressed to the exploiter, introduces is an exposition of unjust, asymmetrical relations in day to day life, and their transformation in a praxis that goes to the heart of the dominant presuppositions. Dussel remarks that, "[t]here is no liberation without rationality, but there is no critical rationality without accepting the interpellation of the excluded, or this would inadvertently be only the rationality of domination." (Ibid, 36)

Dussel objects to the idea of coming up with a discourse that's devoid of particularity, as in the abandoning of conventional grounds. On the contrary he tries to develop the idea of preserving our particular identities, but still conversing on problems that lie at the heart of what it means to be a human. The kind of dialogue that Dussel envisages is a two step discourse that takes as a point of departure the exploitative relation with Europe and its other. Accordingly, first, the hegemonic status, biased understanding and the ongoing asymmetrical relation between the north and south must be questioned. Secondly, the 'south' must reground the dialogue on its own soil and converse with those who also share a history of exploitation and manipulation.

As Asger Sorensen sees it, Dussel's philosophy of liberation is one aimed at exposing how a specific form of rationality served particular interests. Hence one could label it as a "critique of ideology", ideology in this context signifying how the dominant ideas belong to imperialist Europe and how a critique of European modernity is aimed at unveiling such prejudiced and one-sided rationality. (Sorensen, 2009, 149)

Sorensen further argued that the "critique of ideology" as developed in the West was only able to unmask how the ruling ideas and ruling class are intertwined, excluding some classes in Europe. But, what Dussel sets out to accomplish is to put this "critique of ideology" against Europe itself by way of presenting the claims of the other which reveal exploitative relations and hence call for revolutionization of existing states of affairs.

In his article *The architectonic of the ethics of liberation on material ethics and formal moralities*, Dussel tries to come up with an argumentative ethic based in concrete, material economic relations. This is supposed to surpass 'formal ethics' that only focuses on the universal argumentative nature of the ethical dimension on one hand, and

materialistic versions of ethics that only focus on limited material, economic relation. What Dussel proposes in turn is a realization of the two. Thus he remarks, “The goal is the elaboration of an ethics that is able to incorporate the material aspects of goods and the formal dimension of ethical validity and consensuability; every morality is the formal application of some substantive good.” (Dussel, 1997, 1)

### **5.2.2 African Philosophy and Modernity**

The issue of whether African philosophy exists, what forms it takes and what its very existence means to the dominant philosophical paradigms is of a great importance when discussing the fate of reason in the modern period. Here, our discussion will be focused on those philosophers who saw an intrinsic relation with the inauguration of modernity and negation of otherness, this ‘other’, here being the African. I will use the ideas developed here to expose some of the shortcomings of Habermas’s discourse of modernity in the next section.

Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze saw an intrinsic relation with the modern European concept of reason which contains within its tenets both the European notion of the self and the world, and the physical and ideological conquest of the African. For Eze, contemporary African philosophy needs to address the tragic history it shares with modern Europe. To this extent, Eze argued that modernity and colonialism cannot be separated.

Eze conceptualizes ‘colonization’ as the degradation of the African way of being which was established through physical coercion, philosophical conceptions of rationality and currently an indirect rule through ideas. Thus, the concept of ‘colonialism’ tries to broadly conceptualize the historical context through which Europeans came to Africa in name of commerce, started slavery, forcefully colonized the continent, and planted the ideas through which they continually manipulate the African. (Eze, 1997, 4)

For Eze, behind the greatest modern European philosophies and philosophers, was held a centristic assumption that Europe possessed the greatest achievements in human history, and that it should be imitated. Thus for Eze;

*significant aspects of the philosophies produced by Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Marx have been shown to originate in, and to be intelligible only when understood as an organic development within larger socio historical contexts of European colonialism and the ethnocentric idea: Europe is the model of humanity, culture, and history in itself. (Ibid)*

Eze holds that, African philosophy labors under a betrayal of modern reason which meant freedom and emancipation for the European, and exploitation for the other. Eze objects to the kind of sympathetic attempts that try to praise modernity by separating its destructive and positive features. It was by degrading others and placing them in a hierarchically inferior position that modern rationality developed. Furthermore, the Eurocentric assumptions are being echoed in the dominant philosophical, artistic, literary and economic models these days which all posited Europe as the normative ideal. Thus for Eze;

*Scribing the 'post' of the postcolonial under erasure or brackets serves as signal and pointer to the ... unfulfilled dreams of the independence achievements of the 1960s. it also highlights the paradoxical and productively" deconstructive" nature of a self conscious (post) colonial critical philosophical work (Ibid, 14).*

For another philosopher Peter Amato, Modernity provides the theoretical guidelines through which the colonization of the African was practically facilitated. Amato specifically tries to look at the modern-traditional dichotomy introduced by modern European reason. Accordingly "in the modern era of European philosophy, modernity appropriated knowledge for itself along with science, and left only dogma, mysticism, and mythology (also excluded from knowledge) for culture and tradition to be concerned with" (Ibid, 74).

Modernity degraded the status of religion and mythology as the irrational and non-Western societies were portrayed as following ritualistic, religious and mythological ways of being. On the contrary, modern Europe and its rationality were developed as reflectively individualistic and as representing the most refined forms of civilization in human history.

Amato also questions, whether the idea of an individualized reflection on the given was an achievement of modernity. Here, Amato argues that the individual questioned authority and tradition in pre-modern periods by interrogating the place of the individual in the totality, and questioning “the relations between individuals and the state”. Furthermore, modernity through its firm insistence in detaching itself from past ideals lost “the lifeline of human cultural experience” (Ibid, 86)

Another African philosopher who saw an inherent relation between modernity and degradation of the Africans is Tsenay Serequeberhan. For Tsenay, the underlying assumption behind modern European reason is the belief that Europe represents the highest stage in human history and that it should be followed. To this extent, Tsenay maintains that “Broadly speaking Eurocentrism is a pervasive bias located in modernity’s self consciousness of itself. It is grounded at its core in the metaphysical belief of idea (Idee) that European existence is qualitatively superior to other forms of human life” (Ibid, 142). Tsenay generally called for an interrogation of western texts, with an aim of exposing their centric, biased understandings. This will lead to identifying what was imposed on others through Western supremacy. The other of Europe in this case Africa needs to redefine itself by continually reflecting on inherited horizons.

### **5.2.3 Feminism and Modernity**

Habermas’s discourse of modernity is usually criticized for not giving sufficient attention to feminist voices, and the bias of modernity in promoting male domination. Here, I will briefly try to show what is presented in such critiques, based on Mojca Pajnic’s discussion of feminism and modernity.

For Pajnic, the feminist critique of Habermas’s communicative rationality and hence Habermas’s modernity, aims at broadening the theory of communicative action and making it more sensitive to issues like male domination. Pajnic argued that, what’s missing in discussions of modernity and feminism is an analysis combined with a critical reflection. Pajnic summarizes the criticisms towards Habermas’s TCA from a feminist standpoint under seven main categories. The critiques presented under these subdivisions are Pajnic’s accounts of feminist critics of Habermas’s communicative rationality.

