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Rationalization, Legitimation, and Domination in Modern Industrial Societies: The Alternative Perspectives of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas

Penny Pasdermajian

A Thesis

in the

Humanities Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities at Concordia University Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Rationalization, Legitimation, and Domination in Modern Industrial Societies:
The Alternative Perspectives of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas

Penny Pasdermajian, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2005

The suggestions which Max Weber and Jurgen Habermas offer to ameliorate the moral, ethical and practical problems which society faces in modernity are quite different, but they nevertheless complement each other to some extent.

This thesis will explore their differing approaches, and attempt to evaluate and critique both Habermas's evolutionary model of social change and Weber's "open-ended" view of modernity.

The cornerstone of Habermas's project is the assumption that as individuals learn, so do societies. In his view, learning involves a growing ability to reflect, to analyze, and to enter into the life-worlds of others. By engaging in discursive argumentation, participants subject their most cherished beliefs to close scrutiny, which Habermas hopes will result in new, intersubjectively constituted values which may provide a catalyst for change and liberation.

In contrast, Weber's project forcefully rejects evolutionary models of social change. As Weber sees it, reality is infinitely complex, fluid and unpredictable. The constant conflict between competing "value-spheres" as well makes it impossible to specify the direction of social change. Weber would also point out that Habermas's theory is crippled by the "ontogenetic fallacy" embedded in even the most sophisticated evolutionary schemes. I will thus argue (following Weber) that Habermas's guiding

assumption- that as individuals learn, societies "learn"- cannot be empirically demonstrated. Weber would remind us that any recognition of the complexity of reality renders such a position untenable.

Weber offers no specific program designed to accomplish the goal of structural change and emancipation in modernity. However, in his view the plebiscitarian leader may offer a partial antidote to the often repressive forces of rationalization. Weber is also alive to the possibility that as instrumental rationality advances, it may be counterbalanced by value-rationality in various forms- for example, embodied in new social movements, or even a personal commitment to values on the part of individuals.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,
Pauline Joan Hyde Pasdermajian, and the late Yervant Pasdermajian,
and to my uncle,
the late Jack Pasdermajian,
with all my love and gratitude.

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Introduction and Overview of Thesis

Section I: Rationalization and Historical Change

Chapter I: Max Weber and the Neo-Kantians: The Problem of Objectivity

This chapter includes a discussion of the ideas of Heinrich Rickert, Whilhelm Dilthey, George Simmel, and Wilhelm Windelband- theorists who were instrumental in formulating the problems of science and historical explanation in Germany.

Max Weber's conception of science is placed within this framework, and particular attention will be paid to the nature and extent of Rickert's influence on Weber's notion of objectivity in the social sciences. The principle of "value-relevance" was of vital interest to both theorists, but each interpreted its meaning differently- what were the reasons for this divergence?

Thus, the following questions will guide this discussion. First, how can the researcher negotiate an "irrational multiplicity" of values? Second, how can the human sciences be guided by theoretical foundations which overcome the constraints of natural scientific assumptions, and finally, how can we transcend the problem of objectivity?

Chapter II: Weber's Model of Historical Change

This chapter deals with Weber's rejection of evolutionary views of historical change. In his opinion, such schemes are inadequate because their intent is descriptive rather than analytical. As Weber sees it, the use of *ideal-types* overcomes the deficiencies inherent in such models, which tend to be arbitrary, unilinear and monocausal.

In addition, an attempt is made to clarify Weber's usage of the often opaque and shifting concepts of "rationality" and "rationalization". The notion of "rationalization", in particular, is a central organizing theme in Weber's theory of social change. Therefore, the following questions must be addressed must be addressed: How does increasing rationalization manifest itself in the external life-spheres (such as the economy, for example) as well as the internal spheres of religion and ethics?

Second, what effect does the rationalization process have on our capacity to engage in substantively rational behaviour, and in addition, what are the implications of this, in Weber's opinion, for the possibility or moral progress? Finally, Weber's "will-centered" and resolutely individualistic conception of man is evaluated. Does it allow for intersubjectively constituted values, and by extension, the possibility of structural change?

CHAPTER III: MAX WEBER'S LEGAL-RATIONAL LEGITIMACY

This chapter focuses on Weber's central interest in bureaucracy and the bureaucratic state's relationship to democracy in modernity. Several questions will be considered. First, how does Weber define both the bureaucratic state and the bureaucratic administration? Second, what are the consequences of a fully developed state apparatus? In other words, how is bureaucracy (which is ostensibly congenial to democratic principles) actually in conflict with them? Finally, how does the separation of law and morality serve the interests of the bureaucratic machine?

In Weber's view, the individual and societal costs of growing bureaucratization are severe in spite of the advantages it offers in terms of stability and predictability. As

Weber sees it, then, the plebiscitarian leader represents the only possible solution to the specter of social and intellectual ossification. Yet the question must be asked: Is this yet another manifestation of Weber's implacable individualism, and his belief that structures of domination resist our best efforts to undo them?

Section II: Habermas's Defense of Modernity

Chapter IV: Habermas's Evolutionary Theory of Social Change

In this chapter I will examine Habermas's "defense of modernity" which rests on his attempt to present an evolutionary theory of social change. Habermas's model is based on the assumption that individual moral learning will lead to the creation of new societal structures. Discourse which is free of domination will become possible, thus liberating the individual from the repression which in Weber's opinion was an almost inevitable consequence of rationalization.

Habermas thus forcefully rejects Weber's pessimistic outlook and his emphasis on self-created ethics. He instead posits a new kind of communicative rationality- one founded on intersubjectively constituted values. Although he presents a compelling argument, two particularly serious logical problems must be addressed: How can one assume that the leap from individual to social learning is feasible? That is, has Habermas relied too heavily on the argument that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"? Furthermore, even if "social learning" were shown to be possible, can an interaction truly free of domination ever be enacted in reality?

CHAPTER V: JÜRGEN HABERMAS'S DISCOURSE ETHICS: SOCIAL EVOLUTION AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, I elaborate on the difficulties involved in Habermas's use of an evolutionary perspective, which incorporates the idea of "social learning". A discussion of Habermas's self-critique is included as well, which focuses on his recognition that "additional empirical assumptions" are needed to explain the connection between the two processes.

