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# **HABERMAS' PESSIMISM AND MODERNITY**

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Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in  
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## ***HABERMAS' PESSIMISM AND MODERNITY***

### **INTRODUCTION**

When perusing philosophical, political and sociological literature, Jürgen Habermas undoubtedly remains one the most prominent contemporary social thinkers. Born June 18<sup>th</sup> 1929 in Düsseldorf Germany, Habermas came to witness the rise and the rule of the Nazi regime at a very young age,. During the 1950s, Habermas pursued his social studies, notably in sociology and philosophy, among the critical theorists of the Institute for Social Research at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main. He studied among the very influential Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse all of whom shared a very negative outlook on Modernity and often used Nazi Germany as an example of a perverted Modern Society. Despite Habermas' upbringing in the horrors of Nazi Germany and his schooling among some of the most pessimistic modern thinkers, he eventually realizes hope through his theorization of Modernity and, even today, remains greatly renown for this optimism.

Early on in his career, Habermas became quite uncomfortable with the Institute for Social Research's tendencies towards political scepticism and disdain for Modernity. Consequently, after a 1956 dispute with Max Horkheimer, Habermas left the institute and to further his studies at the University of Marburg.

Many years later, he returned to the Frankfurt school to take over Horkheimer's chair in philosophy and sociology in 1964. Many consider Jürgen Habermas as the heir to the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory although this is still somewhat in dispute today. However others believe there are not enough Karl Marx and Critical Theory remaining in Habermas' work. Claims that Habermas neglects Karl Marx are not surprising critiques as these seemingly broad arguments have been used many times before against the founding thinkers of Frankfurt. In his *Habermas and Contemporary Society* (2003), author John Sitton cites James Marsh in claiming that Habermasian critical theory is, to a great extent, a critical theory without Marx and thus a critical theory that is insufficiently critical.

Jürgen Habermas' first major writing is entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, published in 1962 in German, and was eventually translated into English, reaching American audiences in the 1970s. Social thinkers, such as Jeremy Shapiro, Thomas McCarthy, Max Pensky – to name a few, were responsible for making many of Habermas' works available to English readers.

During the 1970s and 1980s, optimistic thinkers of Modernity were arguably not as commonplace as pessimistic critics of Modernity. Accordingly Habermasian thought may have been glamourized as an appealing alternative to the pessimistic outlooks on Modernity of both Marxism and Postmodernism. As for Habermasian theory in relation to Marxism and Postmodernism, the latter's imposingly negative outlook on Modernity may serve as an explanation as to why many scholars exaggerate Habermas' optimism. Hence it is as though Marxism

and Postmodernism represent Modern pessimism while Habermas serves as a their polar opposite. This consequently leads to the possibility that, in the past and even today, we may have overlooked the pessimism in Habermas' theory.

Generally speaking, Habermas' multi-disciplinary approach and critical theory make him a rather interesting scholar to explore. His unique critical stance is one notable feature of his work making him significantly different from his predecessors at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. In the 1980s, Habermas used his version of critical theory to stand up against the dominant Postmodern argumentation of the time. Even today, many scholars consider Habermas to be among liberal, critical, and rationalist thinkers in the defense of Modernity. All in all, Habermas as a defender of Modernity remains an extremely common perspective in current philosophical, political, and sociological literature.

This portrayal of Habermas as a "defender of Modernity" is generally accepted among the scholastic community. However, some amplify Habermas' optimistic liberalism and defense of Modernity. Thus Habermas' optimism should not erroneously be exaggerated as the pessimism cutting across the whole of his work remains quite significant. This inherent pessimism will accordingly be elaborated upon throughout the discourse of this paper.

Though we may not contest the idea of Habermas as a "defender of Modernity," we may argue that he does so very critically and that we therefore must not stress this particular view so as to simultaneously eclipse his pessimism. Throughout Habermas' work, he utilizes a significant amount of criticism made by various social thinkers in regards to Modernity's progress.

In his most recent writings, Habermas clearly opposes both Neo-liberalism and Neo-conservatism argumentation against Modernity as he considered both to rely too heavily on Postmodern premises. More precisely, he does not adhere to their nihilistic and cynical constructs regarding Modernity's capacity to provide a culture of emancipation rather than social inequality or even alienation and domination. Habermas does not fully defend Modernity, as will be ensuingly illustrated . In fact, he rather remains quite open to the notion that Modernity may usher in the end of the individual. One who theorizes the possible end of the "individual" remains undoubtedly close to some of the most basic premises of Postmodern thought. It must be recognized that a true optimist of Modernity would never consider such possible outcomes of extreme negativity, such as the end of the individual. Succinctly stated, Habermas' optimism and pessimism have to be re-evaluated in a scholastic fashion.

In reading Habermas' most influential works, scholars must ask themselves to what extent is this optimism consistent throughout Habermas' writings when compared to his pessimism. When looking at his view of Modernity, it is important to consider this issue of optimism and pessimism as Habermas' work continues to have influence on the global academic community. In this dissertation, it thus remains imperative to compare Habermas to himself in order to analyze the extent to which both his optimism and pessimism remain thematically present throughout the course of his academic career.

Inspired by the previous questions, the following thesis will be advanced. With regards to his most influential sociological writings, Habermas'

contemporary work remains more pessimistic than optimistic, similarly to how it was during the commencement of his career. The general framework of this thesis is divided into three chapters. The purpose of the first chapter serves to illustrate that Habermas is pessimistic in the beginning of his career and that he gradually becomes more optimistic as the Theory of Communicative Action begins to take shape. The second chapter advances the notion that when *The Communicative Action Theory* was published in German in 1981, Habermas' writings, though fundamentally optimistic, still have traces of pessimism within them. Despite this, it was during this time period when the optimism within Habermasian thought was at its apex. In the last chapter of this thesis, it will be argued that Habermas' most recent work is more pessimistic than optimistic in terms of Modernity's capacity to provide a democratic culture and regime that propagates both freedom and emancipation to all strata of society rather than alienation and domination.

This dissertation is intentionally limited to the content of Habermas' work and it does not impede on any personal reasons that can be held accountable for his pessimism. More specifically, in the course of this paper's development, no references will be made to Habermas' holocaust memories, his feeling out of place among the older generation of Frankfurt thinkers, his age nor to certain physical aspects which were challenging to him in his youth and may have inadvertently motivated his particular interest in the many facets of communication and Modernity. Nothing regarding his person will be explored in this analysis.

On a similar note, the argumentation of this thesis does not intend to reduce Habermas' ideas to the simple constructs of his social context, as has commonly been done with the works of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and many others. We thus will proceed with the assumption that great thinkers can achieve a level of rationality leading to enlightened insight and analysis irrespective of their life experiences and physical circumstances. This is why we choose to remain faithful solely to Habermas' writings and their subsequent interpretations, ones which do not reduce him to his personal experiences by focussing on external variables outside of his writings. However situations where Habermas chooses to relay details of his personal experience or social context will be employed throughout the course of this dissertation as they remain part of his argumentation and hence will not cross the boundaries which we have chosen to set.

Yet, in a few instances, Habermasian thought will be broadly juxtaposed with the context of social theory during periods when Marxism and Postmodernism were considered to have a hegemonic grip within the forums of social sciences. The logic behind this strategy lies in the fact we believe that the hegemony which Marxism and Postmodernism acquired could have affected the manner in which Habermas' analysis may have been understood throughout philosophical, political, and sociological literature, due to the fact that Habermas was considered their optimistic opponent. As a result, this remains a possible explanation as to why his optimism is exaggerated and his pessimism is consequently rendered essentially unimportant. This is as far as we will venture

in analyzing material which is outside of the immediate content of Habermas' work. It is henceforth important to note the purpose of our paper is not to focus on comparisons between Habermas and the Frankfurt School, Marxism, and Postmodernism. Although it would admittedly be interesting to epistemologically study Habermas' optimism and pessimism vis-à-vis other sociological and philosophical currents of thought.

The purpose of this paper is strategically limited in that it simply shows Habermas as inconsistent in his optimism throughout his most influential writings and that his pessimism must simultaneously be given more consideration, especially with respect to his most recent work. That being said, this discourse will assert Habermas' optimism fluctuates throughout his work and that his most recent work is considerably laden with pessimism. We hope this type of analysis will provide the heuristically valuable foundation necessary for later epistemological studies seeking to contextually compare Habermas' optimism and pessimism with other currents of thought. Such future studies could be conducted so as to illustrate, per se, why Habermas is no longer as optimistic as he was during the 1980s, and perhaps how he remains more pessimistic in comparison to other contemporary thinkers.

In terms of methodology, the following paper is a chronological analysis of Habermas' most influential and prominent work. The argumentation conveyed in this paper does not represent a text by text analysis as its intent does not lie in exhausting the whole of Habermas' work. In our analysis of Habermas' optimism and pessimism, we will employ three time periods: 1962-1980, 1981-1996, and

1997-2001, corresponding with his vacillations between optimism and pessimism. As aforementioned, each period corresponds to his views regarding Modernity's capacity to provide a political culture of emancipation rather than one of domination. Overall our study focuses mainly on illustrating the primary sociological and political themes of Habermas' work rather than singularly analyzing each work in regards to optimism and pessimism. Even though Habermas' writings are not exhaustively explored herein and this analysis intentionally focuses on revealing the long-eclipsed pessimism intrinsic to Habermasian thought, we nevertheless posit that this dissertation remains a fair representation his work.

In considering the chronological nature of our study, we will be using an alternative citation method indicating the original publication date which will refer to a text's first appearance in Germany, in the German language. Therefore we will use the following method: (author name, \*original date, date of the current source, page number if necessary). For example, in the following scenario \*1981 is when the text first appeared in German literature whereas 1984 refers to its English source (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p. 123).

Before we proceed with our argumentation, it is important to state our working definition of both optimism and pessimism in relation to Modernity. Simply stated, optimism is an individual's state of mind when he or she feels mostly hopeful about something or someone. Conversely, pessimism is a feeling an individual gets when he or she has a mostly hopeless perspective about something or someone. Modernity is comparatively more tenuous to define and,

to our knowledge, Habermas does not define it in simple terms either. In putting ourselves in Habermas' mindset, we are able to offer a basic definition of Modernity. Modernity for Habermas could be considered as a historical period wherein communicative reason and action arise as a result of the decoupling of the system and the lifeworld. Modernity, as a bearer of the Enlightenment Project, is the expansion of a political culture and a regime where democracy, emancipation, and freedom are critical virtues. In essence, Modernity's progress can be measured by its capacity to provide democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all individuals. Conversely, to Habermas, digression is conceived as Modernity's failure to ensure democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all individuals while entailing possible scenarios of anomie, alienation, and domination. In order to analyze Habermas' optimism and pessimism in relation to Modernity throughout his work, we will gage various sociological and political themes against Modernity's capacity to provide democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all people. In other words, we will be evaluating Habermas' view with respect to Modernity's potentiality to overcome anomie, alienation, and domination.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **HABERMAS PRIOR TO THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

The following section considers material pertaining to Habermas' work prior to *The Theory of Communicative Action* published in German in 1981. In considering his first writings, our intent lies in showing that Habermas is significantly pessimistic in regards to Modernity's potentiality to overcome anomie, alienation, and domination, as well as to provide democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all. As he began to construct the basis for what would become his Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas gradually shifts towards an optimistic outlook on Modernity's potential. These ideas will be explored in the following format. Chapter one is divided into three parts: (1) *The Vanguard of Democracy: The Public Sphere*, (2) *The Colonization of the Lifeworld*, and (3) *The Legitimization Crisis and the Possible End of the Individual*.

#### *(1) The Vanguard of Democracy: the Public Sphere*

Nowhere in his writings does Habermas directly refer to the public sphere as the vanguard of democracy, although he does allude to it as being such. Habermas portrays the public sphere as a place serving as very basis for democracy. In a general manner, the public sphere represents a lieu where private individuals unite as a public in order to democratically discuss the outcome of private and public life. Prior to the French Revolution, the

bourgeoisie, both those in France and in England, gathered within the public sphere for various social activities consequently creating a social reality in which political legitimacy could be determined from “below” by common people rather than from “above” by nobles. As the citation below demonstrates, much of Habermas’ pessimism lies in the fact that the very existence of the public sphere was in peril after the French Revolution due to the re-legitimization of political power from “above,” however not by nobles but rather by bureaucrats manipulating publicity as a means of control.

**Tendencies pointing to the collapse of the public sphere are unmistakable, for while its scope is expanding impressively, its function has become progressively insignificant. Still, publicity continues to be an organizational principle of our political order. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.4)**

In admiration of Habermas’ work, developing concepts such as the public sphere and then grounding them empirically in a historical context can be a daunting task. That said, the public sphere can be a slippery concept to grasp due to its complexity, which can accordingly cause it to be misused and erroneously applied in current sociological literature. For instance, it is very easy to mix up the public sphere with concepts such as Jean Jacques Rousseau’s civil society, Robert Bellah’s civil religion, John Rawls’ public reason, and so forth. Surprisingly, Habermas does refer to Rousseau’s civil society and Bellah’s civil religion in some instances in later works but the contrast between civil society, civil religion, public reason and public sphere remain significant.

Briefly, the public sphere is quite distinct from civil society and civil religion as it is even more holistic and comprehensive due to the generality of humankind’s

usage of language. However, the confusion between these similar concepts lies in the fact all four are geared towards establishing universal understanding and action. That is, civil society, civil religion, public reason, and the public sphere are all concepts which are of a similar nature as they communicatively unite singularities into generalities affecting our collective imagination and action.

On a quick note, the public sphere has a lot less to do with the narrower social institutions than public reason, civil society, and civil religion. It moreso involves the holistic belief that communication geared towards the universal is an inherent feature of humankind in its use of language and thinking. This communication geared towards humanity is elucidated and amplified, by all as we interpret and act upon the ideals of Modernity within the public sphere. Habermas contends that throughout history even before the public sphere, language has remained the main social institution which unites private entities into public ones. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989) Durkheim had a very similar idea that was equally important in establishing morality, though with greater emphasis on religion.

Émile Durkheim believed collective representations, which are akin to Habermas' universal understandings, began with the exchange of totems between people. Each totem is individually connoted symbolically and through communicational processes, which Durkheim explains by totem-sharing rituals, individual totems eventually merge with others, gradually forming bases in language for collective representations. As people exchange totems through everyday speech-acts, concepts accumulate, and then languages emerge.

Habermasian ideas on speech-acts and universal pragmatics are not vastly different from Durkheim's collective totems whose existence depend on profane practice and sacred conceptualization. Similarly, Habermas shares Durkheim's belief that language is a fundamental aspect, as concepts whether they are profane or sacred can create solidarity and simultaneously are inevitably geared towards the establishment of universal understanding. (Durkheim, \*1912, 1995)

Conclusively, the public sphere serves as a place where the capacity for communication to provide solidarity is increased due to the lack of economical, political, and social domination. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989) In theory, Habermas' public sphere can serve as a solution to Durkheim's analysis of increasing anomie in modern society. Durkheim wished to provide answers for this dilemma in his creation of a moral sociology but failed to comprehensively do so before his death. Though Durkheim and Habermas use different terms, they share a similar fear of anomie and alienation. Habermas worries about alienation which is a consequence of domination whereas Durkheim was threatened by anomie resulting from a lack of solidarity more often due too excessive or the lack of social cohesion. We believe it is reasonable to represent the public sphere as a concept where the answer to Durkheim's dilemma of modern anomie and the foundations of Habermas' hope for the achievement of Modernity can be found.

Another problem with the public sphere as a sociological concept is that its composition necessitates an intertwinement of cultural, economical and political aspects. Given Habermas' multidisciplinary approach and the fact he adheres to a holistic approach, it comes as no surprise that the public sphere is a pluralistic

concept dependant on the interlinking of many social dimensions. In addition, Habermas developed a version of Marxism which equates the superstructure with the infrastructure. In essence, the public sphere is a precursory idea to Habermas' version of Marxism, which is subsequently elaborated further in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1976), in that it rests heavily on interaction rather than solely on labour. Therefore in treating Habermas' public sphere, the cultural, the economical, and the political must be recognized as being equally relevant. Likewise, both work and interaction remain equally important when considering the public sphere as a sociological concept.