First of all, we have “[a] critique of communicative action as a pure sphere”. (Pajnic, 2006, 387) Mary Dietz questions the relation that Habermas portrays between communicative action where actors organize and systematize their actions by seeking agreement, and strategic action in which actors try to achieve primarily their private ends. Habermas’s distinction is argued to be flawed since the two types of actions are intertwined in everyday life. Dietz also argues that Habermas’s concept of communication is abstract, ideal and divorced from everyday relations where actors try to further their own ends. As Pajnic puts it, Habermas’s strict distinction between strategic and communicative action could be justified, if considered in terms of the background in which it was introduced. Habermas was trying to show that there is communicative action and that it should be strengthened. Furthermore, Habermas, as Pajnic sees it, admits that various types of actions are intertwined with one another, and that there is no human interaction freed of individualized interests and focused solely on reaching understanding.

Secondly one finds, “[t]he theory of communicative thinking” (Ibid, 389). James Bratten introduces ‘communicative thinking’ as an alternative to communicative rationality of Habermas. While communicative rationality supposedly rests on presenting distinct claims by assuming symmetry, communicative thinking seeks unity amongst those who are excluded. Furthermore, in communicative thinking, what’s emphasized are “the complexity of everyday life, and the multiple means of action and [the] diversity of contexts of action.” (Ibid) communicative thinking tries to expose relations of domination, and accuses communicative rationality of not paying sufficient attention to relations of superiority and inferiority in everyday interactions.

Thirdly, Pajnic describes “feminist Discourse of the ethics of care” as one facet of the feminist critique of Habermas’s rationality. (Ibid, 190) As the critics argue, in Habermas’s theory of communicative rationality, everyone is entitled to participate in communication. But this does not mean that it’s practically realizable. In other words, the principle does not necessarily lead to a free and equal discourse in practice. As feminist critics like Susan Beckford put it, in Habermas’s “ethics of justice” what’s emphasized is the universal aspects of everyday communication, the continuing examination of one’s

own positions, and respective communicative grounds on which individuals participate in a universal search for the truth. As an alternative, the feminists propose the “ethics of care” in which the claims of the oppressed and subjugated are emphasized, and more attention is given to otherness and difference. Here, Pajnic holds that, the dangers of communication being influenced by extra-linguistic factors like educational status and health are not addressed by Habermas, and that this needs to be taken into account while offering such critique.

Fourthly, Pajnic describes “inclusive political communication” as one crucial aspect of the feminist critique. (Ibid, 392) Attempts are made to include the aesthetic, emotional, passionate aspect of everyday life into Habermas’s communicative rationality. Difference needs to be acknowledged as going beyond the presence of different claims of truth. In particular, Iris Young tries to include the aesthetic and the non argumentative as part of everyday life, into Habermas’s theory of rationality.

First of all, Young asserts that communication starts from ‘greeting’ which “implies recognition of individuals in their particularity”. Further, ‘acknowledgment’ relates to addressing the difference of others in terms of their presence, not just on the basis of their claims (Ibid, 394). Secondly the feeling portrayed in the utterance of a word, non-literal forms of expression and communication, all need to be taken into account. Finally through uncovering our stories and gaining an insight into our collective memories, one could expose histories of inequality and exploitation.

Fifthly, the feminist forward, “[t]he theory of communicative experience” (ibid, 395), as a critique of communicative rationality. For Lenore Langsdorf, because of the focus in Habermas’s rationality in coming up with universal ideals and the ongoing contestation of validity claims, dynamic experience is subordinated to disputation. This potentially results in conceiving reality as a static realm over which one could offer different perspectives. In all these cases, the ever coming new experience is overlooked. Sixthly, in “symbolic expression”, the excessive focus on how language coordinates our actions and makes social order possible and consequent negation of non-linguistic forms of experience is discussed. Finally, the feminist critics regard “[t]he ideal speech situation as

a thought experiment”. (Ibid, 400) The assumption of equal interests and positions in everyday communication is severely criticized.

For Pajnic, feminist critics in general tried to broaden Habermas’s theory of rationality by showing how communicative and strategic actions are intertwined in everyday life, bringing nonverbal, non-literal communication into the focus, addressing asymmetrical power relations, and reawakening the collective memory of a culture through which its struggles are witnessed.

#### **5.2.4 Intercultural Philosophy and Critique of an Absolutistic Rationality**

Using intercultural philosophy’s approach to rationality and generally the existence of philosophy in different cultures, one could question how the ideas of otherness, difference and mutuality were developed in modernity. How modern European reason viewed the other? To what extent does the universalistic claim to truth promote or devalue otherness.

The ideas of those who advocate intercultural approaches are not usually focused on modernity. Still, one thing identified by most advocates of ‘interculturality’ is that, Eurocentrism persisted throughout human history. Furthermore, it is now time to question exclusive claims to philosophizing, rationality and truth. Here, I am going to give an insight into what intercultural thinking brings to claims of rationality in general. In the next section, I will assess Habermas’s modernity and its relation to non-secular communities, using ideas developed here.

For Ram Adhar Mall, the idea that a single culture represents and possesses all the greatest achievements in human history and hence should be imitated is being questioned by intercultural approaches. Intercultural approaches begin with the idea that no particular culture holds all the claims to truth and that in turn, diverse claims to truth and rationality should be entertained. (Mall, 2000, xii) For Mall, the time has come where received conceptions of reason, truth, otherness and difference are being questioned and need to be examined. We are more or less aware of the existence of the other. Especially

in philosophy, Mall holds that, the idea of a single origin of philosophy (Greece) or of three centers (Greece, India and china) from which philosophical wisdom spreads throughout the world, needs to be questioned. (Ibid, 1-2)

Mall calls the “hermeneutic situation”; the condition in which not only the Europeans who imposed their singular claims on the rest of the world, but also the excluded and distorted are also initiating a new process where exclusionary, hegemonic and absolutistic claims are being questioned.

For another proponent of intercultural philosophy, Franz Wimmer, the challenge introduced by intercultural thinking for philosophy is the fact that philosophy raises the fundamental issues about what it means to be a human being rooted in various socio-historical contexts. For Wimmer, embedded in the encounters between different cultures, are claims to rationality. Assuming different stances on the relation of one culture to the other, intercultural encounters could take mainly four different forms.

First of all, in what Wimmer calls “expansive centrism”, a given culture assumes total possession of wisdom and tries to spread it to the inferior other. (Wimmer, 2007, 3) Secondly, in “integrative centrism”, a culture assumes that its superior models and ways of being are attractive and good enough to be imitated by the inferior other which couldn’t make a significant contribution to human civilization. Thirdly, in “separative centrism” the existence of different grounds is recognized, but still each culture assumes that learning from the other is impossible. Finally, in “tentative centrism” for which Wimmer argues, each centre is willing to engage in a polylogue and to continually remodel its views. (Ibid 3-4)

## **5.3 Habermas’s Discourse of Modernity Criticized**

### **5.3.1 Modernity and the Aesthetic**

In most philosophical orientations, the aesthetic is usually reduced to either a fancy contemplation raising issues that have no real value, or a dangerous realm that could damage discussions of knowledge or social and political thought. What is the role of the aesthetic in Habermas’s discourse of modernity? Here, I will use David Ingram’s essay

*Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality, Completing the Project of Enlightenment*, to point out some of the difficulties found in Habermas's views on the aesthetic.

As Ingram sees it, compared to the works of other members of the Frankfurt school of critical theory, Habermas hasn't made the aesthetic a crucial aspect of his theories on modern society. Habermas acknowledged the aesthetic as hosting a distinctive form of rationality within the general rationalization of the lifeworld.

