

# WHAT IS EMANCIPATION FOR HABERMAS?

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What emancipation means is related to the subjection from which the enslaved are released. Does the constraining situation intend to gain control over others, or is it simply a temporarily confused and relatively simple situation to correct? Is there anything like necessary control for the sake of reaching goals? Most importantly, what is the extent of emancipation? Is it restricted to an arbitrary, unguided, "freedom-from" sense, or is it an emancipation which both frees and enfranchises the former prisoners?

An interest in freedom presupposes some presently restraining condition. The aim of this essay is to show several of the senses and implications of Jürgen Habermas's understanding and use in his works of the idea of emancipation. I propose to do this by examining four transitional phases of the emancipation process: from domination to exploitation; from exploitation to alienation; from alienation to liberation; and from liberation to emancipation. Against Habermas, I conclude that emancipation is a cyclical process, referring to the progressive realizations and developments of humanity over time.

## FROM DOMINATION TO EXPLOITATION

### Employment vs. Use

Habermas's central distinction between instrumental and communicative action

does not address the issue of whether control (rule, direction, guidance) should operate in society—it is simply given that such control does operate. Instead, Habermas focuses on what will count as the proper exercise of such control. Exploitation is a particular kind of domination: some person, event, system, etc., may dominate others without necessarily exploiting them, but every instance of exploitation requires some antecedent condition of domination. Domination is ruling control; exploitation is domination specified by instrumentality. That domination can move in either a monological (instrumental) or dialogical (communicative) direction shows use has both a positive and a negative sense. In contexts emphasizing the process over results, where the means are as important and valuable as the ends sought, the concept of use has an affirmative sense of employment. Its foremost idea is one of engagement, selection, and responsibility. In those situations where the goal is more important than the way it is secured, and ends vindicate means, use shows its nullifying acceptance of manipulation, with the leading connotations of instrumental, coercive, and often fraudulent handling of others for one's own aims.

These positive and negative senses of use structure Habermas's contrast of communicative with instrumental action. Walter Benjamin's incisive remarks in "The Work

of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" highlight the difference between these two senses with respect to the impact of technology upon art, particularly in his discussion of stage plays versus screen films.<sup>1</sup> Before the invention of machines, people sought to secure their various goals in life, whether in the scientific-cognitive, aesthetic-expressive, or moral-practical sphere, in more or less purposive instead of manipulative ways. In order to satisfy a self-interest, one had to treat means with the same care and respect as one treated oneself. With the creation of machines, however, the rules of the game altered dramatically: now the ends/means relationship is opened up to another level of interaction, and means are now either interpersonal or mechanical or some combination of the two. The problem this change raises is twofold: first, recognizing both instrumentation and communication as inherent within human activity; and second, developing an ability for distinguishing the activity of subjects with other subjects from the activity of subjects with objects for the sake of appreciating the unique significance of other selves. According to Benjamin, human beings both attentively contemplate and habitually appropriate their world.<sup>2</sup>

### **Exploitation: Acting Instrumentally**

Failing to differentiate communicative from instrumental action transforms domination into exploitation. The rise of technical power reduces rationality to a single-valued dimension: results and only results justify the means used to secure them. The content spontaneity gives to human behavior is lost to the structure imposed upon it through the discipline of categorical types. Whereas practical power acts in a variety of ways, technical power acts myopically and, in contrast with total consciousness,

incoherently.<sup>3</sup> Habermas specifically rejects instrumental action for those cases calling for dialogical action.

The intentions of the Enlightenment, he says, shifted the balance of value between ends and means to the side of ends. The counter-move against this shift has been to discard the means/ends relationship as an altogether fruitless distinction. This explains why he identifies purposive rationality with instrumental rationality, "which only serves the interest of self-preservation." Prior to its instrumentalization, reason recognizes the difference between what serves self-interests and "that which claims validity."<sup>4</sup> This is suspicious: what does Habermas consider to "claim validity" in a way different from the validity of self-interests? He suggests not everything claiming validity serves only those interests; some actions may be legitimate even if no interest is served. But this avoids the issue; while rightly claiming self-interests (needs) are not the sole criteria for what counts as valid, Habermas fails to show the other conditions of legitimacy.