Habermas's proceduralism (discourse ethics) is also examined, with a view to uncovering some of the difficulties embedded in its formalism. A related critique considers Habermas's tendency to maintain an overly rigid distinction between moral, ethical and practical questions. This issue is especially pertinent because ignoring the extent to which these related dilemmas converge oversimplifies the problem of specifying the direction of social change.

Finally, I once again address a question which had been raised in chapter four, but it is one which deserves further consideration. Proceduralism offers a set of rules meant to ensure that discourse can take place without coercion. But (and this issue will be explored in chapter six as well) Habermas here, as always, seems profoundly uncomfortable with the notion of power differentials. His so-called "ideal-speech situation" is unlikely to eliminate the exercise of power, but rather may ensure that it is carried out in covert form.

CHAPTER SIX : A WEBER-HABERMAS DIALOGUE

This chapter presents a comprehensive summary and critique of the main assumptions of Weber and Habermas, which takes the form of a "dialogue" between the two theorists.

As Habermas sees it, Weber's view of modernity (and therefore his whole intellectual project) is too narrowly conceived. He claims, therefore, that his monologically-based model of social action falls prey to the problems inherent in every "philosophy of consciousness"- that is, a failure to recognize that intersubjectively constituted values can ultimately open up possibilities for structural change.

Habermas also asserts that Weber's rejection of evolutionary theory narrows his conception of the future to such an extent that it offers little more than an intellectual dead end, reminiscent of the nihilism characteristic of not only Nietzsche, but Horkheimer and Adorno as well.

More specifically, Habermas is troubled by Weber's belief that the plebiscitarian leader is the only (tentative) antidote to the stultifying effects of bureaucratization. In Habermas's view, such a solution is anti-democratic and may lead to totalitarianism.

Weber of course cannot answer Habermas's charges directly, but we have already seen that Habermas's reliance on evolutionary learning models is vulnerable to charges that his work conceals an "ontogenetic fallacy". Although Habermas is sensitive to criticism from those who question how the leap from individual to social learning can be accomplished (and Weber would certainly be among them- witness his vigorous critiques of Stammler and Roscher, for example) Habermas's own self-critique has failed to adequately address this issue.

Furthermore, although Habermas berates Weber for his reluctance to specify the nature and direction of future social development, it seems that Habermas himself has underestimated the difficulties involved in negotiating an "irrational multiplicity of values". His tendency to maintain an overly rigid distinction between moral, ethical and practical concerns bespeaks an attempt to compartmentalize reality- but as Weber would remind him, reality is perverse and stubbornly resists our best efforts at prediction and control. Once again, Habermas has shown some awareness of the fact that moral, ethical, and pragmatic issues do converge (and following from this, that reality is infinite- and infinitely complex) but he has so far not reformulated his project to accommodate this insight.

In addition, while the plebiscitarian leader may indeed offer only a partial (and unsatisfactory) solution to moral and social decay in modernity, Weber would point out (and I would certainly agree) that the "ideal-speech situation" is no better. In fact, it may be worse, because as I have indicated, it seems in practice to offer nothing more than an insidious form of coercion, cunningly disguised as equality. In that sense it may offer the last, best proof that structures of domination are indeed as implacable as Weber feared. We should not forget, however, that his view of modernity is "open-ended", as Wolfgang Schluchter has pointed out. If Habermas's vision of the future is hopelessly utopian (and I believe that it is) then we must change ourselves through a personal commitment to value-rationality- and in so doing, we will fight entropy.

SECTION I

MAX WEBER:

RATIONALIZATION AND HISTORICAL CHANGE

Chapter I: Max Weber and the Neo-Kantians: The Problem of Objectivity and the Status of Historical Knowledge

This thesis in large part takes the form of a virtual "dialogue" between Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas. As I see it, my role as "moderator" of this dialogue involves fairly representing the views of each theorist on certain key issues, in particular the problems of rationalization, legitimation, and domination in modern industrial societies. Jürgen Habermas's attempt to salvage modernity through discourse will be examined in relation to Max Weber's project, which is to some extent will-centered and monological. Thus my thesis does not attempt an innovative interpretation of Weber or Habermas vis-à-vis positions taken in the secondary literature. Rather, I wish to set the ideas of these two theorists in relief, and in so doing, allow Weber to respond "hypothetically" to Habermas's critiques of his work.

Habermas's dependence on evolutionary schemes is central to his project, as will be demonstrated in the second section of this thesis. Weber, on the other hand, rejects such approaches. What are the reasons for this divergence?

Weber's assertion that historical knowledge cannot be elevated to the level of the scientifically verifiable rests in part on the recognition that reality is infinite, quicksilver, and protean. Any judgements we make about the future direction of society or the desirability of certain outcomes inevitably reflect our *faith* and *values*, rather than our *knowledge*.

A) WILHELM WINDELBAND: GESCHICHTE UND NATURWISSENSCHAFT (HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE)

The issue of the validity of historical knowledge has preoccupied social scientists for generations, and the members of the Southwest German (Baden) school were no exception. A full account of Weber's involvement in the *Methodenstreit* and his relationship to the members of the Baden school is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a few words on the problematic which they wished to address are in order here.

The Southwest German School, whose members included Heinrich Rickert and his teacher, Wilhelm Windelband, was concerned with the linkage between knowledge and values, which would then provide the foundation for a theory of historical knowledge. The following issues were of particular importance:

1. In Windelband's view, historical science has as its particular focus the knowledge of individual or concrete reality, also known as "idiographic" knowledge, or what Rickert would later conceptualize as knowledge of the historical individual.
2. In addition, the members of the Baden school wished to address the issue of concept formation in the historical sciences. Their discussion focused on the *hiatus irrationalis* between concept and reality, and the related question of how knowledge of the historical individual can be made possible – in other words, what are the prerequisites for a methodology of the cultural sciences?[1]

In order to better understand Max Weber's position on the problem of objectivity and the status of historical knowledge, it is first important to consider his ideas in relation to those of his colleagues, including Windelband, Rickert, Dilthey and Simmel.

In his essay "Objectivity in Social Science", Weber himself acknowledges that "Those who know the work of the modern logicians- I cite only Windelband, Simmel, and for our purposes particularly Heinrich Rickert- will immediately notice that everything of importance in this essay is bound up with their work".[2]

Windelband, like his colleagues in the southwest German (Baden) school, employs Kant's theory of science in order to revise and transcend it. He thus argues that, "To understand Kant is to go beyond him. Kant conceived of the scope of knowledge as limited to the enterprise of Newtonian natural philosophy."[3] Thus, according to Windelband's argument it is this question of the possibility of a valid *historical* science which should be addressed.