For Ingram, at the heart of Habermas's discussions of the aesthetics, is found the division of four periods through which modern art developed. First, in the 'Renaissance', art and the aesthetic become separated from tradition, and religious authority. Secondly, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>, art was to become embodied in certain institutions like 'museums' and practices like 'theatres'. Thirdly, in "late romanticism" art become highly divorced from moral, cognitive, political and other spheres. Finally, art became disseminated through "introduction of dynamic mechanisms of artistic reproduction such as film, radio and television". (Ingram, 1991, 70) Generally, what one witnesses in modern art, for Habermas is how art has become freed from conventional religious authority and was established as a sphere where aesthetic issues were debated. To this extent, it has become "worldly". But, because of movements stressing the intrinsic worth of art and its separation from theoretic practical affairs, modern art also has a 'transcendent' facet. (Ibid, 71) The attempt to free art from ideological interests and establish its status as a separate domain led to art being more and more divorced from everyday life.

For Habermas, both art for art's sake and art as a way of effecting instrumentality are results of the colonization of the lifeworld. The former being an attempt to free art of any interests and herald its genuinity, while the latter shows how art has been ideologically manipulated. As a solution, Habermas locates aesthetic rationality, as one of the validity claims raised in every communicative interaction, which is "an expressive claim to truthfulness" (Ibid, 78). Still, Habermas maintains that subjective claims to truthfulness does not sufficiently lead to areas of inquiries or concrete structures providing stocks of materials and also doesn't have a strong capacity for solving society's problems as the claims to truth and rightness does. This for Ingram; "[d]eprives society of perhaps the

only medium capable of communicating aesthetic discoveries gained in rational discourse to social agents engaged in every day moral/conversation” (Ibid, 79).

Habermas also needs to explain how the act of expressing one’s subjective claims is related to art. Further, in every day communication we usually act in order to accomplish our own goals, and the extent to which our subjective claims could be universalizable is questionable. As Ingram, sees it, in Habermas’s works like *what is universal pragmatics*. There was no distinction between poetic language and every day normal language, and it was debatable whether the three distinct validity claims are found in both kinds of language.

Acknowledging this, Habermas for Ingram, tried to incorporate three new ideas in his theory. These include, first, arguing that language’s function also includes “a poetic disclosure of the world”. Secondly holding that validity also includes “non pragmatic expressive and evaluative claims”. Thirdly, developing an idea of aesthetic critique “that deviates in important respect from the standard model of argumentative rationality.” (Ibid, 80)

Habermas argues that while artistic and poetic uses of language also operate in everyday language, the main goal of interlocutors is to communicate by raising distinct claims to truth. Poetic usages of Language are taken out from normal usages of language, and are employed in such a way as to pose new ideals and perspectives. Still, poetic language is ‘parasitic’ and reducible to the normal usage. Habermas also argued that the poetic function gains its status in its ability to pose new alternatives. This is the extent to which this perspective has an ability to go beyond the situation in which it was articulated. In other words, its degree of ‘worthiness’, needs to be taken into account. (Ibid, 82) (PDM, 203) This clearly shows that Habermas wants the aesthetic to be rational or that which can be contested. Habermas admitted that the poetic function gazes at the whole, but still this experience is subordinated and reducible to everyday normal language.

What we can learn from Ingram’s insights into Habermas’s view of the aesthetic is that Habermas continually tries to restrict the aesthetic experience by, subordinating the

poetic function of language to the normal one. Habermas also argues that even though the aesthetic gazes at the whole this is limited compared to the rationality of other validity claims. Because the poetic function is derivative, the ideals it poses are continually subjected to the rationality of the validity claims. The aesthetic which usually excites the passions of individuals is subordinated to an argumentative rationality. Also, Habermas did not realize that the poetic function offers a critique that usually appeals to passions and emotions, and posits ideals that revolutionize existing affairs. Hence the poetic function goes beyond the normal usage of language in its ability to grasp the whole at once, whereas the validity claims are oriented towards only one aspect of reality at a time. Also making the aesthetic disputational, disempowers the power of art to incite passions and emotions and pose radical ideas.

### **5.3.2 Modernity and Secularization of the Sacred**

As we have seen in the last chapter, following these like Eduardo Mendieta, it could be argued that Habermas did not completely dismantle religious elements from his discourse of modernity. Religious concepts have a place in modern societies as precursors to modern universal ideals like justice and solidarity. In turn, as a result of the influence of modernity's secularism religions are becoming more and more reflexive. Further as a result of "the linguistification of the sacred" or a process through which the absolutistic and dogmatic aspects of religion are made part of a secular culture and continually being reflected on, religious insights in forms of abiding rules, norms and stocks of meaning are being integrated into everyday communication.

Habermas's "linguistification of the sacred" could prove deadly to non-Western identities. As Habermas has shown in his discourse of modernity, the process of rationalization that took place in the West managed to implant positive universal ideals in the long run. Religions are sources of who we are and our place in the world. Most religions provide accounts of who we are, what we are doing in the universe and where we are going. So, if modern intersubjective reason is the ideal as Habermas suggests, then this will result in displacing non-Western identities for secular ones, and threatening to

destroy some cultures. Also, in the secularization, the religious traditions will be expected to adopt the secular structures of the west which originated in a particular setting.

As we can see from Habermas's views on how religion played positive role in modernity, "modern forms of consciousness encompassing abstract right, modern science, and autonomous art, could never have developed apart from the organizational forms of Hellenized Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church, without the universities, monasteries and cathedrals" (Mendietta 2002, 147). Here, it should be noted that Habermas's discussion is limited to Western religions. This overlooks how the West historically developed in relation, to its surrounding environment. For instance, modern science borrowed materials from the Arab and Asian world. Further, Habermas erred in describing universal ideals as being the core of only western religions. Most religion, it might be in African or Asia, try to contemplate the universal, whether it is harmony or chaos. Also the ideas provided by most religions are universal like that of justice and brotherhood.

According to Habermas religions are positive in serving as a "store of concepts or a fundamental element in lived experience" (Ibid, 11-12). But, religion's significance goes beyond providing an ideal or insights that will be secularized. Religions are the locuses of meaning, conduct and generally enable humans to affirm themselves. Further the idea of God and religion is not necessarily otherworldly, as seen in movements like liberation theology that call for a realization of justice for the deprived in this world.

### **5.3.3 Communicative Reason versus the Body**

By the body, we are referring to concrete, material relations through which we daily reproduce our lives, the conflicts inflicted on one another through concrete relations and the role played by concrete relations in day to day interaction. Then, to what extent does Habermas's concept of a communicative reason in modern societies address the body?

As we have seen in the last four chapters, at the heart of Habermas's explanations of modern societies, is found the distinction between lifeworld and instrumental rationality of the state and economy. Habermas gave his theory of communicative action a

materialistic tone by arguing that life is also reproduced materially daily and this is integrated by the language of money. Still, Habermas insisted on showing the primacy of the communicative use of language in its ability to coordinate our daily actions and subsume other relations and forms of language under it.

Habermas tried to explain modern society's problems as resulting from the "colonization of the life world" or the process through which the communicative rationality of every day world is threatened by the instrumental one of the system. Amongst the major solutions Habermas proposes include, strengthening the lifeworld and everyday communicative action to counter systemic instrumental rationality and strengthening autonomous public spheres. These are spheres freed of ideological interests and where positive extracts from everyday communication are discussed.

Generally we can raise three points in relation to the extent to which Habermas's theory of modernity addresses the concrete and material aspect of life. First, Habermas failed to see how asymmetric power relations are embedded in the lifeworld. The materials to be reflected, the common sense knowledge we have of the world and the abiding moral rules that form a sense of belongingness to a community are represent the interests of the dominant. Accordingly, biased structures and meanings pass down into every day communication. Further the horizon of everyday communication is limited since even though the life world is continually being reflected upon, still the dominant agendas are those of the oppressors.