Exploitation for Habermas is instrumental (monological, extrinsic) and not purposive (either extrinsic or intrinsic) action. The next section will show how such exploitation sets the stage for alienation, how one can gain a sense of control without necessarily attaining one of meaning.

### **FROM EXPLOITATION TO ALIENATION**

Alienation presents four important aspects: (1) there is some kind of withdrawal or separation (2) of a person or the person's affections (3) from some object, position, situation, etc. (4) to which the person was formerly attached. David Held says Habermas claims positivism was unable to see

any methods of research other than "those utilized to gain objectified processes of nature."<sup>5</sup> Interaction now has two levels, the level of a subject with another like itself, another subject, versus one of a subject with another unlike itself, an object in the sense understood in the philosophical tradition. The focus shifts from that there is interaction to what kind of interaction takes place. This shift draws a difference within consciousness of two kinds of reasoning: empirical (subject/object) versus transcendental (subject/subject) interaction. By concentrating upon the other as something unlike itself, self-consciousness identifies itself by means of what is outside itself, what is "alien" to it. The so-called "subjective" factors of inquiry, viz. inclinations, tendencies, preferences, interests, are discounted as being too volatile for the stability knowledge requires. Reasoning "infected" by such factors "is henceforth itself discredited as dogmatic."<sup>6</sup>

Technology has established this split even more firmly in consciousness. The fragmentation and immobility of passivity that consciousness feels about itself Benjamin details again in the contrast of the stage actor with the screen actor. In a film the camera separates an actor both from an audience and from himself because of the ways a camera transforms the performance. In a stage play, the actor is more responsible for the unity and integrity of the performance the public sees. Besides this, the stage actor can guide and direct the performance by looking for and responding to the cues the audience gives in its reactions to him. Not so for the screen star. The performance the audience sees is beyond the actor's control, and the role of the audience is reduced from the dialogical interaction of the theatre play to a monological one of passive reception.<sup>7</sup> This reduction creates a separation between actor and audience: the two are less intimate

with one another. Reason experiences a similar withdrawal in itself once mediating reflection (analysis or "thinking") gains an advantage over immediately "lived" experience (synthesis or "feeling"). What was valuable about pre-scientific understanding disappeared with the erection of the context of scientific understanding.

### Thoughts Without Content

Overcoming this domination is not solved by simply returning to the earlier way of living, to acting instrumentally with objects and communicatively with persons. The Enlightenment made it possible to learn how to act instrumentally with persons (an unfortunate lesson) but not how to act communicatively with objects. Consciousness's "natural" tendency was to force phenomena to submit to it; now consciousness had to force itself in order for phenomena to affect it, to restrain itself from exploiting its surroundings. The impulse of consciousness to dominate phenomena beyond its control is what allows alienation to come about. Meaninglessness is the hollowness Kant called "thoughts without content."

If positivism and like-minded procedures lead ultimately to meaninglessness, what can be done to save the content of experience without losing some of its structure? Garbis Kortian says Habermas suggests the following:

If there is to be an adequation, in the dialectic sense, between theory and object, it is necessary to preserve the multitude of historical and cultural predeterminations of the social object in question.... Experience reduced to observation cannot take the place of reflection which recognizes the predeterminations of

the social object in a prescientific moment of understanding.<sup>8</sup>

Such reflection recognizes the object's prescientific determinations as well as its scientific ones. Recognizing only its historical and cultural aspects at the expense of the scientific commits the same mistake positivism makes, albeit in a different way. Meaning has less to do with either open-endedness or closure in and of themselves than it has to do with the tension of the conflict between them.