For the moment, the public sphere is defined as a place where individuals unite to discuss cultural, economical, and political issues affecting private and public life. Ideally, this is done with the intent of establishing universal truthfulness, justness, and goodness for the whole of society. Neglecting one of these three dimensions (cultural, economical, and political) will render problematic in understanding the public sphere leading to an incorrect synthesis of what it represents. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

The public sphere has a cultural foundation which orginated from the pre-French Revolution bourgeois culture. In synthesizing the most critical cultural aspects of the bourgeois public sphere, we must isolate the cultural aspects from those of the economical and the political despite their interrelation. Seemingly, pre-French Revolution bourgeois culture can be understood as being a culture of "underdogs" when compared to the hegemony of the feudal culture. Culturally speaking, the nobility of the time were placed on a pedestal at the expense of the

bourgeois and the common person's wellbeing. As a result, bourgeois culture was gradually forged in opposition to hegemony of the feudal culture of the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

On a quick analytical note, it is important to state that Habermas sees much potential in bourgeois culture. When Habermas wrote *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (\*1962, 1989), his optimism regarding the bourgeois culture could have been considered as heresy given that Marxism was one of the dominant hegemonic social perspectives of the time. The Marxist view of the bourgeoisie is well known for being pessimistic and negative. In placing Habermasian thought as its opponent, it would not be surprising to find that he may have been portrayed as being naively optimistic. In other words, in making him an opponent of Marxist views of bourgeois culture, some might have taken Habermas' views too far by placing him at the other end of the spectrum. Briefly, the same type of critique can be applied to how some social thinkers perceived Habermas' view of Modernity as being optimistic when compared to Postmodern thinkers of the 1980s and 1990s. When compared to Marxists and Postmodernists, it is understandable why some might be inclined to portray Habermas as an optimist but when comparing Habermas to himself, his optimism is definitely inconsistent throughout his work.

Returning to how Habermas' analysis differs from Marx's in terms of the public sphere, Habermas considers the bourgeois as an ideal-type individual who has a cultural basis inclining him or her towards establishing universal goodness, justness, and truthfulness. Also, he sees the bourgeois as one who seeks

emancipation from all the vast unfairness imposed by manorial authority. Contrary to that of Marx, Habermas' bourgeois is not one who drags the working class into conflict with the feudal order for his own personal gain as Marx would argue:

**Bourgeois culture was not mere ideology. The rational-critical debate of private people in the salons, clubs, and reading societies was not directly subject to the cycle of production and consumption, that is, to the dictates of life's necessities.** (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.160)

In comparison to Marx, Habermas would contend that the bourgeois culture is essentially one of emancipation and not one of domination. This arguably heretic, optimistic way of conceiving the bourgeois culture could have been overly highlighted and exaggerated at the time because it contradicted the hegemony that Marxism had acquired. When reading *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (\*1962, 1989), Habermas' position is evidently more sombre when he writes of the effects of what became the bourgeois culture and the public sphere after the French Revolution. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

In synthesizing the emergence of the public sphere, the manorial authority and feudal culture in general appealed to normative reasoning which, at the time, was the dominating rational. Given that medieval society was based on bloodlines as opposed to merit, upward social mobility was a possibility for nobility only. In turn, this created a two-strata society of private and public persons. From the bourgeois' perspective and reasoning, this was unfair and illogical. This type of bourgeois' reasoning is what Habermas refers to as communicational reason in later works, as it is geared towards universal

truthfulness, goodness, and justness. However, this extent of appeal towards communicative reason by the bourgeois culture only lasted for brief moments prior to the French Revolution. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a nobleman was the only representation of a public person. Inspired by W. Schöne's interpretation of the public sphere, Habermas agrees that,

**“A private person has no right to pass public and perhaps even disapproving judgement on the actions, procedures, laws, regulations, and ordinances of sovereigns and courts, their officials, assemblies, and courts of law, or to promulgate or publish in print pertinent reports that he manages to obtain. For a private person is not at all capable of making such judgment, because he lacks complete knowledge of circumstances and motives.”** (W.Schöne cited in Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p. 25)

The bourgeois and the common person were considered as private persons. Prior to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, private persons could never represent a public in matters of State and Church. Therefore, at that moment in time, being a private person entailed limitations and not privileges. Habermas adds that this private status given to common individuals can clearly be seen in military ranking tradition which in many respects remains unchanged in contemporary society. Common soldiers are referred to as private whereas titles of nobility such as a Duke or a Baron signify a public representation of power over an estate and people. What must be understood about manorial authority is that it entails power over people while not being an empowerment given by the people. In other words, power is legitimized from above as opposed to from below. Generally, a nobleman was a representation of the public with the entitlement of governing private individuals as he saw fit.

**As long as the prince and the estates of his realm “were” the country and not just its representatives, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented their lordship not for but “before’ the people.** (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.8)

As communication and information technology evolved, the press being a crucial innovation, the bourgeoisie became conscious of the fact they were the “underdogs” in medieval society and accordingly deserved more than what was allowed to them culturally, economically, and politically. This newly found bourgeois identity created a process of critique against medieval culture whose demise was partly due to an overly dominating normative reason. Given that the bourgeoisie was excluded from the public places of State and Church, coffee houses and salons of Europe became among the only public gathering places where the bourgeoisie’s critical culture could sharpen its claws. Within this public sphere hosted by European coffee houses and salons, bourgeois, aristocrats, intellectuals, craftsmen, and shopkeepers, some rich, others poor, met on a regular basis, even several times a day, to discuss literature, art, economical, and political issues. All in all, the critical and all-inclusiveness aspects of the public sphere were beginning to take shape even though, it was usually art and literature that were being criticized by the rising bourgeois culture. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

**Thus critical debate ignited by works of literature and art was soon extended to include economic and political disputes, without any guarantee (such as was given in the salons) that such discussions would be inconsequential, at least in the immediate context.** (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.33)

As aforementioned, the public sphere is also the result of economical and political forces. In line with Marxian thought, medieval society was progressively

shifting from a feudal mode of production towards a capitalist mode of production. Medieval towns generally had local markets wherein citizens could purchase and trade goods and services. However, these were tightly controlled by guilds and corporations "...serving more as instruments for the domination of the surrounding areas than for free commodity exchange between town and country." (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.15) As a consequence of long-distance trading, local markets gradually became dependant on regional and national markets, thus rendering local lords less vital and influent, as national economics and politics became the domain of the prince's court. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

The need for news is another important aspect to consider in understanding the shift from a feudal mode of production to capitalist one. The trafficking of news exponentially grew as commodities gradually became necessities in pre-capitalist long-distance trading. At that moment in time, many economical and political structures progressively became more and more dependent on news concerning geographically distant events. According to Habermas, the earlier form of stock exchange served as an example of one of the newly emerged economical structures which depended on news:

**The traffic in news that developed alongside the traffic in commodities showed a similar pattern. With the expansion of trade, merchants' market-oriented calculations required more frequent and more exact information about distant events.** (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.16)

Near the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a regular supply of news became available to the general public in the form of press when prior to this, news had been solely distributed to administrative personnel and influential merchants. In combination with the availability of the press to the general public and the fact

that aristocratic power had become increasingly concentrated due to the rising need for a centralized administration of regional markets, the nobility became a more visible subject of criticism within the rising public sphere. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

The modern state apparatus began to develop, as permanent administration over public and military affairs became necessary due to the progressive shift from a feudal mode of production towards a capitalistic mode of production. Consequently, this led to the gradual understanding of the public as being an idea related to the State rather than to that of the court of noblemen. Through this new judicial way of viewing the public under the emerging modern state, feudal authority was transformed into police authority. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Under feudal authority, private people remained unable to rule over public issues. Additionally, the lord's public power was represented before the people and not for the people. The shift from feudal society to capitalist society was mainly fuelled by the bourgeoisie's economical and technological progress. The bourgeoisie gradually became conscious that they were a significant player in the general well-being of society. Consequently they began demanding political entitlements by appealing to public opinion through reiteration of social injustice via local newspapers. As it was then understood, only a lord could represent the public with the right to govern as he saw fit. In questioning manorial authority and by seeking public opinion through publicity, the public sphere gradually became a lieu where political power needed to legitimate its actions. Henceforth,

the publicity of news was developed with the intent of not only informing the public but also of gaining its approval. At this point, news generally came from the bottom of society and gradually became biased and strategic in serving private interests rather than the collective good. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

With the advent of police authority, authority came to be understood as representation of a greater public; one that incorporated private persons under its rule of law whereas under modern law, the public is acknowledged as being formed by the union of private individuals. This shift from feudal law to modern law also cultivated some of the fundamental political ground work for the public sphere. Being a private individual entailed the privileges of being a part of the representation of public. Gradually, private status came to entail certain rights rather than particular restrictions on public power. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Political power progressively became issue to a conflicting process between one form of legitimacy coming from the bottom (public opinion) and another coming from the top (manorial authority). In summary, the public sphere allows citizens, whom once were deemed as only private individuals, to unite as a cohesive public to discuss cultural, economical, and political issues relating to their well-being. Near the end of the development of the public sphere, the political elites of Medieval Europe could no longer ignore the fact that private individuals could publically unite and have legitimate opinions on societal affairs. Some more conservative political elites believed in the hegemony of feudal virtues and tried to ignore the rising importance of public opinion and of publicity and were met with the French Revolution. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

**A few years before the French Revolution, the conditions in Prussia looked like a static model of a situation that in France and especially in Great Britain had become fluid at the beginning of the century. The inhibited judgments were called “public” in view of a public sphere that without question had counted as a sphere of public authority, but was now casting itself loose as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion. The publicum developed into the public, the subjectum into the [reasoning] subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities’ adversary. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.25)**

So far the public sphere represents an ideal-type of a democratic political process. Habermas’ optimism lies in the public sphere as it existed prior to the French Revolution. After the French Revolution, the public sphere lost much of its emancipating potential for reasons which will be subsequently discussed. The aftermath of the French Revolution, Habermas believes, marked the gradual decay of the public sphere as normative reason was being replaced by an overly dominating instrumental and purposive reason. It would seem as though the public sphere, prior to the French Revolution and as conceived by Habermas, represented a “relic” of a potentially better democratic order. The public sphere, in its ideal form, is seemingly the seed of what we believe to be Habermas’ optimism.

## *(2) The Colonization of the Lifeworld*

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the public sphere was undertaken by some significant structural changes. Habermas argues that in roughly the 1850s, with the advent of liberal capitalism and mass media, the public sphere had

generally become a commercialized space flooded by private interests. At this point in history, Habermas contends private advertisements are common place within the public forums. Moreover, the intent behind private advertisements primarily lay in increasing commodity exchange rather than in increasing critical insight on societal, political, and economical issues. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

His works, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (\*1962, 1989), *Toward a Rational Society* (\*1968, 1971), and *The Legitimation Crisis* (\*1973, 1975) illustrate a pessimistic picture reflecting how the public sphere and society, in general, has changed for the worse since the French Revolution. It is without a doubt that, at this point, Habermas' level of pessimism is rather high as he speaks to the effects of a possible refeudalization of society and the colonization of the lifeworld. It is important to accentuate that this originates from a thinker many refer to as a defender of Modernity and yet he speaks to the effect that Modernity could revert to its previous feudal state. Keeping this in mind, the status of Habermas as a defender of Modernity is not what we are directly challenging here. Habermas' pessimism at this point lies in that the public sphere's communicative potential might never be released. When reading his works composed between 1962 to 1976, it becomes quite apparent that Habermas' pessimism lies in the fact that domination may never be sufficiently eliminated.

First, despite reproaches from some of his critics, Habermas readily admits that the public sphere had lost much of its all-inclusive aspect. According

to Habermas, participation within the public sphere with the right to publicity gradually became exclusive to property owners:

**Consequently the propertyless [sic] were excluded from the public of private people engaged in critical political debate without thereby violating the principle of publicity. In this sense they were not citizens at all, but persons who with talent, industry, and luck some day might be able to attain that status; until then they merely had the same claim to protection under the law as the others, without being allowed to participate in legislation themselves. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.111)**

On a cultural level, Habermas believes the public sphere of letters was replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.160) As the public sphere began to take shape, private people had a dual-identity, one part as "homme" with political entitlements that the feudal society would not allow and second, as a "bourgeois" with the right of owning property without any political coercion backed up by normative reason. Therefore "homme" and "bourgeois" represent the separation of public from private. Later near the 1850s, "homme" and "bourgeois" merged to create the identity of "human being." However, "human being" was mostly limited to its economical aspect of being a "bourgeois," as a property owner. Consequently, "human being" developed with much disregard for the political aspect of being "homme" as an individual with the right to emancipation and as a citizen with the right to both publicity and public opinion. Put simply, Habermas posits there is a lack of equilibrium between "homme" and "bourgeois" in composing the identity of "human being." (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Gradually, the 19<sup>th</sup> century public sphere became a place where communication about the economical, the political, and the cultural grew out of

synchrony. In other words, the public sphere progressively became a place wherein commodity exchange and advertising were predominant, as opposed to the various political issues that were pertinent and meaningful to the overall well-being of society. Public opinion via mass media became a construct of the editors of newspapers. While it reflected public opinion to some extent, it also synthesized news in a fashion through which public opinion could be oriented towards particular political and economical beliefs and actions. The logic of wanting to guide public opinion in particular directions serves the economical and political elites in establishing hegemony for their strategic domination over the masses. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971)

In summary, public opinion went from “a public that made culture an object of critical debate into one that consumes it.” (Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p. 173) Thus much of the potential cultural, economical, and political debate within the public sphere became disarmed due to private interests. In other words, commercial advertising is mostly responsible for taking up much of the communicational space of the public sphere, accordingly rendering dialogue concerning other issues unimportant. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Even before writing the article *Crisis Tendencies in Advanced Capitalism* (\*1973, 1975), Habermas believed capitalism had crisis tendencies. Capitalism's crisis tendencies are very important when considering the structural changes of the public sphere. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and also near the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became apparent that “laissez-faire capitalism” or “liberal capitalism” could not auto regulate itself without bringing about serious social crises on

economical, political, and cultural levels. According to Habermas, a form of “organized capitalism” emerged with the objective of eliminating social crisis. The state apparatus in charge of this organized capitalism is referred to as the social welfare state, a precursor to the actual welfare state of post-World War II. The differences between social welfare state and welfare state are significant and the two should not be confused. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

The problems of the commercialization and the bureaucratization of the public sphere of both the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century are essentially the same in nature. In considering the big societal picture of things, the root of the problem can be attributed to the influx of instrumental reason and the deficiency of normative reason. At this point, it is critical to note that communicative reason had yet to be clearly conceptualized by Habermas. Often times, communicative action is reduced to normative reason which Habermas eventually reiterates in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (\*1981, 1984). Concerning the bureaucratization of the public sphere of the early 1900s and how it is similar to the commercialization of the public sphere, the bureaucratic apparatus of organized capitalism privatized public affairs to the point that the political public sphere became restricted to expert cultures. The general problem here is that the public sphere is still today being flooded by private interests; whether these interests are commercial or bureaucratic remains redundant. The bottom line is that the publicity which is mainly fuelled by private interests of expert cultures or economical elites is being designed in a strategic manner with the intent of dominating the people. On a side note, expert cultures are defined as groups of

people who are specialized in specific aspects of science, economics, and politics who have a great deal of influence on public administration and public opinion. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Akin to advertising and the establishment of a culture of consumption within the public sphere, the organized capitalist regime's bureaucracy aims at structuring public opinion through manipulative publicity in order to meet its diverse needs for maintaining political power. Consequently, the public sphere of the 1900s is gradually facing peril as political power is being concentrated in the hands of bureaucratic authorities. This bureaucratically dominated public sphere was congruous with that of the prince's court prior to the French Revolution, as opposed to having its political power concentrated in the hands of the people through democratic procedures. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

Through the manipulative usage of mass media, the people's beliefs and actions are now being determined from the top (bureaucratic and economical elites) and not from the bottom of society (common citizens). Accordingly, Habermas believes the problem lies in the fact that the masses are depoliticized even further with the advent and implementation of the social welfare state and its bureaucratic apparatus. Thus the bureaucratization of public sphere only augments the problems of the commercialized public sphere. All in all, the bureaucracy was put into place to correct the problems of capitalism; in return, it has rid us of some problems while creating others. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

As the beliefs and actions of modern citizens are manipulated by elites, the public sphere is in a greater threat of peril and the overall situation becomes

somewhat similar to that of feudal times. It seems that only the name of the game has changed but the game's essentials remains the same; the lords and princes have simply become capitalists and bureaucrats. Habermas is clearly pessimistic at this point, as he claims we are witnessing a "refeudalization of society". (Habermas, \*1962, 1989)

**Today it is social organizations that act in relation to the state in the political public sphere, whether through the mediation of political parties or directly, in interplay with public administration. With the interlocking of the public and private domains, not only do political agencies take over certain functions in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor; societal powers also take over political functions. This leads to a kind of "refeudalization" of the public sphere. Large-scale organizations strive for political compromises with the state and with one another, behind closed doors if possible; but at the same time they have to secure at least plebiscitarian approval from the mass of population through the deployment of staged form of publicity. (Habermas, *The Public Sphere: Concept in Seidmen*, 1989, p.236) [German source unknown]**

Later on in *The Legitimation Crisis* (\*1973, 1975), Habermas believes the administrative system consequently creates a chain of social crises by taking possession of public affairs in the hopes of correcting the social problems generally caused by capitalism. As aforementioned, it is important to note that the issue of the refeudalization of society entails a depolitization of the masses. This is caused by elites or expert cultures acting upon the individual in a strategic manner with the intent of controlling public opinion. According to Habermas, a true democracy cannot function if the citizens are duped or forcefully lead to particular beliefs and actions. (Habermas, \*1962, 1989) Effectively, the commercialization and the bureaucratization of the public sphere takes away the very autonomy democracy was set up to hermeneutically elucidate and protect.