Windelband's belief in the legitimacy of the historical sciences is made quite clear in the following passage:

> Past languages and nations, their beliefs and their forms, their struggle for power and freedom, their literature and their thought, speak to us through the voice of history- resurrecting what is forgotten into a new form of life.[4]

This is in contrast to the natural sciences, for as Windelband so beautifully and poignantly phrases it, their purpose is to comprehend:

> A silent and colourless world of atoms in which the earthly aura of perceptual qualities has disappeared completely: the triumph of thought over perception, utterly indifferent to the past, the natural sciences drop anchor in a sea of being that is eternally the same.[5]

Windelband thus expresses his agreement with fellow members of the southwest German school who believe that Kant's theory of knowledge is flawed as a result of its restriction to the realm of the natural sciences.

Windelband's seminal contribution lies in his insistence that although knowledge of the general and recurring is indeed valuable, it is knowledge of the unique and singular- that which is imbued with *meaning* – which characterizes the study of history and of all the human sciences. With this in mind, he elucidates his classic distinction between two types of scientific inquiry, each of which yields contrasting forms of knowledge – that is, what Windelband terms the "nomothetic" versus the "idiographic". He clarifies the distinction between the two approaches in the following excerpt from his famous rectorial address of 1894:

> The nomological sciences are concerned with what is invariably the case. The sciences of process are concerned with what was once the case. If I may be permitted to introduce some new technical terms, scientific thought is *nomothetic* in the former case and *idiographic* in the latter case.[6]

Windelband himself admits that his initial distinction between the general (nomothetic) sciences and those that are concerned with idiographic or unique, value-laden events is not exhaustive and will not satisfy the researcher who wishes to arrive at a deeper knowledge of reality. He thus cautions the reader to be aware that "this methodological dichotomy classifies only modes of investigation, not the contents of knowledge itself. It is possible – and it is in fact the case – that the same subjects can be the object of both a nomothetic and an idiographic investigation".[7]

For example, a particular phenomenon may appear to be unchanging, and thus amenable to nomothetic investigation. But it may undergo a sudden, unexpected shift, or alternatively, its invariant character may prove on closer examination to be illusory. Windelband offers language itself as an example of this shifting status, and reminds us that its use is governed by formal laws, "which remain the same throughout all changes

of expression".[8] Nevertheless, language is an organic entity whose fate it is to be born, to grow, and eventually, to die. In that sense, each language, in spite of its adherence to stable grammatical rules, is distinctive, unique, and ever-changing. Meaning and value cling to it, as they do to every other historical phenomenon from which something can be learned.

Does this mean that everything which occurs falls into the category of what Windelband calls a "historical fact" – that which is worthy of study? Not at all – as Windelband points out, "There are many events which do not qualify as historical facts".[9]

A researcher may consider Goethe's life and work to be of great significance, but not every detail of his existence is necessarily relevant to Goethe's larger contribution. As Windelband argues, "A single datum, unless it becomes a building stone in a more general cognitive structure, remains nothing more than an object of idle curiosity". We may therefore be intrigued to learn that in 1780, Goethe had a doorbell and an apartment key made, and on February 22nd, that he had a letter case made.[10] However, unless these isolated events can be shown to have a meaning which is greater than themselves, their inclusion in any biography of Goethe would be arbitrary and misleading.[11] We must gather and accumulate information, to be sure, but if it is to be meaningful, Windelband reminds us that we must do so while carrying "a large sieve that retains the items that are useful and allows those that are useless to drop through".[12]

Windelband's "sieve" will no doubt remind the reader of Weber's "ideal-types". Although Windelband in no way elaborated a full-blown theory of concept-formation, the use of the "sieve" analogy displays a keen awareness of the need for a principle of selection – necessitated by the fact that reality is inexhaustible, and that every act of

choice must be based on what is of value *to us*. This particularistic conception of value forms the cornerstone of Windelband's rejection of positivism and unified science. He concedes that natural scientific methods offer one form of knowledge, but it is not the only form, and to assert that the construction of general laws encompasses reality merely reveals the paucity of one's imagination.

As Windelband expresses it:

> In opposition to this standpoint, it is necessary to insist on the following: every interest and judgement, every ascription of human value is based on the singular and unique. Simply consider how swiftly our emotions abate whenever their object is multiplied or becomes nothing more than one case among thousands of others of the same sort. 'She is not the first', we read in one of the most terrifying tests of Faust. Our sense of values and all of our axiological sentiments are grounded in the uniqueness and incomparability of their object.[13]

Windelband, as has been indicated, offers only the sketchiest advice on how to judge the validity of historical knowledge – i.e., that facts must be capable of taking their place within a "general cognitive structure" in order to be considered worthy of study. His suggestion that we gather as much information as possible, and then pass it through the "sieve" of values in order to evaluate its usefulness begs the question: If we equate "valuable" with that which is "unique" and "singular", what do we mean by this? Goethe's life and work were singular, but the same can be said of Attila the Hun. Furthermore, how can we be sure which details of an individual's life are truly most salient?

The researcher's choices almost invariably reveal more about himself than the object under study. The perils of subjectivism are well known, and Windelband's vague methodological guidelines do little to overcome them. He does assert that in order to avoid idiosyncratic and subjectivist tendencies, the historical sciences require "as their

ultimate presuppositions and principles of selection a system of generally valid values". This system of values would have the same status in the historical sciences that Kant's principles of pure understanding hold in the natural sciences. Yet Windelband's Strasbourg lecture approaches these issues from an epistemological perspective which by definition cannot fully answer the question of how such "generally valid values" can be formulated.[14] Nevertheless, his insistence on the validity and autonomy of the historical sciences provides the parameters in which Rickert, Dilthey, Simmel, and Weber were to develop their own philosophies of history.

B) Heinrich Rickert – The Problem of Value

Heinrich Rickert, in particular, acknowledges his debt to Windelband by admitting that the reader who had carefully analyzed Windelband's lecture "On History and Natural Science" might find his own writings redundant.[15]

This modest claim may understate Rickert's contribution, however. His intent is to go beyond Windelband in terms of logic, consistency and conceptual rigour. It is not sufficient, in Rickert's view, to merely assert that the historian's role is "to breathe new life into some structure of the past".[16] Such metaphorical statements do little to explain *how* this should be done, or dispel the confusion between values and facts.