While recognizing knowledge as content and context, Habermas gives it a fundamental identification, namely, that the scientific is the focus of an other-than-scientific (historical, cultural, aesthetic, etc.) framework.<sup>9</sup> Now what is it about "knowledge" that we cannot thematize another of the usual background spheres and "return" the scientific-cognitive realm to its surroundings? The relation between content and context is a one/many matter. The frame is an opposite of the focus as a totality of other possible focal points. In this way, the focus of one framework can be given up for some other center of attention, relegating the former center to its background.

In "Program of the Coming Philosophy," Benjamin reveals what is involved in the radical turn from knowledge as the value to knowledge as a value. From the beginnings of the philosophical tradition to the present, experience as a whole has been conceived only as an object of "real knowledge." Gradual differences within the whole mark experience (empirical consciousness) into various types. Those differences are also of value as much as they are of types. Because of this, Benjamin claims, one of the leading responsibilities of the philosophy to come will be "to determine the true criteria for differentiating between the values of the

various types of consciousness."<sup>10</sup>

So long as science recognizes that role its knowledge-constitutive interests play in its interpretation of its surroundings, so long as it remembers its understanding is only one of an indefinite number of possible explanations, Habermas says,<sup>11</sup> one can refrain from reducing their lifeworld to an empty, meaningless husk. Because human interests are not animal instincts, it is possible to circumvent the void—illusion and knowledge are meaningful insofar as each affirms the other's presence. The next section will consider how Kant's "Copernican revolution" tries to make it possible for consciousness to liberate itself from its self-alienating ways.

## FROM ALIENATION TO LIBERATION

Kant's turn to the function of subjectivity inverted the experience of knowledge: consciousness shrugged off its submissiveness as a passive receiver of phenomena acting upon it, only to become the agent of power, dominating and controlling phenomena. Consciousness's need to explain phenomena was overtaken by its need to decide them. The control phenomena wield in the experience of knowing over consciousness had been overshadowed by consciousness's discovery of its own ability to rule over phenomena. By making this move within and about epistemological inquiry, Kant "introduced a theoretical margin of manoeuvre" which Habermas uses to outline his proposal of epistemology as a social theory.<sup>12</sup>

### On Choice

By recognizing the power of choice as another valid and valuable starting point in a program of methodological inquiry, Kant

made it possible for reason to overcome the dogmatism rampant in metaphysics. With this, Habermas argues, the distinctly modern task of reflection became one of guiding and directing the human community in social progress. Up to and including the present, societal modernization has been guided for the most part by economic and administrative (i.e., instrumental) standards of reasoning. In order to make a new link between culture and everyday praxis, Habermas claims the ways society has been modernized since the time of the Enlightenment must be redirected. Otherwise, humanity faces the consequences of giving itself over "to the imperatives of an almost autonomous economic system and its administrative complements."<sup>13</sup>

An analogous redirection is already underway in contemporary philosophical investigations of language.<sup>14</sup> The barren results of positivistic language analysis have convinced most either to abandon it or seriously modify its aims. Contexts of aesthetic expression and ethical purposes have joined the traditional interest in ontology. Language research is now concerned with what a speaker is speaking about, and how the speaker speaks about it, and also what aim or intention the speaker has in view.

Realizing the dogmatism of philosophical inquiry carries with itself positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, recognizing no single account must be given once and for all for a given investigation keeps the investigation open to other worthwhile and valuable explanations. Unfortunately, this advantage entails an undesirable disadvantage. By keeping the investigation open, it is difficult (if not impossible) to satisfy the examiner's need for the security of closure. Also, inquirers often assume any explanation, no matter how inane or ludicrous, warrants serious consideration. Carry-

ing this assumption to the extreme paves the way for philosophical medicine shows, recommending entertaining mystery stories however fraudulent they may be. There is more than one way of interpreting a situation—but some interpretations are better than others.

The opposite extreme of dogmatism is decisionism, theories attempting to encompass the process of making choices between alternatives by way of quantification. Because of this, Habermas believes, the differences between various ways of acting are reduced to the point of elimination, and rational choice is now presented with what appears as functionally equivalent means.<sup>15</sup> What is responsible for the reduction of difference is the standard of economy of thought, leveling each choice the standard accepts, and rejecting all other possibilities. The dogmatism of a single standard like economy of thought can only be overcome by adding other measures of value and significance to it.