In broad regards of the development of public sphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Habermas' pessimism lies in that the bourgeois public sphere is slowly becoming apolitical due to excessive manipulation of public opinion through mass media for economical and political purposes serving the needs of a few rather than those of the many:

**The public sphere assumes advertising functions. The more it can be deployed as a vehicle for political and economical propaganda, the more it becomes unpolitical as a whole and pseudo-privatized.**  
(Habermas, \*1962, 1989, p.175)

In Habermas' publications dating after the publication of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (\*1962, 1989), the overall dilemma addressed within his work grows broader thus extending the scope of his analysis of society significantly. That said, the public sphere as a concept remains intact but the range of Habermas' analysis of modern society broadens. Habermas' sociological analysis pivotally shifts when he investigates the validity of Marx's historical materialism. When Habermas returns to Marx's analysis of early capitalism, he realizes that historical materialism is near-sighted in its excessive focuses on labour and instrumental reason. In many ways, organized capitalism does not appeal to the same Marxist rules of liberal capitalism. Marx's theory of labour value and historical materialism only hold partly true according to Habermas. In addition, no longer do the productive forces of organized capitalism remain solely based on labour. Habermas posits that science and technology are gradually becoming productive forces themselves as they have become increasingly ideological. Accordingly, ideology comes to occupy a major role in Habermasian thought whereas ideology for Marx remains the domain of

the superstructure implying that it is secondary to the infrastructure. The following passage illustrates just that:

**Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century two developmental tendencies have become noticeable in the most advanced capitalist countries: an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system's stability, and a growing inter-dependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading productive force. Both tendencies have destroyed the particular constellation of institutional framework and subsystems of purposive-rational action which characterized liberal capitalism, thereby eliminating the conditions relevant for application of political economy in the version correctly formulated by Marx for liberal capitalism. I believe that Marcuse's basic thesis, according to which technology and science today also take on the function of legitimating political power, is the key to analyzing the changed constellation. (Habermas, c1968, 1971, p.100)**

Habermas believes that Marx's theory must be reworked and he did just that. Habermas reworks the Marxist concepts of infrastructure and superstructure, giving superstructure equal importance in the explication of the social. Rather than directly attributing the concepts of infrastructure and superstructure as the fundamental structures of all societies, Habermas uses the concepts of work and interaction, making both interaction and work equal in validity and importance. These two concepts of work and interaction lay the foundation for what would become Habermasian concepts of the system corresponding to instrumental reason and lifeworld relating to normative reason. (Habermas as cited in McCarthy, 1978) Not only does Habermas clearly distinguish himself from Karl Marx at this point with regards to his work and interaction concepts but he also takes much distance from the first generation of the Frankfurt School in his stance that instrumental reason and normative reason

are two facets of reason. He accuses both the Frankfurt School and Marx of being too limited to instrumental reason. McCarthy believes:

**The earlier Frankfurt school was, Habermas feels, too one-sided in its response to this changed situation. What is required is not a critique of science and technology as such but a critique of their totalization, of their identification with the whole of rationality. To this end the different forms of reason and rationalization must be distinguished. In particular the notion of rationality proper to the medium of social interaction must be rescued from the positivist strictures on meaningful discourse. A critique of positivist epistemology and the development of a theory of knowledge accommodating the different interests that knowledge can serve therefore become necessary tasks for the critical theory of contemporary society. (McCarthy, 1978, p.40)**

The following material focuses more precisely on Habermas' views of the lifeworld, the system, and the colonization of the former by the latter. In *Technology and Science as "Ideology"* (\*1968, 1971), Habermas offers the following table to define both the lifeworld and the system:

	Institutional framework: Symbolic interaction	Systems of purposive-rational (instrumental and strategic) action
Action-orienting rules	Social norms	Technical rules
Level of definition	Intersubjectively shared Ordinary language	Context-free language
Type of definition	Reciprocal expectations about behaviour	Conditional predictions Conditional imperatives
Mechanisms of acquisition	Role internalization	Learning of skills and qualifications
Function of action type	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)	Problem-solving (goal attainment, defined in means- end relations)
Sanctions against violation of rules	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority	Inefficacy: failure in reality
"rationalization"	Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination	Growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control

(Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.93)

As mentioned in his article, he remains heavily influenced by his concepts of interaction and work when synthesizing lifeworld and system. In his first attempts to define communicative action in *Technology and Science as "Ideology"* (\*1968, 1971), Habermas does not distinguish it very well from normative reason. Subsequently, when Habermas realizes the colonization of the lifeworld may not necessarily be a negative thing, he makes a clear distinction between normative reason and communicative reason. He concludes that it is in fact normative reason which is being pushed back by instrumental reason and thus potentially releasing communicative reason. This is the approximate point when Habermas pivots towards a more optimistic point of view but much still remains to be elaborated upon before our argumentation can proceed in that direction.

While keeping the previous table in mind, lifeworld and system will be defined in the ensuing section. The following definitions utilizes material dating after the publication of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (\*1981, 1984) in order to limit possible confusion. Essentially, from the standpoint of participants, the lifeworld is a meaningful whole permitting communicative action in everyday life. (Habermas cited in Sitton, 2003) The lifeworld provides and absorbs shared convictions which are at times explicit and implicit to actors' speech acts in social activities. (Habermas cited in Bouchindhomme, 2002) Most importantly, the lifeworld is responsible for the reproduction of culture, society, and personality and does so by offering symbols, histories, and background assumptions that can be tested via discussions on reason and experience. (Habermas according to Sitton, 2003)

Conversely, the system is mainly structured by instrumental and purposive reason. As the system expands, it creates purposive-rational subsystems (law, political, economical, and so forth) whose purposes are to ensure the material survival of society by objectifying and controlling nature. In modern society's earlier stages, the lifeworld and the system were in a relatively stable symbiosis. As the purposive-rational subsystems began to expand, they developed from what Habermas refers to as the "mediatization" to the colonization of the lifeworld.

**The modern form of understanding is too transparent to provide a niche for this structural violence by means of inconspicuous restrictions on communication. Under these conditions it is to be expected that the competition between forms of system and social integration would become more visible than previously. In the end, systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where a consensus-dependent coordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake. In these areas, the mediatization of the lifeworld assumes the form of a colonization. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.196)**

Hence as society evolved, the lifeworld gradually became akin to a subsystem which remained confined to the structural logic of the system at large. According to Habermas, the structural violence committed against the lifeworld drastically reduced the lifeworld's capacity to provide meaning to society, culture, and personality. Said differently, the colonization of the lifeworld represented a great portion of Habermas' pessimism because herein he remains quite open to the notion that modern society might be evolving within a moral vacuum where social crisis is inevitable. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971)

As illustrated, the public sphere also remains a victim of this colonization by instrumental reason. Given public opinion is manipulated by economical and

political elites with the assistance of scientific and technological means, such as mass media, everyday discourse becomes fragmented to the point where communication and actions geared towards universal goodness become scarce in nature. The dilemma does not lie in the totality of science and technology but rather lies in the fact that these former productive forces are used in an instrumental manner often without any consideration for normative implications. As aforementioned, it is important to note Habermas' notion of rationality is one which both utilizes and appeals to the normative aspects of reason. Habermas believes our sociological approaches must consider both normative reason and instrumental reason if they wish to be emancipated from the system's logic. What is interesting here is Habermas' advancement of the idea that even sociological and philosophical paradigms have been trapped by the system's logic. As "experts," social scientists must consider the sapping of normative reason so their socio-political recommendations can be effective in eliminating social crisis and in improving democracy. (Habermas, \*1967, 1988)

**The question is rather whether a productive body of knowledge is merely transmitted to men engaged in technical manipulation for purposes of control or is simultaneously appropriated as the linguistic possession of communicating individuals. A scientized society could constitute itself as a rational one only to the extent that science and technology are mediated with the conduct of life through the minds of its citizens. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.80)**

The above citation also alludes to Habermas' idea that the political is witnessing a scientization. Given the public sphere is considerably weak and the welfare state remains controlled by a technocratic bureaucracy appealing solely to positivist science and instrumental reasoning, Habermas considers politics to

be increasingly scientized. The scientization of politics has many negative implications. That said, Habermas contends that symbols and traditions must nevertheless maintain a role in politics whereas despite their sphere of influence being limited and filtered through positive science and instrumental reason. In many instances, Habermas points out that though positive science is also ideological and symbolic to a certain degree, it is not enough to replace the symbols and traditions emerging from the lifeworld. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971)

**Technocratic consciousness is, on the one hand, “less ideological” than all previous ideologies. For it does not have the opaque force of a delusion that only transfigures the implementation of interests. On the other hand today’s dominant, rather glassy background ideology, which makes a fetish of science, is more irresistible and farther-reaching than ideologies of the old type. For with the veiling of practical problems it not only justifies a particular class’s interest in domination and represses another class’s partial need for emancipation, but affects the human race’s emancipatory interest as such. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.111)**

Another important consequence of the colonization of the lifeworld is that Marx’s concept of class struggle has little pertinence today, as class struggle has become relatively latent. It was aforementioned that the general public evolved from embracing a critical culture towards one of mass consumption. Gradually, the people were “smoked-screened” by this culture of consummation and consequently, class consciousness became no longer apparent. Witnessing the increasing latency of social class struggle, Habermas remains puzzled as to how people will find the motivation and the solidarity to act both politically and publicly. In a pessimistic manner, he suggests that perhaps underprivileged groups could rally against the system in hope of achieving autonomy from the

common history of exploitation. However, Habermas gives the impression that the chances of such uprisings remain unlikely.

**This means not that class antagonisms have been abolished but that they have become latent. (...) But unless they are connected with protest potential from other sectors of society no conflicts arising from such under privilege can really overturn the system – they can only provoke it to sharp reactions incompatible with democracy. For underprivileged groups are not social classes, nor do they ever even potentially represent the mass of the population. Their disfranchisement and pauperization no longer coincide with exploitation, because the system does not live off their labor. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.109)**

At this point, it seems as though alienation and social crisis are inevitable.

However, Jürgen Habermas still sees potential student protest.

**In the long run therefore, student protest could permanently destroy this crumbling achievement-ideology, and thus bring down the already fragile legitimating basis of advanced capitalism, which rests only on depoliticization. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.122)**

### *(3) The Legitimization Crisis and the Possible End of the Individual*

In considering the depoliticization of the masses' within the political public sphere and the system colonizing the lifeworld creating a moral vacuum, Habermas suggests a social crisis cutting across many social dimensions is emerging gradually affecting the very essence of human identity, culture, and society. According to Habermas, despite some peoples belief the crisis is controllable by the current means used by the administrative system this is certainly not the case. We are naïvely fooling ourselves in thinking otherwise , as the crisis is actually shifting from one social realm to another. For example, a

social crisis pertaining to the economical system can seemingly be resolved by particular chosen interventions but the reality behind most of these cases is that the crisis has shifted into the political system thus creating a crisis of a new nature. This, in turn, gives the illusion that the initial crisis has been resolved. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

The following citation illustrates Habermas' conception of crisis:

**Thus, when members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can we speak of crises. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic. Crisis states assume the form of disintegration of social institutions.** (Habermas, \*1973, 1975, p.3)

Furthermore, a crisis is not something that can be resolved by an objective cure. The very essence of crisis is subjective as it is perceived and internalised by a subject. According to Habermas, the colonization of the lifeworld by the system signifies that instrumental reason can be held culpable as a root cause of today's social crisis. Fundamentally, overly dominating instrumental reason remains a cause of social crisis which consequently renders the system incapable of finding a permanent solution. It is permanent in the sense that it neither entails further legitimizing crises nor a need for subsequent solutions. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

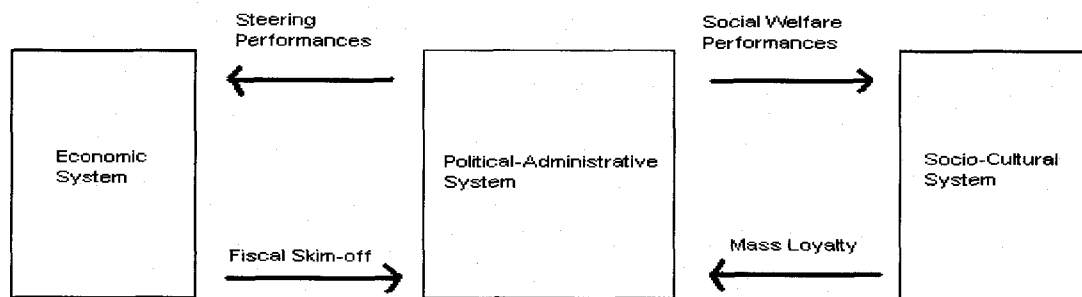
Habermas advances that crisis, at an individual level, is caused by the deprivation of one's sovereignty over one's own subjectivity. That said, one who has been deprived sovereignty over his subjectivity cannot be treated successfully by objective treatment. Matters would only become worse as the

communication between the objective treatment and the subject is distorted from the onset of the treatment process. A subjective treatment stimulating one's autonomy is seemingly the better alternative to resolving a crisis at an individual level. At best, objective treatment can only displace the crisis temporally giving the impression that a solution has been found. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

On a wider scale, the installation of instrumental reason as a source of hegemony in everyday social interactions combined with the massive deprivation of normative reason affects the very essence of the lifeworld which provides meaning to personality, culture, and society. Emancipation through communicative action thus remains the only solution to social crisis. True emancipation can only emerge through domination- and strategy-free communication among people rationally engaged as equals in hopes of establishing universal goodness, justness and truthfulness. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

When *The Legitimation Crisis* was published in German in 1973, Habermas' analytical scope broadened even more so as to include Talcott Parsons' concepts of steering media and relating them to the system, the lifeworld and social crisis. In the chapter *Social-Scientific Concept of Crisis: System and Life-World* (\*1973, 1975) Habermas proposes three subsystems, each with their corresponding steering media: the economical system which relates to the media of money, the political-administrative system pairing with the media of power, and the socio-cultural system coupled with the media of solidarity. Each subsystem and steering media is interconnected, multifariously

affecting one another. When looking at the social welfare state of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political-administrative system can be seen to act as a central node utilizing science and technology to dictate over the economical and socio-cultural systems. Given that the political-administrative system behaves as the central node, the media of power therefore remains the most influential steering media for Habermas. Habermas produces the following table:



(Habermas, \*1973, 1975, p.5)

Habermas contends that during the 1970s when *The Legitimation Crisis* was published, the political system and the media of power predominated over both the economical system and the socio-cultural system. When looking at the socio-cultural system and the media of solidarity, it becomes apparent they both are given less importance than the political system and the economical system, as the latter systems relate closer to instrumental reason than to normative reason. Instrumental reason, during late Modernity, therefore remains the dominant rationale over normative and communicational reason. Both steering mediums of power and money pertain mostly to instrumental logic and thus occupy the majority of the communicational space in society. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

Considering the socio-cultural system relies mostly on normative reason, feeding it with instrumental logic is mainly responsible for social crisis. The lifeworld structures of personality, culture, and society are for generally incompatible with instrumental logic. The following passage reflects this notion in fuller detail:

**In advanced capitalism such tendencies are becoming apparent at the level of cultural tradition (moral systems, world-views) as well as at the level of structural change in the system of childrearing (school and family, mass media). In this way, the residue of tradition off which the state and the system of social labour lived in liberal capitalism is eaten away (stripping away traditionalistic padding), and core components of the bourgeois ideology become questionable (endangering civil and familial-professional privatism). On the other hand, the remains of bourgeois ideologies (belief in science, post-aumatic art, and universalistic value systems) form a normative framework that is dysfunctional. Advance capitalism creates "new" needs it cannot stratify. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975, p.49)**