Secondly, Habermas's explanations of modern society's problems are focused on the loss of meaning, since the explanation derives from systems intrusion into the meaning giving structure of the lifeworld. This prevented Habermas from providing a sufficient account of things like slavery and colonialism which signify primarily conflicts in the material aspect of life. Thirdly, in his account of "autonomous public spheres," Habermas failed to realize that the same problems that haunted his, *Structural transformation of the public sphere* i.e. asymmetric relations resulting from the superiority of the wealthy and educated, also exist in today's public spheres. Usually, the agendas raised in such spheres

are backed by the funding of institutions that impose their own interests and what's discussed is usually what's considered as important by intellectuals.

As Dussel shows in his *The underside of modernity*, hierarchical relations are found in speech acts. To this extent, Dussel gives a special attention to the claim of the oppressed. The utterance of the oppressed has a power of illuminating asymmetrical power relations. Dussel refers to the ideal symmetrical communicative arena as an 'ideal communicative community' in contrast to the 'empirical' one. Here, there are power relations and some voices are superior to others. Dussel also emphasized the fact that beyond communication one finds material, economic relations through which humans try to reproduce their life materially. Everyday communication is an exemplar of material relations. As Asger Sorensen puts it, what Dussel's transmodern approach to meaning and validity demonstrates is that; "practical philosophy must never forget the body as the material foundation of the consciousness. It is with the body that we feel pleasure but it is also with the body we feel pain" (Sorensen, 2009, 155).

### **5.3.4 Postconventional, Postmetaphysical Postnational Modernity and Its Threat to Non Secular Communities**

Habermas's discourse of modernity is postconventional in advocating the need to continually reflect on our inherited backgrounds, continually reflect on the lifeworld, finding a space for communication between different lifeworlds, and generally taking a critical stance whenever we are communicating with one another. Further, Habermas's discourse of modernity is postmetaphysical in going beyond the metaphysical assumptions of Western philosophy. Habermas's approach tries to situate reason in the normal usage of language of modern societies. This is a rationality having universal elements but still reducible to specific origins. Finally Habermas also tried to emphasize the postnational aspects of his approach.

As Habermas sees it, in an age where inter-state relations are being furthered mainly through economic relations, and the growing failure of the nation state as an agent for collective realization, one asks how could the effects of especially economic

globalization could prepare grounds for a new kind of constellation, the postnational constellation.

For Habermas, under the threat of Globalization and loosening of national boundaries the responses of nation states usually takes one of these two forms. One, affirming internal diversity and trying to resist any external influence whatsoever under a secluded state. And the other, uncritically appropriating the nation state to a global order, and trying to benefit economically as much as possible. Habermas argues that the solution rather lies in “expanded horizons” which is a lifeworld continually reflecting on the advent of a post national order. This constitutes continually expanding and appropriating the positive universal aspects of this new postnational order, and moving towards a global lifeworld (PC, 83).

A secular modernity could be deadly threatening to religious communities, by disrupting the horizons through which a society’s sense of identify is established and continually urging them to move towards western secular practices embedded in the various institutions. Further we could ask, how does Habermas’s secular universalism expressed through its postconventional, postmetaphysical and postnational motifs would affect non secular and mainly non Western identities. I will use Messay’s discussions of the strict binary form of operation typical of Western Hegemony to critique Habermas’s secular modernity. Further, I will try to look at what this move into secular universalism would mean interculturally, by using the ideas of Ram Adhar Mall and Franz Wimmer.

According to Messay, all or most attempts to carve out a place for Africa in the philosophical world, have ended up reaffirming Western colonial discourse. As a result, currently African philosophy is in a dilemma (Messay, 2004, 205-208). As Messay sees it, Western thought ascribed reason and philosophy to itself and myth and irrationality for its other. Most attempts in early contemporary African philosophy tried to show that Africans are also rational and that they can philosophize. In this attempt to imitate the ‘superior other’, Africans are losing what they need to affirm their existence, i.e. African orientations towards the world, involving both myth and logos.

For Messay, there are no such differences originally in possessing rationality or essences. Still, a society out of 'choice', "assigns a specific task to rationality" (ibid: 208). These choices shouldn't be seen hierarchically. After rejecting that myth is knowledge and arguing that there is an ability by a given community to produce myths, Messay claims that in the heart of any civilization, as Nietzsche says, lays the ability, to invent mythologies. Furthermore, myths make us enthusiastic and interested in life while reason gives us an ability to control it (Ibid, 212-16). So, mythological components are found at the heart of all great civilizations and the profound threat of the colonial discourse to Africa is the depriving of the "power to believe" (Messay, 219). In a similar tone, we can say that under Habermas's secular universality and the move to postconventionality, non-secular societies are being deprived of their power to affirm their existence via a false dichotomy between myth and reason. Every society needs to have core beliefs which function as practical guidelines in its contacts with other cultures. Here a supposedly universal discourse could possibly damage what is needed to firmly establish one's existence, by subjecting every thing to examination.

From Messay's discussions of African philosophy's dilemma, we can learn about the dangers of subjecting every thing to reflection in a secular discourse. First of all, in such a secular discourse the horizons of conventional, non secular societies will be disrupted in attempting to question every thing and put the given into continual examination. The given horizons and conventional ways of being will lose their importance as they are undermined by the power of reason, and in turn replaced by a secular discourse. This will lead to, secondly, the failure of conventional societies to affirm their existence. The disrupted societies will lose their ideals which are integral parts of their lives. This could result in an inability to consolidate a society's place. Finally, the conventional society which has now entered into a secular discourse will possibly imitate the secular practices and ideals crystallized in the institutions and polices of the West.

We need a medium through which different cultures could converse with one another. Still, this discourse should be seen as one way of facilitating cultural encounters. Cultures

and conventional societies should be able to preserve their identities and an approach that includes both mythology and logos needs to be cultivated.

As we have seen on the second section of this chapter, reason and specifically modern reason could be criticized through the spectacles of intercultural philosophy. What underlies most attempts in intercultural philosophy, is the attempt not to reduce the other to one's own categories, while at the same time trying to come up with common themes and ways of being, Habermas's secular universalism in principle tries to incorporate the other in its totality through its claims to truth which are open to reexamination. But it is a historical fact that societies of the West are the most secular societies in human history. One could also argue that non-secular i.e. mythological, religious accounts are still dominant mainly in the non-Western sphere. When Habermas's discourse of modernity calls for a secular universality, there is a great danger that non-secular communities will move into the dominant Western secular way of being.

Ram Adhar Mall, introduces a distinction between a reductive and analogous hermeneutic; one trying to reduce the other into one's ways of being and frameworks and the other trying to understand the other by looking for "analogous structural patterns that make understanding possible beyond all centrism" (Mall 2000,5). My point is that secularism by itself is not neutral, and it has a danger of moving non-western, non-secular communities into the secular domains of the West. So, one finds traits of a reductive hermeneutics in Habermas discourse of modernity. Further, in terms of Wimmer's discussions of centrism, in such a move towards a secular culture, what we have will not be a 'tentative' centrism where all centers equally contribute and learn from one another, but an 'integrative' one where the West and its practices and institutions are the highest expressions of a secular culture, and in reality only non secular communities will be expected to imitate the advanced West.