Between the extremes of dogmatic and decisionistic theories exist other life criteria. As a matter of logical consistency, these criteria are inconsistent. As a whole, human society values both kindness and cruelty, confidence but not conceit, assertiveness but not arrogance. The emergence of the technological capacity for mass reproduction has obliterated the difference between conformity and originality. Benjamin rightly points out how technical reproducibility has more or less ignored the concept of authenticity altogether. Part of what made an original valuable was its limited accessibility, restricted to certain times and places. The value of originality is reduced in proportion to the number of places (both spatial and temporal) reproduction makes reachable.<sup>16</sup> A capacity for quantitative increase

thus exposes humanity to the danger of qualitative decrease.

### **Intuitions Without Concepts**

Kant's revolutionary theory, while liberating subjectivity from the domination of phenomena, falls short of the Habermasian view of emancipation. The self is free but disenfranchised, deprived of something worthwhile about the previously submissive relationship. Possible content for meaning is realized, but the realization blinds consciousness to the manifold ways such content can be structured and directed. This is feeling at the expense of thinking, intuitions without concepts, blind freedom. Modernity's Enlightenment intentions, says Habermas, have led the spheres of science, morality, and art to gain autonomy through elitist cultures of expertise. The ensuing revolts against such elitism dissipated the uniqueness and authenticity those spheres had gained, attempting to leave everyday life an undifferentiated chaos. The question to answer today is: "should we try to hold on to the *intentions* of the Enlightenment,...or should we declare the entire project of modernity a lost cause?"<sup>17</sup>

In order to counteract the fragmentation freedom brings, Habermas suggests looking for as many connections as can be found both within and between the various human spheres in the medium of communication. The cultural impoverishment experienced today, he explains, cannot be displaced by attending to any single cultural sphere (such as has been attempted through art) since this opens up only one specific complex of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> While liberation is a necessary part of the process of emancipation, it is not identical with it. Intuitions need thought, concepts need content: once these hypostatized axes of consciousness, viz.

thinking and feeling, recognize their mutual need of one another, emancipation (in Habermas's view) is possible. The following section will show how Habermas believes the recognition of thinking's and feeling's mutual necessity can come about, and how he illuminates this possibility through an analogy to his leading example of psychoanalysis.

### **FROM LIBERATION TO EMANCIPATION**

#### **How Concepts Gain Content: Acting Communicatively**

The dogmatism reason came to recognize through self-criticism had always, for better or worse, the strength of its convictions. Dogmatic assertions were assertions of commitment, a compelling power of obligation and entrustment. What the critique of reason exposed was the entwining of intellect and will, and the immediate reaction was reason's endeavor to pull those two threads apart. What must be done, Habermas argues, is modify this reaction, to discover what the critique of ideology "attacks as dogmatic, namely, the convergence of reason and commitment."<sup>19</sup>

According to Kortian, for Habermas

Philosophy is in essence Enlightenment, in the sense that its concept of truth is preeminently a reflective experience of the false pursued with a view to emancipation from the constraints of untruth....The identification of philosophical theory with emancipation . . . . compels [Habermas] to subject self-reflection to his concept of emancipatory cognitive interest.<sup>20</sup>

Kortian rightly points out how Habermas accepts the goals and motivations of the Enlightenment yet tries to circumvent the charges dogmatism brought against it, creating something of a neo-Enlightenment approach. Emancipation is typed as a “cognitive interest,” where the meaning of “cognitive” has greatly expanded. “Constraints of untruth” operate within a truth-as-disclosure context, and reason regards “untruths” as obstructions to be surmounted.