Rickert argues that the cultural sciences may be distinguished from the natural sciences in that cultural phenomena are value-laden, or at least "relevant to values". Objects in nature, on the other hand, are "devoid of value and meaning".[17] It is up to the scientific observer to provide a conceptual framework for organizing his data, which is so diverse and multifaceted (particularly in the cultural realm) that it resists categorization.

Rickert's acceptance of the Kantian view of empirical reality as fundamentally inexhaustible and boundless, both in space and time, presents a conceptual problem.[18] He asks: "From the infinite manifold of the perceptual content of reality, can certain aspects be accentuated and consolidated into scientific concepts in such a way that they represent not what is *common* of a plurality... but, rather, only what is present in *one* individual?"[19] In other words, if "knowing egos" are confronted with an infinite stream of objects and events, but must limit historical concepts to the individual and non-recurring, how is it possible to select from this infinite stream only those which are essential and meaningful?

Rickert advances a solution to this problem through what he terms a "principle of value-relevance". He argues that:

> What falls under historical concepts is what is in relief from reality and consolidated as individual unities by means of the purely theoretical relation of an object to generally acknowledged values.[20]

Rickert thus expresses his agreement with Windelband's rather vaguely worded assertion that the historical sciences must be grounded in a "system of generally valid values". But he is even more adamant than Windelband had been on the issue of the distinction between individualizing and generalizing methods. In Rickert's view, then, the cultural sciences must employ an idiographic method which is based on "universal values" – that is, purely formal constructs which are nevertheless eternally valid. How are such values constituted?

Here again Rickert manifests his debt to Windelband as well as his effort to transcend him in specificity and clarity. Rickert maintains that the truth of values which are 'normatively' recognized by the community – which guide the researcher in the selection of essential facts – need not be empirically verified at every moment. Eternally

valid truths exist, according to Rickert, regardless of whether or not everyone believes in them. Furthermore, Rickert argues that it is unnecessary to specify the *content* of values which influence decisions made by the cultural scientist. Thus Rickert advocated a strict separation between theory and lived experience which paralleled the form/content demarcation characteristic of his approach to the problem of knowledge. His universal values are thus as empty of empirical content as Kant's "categorical imperative".

This "a priori" conception of values poses several difficult problems, in particular that of generality. Although history is a presentation of the non-recurring and general, it must have general meaning. Because "all scientific thought must be articulated in general concepts", then by definition each of the elements of these concepts must be intrinsically general.[21]

Rickert attempts to overcome this problem by arguing that although each of the general concepts when considered in isolation do not qualify as scientific 'concepts', when considered in combination or as a 'whole' they represent that which is unique. In other words, Rickert reminds us that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

As Thomas Burger points out, this leads to a further dilemma. Historical description (contents) can only be of a "limited nature" – scientifically valid only for a specific place and time. Thus, "a universal history which is valid for all mankind appears to out of reach".[22]

Again Rickert struggles to resolve this question by simply assuming that such universally held values do indeed exist. He observes that:

> ...If history is to compete with the kind of general validity that natural science claims in stating laws of nature, we must not only assume that certain values are in fact acknowledged by all members of certain

> communities; we must also assume that the acknowledgement of values in general can be required as indispensable for every scientist...[23]

Thomas Burger reminds us (quite rightly) that the assumption that such universally held values exist cannot be empirically justified.[24] Since no distinction can be made between empirically general and universal cultural values, Rickert simply treats the general as if they were universal, and thus satisfies a necessary condition of the scientific conception.[25]

Rickert himself admits that the "consistent empiricist" would reject the notion of unconditionally valid natural scientific *laws* as well as unconditionally valid values. He agrees that the claim of *unconditional* validity remains questionable.[26]

Nevertheless, he argues that if we seek indirect evidence of the existence of normatively general values, this may be exemplified by our interest in certain historical figures. Rickert explains how such individuals may embody values which are, as he says, "valid for everyone":

> In comparing two bodies, we choose the diamond because, with reference to a general value, it becomes an individual that is valued by everyone. If we compare a personality such as Goethe with any average person, and if we ignore the consideration that even the individuality of this average person means something with reference to some value or other, it follows that Goethe is related to such a person in the same way the Koh-i-noor diamond is related to a lump of coal... There is no general concept under which he can be subsumed.[27]

The assertion that Goethe's life has a value which is "valid for everyone" does not imply a value – *judgement* – that is, it does not assume that Goethe's character, his life, or even his work are necessarily desirable, or morally superior – merely that Goethe is "set in relief" from others in the same category. Thus, as Rickert points out, "History is not a *valuing* science but a value-*relevant* science".[28]

C) MAX WEBER: THE PRINCIPLE OF *WERTBEZIEHUNG* (VALUE-RELEVANCE)

Weber finds much that is worthy in Rickert's approach to the problem of knowledge, and is in agreement with his assertion that we confer meaning on aspects of reality which are of significance to us. Culture in itself is thus a value-concept, and as such, cannot be analyzed with "scientific" objectivity. Every act of choice, every process of selection related to "meaning" implies what Weber calls a "special" and "one-sided" viewpoint, according to which phenomena are organized.[29]

Although Weber concurs with Rickert's assessment of reality as infinite, and therefore sorely in need of an organizing principle, he disagrees with Rickert's assertion that certain values are timeless and universal. Weber elucidates his concept of value-relevance (or as he prefers to call it, "cultural significance") at greater length in the following passage:

> ... the significance of cultural events presupposes a value-orientation toward these events. The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes 'culture' to us because and insofar as we are able to relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments... which have become significant to us because of this value-relevance.[30]

Yet, as previously mentioned, Weber rejects Rickert's presupposition of universally significant values. Instead, he argues that:

> ... the proposition: a 'value' of 'general, i.e. universal significance' is a 'general' i.e. abstract (genereller) concept is just as curious as the opinion that one can express 'the truth' in a single sentence or perform 'the ethically right' in one single action or embody 'the beautiful' in *one* single work of art.[31]

In Weber's attempt to refute Rickert's theory of historical concept formation through reference to value-relevance, he observes that:

> These are all remarkable misunderstandings of what is and what must be understood by 'value-relevance'... Rather, the value – 'judgement' involves my 'taking an attitude' in a certain concrete individuality... the source of this attitude is certainly not an 'abstract concept'.[32]

Weber thus rejects any notion of transubjectively valid values which can be incorporated into a closed system. We have seen that according to Rickert, such research-guiding universal values made social scientific objectivity possible, guarding concept formation against caprice and arbitrariness. Weber, on the other hand, argues that Rickert's emphasis on indisputably shared values is not a precondition for objectivity, but rather destroys the possibility of it.