### **5.3.5 Habermas and the Other Side of Modernity**

Habermas pictured the rise of modernity as a process of rationalization that displaced a conventional lifeworld restrained by tradition and authority, with a secular culture based on the entertaining of distinct claims to truth. Further, Habermas tried to provide a

solution of strengthening the lifeworld, the three validity claims, and the positive universal ideals planted by modernity against the dangers of instrumental rationality of the system. Here I will defend the other, ‘underside’ of modernity defended by philosophers like Enrique Dussel and Emmanuel Eze against Habermas’s picture of the inauguration and development of modernity.

For Habermas, following Weber and Hegel, one could argue that modernity took shape by a universal process of secularization and rationalization, and through historical movements like the Reformation the Enlightenment, and French revolution. This ignores the fact that, amongst other things, the age of discoveries for Europe was not only a search for material inputs and economic superiority, but also the construction of Europe’s other, an inferior other, against whom Europe could consolidate itself. Habermas should have focused on how the French revolution only meant liberation for male whites, and that outside of Europe, the same exploitative relations dismantled by the revolution in Europe, were, still continuing. Habermas also failed in identifying what Dussel calls “the fallacy of developmentalism”. Developed in the modern period, and still persisting today, Europe presents itself as the ideal model, in the developmental policies it formulates. Further, Habermas also did not give a sufficient account of the contribution of non-Western civilizations to modern Europe, how scientific, religious and moral insights were being transferred through commerce starting from ancient Greece. Instead, he simply forwards the secular tradition of modern Europe as the universal model, under the guise of an open communication carried out between equal partners.

Following the arguments of Eze, one could identify two truths about modernity that were not addressed by Habermas. First, Eze rightly pointed out that colonialism and modernity cannot be separated. Modern Europe used the colonies as a way of extracting material inputs and strengthening its greatest achievements in science, morality, the state and arts. Also, it was the ideas that were found at the heart of modern Europe understanding of itself and best described in the giant philosophers like Hegel and Kant that provided the justifications for colonialism and imperialism. How could one separate Hegel’s idea that Europe needs colonies to spread its wisdom and solve the contradictions of capitalism from his view that Europe constitutes the highest stage in human history, and the current

age of Western supremacy is the highest stage in human history. Also how could we separate Kant's division of races based on a transcendent 'germ' or 'talent' from the colonization of those possessing inferior 'talent' in practice? Eze is right, "Ideas do not have meaning in a historical vacuum" (Eze, 1997, 13). Habermas clearly failed to recognize this brutal aspect of modernity in practice, and how the ideals of modernity were being realized outside of Europe.

Habermas's idea that modern society and modern subjects daily cultivate a secular culture based on the contestation of different claims is questionable, given the dominance of cults, religions, and the artistic experience in the West. As Messay sees it, in reality, the West is just as dominated by non secular, non-rational accounts as other parts of the world. Mystic experience, religions and "dreams" are still found at the heart of modern Western civilization. The tendency to focus on only the rational aspects of modern Europe would constitute what Messay calls "the myth of the Whiteman". As Messay sees it;

*[t]he tendency to minimize the part of the irrational to decorate the white man with the honors of rationality becomes obvious when we recall how little the affirmation is supported by facts. Whether we take the bible, the foundation European Christianity, or the ordinary belief of the westerners the role of dreams as revelation of profound truth is largely accepted (Messay, 2004, 45).*

One could raise the arguments of Dussel that myths didn't completely disappear in the move to a categorical philosophical discourse and that myths still play an important role in the great philosophies like those of Kant (Dussel, 2008, 8). Maybe, the reason why myths still persist in modernity is that, modernity still hasn't provided a sufficient account of meaning. Reflecting on an open discourse, where the force of the better argument takes us to the truth is not as powerful as religions and mythologies which provide answers to basic questions like what is the purpose of human existence.

Generally, besides the emancipatory ideals of modernity, it should also be noted that modernity put up as part of its self consciousness what it should have achieved in practice. This is, already seeing itself as the highest stage in human history and falsely

establishing its dominance by negating an 'other', and defining itself as the superior, ideal civilization.

### **5.3.6 Habermas and Postmodernism**

Throughout this essay, we have seen that what motivated Habermas's discussion of the discourse of modernity was what he saw as the postmodernist threat to truth and rationality. This threat was presented in the form of exposing an absolutistic, repressive, instrumental reason. Habermas saw postmodernism as calling for a total destruction of the positive ideals of modernity, and the everyday communicative potential found in Western societies. As we shall see in the next section where the positive aspects of Habermas's discourse of modernity will be pointed out, Habermas goes beyond post modernism in identifying a rationality that could serve as a ground for critical social theory, and also emphasizing responsibility and emancipation. Generally, we can raise the following points in relation to Habermas's discussion of postmodernism.

First of all, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter under charges of misinterpretation and misreading in Habermas's discourse of modernity, two precursors and two main lines in modernity are sketched. On one hand, one finds Hegel and the two routes out of his philosophy, i.e. right and left Hegelians. On the other hand, there are Nietzsche and the two paths out of his critique of modernity. One, a critique and alternative to reason from its 'other' and two, an exposition of the 'will to power'. What we can say about the philosophies of Hegel, right and left Hegelians Nietzsche, Bataille, Foucault, Heidegger and Derrida is that their philosophies are all hybrid. Scientific, artistic, descriptive and normative elements are found intertwined with one another. Thus it wouldn't do justice to their diverse orientations to categorize their ideas in labels such as 'will to power', 'aestheticization' and so on.

Secondly, Habermas was not good at showing the positive aspects of postmodernism. Because of his fear of postmodernism's threat to modernity and its universalistic ideals, Habermas only focused on the destructive aspects of postmodernism. Derrida's critique of the foundationalist and binary presuppositions of the metaphysical tradition, Foucault's exposition of specific practices and institutions in relation to

power/knowledge nexuses and generally postmodernism's celebration of diversity and difference haven't been emphasized by Habermas.

Thirdly, Habermas didn't realize that the reason why most postmodernists haven't provided normative ideals is a direct result of the fear of submitting to an absolutistic thinking. Instead, postmodernism was mainly focused on making the Western tradition open to interpretation. Thus, amongst others, Foucault focused on exposing power/knowledge nexuses, while Derrida deconstructed the texts of Western civilization, exposing what's excluded in their ordinary operations.

Fourthly, there are facets of postmodernism that haven't been discussed by Habermas in his discourse of modernity. Amongst others, Habermas hasn't discussed Lyotard's *The postmodern condition*, which crystallizes the issue of the postmodern in philosophical circles. Baudrillard's 'hyperreality' or an age in which all we have is produced images, instead of facts and pure foundations, is also not discussed.

Finally, in trying to defend modernity, it seems that Habermas introduced a firm distinction between modernity, modernization, modernism and postmodernism. But it should be emphasized that all these movements signify the fate of reason in the West for the last five hundred years. From the age of discoveries to today's discussions of globalization, the issue is of what place reason possesses in our lives. The issue is still, questioning the foundations of modern European civilization and whether its grounds need to be remodeled.

## **5.4 Habermas's Discourse of Modernity, Appraised**

### **5.4.1 Communicative Rationality vs. the Philosophy of Consciousness**

These days, there is a general consciousness amongst philosophers that a philosophy for contemporary society should go beyond metaphysical thinking. The metaphysical tradition failed to provide a viable alternative. In some cases it holds absolutistic claims that fail to recognize particularity. In others, it propagated relativistic assumptions that

fail to recognize the universal dimensions to humanity. The tradition also focused on isolated individuals, subjected the individual to oppressive relations, and so on.