As an interest, the drive toward emancipation can be described in two ways: as a theoretical construct in and of itself, and through the consequences following from the construct’s application. According to Habermas, an interest is a primary alignment grounded upon particular basic conditions of humanity’s reproduction and self-constitution. Habermas takes these conditions to be work and interaction.<sup>21</sup> The concept of interest, one must remember, is something theoretical related to life experience for the sake of understanding it. Other theoretical moves, such as Habermas’s concept of the “ideal speech situation,” are meant as strategies for outlining contexts where dialogical (communicative) activity is possible. The outlined communication background appears as a highly complex, deeply enriched web of intricate interconnections every act of communication implicitly presupposes, recognizes, and anticipates.<sup>22</sup> This complex web provides the conditions of the possibility of communication as well as of consensus.

The concept of interest in theoretical discussion appears to have an uncompromisingly strict “connecting” ability for reconstructing “lived” experience into a unified, indivisible whole. This is like the holism phenomenology seeks behind a slogan like “consciousness is always consciousness of something.” With respect to the double-

tiered (monologic and dialogic) structure of conscious activity, interest links these levels in a triadic relationship of “fact” and two interpreters. Two of the connections of this relation are monological (of the interpreters to the “fact”), and the third is dialogical (of the interpreters to one another). Every interpretation carries the marks an interpreter puts upon it. The danger of exclusively individual interpretations, such as relativism and arbitrariness, can be minimized by additional dialogical connections between a participating subject (first interpreter) and a *partner* (second interpreter). The greater the number of participants (who, it is assumed, agree to communicate [and not necessarily agree] with one another), the greater the likelihood of arriving at both rigorous and creative interpretations. The interaction of several persons mediates the reconstruction of experience. This reconstruction Habermas refers to as understanding and as communicative experience.<sup>23</sup>

Is something like “objectivity,” theoretically speaking, possible? It is difficult to say, mainly because of an integrity philosophy and philosophers want to maintain in the relationship between reason and commitment. Society can resolve “facts” as matters of convention, and let this stand as “objectivity.” But this blurs the distinction between object and interpretation, a necessary distinction insofar as it guides and directs one of the aspects of the program of inquiry. Hence a neutral, detached “observer,” even the one circumscribed by Habermas’s ideal speech situation, is a myth.<sup>24</sup> Some suppose the crucial task of future philosophy is to settle upon either description or prescription as its true aim and purpose. In the long run, this too is self-destructive, since meaning, in both its uniqueness as well as in its universality,

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arises out of the conflict between proposals and discoveries.

Emancipation, according to Habermas, is essentially the activity of understanding, the finding/forging of connections at the dialogical level of experience. To be blunt, emancipation *is* communicative action, living both actively and reactively, critically and creatively, thinking as well as feeling. Understanding is an encompassing cognitive mode, where intellectual assent and willful consent share equally valuable roles in the process of intersubjective acceptance in the medium of language.<sup>25</sup> The positive freedom bestowed through emancipation, a release from bondage endowed with the privileges and rights intrinsic to rationality, draws its meaning and significance exclusively within the context of community and society.

The triadic relation between object, self, and other makes it possible for Habermas to claim understanding consists in three kinds of agreement. He implicitly identifies these kinds by referring to the speaker's selection of an expression for the sake of reaching "an understanding [1] *with* a hearer [2] *about* something and thereby... [3] *make himself* understandable."<sup>26</sup> The first two kinds of agreement, between (1) speaker and hearer and (2) speaker and expression, fall within the monological/dialogical structure of conscious activity. The core of Habermas's concept of emancipation, however, has to do with understanding's third kind of agreement. For him, the essence of emancipation is the process of making oneself understandable, to oneself and others, for the sake of overcoming obstacles standing in the way of realizing one's unique powers and abilities to their utmost limits. He illustrates the sort of struggle he feels must be undertaken with a theoretical ap-

praisal and discussion of the science of self-reflection, psychoanalysis.