All three steering mediums of power, money, and solidarity must be distributed in manner where equilibrium can be ensured. In other words, social crisis arises when the three steering mediums are out of synchrony. Similar to Habermas' ideal speech-act situation where communication is domination- and strategy-free, the steering mediums on a more macroscopic level obey the same logic in the sense that one steering media should not dominate the other. Until equilibrium can be maintained between the steering mediums, social crisis will continue to rise. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

Returning to Habermas' general concepts of system and lifeworld, it is understood that the media of money and the media of power relate to the system and instrumental reason whereas the media of solidarity relates to the lifeworld and normative reason. In general, the overall problem is the excess of

instrumental reason and the deficiency of normative reason in the steering of economical, political, and cultural life. Habermas believes it might not be too late if we place more emphasis on providing communication based on the media of solidarity rather than that which is mostly based on the mediums of money and power. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975) The following passage does not mention steering media per se but essentially implies similar ideas:

**The substance of domination is not dissolved by the power of technical control. To the contrary, the former can simply hide behind the latter. The irrationality of domination, which today has become a collective peril to life, could be mastered only by the development of a political decision-making process tied to the principle of general discussion free from domination. Our only hope for the rationalization of the power structure lies in conditions that favor political power for thought developing through dialogue. The redeeming power of reflection cannot be supplanted by the extension of technically exploitable knowledge. (Habermas, \*1968, 1971, p.61)**

Ensuing, a brief explanation of how this crisis manifests itself in modern society will be provided. It is essential to remember that the system prioritizes self-regulation and control on nature and society. As the system expands, it creates subsystems which have specific functions to deal with crises or anomalies arising from capitalism. Given these subsystems are primarily steered by the mediums of money and power, they create a set of crises and anomalies of their own as they try to correct previous crises. Conclusively, Habermas believes the capitalist system inevitably has crisis tendencies because much of its expansion has occurred via sacrificing democracy. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

Typically a crisis initiates as an economical crisis due to the capitalist system's incapacity to regulate itself using democratic principles. If the economical system fails to suppress the economical crisis sufficiently, the former

becomes transformed into a rationality crisis. Eventually as the political system or the administration attempt to cope with the rationality crisis, should it fail, then the means of dealing with the crisis are scrutinized thus leading to the formation of a legitimization crisis. In the event that the administrative systems fails to suppress a legitimization crisis, the political system eventually will steer the crisis into the realm of the socio-cultural system which then will become a motivation crisis affecting the very essence of human existence/identity. Therefore, Habermas concludes that crises are the result of one or a combination of four main factors:

- the economic system does not produce the requisite quantity of consumable values, or;**
  - the administrative system does not produce the requisite quantity of rational decisions, or;**
  - the legitimation system does not provide the requisite quantity of generalized motivations, or;**
  - the socio-cultural system does not generate the requisite quantity of action-motivating meaning.**
- (Habermas, \*1973, 1975, p.49)

During the later stages of the crisis, within the socio-cultural system, we find what Habermas refers to as a motivational crisis. In line with Postmodern thought, the motivational crisis is what seemingly occupies most of Habermas' worry, as it challenges the very essence of what it means to be human. Habermas believes "the less the cultural system is capable of producing adequate motivations for politics, the educational system, and the occupational system, the more must scarce meaning be replaced by consumable values." (Habermas, \*1973, 1975, p.93) Therefore it becomes evident Habermas

believes we are heading towards a “dead end” in the sense that the culture of consumption is the only source of solidarity left

At this point, the administrative-political system is confronted with exorbitant demands for legitimization. Its current sources of legitimacy, such as science and technology as ideology, are inadequate as their normative structures are inflexible. The solution to this problem is not to go regress to pre-modern ideologies or traditions because that sort of normative reason is not domination free and hence cannot provide adequate justifications for its legitimacy. Habermas believes the solution must entail a sort of normative reason that does not require justification. This does not necessitate an objective form of normative reason but rather the objectification of normative reason lies in fact the problem when considering the colonization of the lifeworld by the system, as it inevitably becomes a colonization as opposed to a mediatization. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

In 1973, Habermas' pessimism lies in that this motivation crisis is due to a lack of meaning in societal discourse because of the structural violence committed against the lifeworld by the colonization of rational and purposive subsystems. Habermas contends that in late Modernity the lifeworld is gradually becoming akin to a subsystem. Moreover, the sole tradition that the lifeworld can employ to give sense to the people is that which is found in the Enlightenment Project as it occurred in the beginning of Modernity. Similarly to Max Weber, Habermas believes we cannot return to traditions dating prior to the Enlightenment. Modernity has a democratic tradition or procedure, as shown in

his previous writings pertaining to public sphere, in which we can base our daily interactions thus bestowing upon us the capacity to deal with crises accordingly. (Habermas, \*1973, 1975)

Approximately four to five years before the German publication of *The Theory of Communicative Action* in 1981, Habermas became hopeful in his conception of universal pragmatics. Universal pragmatics entails the communication of speech-acts aimed at establishing universal goodness, justness, and truthfulness. As conceived at this point, communicative action goes beyond simply bringing back normative reason in the public sphere, it has a reason of its own. It can serve as a solution to the legitimation crisis in the sense that communicative action appeals to communicative reason which essentially requires no justification as speech-acts are universally human and *sui generis* to external nature, society and internal nature. (Habermas, \*1976, 1979) Despite this newfound hope, Habermas is still open to the ideas that some structural damage to the lifeworld might be irreparable and irreversible. Additionally, the end of the individual is always a possibility as we have become fragile due to the lack of diverse societal conflicts.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HABERMAS AND THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION**

This chapter relates to Habermas' publications dating around the 1981 period. Emphasis will be placed on the two volumes of *The Theory of Communicative Action* written in 1981 in German. *The Theory of Communicative Action* is arguably the most important of Habermas' writings and is certainly the one for which he is most renowned. References will be made on his publications spanning from 1983-1996 but the optimism that we wish to highlight is mainly found in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (\*1981, 1984). The general purpose of this chapter is to argue that while indeed Habermas is predominantly optimistic his pessimism nonetheless remains present. At this point, Habermas is undoubtedly optimistic as his writings emit a greater degree of hope than his writings prior 1981. In this time period, his optimism is considerable in respect to Modernity's potentiality of overcoming anomie, alienation, and domination by providing democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all people.

As briefly aforementioned, we consider in 1981 Postmodern argumentation to be quite prominent and even hegemonic. Given that Habermas is one of the few "underdog" perspectives of that time, when compared to Postmodernism, it can be put forth that his thoughts were interpreted and illustrated in a manner depicting him as a liberal defender of Modernity. Accordingly, we argue that oftentimes his optimism was overly emphasized at the expense of overlooking his pessimism consequently making his social perspective an opponent to Postmodern thought rather than seeing their

similarities. In other words, in construing them as opponents, Postmodernism and Habermas' similarities in terms of pessimism are often unnoticed. Hence, it is not argued here that Postmodern pessimism and Habermasian pessimism are congruous but we simply purport they are similar in some regards. For example, both are very open to the possible end of the individual. However, they simultaneously remain distinct as Habermas' pessimism still contains some hope whereas general Postmodern pessimism is nihilistic and cynical in the sense that Modernity is hopeless in providing democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all people. Though Habermas has never claimed that Modernity is hopeless but he does not lean towards a predominantly hopeful position either.

That said, in our illustration of Habermas' work spanning from 1981-1996, we assert he is in fact optimistic but that his position is much more moderate than that of what is typically and contemporarily considered an optimistic thinker. *The Theory of Communicative Action* depicts a Habermas with a hopeful perspective, however his pessimism nevertheless remains quite significant. Chapter 2, like its antecedent, will consist of three main sections: (1) *The Communicative Action Theory*, (2) *Communicative Action as a Solution*, (3) *Latent and New Conflicts: The Tasks of Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative Action*.

### (1) *The Communicative Action Theory*

The Theory of Communicative Action is of great complexity. Similarly to the concept of public sphere, communicative action is oftentimes misunderstood

in contemporary sociological and philosophical literature. As Christian Bouchindhomme advances “The concept of communicative action is a central concept that is the object to an impressive amount of misunderstandings” [Translated from French] (2002, p.26). The following material will develop and define such communicative action as a concept.

Interestingly, the Theory of Communicative Action is a synthesis of many theories within philosophy and social sciences, such as Herbert Mead’s Symbolic Interactionism, Émile Durkheim’s Functionalism, Talcott Parsons’ System Theory, Karl Marx’s Conflict Theory, Max Weber’s Action and Rationality Theory, Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytical Theory, Lawrence Kohlberg’s Moral Development Theory, and Jean Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory, only to name a few. As evident, due to its conceptual range, it is no surprise that Habermas’ communicative action theory is the source of much perplexity. Not only does the theory of communicative action synthesize the theories enumerated above, but it is also a continuation of his argumentation prior to 1981 in that he relates it to his concepts of the lifeworld, system, legitimization crisis, public sphere, steering mediums, and so forth.

According to Habermas, inter-human interaction consists of speech, action, or both concurrently. Speech-acts are inherently universal to all humans even in extreme cases wherein severe handicaps or pathologies are involved. In principle, Habermas considers human identity to be essentially founded on the fact that we are communicational beings capable of speech-acts thus making us arguably different from the greater majority of living-beings. Speech is the

source of language, effectively enabling the production of concepts which comprehensively serve as “building blocks” for both oral and written history (or collective memory). Moreover, history, collective memory, and culture as essential components of the lifeworld, allow the formation of human identity as individuals employ them in everyday life. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Inspired by Émile Durkheim, Habermas believes that language, as a result of speech, is a *sui generis* reality which transcends external nature, internal nature, and even society. Similarly to Durkheim, Habermas argues that in everyday discussions, words encapsulate various profane and sacred meanings that both define and challenge the moral limits of society, internal nature, and external nature. It seems as though Habermas believes language, in the absence of an overly dominating normative and instrumental reason, is critical as it inevitably pushes the limits of the true, the just, and the good of society. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

In similar terminology to Durkheim, Habermas believes that as we progress from mechanical societies towards organic societies, our ability to utilize language in a critical manner augments. That said, communication through language seemingly correlates with a gradual emancipation and autonomy as the moral limits are constantly being pushed and neutralized by the establishment of norms solely based on communication itself. History, for Habermas, progresses in a direction where individuals are less defined by moral standards, except for the essential standards of communicational reason, and are more reliant on their self understanding of happiness and well-being, which they actualize via open

discussion with others. In other words, societal progress increases via general appeal to communicative action, which allows the people to discuss and question any aspect involving their person, society, or existence. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Perhaps in more sociological terms, Modernity is the culmination of a progressive process of intersubjective recognition in everyday communication. Through communicative action, modern individuals gage their conception of the good life with the collective's conception of the good life. In a truly rational and modern society, individuals can generally become masters of their own fate and identity if they respect others' right to achieve the same. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984) Conclusively, we argue Habermas' progress can be depicted as an evolutionary walk towards autonomy and that communicative action serves as both the source and safeguard of this autonomy.

**Insofar as a person does make his decision about who he wants to be dependant on rational deliberation, he orients himself not by moral standards, but by standards of happiness and well-being that we intuitively use to judge forms of life as well. For the life conduct of an individual is entwined with the life-form of the collectivity to which he belongs. Whether a life is a good one is not decided by standards of normative rightness – though the standards of a good life are also not completely independent of moral standards. (...) If it is to be a good life, these identities may not contradict moral demands, but their substance cannot itself be justified from universalistic points of view. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.110)**

In relation to the lifeworld, language exists as a primary social institution. Individuals sustain the lifeworld through speech-acts as they interact with each other in everyday life. In exchange, the lifeworld provides meaning to the social dimensions of personality, culture, and society.

**“Communicative action can be understood as a circular process in which the actor is two things in one: an initiator who masters situations through actions for which he is accountable and a product of the traditions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialization in which he is reared.” (Habermas, \*1983, 1990, p.135)**

In other words, the lifeworld is a network in that it serves as a collective memory inputting and outputting meaning through the language of communicating individuals. Every word means something. In essence, each word is a sort of claim concerning physical or metaphysical reality. Through communicative action, individuals challenge these claims used in language in everyday interactions, and do so with the intent of reaching mutual understanding. That said, communicative action is critical as it is a continuous loop of questioning claims on physical and metaphysical reality rendering the lifeworld's symbolic structures to be dynamic and fluid. Fundamentally, the lifeworld cannot have a positivist foundation as it is too fluid and subjective by necessity. Communication action, however, is objective and subjective enough to mediate the lifeworld and consequently prevent it from being colonized by the system while simultaneously preventing it from colonizing the system. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

In the footsteps of Habermas, we will compare communicative action to other types of actor-world relations. As actors engage in everyday discussions challenging physical and metaphysical claims, they appeal to four types of actor-world relations: teleological/strategic action, normative action, dramaturgic action, and communicative action. The first type, teleological/strategic action is two forms of action merged together. Teleological action is end-oriented and is based on maxims and interpretations of a given situation. Strategic action

pertains to an action chosen over other possible actions based on a calculation of its maximal utility in reaching an end goal. Action of this sort is usually of a more external nature. A second type of actor-world relation, normative action, is action taken based on common values. Normative action typically relates to society at large. The third type of action is dramaturgical, consisting of action oriented to a public by an actor wanting to convey an image of oneself with the intent of somewhat unveiling one's subjectivity. Dramaturgical action relates to inner nature. The fourth type of action is communicative and it employs the other three types while adding some additional criteria. (Habermas, \*1981, 1987)

As aforementioned, communicative action can be differentiated from the other types of actor-world relations in that it concerns interaction between two or more individuals capable of speaking and acting, and whom are engaged in an interpersonal relation. In this instance, actors coordinate their negotiations and actions with the intent of forming consensus on defining a situation, on choosing a plan of action, and on acting on the given situation. (Habermas, \*1981, 1987, p.101-102) Communicative action is inherent to humankind and its potential can be released once actors are engaged communicatively within a domination- and strategy-free environment. Essentially, communicative action is a combination of all three other types of actor-world relation in terms of how they relate to internal, societal, and external nature and its aim is geared towards the formation of mutual understanding without relying on strategy or domination. (Habermas, \*1981, 1987)

Another important aspect of communicative action is that it contains fundamental action orientations. Given communicative action serves as a point of intersection between individuals and the lifeworld, it both transmits and renews knowledge, goals, norms, and values. Habermas illustrates how communicative action relates to the subsystem of culture, society, personality, and behavioural system. In terms of culture, communicative action is geared towards values with the intent of maintaining cultural patterns thus providing meaning to everyday life. Socially, communicative action is oriented towards norms whose function are to integrate members by creating solidarity. With regards to personality, communicative action provides the means for goal attainment which, accordingly, permits identity formation. Finally, pertaining to the behavioural system, communicative action provides both the means and resources to necessitate human environmental adaptation.

<b>Components of action orientations</b>	<b>Subsystems</b>	<b>Functions</b>
Values	Culture	Pattern maintenance
Norms	Society	Integration
Goals	Personality	Goal attainment
Means, resources	Behavioural system	Adaptation

**Functions and Action Orientations**

(Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.243)

The previous table is clear in illustrating how communicative action serves as a link between the individual and the lifeworld in providing symbolic meaning and knowledge through language. Communicative action is much more than a communicative force solely responsible for recrudescing normative reason within the public sphere. In comparison to action founded upon normative reason, communicative action offers access to the communicational side of reason

whereas, in many instances, normative reason limits access to it. For example, manorial authority illustrates how normative reason hindered access to the communicational side of reason as only lords were permitted by feudal culture to determine aspects of private and public life. Succinctly said, communicative reason is neutral in its cognizance of human intersubjectivity and accordingly cultivates mutual understanding. Such understanding remains free of strategy and domination whereas instrumental reason and normative reason have both relied heavily on these forms of control.

**Under the functional aspect of mutual understanding, communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of coordinating action, it serves social integration and the establishment of solidarity; finally, under the aspect of socialization, communicative action serves the formation of personal identities. The symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced by way of the continuation of valid knowledge, stabilization of group solidarity, and socialization of responsible actors. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p. 137)**

In general, Habermas believes social evolution is a history of progress wherein individuals become increasingly liberated and autonomous by appealing to communicative reason. While technological and scientific progress are admittedly forms of progress. they remain only a small aspect of the progress Habermas envisions. True progress for Habermas is denoted by the gradual accomplishment of autonomy via interrelationships between individuals and society. When exploring his works in their entirety and, as idealistic as it may sound, it becomes evident Habermas envisions the ideal society as one wherein citizens are autonomous and emancipated from the constraints of material and social reality. Communicative action therefore remains a foundation on which a

purely rational society whose citizens are truly autonomous from natural and societal constraints can be established.