Habermas claims that the kind of rationality he identifies and tries to develop in modern societies is postmetaphysical, in that it's situated in daily uses of language having both particular and universalistic dimensions. As, we have seen in the last chapter, Badillo saw Habermas's rationality as one going beyond the objectivist/relativist dichotomy while Cooke labeled it postmetaphysical yet non defeatist. Here, I will employ James Gordon Finlayson's discussion of what Habermas generally means by the philosophy of consciousness, to show in fact that Habermas does go beyond this orientation.

Habermas's analysis of speech acts is part of the 'linguistic turn' in twentieth century philosophy, which abandons the look for absolute truth and certainty within a subject. Instead it focuses on analyzing the language we speak and employ. It inquires into what this language tells us about the basic questions of reality, knowledge, values and so on. Finlayson identifies under the term philosophy of consciousness, seven major orientations in Western philosophy that Habermas's communicative paradigm supposedly stands in opposition.

1. In "Cartesian subjectivity" (Finlayson 2005, 29), it's assumed that there is a clear essence that we can ascribe to the individual, and that this is thinking or generally thought. We can say that, Habermas goes beyond this orientation since in his approach; the 'I' cannot be separated from others. Rather, there is a world of claims through which one affirms unique individuality by raising distinct claims in relation to others.
2. In "metaphysical dualism" (Ibid), it is assumed that there are two major kinds of substance in the world, one reflective and other corporal. Habermas doesn't assume that one can distinguish between thinking and the body, either in the individual or the individual as thinking and the world as body. He stresses that modern individuals have the space in which they raise their claims to one another thereby coordinating their actions.

3. In “Subject-object metaphysics” (Ibid), the subject either as thinking or interested, relates to possible states of affairs in an attempt of gaining knowledge or laboring. Habermas in turn tries to show how modern individuals raise their claims in relation to the objective, social, and subjective dimensions of reality and are willing to defend their positions in an intersubjective arena in which they establish their identities.
4. “Foundationalism” (Ibid), signifies the search for either an empirical or transcendental ground on which questions of ontology, epistemology and social theory could be built. Habermas didn’t try to trace his theory to an underlying reality or an absolute truth about reality or the individual. Instead, he focuses on demonstrating how modern societies have gone through a historical process of rationalization, which has managed to establish an intersubjective arena in which contestable claims to truth are raised.
5. “First Philosophy” (Ibid) is seen as the ultimate judge in questions of knowledge, truth, and reality. But in Habermas’s approach, philosophy is located between everyday validity claims and the special fields of inquiries facilitating a mutual learning and influence. Further, philosophy “may act as a stand in for.. ‘ empirical theories with strong universalistic claims, that is, it can help fill gaps in natural science by offering hypotheses for empirical confirmation” (ibid)
6. In “Social atomism” (Ibid), society is the concretization of individual interests. Isolated, autonomous individuals further their desires by entering into a mechanism called society. For Habermas, there is no isolated individuality since we find our claims intertwined with one another, in an attempt to affirm our existence by seeking recognition.
7. If we take “Society as a macro subject” (Ibid), macro realities, whether it be the state, meaning formation, power/knowledge nexuses, are elevated beyond the individual. For Habermas, the various forms of inquiries are in an open relationship to everyday world of validity claims. Claims raised in daily interactions relate directly to the special forms of inquiries. Habermas also claims that, modern individuals find themselves in a world of claims in which they equally participate

by raising their views, not under hegemonic macro realities. There is a space for intersubjective reflection, hence for freedom and equality.

In escaping such metaphysical trapping and orientations under which modern societies are disempowered, Habermas's communicative paradigm is unique in the following terms. First of all, in principle it's a rationality in which everybody can participate. It's procedural in that, it depends on following certain rules and raising certain claims. As we have seen, Habermas's communicative rationality did not sufficiently expose modernity's other side, material relations and asymmetrical power relations. But with some modifications, it could serve as a ground for discussing today's major issues. Secondly, it's a kind of rationality which invites continuous revision since every time validity claims are raised the truth is in question and in chance of being revised. Thirdly, it's a rationality that encompasses the entire objective, social and subjective dimensions, going beyond a strict insistence on isolated subjectivity, the objective world, and macro social reality and incorporating all in modern individuals claims towards the world. Habermas's communicative paradigm does go beyond the metaphysical trappings in western thought. Still, beyond the postmetaphysical nature of Habermas's communicative paradigm, the question should be that of how this secular discourse stands in relation to non secular communities, whether it addresses concrete asymmetrical relations, and sufficiently deconstructs the negative, other side of modernity.

#### **5.4.2 Communicative Rationality, Responsibility and Emancipation**

Another aspect of communicative rationality that makes it strong when compared with the ideals developed throughout modernity, and the postmodern critics is that the concepts of responsibility and emancipation are highly developed in it. It is also a kind of rationality that could deal both a descriptive and emancipatory critical theory of modern societies. In the discussion that will follow, we will see what is it that makes Habermas's communicative paradigm stronger than the interlocutors in the philosophical discourse of modernity.

As we can see from Habermas's discourse of modernity, Hegel attempts to integrate existing reality into philosophical thought. But, as Habermas correctly pointed out,

ultimately Hegel devalues the present in trying to show the unity of human experience by focusing on a final reconciliation. So, a critical theory of society that can both diagnose and remedy contemporary society's problems was not cultivated since the focus was on how the present is part of a larger process and the result of the spirit's development in human history. A concept of responsibility was not developed since the actions of individuals, states, and generally history were thought of as manifestations of a higher reality. Out of Hegelian philosophy, emerged the right and left Hegelians. The right Hegelians failed to develop an approach that describes and incorporates the concrete present since their attempts were geared towards demonstrating the universalist dimension of Hegelian philosophy in concrete institutions and practices. In the left Hegelian critique, the concrete present was empowered through a critique of idealist philosophy, and the exposition of degenerated forms of state and church was made. The concept of responsibility was developed focused in how humans control and preside over their environment materially. But, as Habermas points out, this soon resulted in a praxis philosophy in which reason was only conceived instrumentally, and potentials for a communicatively intersubjective praxis were undermined.

Nietzsche's critique of modern reason and rationality in general has a positive aspect of demonstrating this-worldliness of ontological, epistemological, moral, sociopolitical forms. In his attempt to affirm this life, Nietzsche demonstrated that the greatest systems and theoretical constructs that made humanity's existence possible were animated by the desire to survive and flourish by imposing values on our world. Still, Habermas didn't acknowledge Nietzsche's contribution, and only focused on the destructive aspect of the latter's critique and its contributions to postmodernism. In Nietzsche, humans were responsible for all the ascetic, life denying constructs and also for imposing emancipatory ideals in the future which will reaffirm life through a new 'transvaluation of values' or a process through which life will be redefined. Still, Nietzsche's ideal could not deal with a society that could continually flourish and cooperatively actualize itself in history, since by seeking an alternative in reason's other or forceful imposition of 'will to power'; Nietzsche undermined the potential for collective learning and growth.

Horkheimer and Adorno uniquely developed an interdisciplinary approach to a critical social theory of society which draws on various disciplines and concrete practices, to revolutionize existing states of affairs. Initially this took the form of a critique of an ideology or exposition of the one sided ruling ideas in society. Eventually this developed into a general critique of reason which equated reason with repression. Horkheimer and Adorno should be credited with drawing lessons from various forms of inquiries, and also developing an immanent critique that launches critique based on the goals, intentions and inherent contradictions of the object of interrogation. Still, Habermas is right in pointing out that, in the final analysis the Frankfurt school social theory was unable to find a space for critique, since it equated rationality and repression.