In Weber's view, then, Rickert's legacy is flawed by radical subjectivism. He offers no methodological standard against which "value" can be tested (in spite of his efforts to surpass Windelband on this account). Rickert was thus forced to take refuge in metaphysical arguments based on the assumption that values have an existence apart from, and outside of, individual consciousness.

In his methodological essays (particularly "Objectivity in Social Science") Weber elucidates his opposition to those who hold the "meaningless" idea that the goal of the cultural sciences should be to "construct a closed system of concepts, in which reality is synthesized in some sort of *permanently* and *universally* valid classification and from which it can again be deduced".[33]

Weber's own project is guided by three questions, which in his opinion must be addressed if the cultural sciences are to successfully transcend the limitations of positivism. Each of these questions will be considered in turn:

1. What is the object of knowledge?

2. What are the criteria according to which a given segment of reality should be investigated?

3. How can we gain access to an understanding of this segment of reality? (object of knowledge) That is, what method is appropriate?[34]

Weber's answer to the question "What is the object of knowledge"? is concerned with the nature of reality itself. His characterization of this reality as an irrational multiplicity of events, as previously noted, has much in common with Rickert's conception of it. Weber reminds us that:

> Now, as soon as we attempt to reflect about the way in which life confronts us in immediate concrete situations, it presents an infinite multiplicity of successively and coexistently emerging and disappearing events, both 'within' and 'outside' ourselves. The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focused on a single 'object' for instance a concrete act of exchange...[35]

Our 'object of knowledge' must therefore be restricted to only a "finite portion" or segment of inexhaustible reality. Weber then asks, "What are the criteria according to which this given segment should be investigated?" We can profitably turn our attention only to what is "worthy of being known". How is such a determination to be made? In Weber's view, it is *not* according to the natural scientific method, which focuses on the "law like" patterns and regularities inherent in phenomena under investigation. Like Rickert and his fellow members of the Baden school, Weber wishes to transcend this naturalistic bias, which he feels is at odds with the distinct task of the cultural sciences. Instead Weber asserts that phenomena "worthy of being known" are endowed with what he terms "cultural significance." This concept is linked with Rickert's principle of "value-relevance", but he departs from it in several important respects.[36]

For Weber, cultural significance has what John Drysdale terms a "bi-directional" meaning.[37] Weber accepts Rickert's notion of "value-relevance" to the extent that the social scientist obviously selects "from an absolute infinity a tiny portion with the study of which he *concerns* himself".[38] Any researcher who does not acknowledge this subjective component is deluding himself, and ignoring the degree to which, as Weber says, "the refraction of values in the prism of his mind gives direction to his work".[39]

This subjective component is fine as far as it goes, but Weber's substantive work is clearly concerned with the objective aspect of the selection process as well. The researcher chooses to investigate a phenomenon because it speaks to his own values – but his choice must have significance for the *culture under study* as well. Rickert's principle of "value-relevance" ignores this second component – instead he refers only to the scientist's culture.

Weber does not explicitly state his intention to undertake social scientific research from this bi-directional perspective, but an examination of his writings reveals the complexity and subtlety of his approach.[40] For example, Weber's studies of Confucianism and Calvinist asceticism were relevant not only to early twentieth century readers, but would likely have been highly significant to the ancient Chinese and the eighteenth century Puritans as well.

It is worth noting, however, that each would be interested in the phenomena under study for very different reasons. Weber's examination of these disparate types of social action illustrates that the inner dispositions fostered by each religion indirectly transformed social and economic life. It is unlikely, however, that either the Confucians or the Puritans would have been capable of taking such a self-conscious approach to their

own situations. The interest each group would have manifested in their respective religious outlooks (in their own cultural contexts) would possibly have focused on the function of religion as a guide for life – again, highly significant from their point of view, but certainly not what Weber had in mind.

Weber's response to the third question, "How can we gain access to a given segment of reality?" – in other words, "What method can be used?" follows logically from his characterization of this reality as an "absolute infinitude" of events". Given that this is the case, any assertion of the existence of "absolute truth" is untenable. Weber warns us that, "There is no absolutely 'objective' scientific analysis of culture." Nevertheless, Weber outlines his belief in the possibility of "an *empirical science* of concrete reality" (*Wirklichkeitwissenschaft*) as follows:

> Our aim is the understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move. We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically *so* and not *otherwise*.[41]

The quest for "understanding" is thus inevitably bound up with the painful realization that value-conflict is inevitable. No matter how much we hope and believe that our views represent the good, the true, and the beautiful, we must give up a naïve belief in the existence of moral certainty. Our cultural values can thus never achieve the status of "unconditionally valid *ethical* imperatives".[42] Rickert attempted to elevate "value" to the exalted level of an imperative, thus confusing the "is" and the "ought". Weber does not make the same mistake. He reminds us that, " the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals, which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us".[43]

Objectivity for Weber thus rests ultimately on subjective considerations. The ideal-type is an objective, that is, "scientific" method of reaching some interpretive understanding of human action, which according to Weber is the province of the cultural scientist. However, it is impossible to make use of this method until a choice of subject matter, filtered through the lens of subjectivity, is first made. We must test our assumptions about human action against the finite segment of reality which interests us at the moment. As Weber explains:

> It is no 'hypothesis' but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous mans of expression to such a *description*... In its conceptual purity, this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*.[44]

We therefore come to a deeper understanding of what motivates the Confucian, the Puritan, the nineteenth century capitalist, and so on, by constantly refining and reconstructing our conceptions of who they were and why they behaved as they did. As Weber points out, the ideal-type "reveals itself therewith as a theoretical and hence 'one-sided' viewpoint which illuminates the aspect of reality with which it can be related".[45] But this schema can never subsume or exhaust reality, which is infinite and perpetually in motion. Nor can they reveal absolute truths about values, since these are subjective and hence "irrational" in nature – based on "faith", rather than "fact". An "objective" social science should, however, be able to establish some empirical facts about the reality under investigation – facts which aid in the ultimate goal of understanding.