## *(2) Communicative Action as a Solution*

Communicative action was previously defined as a force interlinking justness, knowledge, and meaning. Briefly, justness relates to modern culture, knowledge relates to the system, and meaning relates to the lifeworld. That said, communicative action remains deeply ingrained within modern culture. It thus is understood as a mediator between system and lifeworld in its establishment of a system of formal law with the underlining intent of keeping instrumental reason and normative reason in equilibrium. History illustrates that instrumental reason and normative reason customarily encroach upon each other consequently affecting communicative reason. It can hence be argued that when normative reason was the dominant rationale over instrumental reason in feudal times, bourgeois culture began to appeal to communicative reason within the public sphere. At that point in time, instrumental reason was being dominated by normative reason, which subsequently caused the release of communicative reason which was utilized temporarily by the bourgeois culture. In 1981, as instrumental reason was the dominating rationale over normative reason, Habermas believed the colonization of the lifeworld was potentially releasing communicative reason should we the modern citizens decide to use it in setting the formal ground work for a purely rational and modern society. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

It should now be quite evident that depriving the lifeworld of normative reason would instigate its decay. Habermas admits that instrumental reason can provide a substitute for the lifeworld for a relatively short period of time, as it can be interpreted by the people as normative content. Noteworthy examples of these are empirical and positive. Though empirical and positive sciences neglect the media of solidarity while privileging the media of money and power, they nevertheless strive to establish a universal understanding of truth, bestowing upon people a limited meaning of reality. The meaning conveyed by positive science is reductionistic and incomplete, as it neglects issues pertaining to the just and the good thus becoming exactly what it claims to oppose. More clearly, positive science has become ideological and consequently allows the possibility of providing a limited form normative reasoning. Only through true communicative reasoning can the true, the just, and the good be engaged simultaneously without alienating one another in the process. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

While traditional or pre-Enlightenment cultures also seek to establish a universal understanding of natural and social realities, they are mostly interested in establishing a normative understanding of what is good. By distorting that which is considered true and just, these cultures endeavour to realize a good that is neither communicatively and instrumentally reasonable nor sound. It can accordingly be suggested these pre-Enlightenment cultures, in their arguably limited understanding of the good, actually achieve the opposite of their initial

goal. In neglecting both the just and the true, these cultures come to embody the bad. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

In a liberal sense, communicative reason merges with the just as it attempts to establish neutral grounds upon which rational societal discussions on the true and the good can occur. Habermas contends that communicative action can maintain the equilibrium between the system and the lifeworld with its intent of providing freedom and autonomy to the people without hindering neither system nor lifeworld developments. That said, communicative action permits both the system and lifeworld to develop under the rules of modern law and democracy. Such communicative action will inevitably cause individuals to excel as well as they become autonomous when the system and the lifeworld do not enslave them. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

In his work prior to 1981, Habermas considered the lack of normative reason to be a serious dilemma. From henceforth, Habermas considers normative reason as something that, like instrumental reason, requires constant mediation. Logically, the system can also be colonized by the lifeworld to the extent that normative logic propels ideology and tradition to a point where the essential material conditions for existence are no longer provided for. Furthermore normative reason can delineate and encapsulate what is "good," while simultaneously encroaching upon that which is true and just. In doing so, the good becomes the bad, and what is considered bad becomes good. In summary, through its restoration, normative reason must only be rendered equal

to instrumental reason through mediation via communicative reason.  
(Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Though instrumental reason and normative reason infringe upon one another, communicational reason can serve as their mediator. Habermas claims that, at one time in human history, the system (instrumental reason) and lifeworld (normative reason) were coupled. However, as society evolved, we came to witness "the uncoupling of system and lifeworld." (\*1981, 1984 p.153) Such an uncoupling served to create communicative reason releasing potentials for a domination-free existence, which are arguably unique to Modernity alone. As instrumental reason and normative reason gained their respective autonomy throughout time, communicative reason, as the weakest of the three, remained the uniting force preventing them from annihilating one another. Simply put, Habermas hopes communicative action will thwart the colonization of the lifeworld. We hence conclude that some may mistakenly conflate this hope with optimism. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

The following passage contains another key aspect concerning system and lifeworld relations:

**The lifeworld, more or less relieved of tasks of material reproduction, can in turn become more differentiated in its symbolic structures and can set free the inner logic of development of cultural Modernity. At the same time, the private and public spheres are now set off as the environments of the system. (...) In modernized societies disturbances in the material reproduction of the lifeworld take the form of stubborn systemic disequilibria; the later either take effect directly as crises or they call forth pathologies in the lifeworld.**  
(Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.385)

As the lifeworld is colonized by the system, it loses its right to impede on material reproduction. Therefore, material reproduction becomes predominantly mediated or steered by the system. As illustrated by the above citation, the relationship between the system and the lifeworld remains hypocritical, as the system impedes on the lifeworld while the converse is prevented. Given the lifeworld can no longer crossover into the system's realm of responsibility, Habermas' newfound optimism lies in this particular aspect. That said, he concedes the colonization of the lifeworld may not be as bad as he previously believed it to be. Relieved from its association with material reproduction, the lifeworld can now invest a greater amount of its energy on the culture of Modernity. Therefore the colonization of the lifeworld releases communicative reason which, in turn, serves as the basis for modern culture if the mediums of money and power should become overly dominant. Effectively the colonization of the lifeworld may be a necessary step in establishing a truly rational and democratic society, one which is founded upon communicative action. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Habermas believes the imbalance of influence between instrumental reason and normative reason to be the source of contemporary crisis. While instrumental reason is not intrinsically bad, there remains an influx of it within society today. Increasing normative reason would promote greater balance however this should not be done at the expense of annihilating instrumental reason, as this would render another type of imbalance. Habermas believes that, as instrumental reason is forcefully entering the lifeworld, communicative action

will be liberated as a counter-measure to prevent normative and instrumental reason from alienating one another. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

On a more methodological note, Habermas' theory of Communicative Action can be considered as the completion of Max Weber's thoughts on rationality. The latter had greatly affected the Frankfurt School and many other influential thinkers, such as those of Postmodern, Neo-conservatist, and Neo-liberal tendencies, so as to incorrectly synthesize the social dynamics of Modernity. Weber's analysis of reason is limited to in reducing rationality to its instrumental aspects while simultaneously neglecting moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive aspects embedded in communicative reason and normative reason. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.303) The problem lies therein that ensuing social thinkers employ Weber's theory on rationality in order to critique rationality as a whole without fully understanding the normative and communicative aspects of rationality. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

In their critiques of modern rationality, Neo-conservatives and Postmodern thinkers alike tend to found their solutions in irrationality or nihilism, whereas Neo-liberals overstress the objectivity and progressiveness of science and technology. Generally, Postmodern, Neo-conservatives, and Neo-liberals are likely to privilege either normative reason or instrumental reason while neglecting communicative reason in their critiques of modern rationality. Therefore Habermas conceives social theory as containing a similar imbalance, as that existing within society is commonly over reliant on instrumental reason and consequently lacks normative and communicational reason. In reaction to this,

Habermas places hope in communicative action's potential to return a much needed equilibrium to critical theory, social theory, and social sciences. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Interestingly, it is as though Habermas' initial dilemma has now become a solution of sorts. Habermas' reconceptualization of the lifeworld's colonization as a source of optimism denotes that communicative reason is seemingly being released. Thus it can be argued that Jürgen Habermas is more optimistic than pessimistic at this point. He is most hopeful about the potential of communicative action as a solution to economical, legitimization, administrative, motivational crisis in society, and to crisis in the fields of social science and philosophy. Essentially, crisis is caused by purposive-rational subsystems over-expanding in realms where they do not belong or are not readily received. Habermas suggests that once the communicative action theory is embraced by critical theory, its main task will be to restore a much needed equilibrium between instrumental reason and normative reason on a societal and sociological level. Much of this optimism lies in the tasks he recommends for critical theory and communicative action theory. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

### *(3) Latent and New Conflicts: The Tasks of Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative Action*

In his work pertaining to the public sphere and to science and technology as ideology, Habermas speaks to the effect that social conflicts based on class struggle have become latent. Consequently, this class struggle latency creates

new conflicts and lifeworld pathologies. These ideas are elaborated in greater detail in volume 2 of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (\*1981, 1984). For example, according to Habermas' understanding of Sigmund Freud's work, human identity, at one point, was greatly influenced and determined by the Oedipus complex. Essentially, the Oedipus complex is a conflict of authority within the typical family unit. Being highly dependent on the family unit, human identity was once defined through a period of conflict wherein children protested against their parents' authority. Through conflict-consensus between them and their parents, children would gain a sense of autonomy and identity. More precisely, Habermas posits that the Oedipus complex was the first step of permitting an individual's realization by comparing oneself to one's present self, a past self, and a future self via conflict-consensus with parental authority. Only once this conflict has been resolved within the family unit can an individual gain a unique conception of the good life and autonomy. These ideas are subsequently addressed in the section pertaining to cloning. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

Habermas uses the findings of Christopher Lasch to argue that the Oedipus complex is an older social conflict which is becoming latent. Due to the increasing latency of the Oedipus complex, Lasch considers narcissistic disturbances to be on the rise. Communicative freedom within the family unit are achieved through sacrificing greater individual fragility in terms of personal identity. In other words, in eliminating a domination (authoritarian or paternalistic) discursive process like the Oedipus complex, individuals are freer

but now consequently prone to newly and unseen social pathologies, such as the narcissistic crisis. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.388)

Based on his elaborations on the narcissistic crisis, we believe Habermas is, in this context, considerably pessimistic in his belief that Western Society and its individuals are free though fragile. Moreover, Habermas' optimism at this point lies in the tasks he suggests for the Critical Theory and Communicative Action Theory. On a side note, Habermas mentions that Lasch's diagnosis of the times goes beyond the clinical domain in that it appeals to normative reason whereas, we assume, Behaviourism does not. Prior to *The Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas directly critiqued Behaviourism for being too limited in its systemic type of analysis based on instrumental reason, which accordingly neglects the normative logic of the lifeworld. (\*1967, 1988)

Conclusively, Habermas outlines two main tasks for Critical Theory once it successfully is able to employ the theory of Communicative Action. These tasks work on two different levels of reality. The first is pertinent to Critical Theory as a mediator between science and philosophy allowing a just, true, and good social theory. In this sense, Critical Theory must bridge the gap between science and philosophy in making them self-critical and aware of the social dimensions pertaining to the system, the lifeworld, and communicative action, and while being considerate of the instrumental, normative, and communicational dimensions of reason. As for the second task of Critical Theory, it must erect a praxis based on communicative action which serves to protect the lifeworld and the system from annihilating one another. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984)

A fundamental task for Critical Theory is that it must liberate modern culture from the system. Modern culture has the means to sustain itself as it "...is as little in need of a philosophical grounding as science" (\*1981, 1984, p. 397). Arguably, through Critical Theory both science and philosophy are part of the solution of freeing modern culture by giving it autonomy in the dialogue it entertains. In other words, modern culture can exist independently of science and philosophy, as it bears communicative reason which is autonomous to both instrumental and normative reason. Art, philosophy, and science can be linked only through communicative reason and thus cannot be limited solely to a viewpoint based upon instrumental reason or normative reason. Furthermore, their emancipating potential would greatly be enhanced through communicative action as questions of the good, the just, and the true would not be impinging upon each other. At this point, Habermas has never been this optimistic:

**Even without the guidance of the critiques of pure and practical reason, the sons and daughters of Modernity learned how to divide up and develop further the cultural tradition under these different aspects of rationality – as questions of truth, justice, or taste. More and more the science dropped the elements of worldviews and do without interpretation of nature and history as a whole. Cognitive ethics separates off problems of the good life and concentrates on strictly deontological, universalizable [sic], so that what remains from the Good is only the just. And an art that has become autonomous pushes toward an ever purer expression of the basic aesthetic experiences of a subjectivity that is decentered and removed from the spatiotemporal structures of everyday life. Subjectivity frees itself here from the conventions of daily perception and of purposive activity, from the imperatives of work and what is merely useful. (Habermas, \*1981, 1984, p.397)**

Near the German publication of *The Theory of Communicative Action* in 1981, Habermas' optimism lies in that he believes modern citizens have never

been this liberated. Also, so long as Critical Theory embraces the Theory of Communicative Action and that its interests lie in the establishing of a modern culture, Critical Theory remains a huge asset in ensuring societal progress towards greater autonomy. Accordingly, Habermas' pessimism lies in whether or not Modernity will be capable of keeping social crises at bay while simultaneously progressing towards greater individual autonomy.

### **CHAPTER THREE HABERMAS TODAY**

Our last chapter focuses primarily on Habermas' publications dating after 1997. The main purpose of this chapter is to illustrate that Habermas is again pessimistic with regards to Modernity's potential to overcome anomie, alienation, and domination and to provide democracy, emancipation and freedom to all people. This chapter is divided into three subsections, they are as follows: (1) *Transnational Crises and the Nation State's Incapacity to Act*, (2) *Modernity versus Pre-Modernity: Terrorism and Fundamentalism*, (3) *Bioethics and Human Cloning: Modernity against itself and the Limits of Communicative Action*.

#### *(1) Transnational Crises and the Nation State's Incapacity to Act*

In the early 90s, globalization became a "hot topic" in both sociology and philosophy thus having a considerable impact on Habermas' views on Modernity. Arguably, his views have become significantly sombre due to the influence he reckons globalization is having on society. Before we proceed with some more of Habermas' more specific views on globalblization, we would like to cite a passage of Max Pensky's introduction to Habermas' *The Postnational Constellation: Politcal Essays* (\*1998, 2001):

**The resulting dialectic between universalist theory and pointedly and up-to-date political writing is nowhere more clear than here, where Habermas confronts the ambiguous consequences of globalization in their full range. Rather than take the simple step of emphasizing the "good," universalistic reading of globalization, the essays collected here derive much of their value from their unflinching analyses of the**

**“bad”; including the real possibility that the bad might win, all our universalistic sympathies notwithstanding. (p.x)**

Herein Max Pensky makes an interesting claim when he writes, “...the essays collected here derive much of their value from their unflinching analyses of the “bad”; including the real possibility that the bad might win.” Accordingly, we surmise Pensky would agree with our argument that Habermas, in 1998, is quite pessimistic in his conceptions of both globalization and Modernity. We do not, however, equate globalization with Modernity. While globalization is accelerated by Modernity, it is also affectuated by many other factors which we will not consider in this dissertation.

Globalization has greatly influenced Habermas’ thoughts on Modernity.