In Heidegger, an attempt was made to return fundamental analysis to everyday life, by laying out the structures in which Dasein dwells. Habermas saw Heidegger's philosophy of Being as a devaluation of the learning processes that took place in the everyday world. In Heidegger's defense, one can say that, he addresses this everyday realm eventhough for him this everyday world and Dasein's destiny are understood within a larger horizon which determines its scope and self understanding. Heidegger mainly focused on the forgetfulness of Being, and one can argue that his philosophy entails a resignation to fate. He also can be criticized for failing to explain why he was affiliated with the Nazis.

Bataille emphasized the need to burst out of the conventional and envisaged emancipation in the non-rational or the heterogeneous. Still, Habermas rightly pointed out the difficulty of coming up with a theory or discourse of the non-rational. Habermas asks what kind of emancipatory ideal could be built on subjective experiences that can't be rationally examined and developed into a discourse of knowledge that could continually be reflected upon to meet society's daily problems.

In Derrida's deconstruction and 'différance', an attempt is made to expose what's excluded in the binary operations and the search for origins in Western philosophical thought. But, as Habermas notes, the subject is lost in a process of meaning formation. We can see Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the texts of Western civilization, as an attempt to open up and reveal the history of exclusions. Still Derrida didn't propose any

emancipatory, future ideal, except in asserting that meaning always comes. In Derrida's defense we can say that his later works like *The specters of Marx* haven't been taken into consideration in Habermas's discourse of modernity.

Foucault's archaeology and genealogy tried to identify thought patterns, specific practices, disciplines and institutions that determined a particular form of subjectivity in modernity. Foucault exposed and hence revealed the concealed practices, institutions, disciplinary techniques of Western society. But, as Habermas rightly observes, Foucault was not able to pose a normative ideal, and hence didn't find a space for responsibility. In addition, since the subject was not empowered in relation to a concept of emancipation, Foucault was not able to step out of power/knowledge nexuses.

When we come to Habermas's communicative rationality and discourse of modernity we can raise the following points. First of all, we are responsible for history, since we are active agents and participate in intersubjective process that empowers us. We have control over our destinies insofar as we are capable of reflecting on the background we inhabit; being able to reflect on our social structures.

Secondly, there is a space for discussing modern society's problems like anomie, meaninglessness, the holocaust and so on, by appealing to everyday language. Everyday language and communicative rationality have provided a space for discussing modern society's problems resulting from the continuing rift between the everyday world and value spheres, and also the colonization of the lifeworld.

Thirdly, there is a space in communicative rationality for envisioning emancipatory ideals. This is through strengthening everyday communicative action, strengthening the value spheres, empowering the institutions in which the positive universal ideals of modernity are concretized and strengthening the public spheres. Thus, Habermas has found a space for a communicative rationality and a critical social theory of modern societies which is both diagnostic and could also pose emancipatory ideals.

### **5.4.3 Modernity as a Platform**

Perhaps one of the most important arguments of Jurgen Habermas is that modernity is the horizon through which our current understanding of our lives has been developed, and that the solution is working within and through modernity. Excluding the issue of whether we are now in a modern or postmodern age, one could argue that the twenty first century's sense of the self and identity is informed by the reason of the modern project. A consciousness of time, the self, history and progress that began to develop in the age of discoveries, and crystallized in the values of the Enlightenment is serving as a model in contemporary states of affairs. This is not to ignore the discontinuities and shifts in the modern project, like the development of instrumental rationality, the rise and fall of diverse economic policies, images of the other, the role of the individual, the influence of social structures, the place of science and technology, and so on. But, all the diverse orientations developed under the theme of modernity and radical emancipatory reason, are still dictating our lives. Amongst others, one could trace today's institutions like the U.N to the universal ideals of modernity, capitalism to instrumental mastery over the world, and development models to modernity's idea that humanity as a whole is moving and should move in a progressive direction.

Employing Habermas's argument that we should continually reflect upon modernity and propose new ideals, one could see modernity as a platform for understanding the positive and negative aspects of our past, to address problems facing modern society and identify its stronger sides, and finally to pose emancipatory ideals in the future.

Through a discussion of modernity, we can ask what went wrong with human history in the past. Is human reason evil or the destructive aspects of human history were caused by developments of an instrumental rationality in science and technology. What caused the Holocaust and how is this related to modernity's science of the other? What justified the slave trade, colonialism and imperialism? Does modern reason constitute in its core an idea of constituting oneself by degrading an 'other'? What caused the genocide and interracial conflicts? Is modern society on the verge of nihilism or a progressive sense of the self?

Eventhough, Habermas's discourse of modernity has difficulties in addressing concrete asymmetrical power relations, doesn't give a full account of modernity's destructive side and the threats of a secular discourse, still we can preserve from Habermas's discussions, the idea that the problematization of the past, should be launched through a critique of modernity. We could also ask, how modernity contributes to growth of the sciences, a rise in production, science and technology, a rise of modern sovereign states, individual freedom, interplanetary explorations, and so on.

In the present state, one could invoke a discussion of modern reason and modernity to shed light on issues like the ills of capitalism and unlimited growth, the environmental crisis and instrumental relations to the world. Further, one could also raise, issues of globalization and the question of homogenization or true diversity, the idea of a cosmopolitan order and the place of the nation state, terrorism as a devaluation of modern reason or response to homogenization, the ideas of 'progress' and 'development', the rise of communication technology, intercultural communications and the exchange of ideas, and so on. Only when we have deconstructed, and worked through a critique of modernity could we argue for strengthening the ideals of modernity, identifying corrosive forces or the abandoning of the modern project as a whole.

As we have seen in the last chapter, Habermas argues in his postnational constellation that the critique and exposition of modernity have been carried out through philosophy. Modernity sees itself as an advocate of rationality and other periods as that of myth and authority. If philosophy is to carry out the task of the interrogation of modernity, then we could argue that Habermas empowered philosophizing since a discussion of modernity is a discussion of the platform through which one could view humanity's past and present history and future prospects. How a possible critique of modernity could benefit humanity, is easily demonstrated through Habermas's works. Taking modernity as a starting ground, Habermas made a broad study of issues like, the place of rationality in human history and its future, the rise and development of different paradigms throughout history, the rise of capitalism and its ills and so on.

Also issues like terrorism, the decline of national sovereignty, and the idea of a postnational constellation, the place of aesthetics in our lives, the place of the sciences and the various forms of inquiries, instrumental mastery, communicative potentials, history and responsibility, law, democracy, and so on, could be elaborated through discussion of modernity.

Generally, Habermas argues that discussions of major issues in contemporary society should be launched through a critique of reason and the development of a new inclusive rationality should be defended. This could lead to, in the future a rationality that could have a place for diverse voices, especially a discourse which allows contestation, continuing revision of ideas, formations of different discourses and generally a continuing discussion of the human condition and the fate of humanity.

## Conclusion

Jurgen Habermas tried to defend modernity conceived as a process of rationalization that led to the development of a secular culture based on three validity claims in every day communication and three corresponding value spheres, by identifying and strengthening what he saw as an implicit communicative potential that's found in modern societies. Habermas conceived modernity as a project that's instituted consciously to solve modern society's problems. This project is not completed since problems like the colonization of the lifeworld are occurring in modern societies. According to Habermas communicative rationality provides the strongest alternative compared to the ideals provided by modernization, aesthetic modernity and postmodernism.