Such a social science cannot presume to tell us whether Confucianism is superior to Calvinism in moral terms, or whether we *should* adhere to the guidelines offered by either religion, or indeed, by any religion. That is a matter of faith, rather than

knowledge. Thus the social scientist who seeks objectivity (insofar as it is possible) consciously attempts to restrict himself to what he can know, rather than what he hopes or believes. We may come to better understand a finite slice of reality, but this cannot yield a defence of a particular value, such as Christianity, Communism, or any other belief-system.

It was not always thus. Traditional societies upheld world-views, often theologically based, which presumed the existence of meaning and moral certainty, and gave coherence to the life of the believer. As Weber reminds us:

> Abraham, or some peasant of the past, died 'old and satiated with life' because he stood in the organic cycle of life; because his life, in terms of its meaning and on the eve of his days, had given him what life had to offer; because for him there remained no puzzles he might wish to solve; and therefore he could have had 'enough' of life.[46]

This is not so for modern man, who may be exhausted, but is not genuinely sated because he is continually in doubt – all too aware that there are no eternal truths because everyone can create his own truth. Thus he lives in a world in which all is contingent and transitory. He is perpetually in motion, but the final destination is always tantalizingly out of reach.

Weber's avowed aim in writing the "Objectivity" essay was, as he says, "to trace the course of the hair-line which separates science from faith".[47] Weber elaborates on this goal (and the importance of avoiding intellectual dogmatism) in the following lines:

> The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the *meaning* of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself.[48]

Thus, for Weber, one of the main tasks of the human sciences revolves around the attempt to better comprehend a phenomenon under investigation. Understanding, as

Weber sees it, refers to an "interpretive" grasp of meaning. It is the recognition that reality cannot be subsumed under "laws", but at the same time, that findings must be verifiable, and thus, based on more than mere intuitionism. It is to Georg Simmel whom Weber turns for guidance in this quest.

Weber acknowledges his debt to Simmel quite frankly: "First of all, we owe to Simmel the elucidation of the most extensive range of cases which fall under the concept of 'understanding', that is, in contrast to 'discursive knowledge' of reality not given in 'inner' experience".[49]

Before elaborating Simmel's conception of "understanding", however, it would be well to briefly examine Wilhelm Dilthey's approach to the cultural sciences, for his concern with what he calls the "whole man" left an imprint on the work of both Weber and Simmel.

D) WILHELM DILTHEY AND THE HUMAN STUDIES (*GEISTESWISSENSCHAFTEN*)

We have already seen that the problem faced by the neo-Kantians was how to extend Kant's "object of knowledge" to include "sense" and "meaning" (*Sinn und Bedeutung*) as important elements in social-scientific research. Dilthey vehemently expresses his opposition to the narrowly-conceived Kantian focus when he observes that, "No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume and Kant; it is only the diluted juice of reason."[50]

Dilthey's approach to the cultural sciences, and by extension, his methodology, centers on the distinctive nature of what he calls the *Geisteswissenschaften* (literally, the

"study of the spirit", or more properly, "the human studies".) His is an effort to restore what is human to the science of man – not merely the study of institutions or laws, for example, which preoccupied Comte, but that which is "irrational" as well, which he hoped to comprehend in a "rational" way. Thus, in place of Kant's "knowing subject", Dilthey speaks of the "whole man". He emphasizes that meaning can only be understood in the unity of the whole:

> I was led, by my concern... with the whole man, to make this whole man, in the full diversity of his powers, this willing, feeling, thinking being, the foundation for explaining even knowledge and its concepts.[51]

Human beings can never be studied through recourse to fixed formulae, because they are constantly in motion, as is history itself. There is no immutable "human nature" – for Dilthey it is a function of ever-changing circumstances. Dilthey thus posits a relativist approach to the study of man and the problem of knowledge (in contrast to Rickert's position).

Dilthey states quite simply his reasoning about what disciplines should be included in the human studies. He views these as being linked by their common subject matter and their emergence from "the problems of life itself". Thus, along with history, economics, politics, and what is now considered to be the "humanities", he lists psychology. All these studies, Dilthey argues, "refer to one great fact: mankind... so it is possible to define this group of disciplines in terms of their common reference to the same face – humanity".[52]

With the inclusion of psychology, however, Dilthey did not mean a discipline which models itself on the natural sciences, for he asserts that "the procedure of

explanatory psychology is born from the unwarranted extension of the concepts of natural science into the domain of psychic life and history".[53]

Instead, Dilthey proposes a new "descriptive and analytical approach", for as he explains, "the methods by means of which we study psychic life are very different from those which have led to knowledge of nature".[54] For Dilthey, the human studies possess a decisive advantage over the natural sciences – we can only "explain" nature, but we can *understand* psychic life. Thus, we must remember that the natural sciences are concerned with facts which are external to our consciousness, while the facts of the human sciences flow from within us.[55]

In Dilthey's view, the emphasis on that which flows from within us should not be equated with an undisciplined approach to the study of mankind. He thus rejects a reliance on the study of individual motives as explanations for historical events. Any knowledge gained in such a manner is purely subjective and thus not verifiable.

Nevertheless, Dilthey insists that because history is made by man and is thus mind-affected, it is possible to have knowledge of historical reality.[56] We begin with the principle of "meaning" which Dilthey suggests is revealed to us by the "historical imagination". Just as we recall only those events which have a lasting meaning for us, only those objects survive which are expressions of their epoch. The historical course of events has already been experienced as "meaningful" by the people involved. They have sifted the facts and those which are significant survive in the form of historical accounts, legal codes and memoranda, as well as art, music and literature:

> Re-experiencing (or re-living) is perfected when the event has been filtered through the consciousness of a poet, artist or historian and lies before us in a fixed or permanent work.[57]

As the historian interprets these documents, he must place them in an understandable context – a kind of *gestalt* which gives unity to the stream of events in life. Through an imaginative "rediscovery of the 'I' in 'Thou'", he is able to link the elements and reveal the focal point of an historical epoch.[58] Dilthey's method is based on the assumption that we can only comprehend history through an examination of cultural products which have a real, empirical existence. The subjective and the objective are thus intertwined in his work. These phenomena are objectifications of the minds of their creators, they survive because of their intrinsic importance, and as well, they become part of the minds of those who experience them. For Dilthey, then, the individual lives within the whole, and the whole lives within the individual. By striving to include both objective cultural products and subjective human experience, Dilthey's method of historical understanding appears to contain the contradictory elements of positivist philosophy and an idealist conception of interpretive understanding.