He expands on his idea of globalization in the ensuing paragraph:

**I use the concept of “globalization” here to describe a process, not an end-state. It characterizes the increasing scope and intensity of commercial, communicative, and exchange relations beyond national borders. Just as railroad, steamship, and telegraph intensifies and accelerated the flow of goods, persons, and information in nineteenth century, so today satellite technology, air travel, and digitalized communication have the effect of expanding and intensifying networks. “Network” has emerged as a key term, whether it refers to the means of transporting goods and persons or to flows of commodities, capital, and money, or electronic information transfer and information processing, or the circulatory process between humanity, technology, and nature. Timelines show globalization tendencies running in many dimensions. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.66)**

As globalization becomes a more effective variable in social analysis, Habermas becomes increasingly preoccupied with how it, as a force, can be held accountable for the ever-increasing amount of social conflicts and crises. Habermas is further worried about how the culture of experts and the

administrative system will choose to deal with many of these new conflicts. Habermas suggests that more and more politicians, since 1989, appear to be saying "If we can't solve any of these conflicts, let's at least dim the critical insights that turn conflicts into challenges." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p59)

Habermas is deeply troubled by the fact that old social conflicts and newly emerging global crises are not viewed as political challenges. The following passage presents readers with "statistical gloom," thus serving to illustrate why certain social conflicts should in fact become political challenges:

**The million people living below the official poverty line in the Federal Republic of Germany, along with the 2.7 million who receive some form of social aid, are a political challenge. The fact that the increase in seasonally adjusted monthly figures for registered unemployment coincides with higher and higher levels of share prices and corporate earnings is a political challenge. The fact that criminal acts with a right-wing extremist element have increased by a third over the last year is a political challenge. The widening gap in living standards between the prosperous North and the impoverished, chaotic, and self-destructive regions of the South, or the looming cultural conflicts between a largely secularized West and a fundamentalist Islamic world, or the sociocentric traditions of the Far East, are political challenges – to say nothing of the warning signals from the relentlessly ticking ecological clock; the balkanization of regions collapsing into civil wars and ethnic conflicts, and so on. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.59)**

Not only is Habermas pessimistic about the rising social conflicts which are going unchallenged but he also greatly worries about the fact that welfare states around the globe are in a state of decline. Nation States and their respective administrative systems everywhere appear to be losing their capacity to respond to cultural, economical, and political issues pertaining within and outside of their borders. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

The nation-state constellation is giving way to a postnational constellation. That is, the national reality is being determined by a more global reality. The main issue is that politics, via the nation-state model, are being weakened by globalization thus motivating the former nation-states to re-orient their actions towards the unclear political framework of the postnational constellation. The problem herein partly lies in the type of globalization which is occurring today. Globalization is now predominantly market-driven meaning that, in Habermasian terminology, it is mainly fuelled by the media of money rather than the mediums of power and solidarity. Considering the mediums of power and of solidarity are not the main drivers of globalization, nation states have lost much of their capacity to act within and outside of their national sphere of influence. Consequently, social welfare states are declining on a global scale due to the fact that capitalism is left to its own logic of instrumental reason. More precisely, we have regressed to a time where the political and the cultural spheres are being driven by that of the economical. Equilibrium on a global level must be met between the three steering mediums. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Habermas considers globalization with a global political "closure" to be occurring at the expense of the nation state and the democratic life that many have tried to establish. (\*1998, 2001, p. 61) This does not presume a flawless supremacy of nation states, as Habermas would have a great deal of negative critique concerning them and accordingly speaks to the effect that their dismantling would be considered positive. But, for now, the crude democratic procedures that the nation states have established represent decent steps

towards a truly rational and democratic society. The type of globalization that is taking place, notably market-driven globalization, is a poor substitute for the former type of political order upon which the nation state is founded.

**For if state sovereignty is no longer conceived as indivisible but shared with international agencies; and if territorial and political boundaries are increasingly permeable, the core principles of democratic liberty – that is self-governance, the demos, consent, representation, and popular sovereignty – are made distinctly problematic.** (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p. 61)

In accordance with the fact that social welfare state does not adequately eliminate social crisis on its own, Habermas contends that, numerically speaking, some public administration is better than no public administration. Habermas argues that part of globalization's problem is that it remains propelled by Postmodern belief underlining Neo-conservative and Neo-liberal politics. In essence, these are cynical and nihilistic beliefs which lead to losing faith in both the individual and Modernity. This consequently ushers in the mass deregulation of social welfare state institutions. Globalization is essentially supported by too much instrumental in combination with some flawed normative reason while neglecting the communicative reason. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Habermas links the rise of nation states and democracy. He believes that the majority of nation-states are founded upon the same model established after the French and American revolutions. Not all, but most, of these nation states are democratic. A democratic nation state entails "...principles of an association of self-governing free and equal citizens." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.62) One certainty in regards to nation state and democratic relations is that "wherever democracies on the Western-model have appeared, they have done so in the

form of the nation state.” (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.62) Accordingly, the nation state has preconditions that remain compatible with the processes of democracy. Habermas enumerates four of these preconditions:

First, a society must be capable of choosing its own course of action. Before this can occur, a subsystem specialized in producing collectively binding decisions must effectively exist. Habermas contends that an administrative state based on positive law can satisfy this criterion. Such administration under positive law allows a separation between society and state. Through taxation of private economical activities within society, the administrative state can therefore regulate certain aspects ensuring the general wellbeing of society. Another important criterion is that the administrative state must have the monopoly of violence to use force in the name of societal wellbeing. Without state administration, society would be on the brinks of chaos thus making it fundamentally incompatible with democratic virtues. (Habermas, 1998, 2001)

Second, the autonomy given to society by the state under the setting of positive law, alone, is insufficient in implementing democratic order. Delimiting the collective within a geographically bound territory is also necessary for political action because without doing so, a state could not legitimately govern over the people. Territorial boundaries also utilized in that they provide the grounds for interstate politics. A society must clearly be anchored within territorial limits so that it can be recognized by other nation states. The population of a given society must be set within the geographical limits if its administrative state is to

set domestic and foreign policies for the overall wellbeing of the people. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Third, "...democratic self-determination can only come about if the population of a state is transformed into a nation of citizens who take their political destiny into their own hands." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.64) Having a modern state apparatus which sets geographic limits over its people is not enough, a cultural sense of belonging must be provided to the people. The populace must have a sense of "the spirit of the people" and only then can the basis of a true nation state can be forged. The "spirit of the people" is a necessary component in that it encourages military service and the redistribution of taxes in order to ensure social equality. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

This fourth component of the construction of a democratic process within the framework of a nation state is arguably the most critical. The administrative state must adopt a democratic mode for the legitimation of its political authority. That said, under the administrative state's wings, persons can no longer be understood as "subjects," as was the case under princely sovereignty. Popular sovereignty must be adopted, enabling the people's rights to more comprehensively reflect their humaneness and citizenship thus giving them the right to determine national politics via participation in political forums. This contrasts to princely sovereignty in that the latter is typically characterized by domination and the people are not included in political decision making processes. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Capitalism follows its own logic and is thus seldom aligned with true democratic virtue. In the long run, capitalism left to its own guises will lead to the hindrance of the people's justice and autonomy. The inevitable ills of capitalism bring forth the necessity of a social welfare state "...whose principal goal is to secure the social, technological, and ecological conditions that make an equal opportunity for the use of equally distributed basic rights possible." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.65) Furthermore in regards the steering media and globalization relation mentioned earlier, Habermas posits "...social state interventionism, itself justified by these basic rights, expands the democratic self-legislation of the citizens of a nation-state into the democratic self-steering of a national-state society." That said, capitalism, globally, must be brought down to an equal level with democracy. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.65)

In summation, these four main aspects ensure the compatibility between the nation state and the processes of democracy. However, some questions remain: Which aspects of globalization could potentially degrade the capacity for democratic self-steering within a national society? Are there functional equivalents at the supranational level for deficits that emerge at the level of the nation-state? Habermas admits that the answer to these first two questions lies within the questions themselves. Habermas suggests a third, more critical question: Is economical globalization an uncontrollable, inflexible force to which liberal democracy is inevitably subordinate? (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.68) Keeping this final question in mind, Habermas' investigates how globalization affects: (a) the security of the rule of law and the effectiveness of the

administrative state, (b) the sovereignty of the territorial state, (c) collective identity, and (d) the democratic legitimacy of the nation state?

Regarding the security of the rule of law and the effectiveness of the administrative state, Habermas contends that these are geared towards goals reflecting macroeconomic steering and redistribution. Contemporary issues, such as ecological degradation in combination with high-tech facilities entailing unknown risks and organized crime in regards to the trafficking of arms and drugs, transcend nation state borders. In regards to internal politics, administrative states are having a hard time levying taxes due to capital mobility. As tax dollars are more difficult to accumulate, administrative states are given no choice but to minimize their budgets accordingly. It then becomes more tenuous for the state to intervene socially with the intent of insuring social wellbeing. Conclusively, diminished state intervention implies increased levels of social conflict, if capitalism is left to its own logic. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Concerning how globalization affects nation state sovereignty over its territory, it has not been until recently that territory is no longer considered "a container" of society, as Habermas puts it. National borders can become internationally controversial, especially in instances where nation states propose particular types of development (such as a nuclear reactors or military facilities) near the borders of other nation states. Such issues are often governed by third-party, "neutral" international organizations, such as the International Nuclear Agency . Habermas argues that in many instances, such as the one above, territory gradually becomes the political domain of a global network,

consequently diminishing land-based, nation state sovereignty. In many cases, intergovernmental accords take governance beyond that of the nation state territory which ironically is both a problem and solution in regards to legitimation based on geographical limits. In addition, Habermas contends that international organizations, such as World Wide Fund for Nature, Greenpeace, or Amnesty International represent a “soft power” which fills some legitimation gaps caused by the geographical boundaries of nation states. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the nation state has a diminished capacity to act upon issues relating to neighbouring nations. What happens inside one’s territory is gradually becoming issue of a postnational constellation. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Globalization also affects national collective identity. According to Habermas, national collective identities are eroding due to the forces of market-driven globalization.

**Beyond this, there is the further question of whether globalization also affects the cultural substrate of civil solidarity that developed in the context of the nation-state. Regarded as the institutionalized capacity for democratic self-determination, the political integration of citizens into a large-scale society counts among the undisputed historical achievements of the nation-state. But today signs of political fragmentation betray the first breaches in this façade of “the nation”. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.71)**

Habermas distinguishes between two main tendencies herein. The first holds globalization responsible for the hardening of national identities, as different forms of life collide. The second tendency consists of “...the hybrid of differentiations that soften native cultures and comparatively homogenous forms of life in the wake of assimilation into a single material world culture.” (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.72) In regards to the first, Habermas retains hope that

constitutional patriotism can lead to the establishment of a common political culture but also contends that the possibility of failure still exists:

**The majority culture, supposing itself to be identical with the national culture as such, has to free itself from its historical identification with a general political culture, if all citizens are to be able to identify on equal terms with the political culture of their own country. To the degree that this decoupling of political culture from majority culture succeeds, the solidarity of citizens is shifted onto the more abstract foundation of a “constitutional patriotism”. If it fails, then the collective collapses into subcultures that seal themselves off from one another. But in either case it has the effect of undermining the substantial commonalities of the nation understood as a community of shared decent. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.74)**

Despite this possibility of failure, Habermas remains confident that a democratic constitutional state is still preferable than other political regimes in dealing with cultural pluralism. That said, the classical mode of nation state deals poorly with immigration and cultural pluralism. Constitutional patriotism seems to be the only hope for national and postnational constellations.

**Thanks to its procedural properties, the democratic process has its own mechanisms for securing legitimacy; it can, when necessary, fill the gaps that open in social integration, and can respond to the changed cultural composition of a population by generating a common general political culture. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.74)**

Habermas primarily holds the United States of America culpable for the existence of the second tendency of globalization. Global markets, mass consumption, mass communication, and mass tourism are setting the grounds for a mass culture across the globe which Habermas believes is conveyed mostly by the United States. Habermas ventures so far as to claim mass culture “...levels out even the strongest national differences, and weakens even the strongest local traditions.” (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.75) Comprehensively, he

seems rather neutral in terms of optimism and pessimism on this point. Habermas concludes the market-driven mass culture appears to strengthen tendencies towards individualization and the emergence of cosmopolitan identities. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Habermas argues a democratic order does not inherently need to be mentally rooted in “the nation,” as a pre-political community of shared destiny. This idea of “the spirit of the people” can be forged through the political participation encouraged by a democratic constitutional state. In Habermas’ terms, “the strength of the democratic constitutional state lies precisely in its ability to close the holes of social integration through the political participation of its citizens.” (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.76) Habermas places great faith in the healing potential of democracy and constitutional patriotism:

**Once embedded within a liberal political culture, the democratic process itself can then guarantee a sort of emergency backup system for maintaining the integrity of a functionally differentiated society, in cases where the multiplicity of interests, cultural forms of life, or worldviews overwhelms the supposedly natural substrate of a community of shared decent.** (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.76)

It takes more than simply installing a constitutional democracy within a nation state to successfully survive the impact of economical globalization. Nation states must collectively ensure interstate administrative mechanisms not only redistribute taxes but also protect basic human, social, ecological, and cultural rights. Only when it “pays” to be a citizen of a postnational constellation will solidarity issues be resolved. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

Habermas believes the transition from a national constellation towards a postnational constellation is seemingly inevitable. If this transition is to proceed

smoothly, market-driven globalization must not be left to its own doing. Akin to steering media relations within the nation-state model, the global order cannot continue to vacillate between the steering media of money and the steering media of power while neglecting the steering media of solidarity. Habermas posits, "Power can be democratized; money cannot. Thus the possibilities for a democratic self-steering of society slip away as the regulation of social spheres is transferred from one medium to another." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.78)

In terms of steering media, the mediums of power and solidarity need to catch up to the steering media of money. Within the nation state model, politicians were far too liberal in deregulating social policy. Conversely, global regulation, with the intent of installing a global democratic political culture, is what is required to adequately repair the ills of market-driven globalization. Empty "it's time for a change" formulae of politicians, such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, do not represent a step in the right direction. "Charismatic leaders and shady characters, such as Ross Perot and Berlusconi," with their acclaimed business-style success are not needed either to solve the shortcomings of market-driven globalism, according to Habermas. (Habermas, \*1998, 2001)

As Habermas states, "the re-regulation of the world society has, until now, not even taken the shape of an exemplary project for which one could provide examples." (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.112) He argues the United Nations is an admirable step, although it is nothing more than a "paper tiger" at the moment. The European Union also has potential. However, Habermas pessimistically believes this union primarily mainly on economical interests. He believes the

European Union should adopt a democratic constitution with the intent of forming a common political culture. That said, a “social” Europe has to be created to match the “economical” Europe that is now taking place, if this entity wants to “throw its weight onto the cosmopolitan scale.” (Habermas, \*1998, 2001, p.112)

## *(2) Modernity versus Pre-Modernity: Terrorism and Fundamentalism*

In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, terrorism and fundamentalism have become emerging themes in Habermas’ work. Thus far, most of Habermas’ analysis pertaining to these themes exists in the form of interviews. Effectively, we find it important to explore these issues, as they relate to market-driven globalization and considering they also serve well in illustrating Habermas’ pessimistic nature. Habermas’ pessimism, at this point, is significant and is therefore hard to deny especially with regards to how the West is presented to the rest of the world in its dealings with terrorism and fundamentalism.

Giovanna Borradori author of *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* asserts that both Habermas and Jacques Derrida’s perspectives on the West and terrorism are sombre. Arguably, sombre is synonymous with pessimism in that Habermas’ outlook on these issues is ominous and dark. In his defence, we admit that there is still a sliver of hope in his work concerning terrorism and fundamentalism. Borradori believes the following:

**While for Habermas terrorism is the effect of the trauma of modernization, which has spread around the world at a pathological speed, Derrida sees terrorism as a symptom of a traumatic element intrinsic to modern experience, whose focus is always on the future,**

**somewhat pathologically understood as promise, hope, and self-affirmation. Both are sombre reflections on the legacy of the Enlightenment: the relentless search for a critical perspective that must start with self-examination. (Borradori, 2003, p.22)**

This shift in concern, for Habermas, entails a significant shift in his views causing him to have a more pessimistic comprehensive outlook on Modernity.

As portrayed in the previous section, many social conflicts have emerged as a result of the negative impacts of market-driven globalization. Consequently, terrorism and fundamentalism, as newly global social conflicts, pose serious challenges to the limits of the national constellation. Habermas argues the nation state cannot single-handedly adequately deal with terrorism, as it does with other social issues because of its trans-national character. In addition, Habermas believes the solution to terrorism and fundamentalism lies solely within the postnational constellation and not within the national constellation. (Habermas, 2003)

Conclusively, terrorism and fundamentalism do not reflect an interstate and/or an intrastate social conflict as they are global problems which, in essence, require global solutions. Furthermore, terrorism and fundamentalism chiefly reflect clashes between civilizations rather than clashes between nation states. For instance, George W. Bush's "War on Terror" gives the illusion the United States, as a nation state is capable of declaring war on particular terrorist movements. The reality is that terrorist movements transcend the nation state constellation. Habermas posits the logical basis behind the declaration of "War on Terror" is flawed. The overall problem of terrorism and Modernity stems from

communicational pathologies which can be clearly seen in Western and Middle Eastern relations. (Habermas, 2003)

Moreover, Habermas argues the United States administration is incorrectly framing and thus is handling the issue erroneously. In fact, to assume a nation state can declare war on a terrorist movement is flawed as nation states can only declare war on other nation states. The government of the United States cannot declare war on Al-Qaeda due to the fact that it is a terrorist movement operating within an international network which does not necessarily fall under the jurisdictions of national borders. When asked by Borradori, "Do you think it was good to interpret 9/11 as a declaration of war?", Habermas replied:

**Even if the term "war" is less misleading and, morally, less controvertible than "crusade," I consider Bush's decision to call for a "war against terrorism" as a serious mistake, both normatively and pragmatically. Normatively, he is elevating these criminals to the status of war enemies; and pragmatically, one cannot lead a war against a "network" if the term "war" is to retain any definite meaning. (Habermas, 2003, p.34)**

Briefly, international security and its premature post-national configurations are threatened by three sides: by international terrorism, by criminal states, and by certain new civil wars arising in failed states. Currently, nation states generally have the means to deal with other criminal states and civil wars. However, international terrorism is something "new" in that it is an international network that is both far-reaching and decentralized. Habermas, with much irony and pessimism, states the following:

**War between states is asymmetrical when an aggressor aims at the destruction of a regime, rather than at a conventional defeat, because**

**their relative strengths are so transparently fixed a priori. Think of the month-long troop deployment on the borders of Iraq. One needn't be a terror expert to recognize that this is no way to destroy the infrastructure of a network, or to engage Al-Qaeda and its off-shoots, or to dry up the milieus which nourish such a group. (Habermas, 2004, p.11)**

After so many innocent lives were taken due to flawed ideology – by normative and by instrumental ideologies alike – in the events of 9/11, it is always a challenge for any social thinker like Habermas to offer an analysis free of personal judgement. It is quite clear Habermas has been greatly affected by the events of 9/11. In an interview with Eduardo Mendieta, author of *America and the World: Conversation with Jürgen Habermas* (2004), Habermas mentions that post-9/11 America is one which is quite different from the America that inspired him in his youth. He is awed by the patriotic upsurge following the tragedy, an upsurge which he claims had an admirable “American character.” However, when looking at the curtailment of fundamental law, notably the breach of the Geneva Convention in Guantanamo and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, Habermas’ picture of post-9/11 America is no longer a positive one.