### Habermas and Psychoanalysis

The philosophically novel and fruitful aspect of Habermas's discussion of psychoanalysis within the context of critical theory is how the transcendental turn to self-reflection is taken up for the sake of how it can be used to make the emergence of a self over and against experience possible. The intentions of the Enlightenment had been led astray, and experience had come to be interpreted in very nearly exclusively material ways, reaching the extreme in Hume's impressions of sense. Benjamin tells how a sufficiently revised concept of knowledge necessarily demands a new concept of experience, "in accordance with the relationship Kant has found between the two."<sup>27</sup> Now Kant had presupposed a knower knows himself, that the connections one finds or makes in experience assume one has an implicit self-knowledge of one's own framework of operation. Habermas rightly brings this presupposition out. In this way, emancipation for Habermas is a matter of overcoming and mastering oneself through self-understanding.

By examining the psychoanalytic model, Habermas suggests the domination from which one seeks emancipation is in a sense self-inflicted, the oppression one experiences lies in the absence of one's understanding of oneself for the sake of successfully dealing with life. Communication is the fundamental condition for success because, though one can give public appearances of coping with life by outwardly conforming with sanctioned expectations, a neurotic privately suffers from a communication disturbance within himself.<sup>28</sup>

Psychoanalysis, Habermas argues, shows there is more to language and understanding than their capacity rationally to reconstruct experience, an instrumental act. In addition to the value of the end, communication realizes means also have value in and of themselves, and even if some ends are not achieved, the means are no less worthwhile because of it. The key here is to realize and value the activity of experience without having to justify it in terms of results.

Habermas's distinction between instrumental and communicative action is another way of talking about needs and desires. Instrumental standards of societal interaction have come about because instrumentality is the minimum instance of communication. Some needs (such as self-preservation) demand (and, arguably, rightly so) results be taken more seriously than the ways they are produced. This is not to say every action must reach (even have) some goal. With communicative action, Habermas suggests some actions are their own ends, and people do them not because they have to but because they want to do them. Living instrumentally is recognized as domination once one experiences the need for emancipation,<sup>29</sup> a paradoxical situation where one moves from the need to meet needs to a plane where one "needs" to satisfy desires, to validate oneself not for the sake of ends but in spite of them. This is the self's drive to put its spontaneity ahead of its calculability, to live actively rather than reactively, to make desire life's sufficient condition.

What does such a move do to the critical attitude of the Enlightenment project, to *reasonable* reflection? While the possibility of interpretations becoming relative, arbitrary, and decisionistic exists, there is no necessary reason for them to become so. The demand for secure knowledge to anchor itself upon the invariance of nature (the faith

featured in the concept of "natural law") is only partially discounted, insofar as the generation of a self's identity forms an invariance of its own, namely, of its life history.<sup>30</sup> The self's capacity to reflect upon and mediate the contraposed invariances shows proper interpretations (where "proper" means due consideration of possible aspects) are in principle as incapable of "absolute" arbitrariness as they are of any other dogmatic absolute.

David Held gives an excellent account of how psychoanalysis inverts rational reconstruction from its usual position as a sought after result into a means a self can use to overcome itself:

Psychoanalysis presents a way of understanding neurosis as the consequence of sequences of lawlike developments which act, prior to therapy, as a form of "second nature"...Explanation, in the form of a reconstructed life history, is used both to understand and overcome the pressures of second nature....Once the therapy has been successfully concluded and the patient is well, explanation of actions will coincide with the patient's own understanding and the process of explanation itself will become superfluous to the recovery of meaning.<sup>31</sup>

Knowledge and experience require something of a similar inversion. As concepts, instead of each trying to appropriate and subjugate the other for its own sake, each must come to recognize their complementarity. This understanding has to rebuild and recover forgotten connections, in order to conquer the opposition between knowledge and experience. Finally, once such a con-

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flict has been resolved, the understanding returns to the unthematic, pre-reflective background over and against which experience and knowledge have meaning, the background of communicative action.