Dilthey's effort to combine "science" and "life" in this way was at the root of Rickert's criticism of his work. Rickert rejects any notion of a science grounded in "lived experience", and calls Dilthey's efforts a "monstrous misconception". Rickert maintains that neither "real concrete experience, which is wholly irrational and dumb (percept without concept) nor 're-experiencing' can offer valid grounds for scientific knowledge."[59]

E) GEORG SIMMEL – HISTORY AS A "FORM"

Georg Simmel accepts Dilthey's emphasis on the importance of understanding and interpretation as pathways to historical knowledge, but like Rickert, questions whether Dilthey's method of "re-experiencing" could truly further his goal. Simmel (along with Dilthey, Rickert, and Weber) gives serious consideration to the issues raised by Windelband in his Strasbourg address of 1894.[60]

However, unlike Windelband, Simmel argues that what is distinctive about history in contrast to the natural sciences is not its subject matter, but rather that history is a special way of constructing reality. It is in fact a form of expression which transforms reality. Historical truth is not a mere representation; it is an intellectual activity which produces something new out of the raw material, and in history, as opposed to the natural sciences, "one mind speaks to another".[61]

This leads to Simmel's fundamental problem of historical understanding – the comprehension of mental processes lying beyond immediate experience. In considering this, Simmel asks, "How can a state of mind of one person also be *eo ipsi* represented as the state of mind of another person?"[62]

Simmel explains that history and nature are accessible to us in completely different respects. As he puts it, "The difference between the two egos is very different from that of my ego and nature".[63] He points out, however, that the two minds (subject and object) are not really "genetically or essentially different".[64] But Simmel argues that this similarity does not lead to the possibility of historical knowledge without mediating processes – such as "externalization, transposition, and symbolization". Simmel maintains that any sort of understanding based on the homogenous nature of two minds

would "either be a form of mind reading or mental telepathy".[65] As well, he rejects Dilthey's assertion that the historian can somehow disengage himself from his own mental processes and through an examination of cultural products, enter into and understand the spirit of an age which is different from his own. This is merely a type of projection, which in Simmel's view, is scientifically untenable.

How, then, can we ensure our knowledge? In other words, how is social *science* possible? Simmel turns to the notion of history as a "form" in order to provide an answer to this question. He vigorously rejects the correspondence theory of truth, which assumes a one-to-one relationship between our experience of reality and the objective truth of that reality. A description of historical events *as they really happened* is therefore impossible.

Simmel instead asserts that events do not become history merely as a result of our subjective consciousness of them – we can never comprehend such events in their totality. History is a "form" which structures the content of the mind of the historical person. The "epistemological" explanation for this lies in the feeling that certain mental constructs and relations are "transsubjectively valid".[66] It follows from this that Simmel is suggesting that the possibility of historical knowledge is contingent on the existence of historical forms (analogous to Kant's pure forms *a priori*). As Guy Oakes points out, this notion is fundamental to Simmel's project:

> Form is the axiomatic concept of Simmel's thought – all his work, whether it is sociology, the historical sciences, epistemology, and metaphysics – rests on the assumption that the world as a whole and aspects of it, become possible objects of knowledge and experience, only if they are all constituted by some form or forms...[67]

It is this notion of form, then, which imposes system and order on the (only apparent) disorder in Simmel's various writings. Oakes outlines the definitive properties

of "forms" (as Simmel conceives them) as a "collection of categories, a language, a taxonomy, or a conceptual scheme, which makes it possible to represent the world in a certain way".[68]

Briefly, therefore, an event or an experience becomes history only if it is constituted by the "form" peculiar to history. It is a possible object of historical knowledge only if it has been translated into the "language" of the categories of history.[69] All knowledge has its own forms, categories, and requirements. Each must confront reality from its own perspective – certain aspects are selected for emphasis, while others are disregarded. As Simmel tells us, "History weaves a fabric from fragments of material that have been transformed by the process of emphasis and omission".[70] In rejecting historical materialism Simmel argues that:

> It is impossible to describe the single event as it really was because it is impossible to describe the event as a whole. A science of the total event is not only impossible for reasons of unmanageable quantity, it is also impossible because it would lack a point of view or problematic.[71]

Thus, there is no one history; there are many histories, each discriminating different aspects of the total historical reality, and each having its own truth conditions or criteria for validity.

The categories of history, according to Simmel, are "exponents of the second power. They can only comprehend material which already falls under the category of direct experience."[72] But previous experience is not in itself a sufficient condition for understanding. The event must also have "significance or meaning", that is, it must also be important from the viewpoint of the historical observer. Thus Simmel (and as we have seen, Weber) would insist that the importance of an event does not wholly derive from the event itself.[73]

These necessary and significant criteria for historical knowledge must meet *both* conditions of "existence" and of significance and meaning. Simmel is here assuming what he terms a "threshold of historical consciousness" – or a place where these two conditions (existence and significance) intersect, which will then provide a foundation for a historical science.[74]

As has been noted at the outset of this discussion of Simmel's approach to the problem of objectivity, Weber relies heavily on Simmel's interpretive method as the primary tool for understanding the meaning of action. In spite of his avowed dependence on Simmel, however, Weber criticizes him for his tendency to limit understanding of the acting individual to theoretical knowledge – "the presentation of substantive matters in a logical form".[75] A full discussion of Simmel's work on "the speaker and the spoken" and Weber's reaction to it is beyond the scope of this chapter. It should be noted, however, that Weber extends understanding of the "spoken" to include what he terms: an appeal to conscience, understanding a command, or an appeal to value-feelings or value-judgements of the listener. And as Weber points out, "understanding of speech in Simmel's sense can also be preliminary to 'taking a position' concerning the 'objective' *meaning* of a proposition."[76]

Simmel's insistence that knowledge must be categorized into "forms", each of which has their own truth criteria, was also indispensable to Weber. Yet here again Weber faults Simmel for what he contends is the abstract, ahistorical nature of "forms" as he conceives of them. When Simmel speaks of "domination", for example, Weber claims that greater specificity is needed. What is the character of such domination? What is the nature and intensity of the relationship between subordinate and superordinate?[77]

Weber thus asserts that Simmel's "forms", useful though they are, would be strengthened through reference to concrete situations. Such empirical referents would also enhance their validity and reliability. Weber argues that because his "ideal-types" are constantly redefined through comparison with actual events, they attain a degree of precision which could not be approached by any previous formulations – Rickert's "universal and transcendent values", Dilthey's "re-experiencing", or even Simmel's "forms".[78]

With the "ideal-type", Weber thus sought a new level of conceptual transparency which he believed would surpass the contributions of previous thinkers whose work had left "traces" on his own formulations.