In short, the current administration of the United States is adopting policies that are shaping the United States into what Habermas refers to as a Hobbesian State. Habermas contends the enlightened American people would have most definitely rejected this curtailment of their civil rights and the militarization of domestic life and abroad if the Bush administration “had not, with force, shameless propaganda, and manipulated insecurity, exploited the shock of

September 11". (Habermas, 2004, p.10) The following passage illustrates Habermas' pessimism of post-9/11 America quite well:

**For a European observer and a twice-shy child such as I, the systematic intimidation and indoctrination of the population and the restrictions on the scope of permitted opinion in the months of October and November of 2002, (when I was in Chicago), were unnerving. This was not "my" America. From my 16<sup>th</sup> year onward, my political thinking, thanks to the sensible re-education policy of the Occupation, has been nourished by the American ideals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Habermas, 2004, p.10)**

Habermas argues that the United States administration proceeds as though it has lost faith in international law as a medium for conflict mediation between states, as well as for the advancement of democracy and human rights. Seemingly, the Bush administration is taking matters into its own hands, especially in the case of the invasion of Iraq. In their dealings with the alleged terrorist harbouring states, the American administration subscribes to a "restricted vantage point of its own political culture and its own understanding of the world and of itself, even the most thoughtful and best-intentioned hegemon cannot be certain if it is understanding and considering the situation and interests of the other parties." (Habermas, 2004, p.15) In a way, the United States' behaviour in dealing with the Middle East can be seen as the result of a communicational pathology. By communicational pathology, Habermas implies the American administration seems to adhere to a centralized and self-centered perspective comparable to the pseudo-universalism typical of ancient empires. Contrary to communicative action, American administration is not including all parties and viewpoints involved in the global crisis revolving around West and Middle Eastern relations.

**Without, inclusive legal procedures, which embrace all the parties involved, and contain their conflicting perspectives, there is nothing compelling the predominant party to give up the central perspective of a great empire, or to engage in the de-centering of meaning-perspectives that an equal consideration for the cognitive point of view of all interests requires. (Habermas, 2004, p.15)**

Fundamentalism is not presumed innocent by Habermas. It is as guilty of self-centeredness due to its roots as the product of a communicational pathology. In addition, Habermas believes fundamentalism is an incarnation of religious intolerance. In essence, fundamentalism is exclusive to Modernity. Like Kant, Habermas "...understands Modernity to be a change in belief attitude rather than a coherent body of beliefs. A belief attitude indicates the way in which we believe rather than what we believe in." (Habermas cited in Borradori, 2003, p.18) Similarly to Modernity, fundamentalism is a belief modality. Whether Islamic, Christian or Hindu forms of fundamentalism, we are looking at critical movements geared against the modern rationale of how Modernity conceives and practices religion. For example, the modern idea of separating religion and state is greatly contested by most fundamentalist groups. In short, Habermas argues fundamentalism is "...about violent reactions against the modern way of understanding and practicing religion. (...) Fundamentalism is not the simple return to a pre-modern way of relating to religion: it is a panicked response to Modernity perceived as a threat rather than as an opportunity." (Habermas cited in Borradori, 2003, p.18)

Habermas' concepts of system and lifeworld can be extrapolated on a global level. Because of the system's uprooting of traditional ways of life on a global scale, modernization has come to be held culpable. Inevitably, the West

given it carries the Enlightenment Project, serves as a "...scapegoat from the perspective of the Arab world's experiences of loss." (Habermas, 2003) Succinctly stated, fundamentalists challenge the normative message of consumerism which Western liberal democracies typically export. Consumerism is predominantly the product of a distorted form of instrumental reason which has somewhat become normative at the same time. Nevertheless, such a distortion of reason contradicts the Enlightenment Project and the communicative reason it bears. (Habermas, 2003)

Habermas' solution here is not surprising. Arguably as the representative of Modernity, the West has an inherent critical culture thus facilitating easier and more effective self-criticism. Habermas argues the West needs to be critical of the messages it conveys to the rest of the world and, in return, it must consider how the rest of the world conceives the West. Broadly put, only through critical and all-inclusive global dialogue can the Enlightenment Project be embraced by all of Humanity and accordingly used for the purposes of neutralizing fundamentalism and the terrorizing and violent reactions its anti-modern ideals entail. (Habermas, 2003)

As mentioned earlier, Habermas believes fundamentalism and terrorism are mostly mediated by violence fed by a distorted communicative pathology. Western and Middle Eastern societies have alienated each other through this distorted communication as they do not feel as though they are part of the same community.

**The relation between fundamentalism and terrorism is mediated by violence that Habermas understands as a communicative pathology.**

**The spiral of violence begins as a spiral of distorted communication that leads through the spiral of uncontrolled reciprocal mistrust, to the breakdown of communication. (Borradori, 2003, p.19)**

Essentially, what is needed to remedy the alienating communication between the West and Middle East is a common and meaningful political culture. A global and democratic legal framework can serve as a basis for this cosmopolitan political culture. Habermas' hope lies in the possible establishment of a "constitutional patriotism" which can serve to unite yesterday's foes thus transforming them into today's friends, on a global level. Simply put, establishing an all-inclusive global dialogue based on a domination-free communication might cure the ills of modernization, fundamentalism, and terrorism. (Habermas, 2003)

In considering Habermas' lifeworld concept, it can be inferred terrorism and fundamentalism represents some sort of hope. Some may perceive the situation of fundamentalism and terrorism as the lifeworld fighting against the colonization led by the system. Habermas clearly sees no hope in this as it would still entail communication based on domination but in another sense. More precisely, Modernity as it is now is too instrumental and fundamentalism is too normative. Both Modernity and fundamentalism, as they exist now, neglect communicative action which, in theory, should be domination-free and all-inclusive.

**If we want to avoid a clash of civilizations, we must keep in mind that the dialectic of our own occidental process of secularization has as yet not come to a close. The "war against terrorism" is no war, and what comes to be expressed in terrorism is also the fatally speechless clash of worlds, which have to work out a common language beyond the mute violence of terrorists or missiles. Faced with a globalization imposing itself via deregulated markets, many of us hoped for a return of the political in a different form – not the original Hobbesian form of**

**globalized security state, that is, in its dimensions of police activity, secret service, and the military, but as a worldwide civilizing force.** (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.103)

In essence, fundamentalism and terrorism are overly founded upon normative reason thus encouraging and condoning violent reactions against modern premises. Today's instrumentalized Modernity is guilty of the same charge when looking at how the Bush administration's actions are considerably condoned by those considered to be "enlightened Westerners," Americans and Europeans alike. In its ideal sense, Modernity bears communicative aspects which include everyone while permitting self-criticism. In opposition, fundamentalism is exclusive and does not permit self-criticism much like it was with manorial authority during the Middle Ages. Ironically, today's overly instrumentalized Modernity is quite far from Habermas' ideal Modernity in the sense that it, too, is exclusive and does not permit self-criticism. Habermas' hope lies in an awakening of the modern ideals.

**The anti-modern emotion directed against the Western world as a whole, is another matter. In this regard, self-critique is appropriate – let us say, a self-critical defense of the achievements of Western modernity, which signalizes openness and willingness to learn, and above all dissolves the idiotic equation of democratic order and liberal society with unbridled capitalism. We must, on the one hand, clearly and unmistakably draw the line against fundamentalism, including Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, and, on the other hand, we must face up to the fact that fundamentalism is the child of a deracinating modernization, in which the derailments of our colonial history and the failures of decolonization have played a decisive role. As against fundamentalist self-quarantine, we can, in all events, show that the legitimate critique of the West borrows its standard from the West's own 200-year-old discourse of self-criticism.** (Habermas, 2004, p.21)

### *(3) Liberal Eugenics and Human Cloning: Modernity against Itself and the Limits of Communicative Action*

In his work dating between 2001 and 2004, market-driven globalization, terrorism and fundamentalism are not the only new societal conflicts that concern Habermas, and accordingly to don a pessimistic outlook. Habermas also seems preoccupied with the question of bioethics and the prospect of human cloning as both pose serious threats to the very essence of what it means to be human. More precisely, human cloning challenges society on the very limits of liberalism, of communicative action and Modernity.

Earlier in his career, Habermas came to understand the colonization of lifeworld as something that could liberate communicative reason. He considers the system to inhabit the lifeworld consequently permitting communicative action to emancipate itself while restoring a type of normative reason structured by formal law. The emancipation of communicative reason leads to actions which emancipate the people in return. This can only occur in the event that science and technology do not become too cumbersome in the sense that their ideology, which is based on a very limited normative reason, does not become a hindrance to communicative action. Furthermore Habermas posits as communicative reason is gradually being freed from the clutches of the lifeworld, individuals gain greater freedom at the cost of acquiring greater fragility on many social levels, such as within the family unit or within the educational system. All in all, Habermas contends the colonization of the lifeworld may be a good thing in that it allows communicative reason to be emancipated through formal law thus

allowing every individual to determine his or her own version of the good life so long as they do not impede on each others' right to do the same. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Knowing where and when to limit individual freedom, however, is not always clear. The mediums of money and power with consumerism and deregulation, for instance, constantly challenge societal limits on individual freedom to the point where the fundamentals of human rights are jeopardized. Habermas argues liberal eugenics not only challenge human rights but also the very logic of liberalism. Without sufficient discourse based on communicative reason, properly defining the limits of liberalism can be problematic especially if we continue to rely on the mediums of money and power. Thus relying on the logic of money and power, hence instrumental rationality by extension, to legitimize the advancement of human cloning is flawed as it represents a gain of liberty in an unknown realm of humanity which can prove to be self-destructive. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

**A more complex explanation is required for the disgust we feel at the notion that research involving the destruction of embryos is instrumentalizing human life in view of the benefits (and profits) to be derived from a scientific progress which is not even predictable with any certainty. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.70)**

Based on Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy, Habermas believes one of the driving forces behind human existence is one's quest to develop an understanding of what is the good life. This requires the private person to become an individual among individuals within an intersubjective process of recognizing one another's' rights to a good life. In Habermas' analysis of the

possible societal impacts of human cloning, he perceives human cloning as a threat to individual autonomy in deciding what exactly the good life is. Hypothetically speaking, the fact that we possess the technological means and resources to create human clones is not enough to deem it socially acceptable and desirable. As it stands, Habermas argues human cloning appears to be perfectly acceptable when we have an instrumental outlook on reality, which is normatively conveyed by the mediums of money and power. Consequently, with the current state of liberal eugenics and the waking possibility of human cloning, Habermas believes we may be lining ourselves up for the greatest of all social crises. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Overall, Habermas' conveys the notion modern society is unique in that the just serves the purpose of enforcing one's liberty in deciding what is good for his or her own life. In this sense, the just, through formal liberal law, is forsaking its subjective character with the intent of protecting the subjective character of the good. In turn, this acquired right of deciding what is good allows modern individuals to critically communicate with both the "I" and "Other" concerning everyday experiences and measuring it against what was previously considered good, what is good now, and what will be good in the future. In doing so, we realize our identity as individuals by engaging in this infinite lifeworld discourse on what is good. As a result of this endless dialogue between individuals on what might be the good life, individuals both give to and take from the lifeworld thus creating personality, culture, and society. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Returning to Freud's Oedipus complex within the family unit, adolescents once defined themselves through critical discussion regarding parental authority. Eventually, these challenges to parental authority will lead to some sort of agreement on what the good life may be. However, this parent-child discussion is obviously not domination-free. Nonetheless as manifestations of the Oedipus complex became somewhat latent for various reasons (for example, mass education, child and youth social services, mass media, pop cultures, and so forth), greater individual freedom in defining the good life has been attained at the cost of individual fragility, such as narcissistic crises. At least with respect to the Oedipus complex, no matter how dominant a parent might be towards his or her child, the child, in turn, will eventually mature into an adult with his or her own definition and version of a good life. As children become adults, parental authority can always be put into question through hindsight. That said, regardless of their upbringing, to Habermas, children who become adults are always the full authors responsible for their own life and how they perceive the good life. This would not be the case for human clones. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Habermas believes it may not be as easy for cloned humans to both define and actualize their identities, as their creation goes beyond one individual dominating another. It is worse than domination, as it entails pure determination over another's existence altogether. That said, a clone's predispositions are determined by another individual and are not due to the seemingly random processes of nature. Consequently, clones are literally limited to living out their

history based on those of their creator's hence growing into someone who simultaneously exists or has existed already. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

**The program designer carries out a one-sided act for which there can be no well-founded assumption of consent, disposing over the genetic factors of another in the paternalistic intention of setting the course, in relevant respects, of the life history of the dependent person. The latter may interpret, but not revise or undo this intention. The consequences are irreversible because of the paternalistic intention is laid down in a disarming genetic program instead of being communicatively mediated by a socializing practice which can be subjected to reappraisal by the person "raised."** (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.64)

According to Habermasian thought, individual uniqueness is one of the many gifts of Modernity and ironically, it is a prerequisite for Modernity's existence. The public sphere, in its beginnings, was great because it symbolized the separation of private and public ensuring individuals a sense of self. Human cloning remains a threat to our sense of self whether we are human clones or naturally determined humans. Ultimately, human clones will be no more than the co-authors of their existence creating a similar pattern of domination as it was in feudal times when it was socially acceptable for noble lords to own other humans as chattel. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

In a hopeful manner, despite many "ups and downs" Habermas considers the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a period of gradual attainment of liberty in accordance with the basic ideals of liberalism and democracy. Generally, history for Habermas can be measured by its progress towards a truly rational and domination-free society. However, in measuring society's historical walk towards the gradual attainment of greater individual freedom and self-empowerment against liberal eugenics and human cloning, Habermas poses the following inevitable question:

**Do we want to treat the categorically new possibility of intervening in the human genome as an increase in freedom that requires normative regulation – or rather as self-empowerment for transformations that depend simply on our preferences and do not require any self-limitation? (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.12)**

What makes us modern beings is that through the intersubjective process of communicative action, we are able to recognize each other's identity and life history. Fundamentally, the ideals of Modernity believe every human being is duly entitled to his or her own life history. The individual struggle of defining a good life is one's own and no other being can ever have ownership of this fundamental right. A primary step towards being truly emancipated lies in the individual right of being oneself based on one's own struggle in determining a good life. Therefore by allowing someone to predetermine another individual, we are consequently depriving one individual of his or her fundamental right to a unique life struggle. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

**In the context of a democratically constituted pluralistic society where every citizen has an equal right to an autonomous conduct of life, practices of enhancing eugenics cannot be “normalized” in a legitimate way, because the selection of desirable dispositions cannot be a priori dissociated from the prejudgment of specific life-projects. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.66)**

Another key aspect to consider is that random and natural predispositions at birth are what engage this necessary life conflict of being different and hence being an individual within the intersubjectiveness of the lifeworld. The fact remains that, at birth, every human comes into existence by an unforeseeable combination of two different sets of chromosomes which determine one's bodily and mental dispositions and characteristics. It is this very random process at birth which instigates our personal quest for a good life. To Habermas, this leads

to our being responsible for and self-critical of whom we were, who we are, and who we want to be in the future. Effectively, human cloning is a threat in that it will change the very basis of what it means to be human. Essential to Modernity is the fact that modern persons must be capable of self-criticism, as Modernity itself is self-critical. According to Habermasian logic, if we have no sense of self then how can we be self-critical and modern? Also, if modern citizens can no longer be critical of Modernity then Modernity ceases to exist. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

One's decision to clone oneself in order to create another human being represents an individual taking up his or her definition of the ideal conditions of a good life and imposing them on what will become another human entity. In other words, human cloning can be understood as one individual dominating another through the deprivation of the random outcomes of his or her biological and mental dispositions, thus depriving one of his or her own historical development. Habermas claims, "This kind of intervention should only be exercised over things, not persons." (\*2001, 2003, p. 13) In depriving human clones of the ownership of their history, they cannot be self-critical without having to pose their critique via their programmers. As it stands without cloning, humans can only critique their god or a transcendental force of their choosing leading to the fact that no other human can be held responsible for someone else's historical development and definition of a good life. Comprehensively, a clone cannot critique and communicate what he or she believes to be the good life due to the fact someone made the decision for them before he or she even existed.