Habermas's conception of reason constitutes a postmetaphysical, postconventional and postnational approach to the issues of meaning, knowledge, and rationality in modern societies. Elaborated in terms of Weber's theory of rationalization and Hegel's attempt to problematize the 'present', Habermas's modernity provides a secularist approach to modern societies. It's postmetaphysical in going beyond the anti-intersubjectivist philosophical and social orientations of the Western intellectual tradition and developing a concept of reason that's embedded in particular contexts but still has universalistic implications. It's postconventional in focusing on the need to go beyond the given and conventional boundaries and question our contexts. Further, it's postnational in arguing for a practical approach to modern societies where discussions are made in a larger context where supposedly particular interests are respected.

Habermas's discourse of modernity constitutes a response to the postmodernist movement in general and the poststructuralism of Derrida and Foucault in particular. From Habermas's point of view, postmodernism radically deconstructs modernity and tries to provide a new ideal in the heterogeneous, the non rational, and generally in that which steps outside of the modern. Thus, Habermas defended communicative rationality against Derrida's deconstruction and 'différance', and Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, by arguing that they fail to recognize the communicative processes of modern societies under the employment of ordinary speech acts.

Habermas's defense of modernity is based on his unique reconstruction of the philosophical discourse of modernity through the greatest philosophers and social theorists from Hegel to poststructuralism. After offering an exposition of the accounts of the major interlocutors on the modern condition, Habermas would offer a critique that emphasizes a communicative rationality that was left undeveloped in each approach.

Habermas's modernity has a negative aspect of undermining the role of the aesthetics by subjecting it to continuous reflection and subordinating it to formal rationality, not giving a sufficient account of asymmetrical material relations, threatening non-secular communities, failing to acknowledge the destructive side of modernity and failing to recognize postmodernism's positive input. On the other side, Habermas's discourse of modernity should be acknowledged for providing an account of rationality that escapes the metaphysical trappings of Western thought, offering a critical theory of society that analyzes modern society's problems and also proposing emancipatory ideals. Most importantly, Habermas's discourse of modernity has the positive aspect of emphasizing the critique of modernity and rationality as a solution for modern society's problems. Habermas has a discourse through which one can reflect on modern society's problems, even though it also needs to be sensitive to hidden agendas, asymmetrical power relations and the expressive side of everyday life, through which our problems are exposed.

Our discussion of Habermas's discourse of modernity was made in five chapters. The first four exposing Habermas's lectures in PDM; while the fifth one, tries to point out the negative and positive aspects of Habermas's discourse of modernity.

In chapter one, we saw how Habermas uses Hegel's conception of the 'present' age and Weber's ideas on the emergence of a secular culture embodied in three value spheres. To establish the idea of the 'modern', Habermas further identified three validity claims in everyday communication through his universal pragmatics. Habermas saw both modernization and postmodernism as trying to devalue modernity's rationality and establish themselves as new progressive approaches. Further, Habermas defended modernity against modernism. While in modernism and in aesthetic debates concerning modern works of art, the question of what is modern was articulated. Still Habermas

maintains that modernity should be interrogated through a critique of a metaphysical, anti-subjectivist reason and damaged intersubjectivity. As Habermas sees it, Hegel's attempt to articulate the 'present' age under a dialectical philosophy of spirit, led, in the final analysis, to an abstract rationality that devalued the actual. Furthermore attempts were made by old Hegelians who tried, but failed, to justify Hegelian doctrines along with left Hegelian critiques which emphasized the other of reason which is the sensible, material, and the particular. Finally, Habermas sees left Hegelian critiques reaching its peak in praxis philosophy which conceived reason only instrumentally.

In chapter two we saw Nietzsche's radical critique of reason which according to Habermas tries to step out of the bounds of Western rationality, emphasizes the passionate, artistic and fragmented as an alternative, and also calls for a reading of Western civilization through an exposition of the 'will to power'. This was echoed throughout the approaches of Horkheimer and Adorno, Heidegger and Bataille.

For Habermas, Nietzsche's critiques of ascetic ideals and his affirmation of this worldliness could be traced to the latter's 'Dionysianism' in *The birth of tragedy*; Dionysus represented the non-rational. Nietzsche rejected the affirmation of the pessimistic side of life and instead proposed the overman as embodying ideals that reaffirm this life. In Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas witnesses an interdisciplinary critique of society that shifts from a Hegelian-Marxist ideological critique of reason to a Nietzschean inspired totalized critique which equates reasoning with repression. This approach, best captured in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, results in the final analysis in an aporia. If all reason is repressive then what is the space in which Horkheimer and Adorno could launch their emancipatory ideals. In Heidegger, a distinction was made between the analysis of beings and Being as such. For Habermas this resulted in an approach that devalues everyday praxis, scientific practice and entails a resignation to fate. Finally Bataille's attempt to step out of the conventional and the boundaries of rationality, finds itself failing to come up with a discourse and theory of the non-rational.

Habermas sees postmodernism as failing to come up with emancipatory potentials for the radical readings it offers. Derrida's approach is related to Heidegger in its deconstructive

attempt to expose the limitations of the metaphysical tradition and go beyond it. For Habermas, in Derrida's 'différance', the individual is subjected to the processes of meaning formation. Everyday communicative potentials are undermined by infinite referral and the idea of a pure discourse is seen as a fiction. Habermas responds by arguing that the poetic function of language is subordinated to the validity claims and their corresponding value spheres that Derrida tried to trace to the original process of meaning formation, i.e. arche-writing.

In his confrontation with Foucault, Habermas argues that the former's approach contrary to its own expectations turns out to be a relative, value-laden, shortsighted approach that has no insight of communicative rationality. Foucault generally argued against an exaggerated role of the present, a hermeneutics that empowers the subject and theory of history as unilateral and universal. This for Habermas only succeeded in undermining the subject and giving an insufficient account of the positive ideals developed in the practices and institutions of the modern West.

In chapter four, we saw how Habermas defended modernity by strengthening the life world, everyday validity claims and the public sphere against the intrusion of the instrumental rationality of the system into the lifeworld. As Habermas puts it, modern individuals continually reflect on their backgrounds which provide them with a general knowledge of what the world is, sense of belongingness, and a space for affirming individuality. Habermas distinguished his approach from praxis philosophy that lost sight of communicative action and various forms of the linguistic turn which failed to uncouple everyday communication and inherited horizons. Habermas argues that his new communicative approach introduces, the intrinsic connection between meaning and validity, the possibility of going beyond instrumental relations, and validity claims related to the objective, social and subjective dimensions.

Finally, in chapter five we tried to examine Habermas's discourse of modernity by, introducing his critics who charge Habermas of misreading many of the authors in the

discourse of modernity, elaborating those critics outside of Habermas's discourse, and identifying the negative and positive aspects of Habermas's discourse of modernity.

Generally, Habermas's discourse of modernity constitutes the strongest feature of providing a framework through which one can view our past histories, the present and future prospects. Thus, Habermas's diagnostic and emancipatory critical social theory has something worth preserving. This is the importance of modernity for humanity's destiny. But, it should also be noted that Habermas's discourse needs to address the aesthetic, material asymmetrical relations, and the unacknowledged negative aspect to the modern project. Habermas's theory of rationality also needs to find a space for non-secular communities.

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