In psychoanalytic terms, Habermas means emancipation is a conscious resolution of conflicts, as opposed to the repression of conflicts unconsciously resolved. He argues Foucault's proposal to replace Marx and Freud's repression-emancipation model with a pluralistic one of power-discourse formations "can be differentiated according to their style and intensity" but cannot "be judged in terms of validity."<sup>32</sup> Habermas is quite obviously working from some criterion for distinguishing valid resolutions from invalid ones. This can become a problem depending upon where one decides to incorporate measures of validity within one's process of inquiry. Habermas has to be careful about the legitimacy and the desirability of establishing the psychoanalytic model as a ruling paradigmatic metatheory. The conscious/unconscious axis is one way of deciding validity. The same model, in accordance with its own principles, however, demands a margin of freedom and variation with respect to what counts as "valid" ways of dealing with life. It is as if Habermas believes the psychoanalytic model allows for more than enough leeway concerning validity, and ultimately, within the limits and constraints of this theory, one can live life satisfyingly. If this is how Habermas sees this model, however, he is forgetting the hypothetical distinctions such a theory makes. Closing the gap between hypothesis and certitude, at subsequent meta-levels of theory no less than at the initial theoretical level itself, only smuggles a dogmatic attitude into the theory at some inconspicuous place.

## FROM EMANCIPATION TO DOMINATION

Because Habermas places great confidence in the capacity of the psychoanalytic model to deal with life, one gets the impression emancipation is the final endpoint of a single line of overcoming the obstacles of domination, exploitation, alienation, and aimless liberation. It may be at some distance, but emancipation does lie ahead, freeing humanity of the instrumental standards and measures now ruling it. Acting communicatively is the greatest value; once it is reached, humanity will have fulfilled the Enlightenment project once and for all.

Held, however, charges that the concept of an "emancipatory interest" is at best ambiguous. By designating work and language as the fundamental conditions of existence, Habermas sets domination as a systematic distortion of one or the other (or both) of these conditions. But as such, emancipatory interest "only develops to the extent that domination is institutionalized."<sup>33</sup> In order for an interest to be seen *as* an emancipatory interest domination must become concrete through institutionalization. One learns what emancipation might mean for Habermas by understanding that from which the interest seeks to be released. In this sense, emancipation and domination are polar opposites. Other senses Habermas attaches to emancipation include its particular contrasts with exploitation, alienation, even liberation.

The ambiguity in Habermas's theory of communicative action is how he can say *this* sort of activity is *better than* instrumental action. Communicative action may be better in the way some regard art as better than science, placing desire and spontaneity in a hierarchy ahead of need and security. If Habermas is claiming some end other

than itself (suggested by the references to validity), then communicative action operates in the same context that makes instrumental action meaningful. The contrast of communicative action as dialogical with instrumental action as monological is insufficient. On the one hand, communicative activity does not lend itself (as instrumentality does) to a means/end understanding; on the other hand, what is the proper understanding for communicative action if it is not one of purposiveness or teleology? Habermas turns to validity (whose meaning depends upon a context of purposiveness) in order to help and protect his theory of communicative action. Outside of this context, the theory has no meaning.

In connection with this problem, Habermas must be taken to task for his reading of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. He believes Nietzsche privileges origins above other developments for no other reason than that they precede later developments. In claiming Nietzsche identifies what came first as more active and creative than what came after, Habermas goes on to infer what is more active necessarily comes first. Now Nietzsche can "denounce the accidental success of the belief in truth and the ascetic ideal, as well as the belief in science and morality."<sup>34</sup> Especially in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche's concern for the value of truth is to raise the problem of its legitimate limits. To say he denounces the "accidental success" of the belief in truth and science is wrong. The success of truth and science is no accident for Nietzsche—one need only read through *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, and *Beyond Good and Evil* to recognize his profound respect and admiration for the ways humanity has dealt satisfyingly with life.

What Nietzsche does denounce are the irresponsible ways both religion and science

attempted to establish their realities as *the* reality. Nietzsche attacks both scientism and emotivism with equal contempt (see *Genealogy*, III 26). Each commits the same error differently: scientism, by valuing thinking at the expense of feeling; emotivism, by valuing feeling at the expense of thinking. Nietzsche's polemic is against a way of life that is only reactive, refusing to be creative. He does not praise activity alone. Instead the greatest way of life incorporates both structure *and* content, both responsibility *and* spontaneity, even if this way of life presents something of a logical contradiction.