**This possibility of self-critical appropriation of one's own developmental history is not available in regard to genetically manipulated dispositions. Rather, the adult would remain blindly dependent on the nonrevisable decision of another person, without any opportunity to establish the symmetrical responsibility required if one is to enter into a retroactive ethical self-reflection as a process among peers. For this poor soul there are only two alternatives, fatalism and resentment. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p. 14)**

Conclusively, Habermas seems undoubtedly more pessimistic than optimistic about human cloning. It is not easy to categorize Habermas as being essentially pessimistic in terms of cloning, as his portrayal of this societal issue is chiefly one of despair with a small slivers of hope. That said, Habermas does condone human cloning in particular instances wherein philosophy can potentially set some normative limits to liberal eugenics.

In analyzing Habermas' work, it seems as though human cloning is a valid act when the party involved is included within a communicative process free of domination and of strategy. For instance, genetic intervention can be used with a therapeutic intent in hopes of eliminating severe hereditary handicaps even though for some handicapped people, being handicap is a part of their life struggle, hence part of their identity. According to Habermas, this type of instrumentalization of embryos is acceptable because, in these circumstances, human clones will grow into human beings capable of communicating their thoughts on the therapeutic procedure in question. For this to become ethical, they must be given the right to communicate their feelings and formal arguments within a democratic forum on such issues. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Along the same lines, genetically altered children's self-identity would probably not be impacted by genetic alterations which are deemed therapeutic.

The logic behind this assumption is that genetically altered children would grow up knowing that their parents made these decisions out of love. They would assume their parents wanted to give them better chances at attaining a good life without the hindering effects of certain handicaps. This type of genetic alteration can be morally justified as good ethics. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Therefore genetic alterations are potentially good things for Habermas so long as they are exercised within the interests of both healing and communicative reason. However, this is not so easy for many reasons. First, determining who is eligible for this sort of treatment would most likely become problematic. Second, deciding which handicaps are severe enough to qualify for genetic therapy will be very challenging, as well. Despite these two issues, Habermas is more concerned with the possibility that communicative reason might render ineffective in setting limits to these questions. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Consequently, there will always be the threat that humans might become overly comfortable with human cloning. Based on the current rate of the expansion of the system's logic, it is possible that in the future instrumental reasoning will keep pushing the normative limits with respect to human cloning. Habermas' pessimism lies in that communicative action might have met its limits in regards to human cloning as instrumental reason could potentially convolute normative limits with therapeutic healing. More precisely, as human cloning for therapeutic use becomes a norm, it will be much easier for instrumental reason to take it one step further and exploit this technological knowledge to meet the ends of the mediums of money and power. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

Destroying human embryos based on parental preferences is no longer science fiction as it is a reality. Habermas argues that destroying embryos based on parental selection of specific genetic criteria for reasons which do not appeal to a healing intent is not acceptable and therefore cannot be morally justified as ethical. For instance, destroying a dozen embryos to have one which has blue eyes, blond hair, and an aptitude for math is simply absurd and cannot be morally justified according to communicative reasoning. In this instance, many embryos are destroyed in the instrumental interests of the parents in the interest of designing their children in conformity with performance ideology and aesthetical soundness. This is arguably not being done in the name of parental love or the overall well-being of the child. In designing their children through genetic manipulations without therapeutic intent, parents are instrumentalizing and dominating their unborn children based on their conception of a good life. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

According to the ideals of Modernity, every citizen has the right to his or her own conception of a good life in the event it does not hinder another's right to do the same. Nonetheless, prenatal natural biological processes and traditional forms of socialization (in terms of aptitude, personality, and talent development) are gradually being overridden by instrumental reason consequently leading to the fact that countless embryos will not be given the chance to live and become a voice within the intersubjective lifeworld. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003)

In Habermas' despair vis-à-vis cloning, hope can still be found. Social sciences and philosophy can play an important role in setting normative limits to

liberal eugenics and human cloning. Within the following passage, Habermas is pessimistic about philosophy's lack of critical participation in the human cloning debate. However, it undoubtedly suggests that, should philosophy decide to "roll up its sleeves" and jump in, hope remains:

**As a result, the ethics of successfully being oneself has become one among several alternatives. Formal arguments no longer suffice to maintain the substance of this self-understanding in the face of competing proposals. Rather, today the original philosophical question concerning the "good life" in all its anthropological generality appears to have taken on new life. The new technologies make a public discourse on the right understanding of cultural forms of life in general an urgent matter. And philosophers no longer have any good reasons for leaving such a dispute to biologists and engineers intoxicated by science fiction. (Habermas, \*2001, 2003, p.15)**

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the main argumentation of this paper aims at showing how Habermas' general perception of modern social issues has wavered from pessimism then to optimism and back to pessimism, in his most recent writings. The first chapter corresponds to the beginning of his career spanning from 1962 to 1980. At that point in time, Habermas was significantly pessimistic and gradually became optimistic as the basis of the Theory of Communicative Action took shape. Chapter 2 relates to material between 1980 and 1996, when Habermas was undoubtedly optimistic as he maintained the Theory of Communicative Action with much hope. The final chapter is similar to the first in that in contemporary Habermasian literature, he has returned to a pessimistic viewpoint due to the potentially devastating effects of globalization and of the potential instrumentalization of humanity. The general purpose of this paper is to argue that his work contains enough pessimism so as to nullify the claim that Habermas is currently an optimist with respect to Modernity's potentiality to overcome anomie, alienation, and domination and to provide democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all people.

In the first chapter, entitled *Habermas Prior to the Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas' optimism and pessimism is explored within the conceptual framing of his three sociological themes as conceived between 1962 and 1980. Emphasis is placed upon Habermas' concepts of the public sphere, the colonization of the lifeworld, and the legitimization crisis.

In *The Vanguard of Democracy: the Public Sphere*, most of Habermas' pessimism lies in the fact that the post French Revolution public sphere is in peril. The public sphere is depicted as a place where an ideal type of communicational process was used once by the bourgeois culture to collapse feudal society and its manorial authority, as based on normative reason. Thus the public sphere seemingly represented a necessary component of democracy serving to give modern citizens the right to individuality by keeping private and public issues as separate, distinct matters.

*The Colonization of the Lifeworld* section depicts a time when Habermas' pessimism is probably at its highest prior to the *Theory of Communicative Action* (\*1981, 1984). Habermas fears what he calls the "refeudalization of society." In opposition to the public sphere, the "refeudalization of society" represents the reunification of private and public issues under which political control is delegated from the "top" rather than the "bottom" of society. Basically put, the "refeudalization of society" opposes democracy as the private interests of the economical and bureaucratic elites dominate the communicational space of the public sphere with the intent of controlling public opinion through strategically altered publicity.

There is a further dimension to this issue pertaining to science and technology being used as productive forces. As the public sphere is weakened by the economical and bureaucratic elites, science and technology are developed within the elites' range of interests rather than being processed through democratic forums on what the people deem as best. Through

advertisement, this sort of limited scientific and technological progress is legitimated through the media and is tweaked by consumerism in that most technological advancements appear to be beneficial to the people. Ironically, Habermas contends that this appeal to science and technology has made them the very gages by which legitimacy and rationality are measured. Accordingly, science and technology are ideological in that they provide normative reasoning but to a lesser extent than a mainstream religion for example.

As previously depicted, Habermas reworked Marxism to produce new concepts of work and interaction which later developed into the system and lifeworld. Science and technology are the creations of instrumental reason, thus serving the system by providing means for the people's material reproduction. Because science and technology are considered ideological, they are considered impediments to the lifeworld's essential function which is to provide the symbolic reproduction (culture, society and personality) of the people. Conclusively, Habermas considers this scenario to be the colonization of the lifeworld by the system.

The symbolic meaning conveyed through science and technology is not enough to sustain the symbolic reproduction of a rational society. Keeping this in mind, Habermas considers advanced capitalism to be reliant upon science and technology as productive forces and, in such, has crisis tendencies. Therefore, controlling and eliminating such crisis tendencies lies within the interest of all people. By relying on instrumental reason to correct social crisis, of which many are subjective in nature and thus remain incompatible with objective remedies,

we consequently displace social crisis from one social dimension to another. At best, employing solutions relying mainly on instrumental reason only temporarily heals the maladies of capitalism. In this case, the purposive and rational subsystems expand even further within the natural and the social realities thus bringing forth new crises altogether. Simply put, Habermas believes capitalism can only be fixed by its antagonist, democracy. Within democracy, communicative reason can be found. Communicative reason thus serves as a normative basis in that it provides subjective and rational content capable of curtailing social crisis. Herein Habermas' hope can be found.

The main focus of Chapter 2, *Habermas and the Theory of Communicative Action*, is to illustrate that Habermas remains as optimistic as his writings emit a greater degree of optimism than his writings prior to 1981. More precisely, we advance Habermas' optimism with respect to Modernity's potential to overcome anomie, alienation, and domination and to provide democracy, emancipation, and freedom to all people is at its highest.

Our first section *The Theory of Communicative Action* serves to situate the reader into a fuller comprehension of the rudiments of communicative action. Essentially, communicative action is inherent to all humans and it considers all speech-acts emitted during a domination- and strategy-free dialogue among humans to be integral aspects concerning the overall well-being of humanity. In a truly rational society, anything not adhering to this communicational action script must become an object of critique.

The second section, *Communicative Action as a Solution* is more analytical in its illustration of communicative action as a critical point of intersection between instrumental action and normative action, preventing them from alienating one another. The bourgeois public sphere can be a primary example of this. As the normative reason of the Feudal society became too unjust, the bourgeois culture, for a small period of time, appealed to communicative reason for the overall wellbeing of humankind. In doing so, they brought reintroduced instrumental reasoning and thus restored equilibrium with regards to the system's material reproduction. Feudal authority was also perceived to be unfair by the bourgeois culture, as social mobility within the feudal society was based on bloodlines as opposed to merit.

The main dilemma with Modernity is that it is overly dominated by instrumental reason at the expense of normative reason. The bourgeois culture took their societal critiques too far and sapped normative reason to a dangerous low. In other words, the system colonizing the lifeworld minimized the effects of normative reason. In Habermas' reconsideration of the colonization of the lifeworld, he concludes it may no longer be a bad thing, per se, because if instrumental reason pushes normative reason too far back then, in theory, communicative reason will be released and will consequently restore equilibrium again.

In the third section, *Latent and New Conflicts: The Tasks of Critical Theory and the Communicative Action Theory*, we consider Habermas' reservations with regards to his newfound optimism. In the long run, he believes the colonization

of the lifeworld may be a small price to pay for the eventual achievement of a truly rational society. Concurrently, class struggle and many former social conflicts have become latent. As a result, ensuing social conflicts are on the rise. According to Habermas, a primary example of one of these new social conflicts is the narcissistic crisis, as understood by Christopher Lasch. Habermas adds that the latency of the Oedipus complex is the primary source of this narcissistic crisis. He concludes we have simultaneously become more free and more fragile as individuals, due to the colonization of the lifeworld. Therefore, Habermas' optimism remains shadowed by the possibility that we could be faced with the end of the individual. In adopting the Theory of Communicative Action, Critical Theory must encourage philosophy and science to emancipate modern culture which can then provide much needed solidarity in combating the possible end of the individual.

In Chapter 3: *Habermas Today*, the goal is to argue that after 1997, Habermas returns to a pessimistic point of view. The first section, *Transnational Crises and the Nation State's Incapacity to Act*, revolves around Habermas' concerns of market-driven globalization and the new social crises it entails. The problem lies in that market-driven globalization remains fundamentally driven by the media of money. In its neglect of the mediums of solidarity and of power, it creates trans-national crises which in essence, transcends the nation state's capacity to act. Habermas pessimistically believes today's globalization is one of political closure creating many social issues as it expands. In line with the mediums of solidarity and power, Habermas advances that two things are

necessary. First, globalization has to propagate a global political culture (a sort of global or regional constitutional patriotism) that, in turn, would provide much needed solidarity. Second, capitalism cannot be left to its own doing, especially on a global scale. Habermas believes that dismantling welfare states across the globe is a step in the wrong direction, as capitalism cannot function without creating social crises. It is imperative capitalism continues to be administered in a fashion where equilibrium is maintained between the mediums of money, power, and solidarity.

The second section, *Modernity versus Pre-Modernity: Terrorism and Fundamentalism*, is not at odds with the first section of the chapter. After 9/11, it has become apparent that terrorism and fundamentalism are both strongly affiliated with the negative impacts of market-driven capitalism. Habermas' pessimism lies in the fact that nothing is being done to heal the communicational pathologies between the West and the Middle East, except for the exchange of violence. He contends that the United States is rightfully angered by the cowardly attacks of the extremists but they are making matters worse in acting unilaterally and thus forsaking the rest of the world in their dealings with terrorism. Occupying Iraq does not serve well in taking down a globally linked network of terrorists. What is needed is a global effort; and the West can instigate such efforts by creating an all-inclusive global forum which includes humanity altogether. In doing so, the West would need to become sensitive to and more aware of the normative messages of consumerism it conveys to the

rest of the world. At this point, Habermas' views hangs on a small thread, as he fears political closure between the West and the Middle East.

The final section entitled *Liberal Eugenics and Human Cloning: Modernity against Itself and the Limits of Communicative Action* can be linked with Habermas' previous work pertaining to the end of the individual. In the wake of liberal eugenics, Habermas believes the very limits of communicative reason are being challenged. Unlike the first two sections of this chapter, the last section illustrates Habermas' beliefs on how Modernity can be destroyed from within. That said, human cloning defies the random nature of the biological and genetic processes consequently leading to the fact that another human can be held accountable for a cloned human's failure to achieving a good life. As it stands without the cloning of human beings, only natural randomized biological process and/or transcendental or divine force(s) can be held accountable for one's failures in life, as opposed to another individual's choice of design for a cloned individual.

In short, human cloning represents one of the worst possible forms of domination, as it allows one's vision of a good life to be unwillingly imposed on another before he or she is even born. Habermas believes the fundamental problem with human cloning is that he considers these pre-natal changes to be irreversible. With socialization without any implications of cloning, one will remain truly able to critically reflect upon his or her upbringing, whereas a clone cannot because he or she was determined before birth. Comprehensively, Habermas remains very pessimistic about human cloning for instrumental

purposes, such as in cases where parents choose to design their children before birth based on their own experiences of a good life. As for liberal eugenics and human cloning, they are both fundamentally threatening to the essential basis of liberalism, democracy, and Modernity altogether.

In reading Habermas' writings spanning the whole of his career, it is apparent his views fluctuate greatly. Contrary to popular thought, Habermas' views on the fulfillment and accomplishments of Modernity are often sombre. We firmly Habermas is not the typical optimist, as optimism entails a mostly hopeful point of view regarding the outcomes of certain issues or events. In general, Habermas believes domination and alienation of Modernity's children are still very possible. However, Habermas' views are neither nihilistic nor cynical.

Despite the optimism evident in Habermas' most recent writings, the amount is not enough to warrant his categorization as an optimist. We believe Habermas' analysis of diverse aspects of Modernity is realistic, as he views society isomorphically. He seemingly has no care to impress his readers by employing "verbal varnish" and exaggerating social phenomena in an overly optimistic or pessimistic manner. In our opinion, his writings are authentically sociological and philosophical in that they contain a high degree of objectivity and formality leading us to believe that they are not written to sell. Overall, our position does try to exhaust Habermas' pessimism to the highest degree possible in order to highlight some important aspects that might have been overlooked in his work. While his pessimism is not always blatant, we remain convinced that Habermas can no longer be categorized as a true optimist.



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