This should be the force of Habermas's appeal to the psychoanalytic model: the task of understanding oneself is a logical endeavor of the most rudimentary form. Life demands an amount of logical contradiction, and it matters little to persons forced to understand themselves in connection with a universe of others whether those connections fit well into an either/or form. Logic is a matter of thinking, brought to bear upon life for the sake of organizing it, but never in order to replace it (such as positivism had aspired to do). Nor is life only a matter of feeling, for "absolute" emotion controls a person, and life is a give-and-take proposal for consciousness. Sometimes thinking rules feeling, and sometimes feeling rules thinking.

By taking Habermas's sense of emancipation with a fairer reading of Nietzsche, what appears as emancipation on today's horizon is a domination of tomorrow's foreground. What it takes to break the chains ancestors handed over are in turn handed over to posterity, never intending to imprison them, yet constraining them all the same. What frees one generation enslaves the next: what helps it survive encumbers its children.

The cycle from domination to emancipa-

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tion recurs over and again through various human epochs. Other realms Kant failed to systematize, such as religion, must be explored by moving from reflection upon the epistemological nature of language to

the the *linguistic* nature of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Having already learned something about language's logical structure, philosophy now needs to see how language makes knowledge a valid interest.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 233.
2. "[T]he tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tacticle appropriation." *Ibid.*, p. 240.
3. Jürgen Habermas, "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in Our Scientific Civilization," *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 255.
4. Jürgen Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," *New German Critique* 26 (1982): 22.
5. David Held, "Interests, Knowledge, and Action," in *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 303.
6. "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," pp. 262-63.
7. "The Work of Art," p. 228.
8. Garbis Kortian, *Metacritique: The Philosophical Argument of Jürgen Habermas*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 63.
9. Jürgen Habermas, "Intermediate Reflections: Social Actions, Purposive Activity, and Communication," in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, volume one: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p. 336.
10. Walter Benjamin, "Program of the Coming Philosophy," *The Philosophical Forum* 15 (Fall-Winter 1983-84): 45.
11. "Nothing...compels adoption of an empiricist interpretation...as long as the self-reflection of science...is not positivistically misunderstood itself, that is rejected as critique." Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 298.
12. Kortian, p. 131.
13. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 13.
14. "[T]he break with the 'logos characterization of language'...also has consequences for the choice of ontological presuppositions in the theory of language....[W]e have to establish validity claims and world relations for [other modes of language] as was done for the assertoric mode." "Intermediate Reflections," p. 278.
15. "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," pp. 270-71.
16. "The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical—and, of course, not only technical—reproducibility." "The Work of Art," p. 220.
17. "Modernity versus Postmodernity," p. 9.
18. "Communication processes need a cultural tradition covering all spheres—cognitive, moral-practical and expressive." *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
19. "[S]cience in its critical function of knowledge...[as] a kind of committed reason...is precisely what the critique of ideology denies." "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision," p. 268.
20. Kortian, pp. 109-10.
21. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 196.
22. Kortian, p. 121.
23. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 180-81.
24. "A successful interpretation...preserves the subject's unique meaning." Held, pp. 312-13.
25. "Intermediate Reflections," p. 298.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
27. "Program of the Coming Philosophy," p. 46.
28. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 227-28.
29. "The will, like Kant's faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), constitutes the essential element of reason." Kortian, pp. 52-53.
30. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 271.
31. Held, p. 323.
32. "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment," p. 29.
33. Held, p. 319.
34. "The genealogical localization of the powers has a critical purpose: the powers of an earlier and more distinguished ancestry are the active and creative ones, whereas the reactive powers of later and lower descent express a perverted will to power." "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment," p. 28.
35. "The Program of the Coming Philosophy," p. 49.

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