As we have seen, Windelband distinguished between the nomothetic or generalizing sciences, which search for law-like regularities, and the idiographic ones, which focus on unique events. Rickert's concern was with values shared by the community. Dilthey, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of *understanding*, which in the social world could only be accomplished through an examination of cultural phenomena. Simmel shared Dilthey's preoccupation with understanding or *verstehen*, but argued that if categories enable us to better comprehend nature, then surely such patterns or "forms" could allow us to impose coherence on our experience of the social world as well. We could thus hammer a segment of reality into a definable shape, and in so doing, use these self-created concepts to study ourselves. Weber's approach to the problem of objectivity includes fragments from the work of these intellectual antecedents and colleagues, which he then fashioned into a unique conceptual scheme, based on the "ideal-type" as a tool designed to further the understanding of human action.[79] More will

be said on Weber's methodological orientation, and on his related rejection of evolutionary theory, in the following two chapters.

[1] Guy Oakes discusses the "problematic" of the Southwest German (Baden) school in *Weber and Rickert: Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*. MIT Press, 1988. See especially Chapter 2, "Rickert and the Theory of Historical Knowledge", p. 41 ff.

The most fascinating (and most questionable) aspect of Oakes's argument concerning the methodological dependence of Weber on Rickert is elaborated in Chapter 5, "Concluding Remarks", particularly pp. 145-152. On p. 152 Oakes claims that "...Weber's turn from a philosophy of values to a sociology of values has the same result as Rickert's turn from a normative theory of values to a purely formal taxonomy of values: *the irresolvability of the problem of the objectivity of the cultural sciences*." (emphasis mine)

The question of the degree to which Weber's work converged with that of Rickert will be explored further in Ch. 1. But it appears that Oakes's assertions concerning the "irresolvability" of the problem of objectivity are rather extreme and dogmatic, and to some degree at least, ignore the contributions inherent in what John Drysdale has called Weber's "bi-directional" approach. More will be said on this issue later in Ch. 1 of the thesis. Furthermore, it seems that Oakes has largely chosen to ignore what Weber identifies as the true purpose of ideal-types. It must be emphasized that they are meant to enhance the researcher's *understanding* of social action. In this sense, Oakes may have overburdened Weber's project with problems that it was not intended to solve, and obligations which do not necessarily have to be met. On p. 150, Oakes asserts that intellectual honesty dictates that "Weber follow Rickert to the bitter end" with regards to a solution to the problem of the objectivity of the cultural sciences. Given the points of divergence between the two theorists, this seems to be an unreasonable conclusion.

Other extremely useful sources which deal with the *Methodenstreit* include *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism: German Academic Philosophy Between Idealism and Positivism* by Klaus Christian Köhnke, Cambridge University Press, 1991, and Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany, 1831-1933*, translated by Eric Matthews, Cambridge University Press, 1984, see especially Ch. 1-4 and Ch. 6. Both of these sources place Neo-Kantianism in the broader context of ideas which arose in Germany following the death of Hegel.

A helpful discussion of Weber's views on concept formation is also offered by Martin Albrow in *Max Weber's Construction of Social Theory*, London: Macmillan Press, 1990. In Ch. 6, "The Scholarly and Political Context", Albrow examines the question of Weber's methodological/epistemological reliance on Rickert, which, as has been indicated, is of concern to both Guy Oakes and John Drysdale. On p. 98, Albrow points out that, for Weber, a pure idea was one thing, something existing in people's minds another, and actual practice was something else again. Albrow goes on to say that it was Weber's "insistence on the difference between the empirical study of ideas and the logical implications of ideas which caused him to distinguish his own position from his friend, the philosopher Rickert. However much the logic of ideas might exercise an attraction and even a compelling character for individual people, their influence on the course of events was still an empirical, not a philosophical issue."

In his work *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*, Harvard University Press, 1997, Fritz Ringer critiques positions taken by Thomas Burger and Guy Oakes. In Ch. 2, "Weber's Adaptation of Rickert," especially p. 51 ff., Ringer offers valuable clarifications of some aspects of the intellectual relationship between Weber and Rickert, rightly observing that, "It is hard to understand and impossible to accept the view that Weber was essentially a follower of Rickert, a view proposed by Thomas Burger and fully developed by Guy Oakes. Oakes is particularly puzzling on the subject, since he concedes that Rickert's formulations were often imprecise of flawed. Nevertheless, he seems to conclude that Weber can be blamed for failing to resolve problems in Rickert's philosophy that were presumably inescapable, and not just misconceived." As has been indicated, Oakes's view of this matter seems unjust in that it places Weber in an indefensible position.

[2] Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry Finch. New York: The Free Press, 1949, p. 50.

[3] Wilhelm Windelband, *Präludien*, Vol. II, pp. 13-14. Cited in Guy Oakes' introduction to Heinrich Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*. Texts in German Philosophy Series. Edited, translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes. Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. ix.

[4] Wilhelm Windelband, Rectorial Address, 1894, "On History and Natural Science" in *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, 1980, p. 179.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 175.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 176.

[9] Ibid., p. 181.

[10] Ibid. It is theoretically possible that *any* event, regardless of its apparent triviality, may become such a "building stone", part of a larger *gestalt* imbued with meaning. The apartment key and letter case, for example, would be worthy of study if we learned that Goethe had intended to give the key to his mistress, or use the letter case as a hiding place for her correspondence. If his mistress's former lover then discovered their secret assignations, and shot Goethe in a jealous rage, these commonplace items would then become the stuff of destiny.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 182.

[14] Wilhelm Windelband, "Ueber die Gegenwärtige Lage und Aufgabe des Philosophie" in *Präludien*, Vol. II, p. 20. Cited in Guy Oakes' introduction to Windelband's Rectorial Address, 1894, "On History and Natural Science" in *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, 1980, p. 168.

[15] Heinrich Rickert, *Die Grenzen der Naturwissenschaflichen Begriffsbildung*. Tubingen: Mohr, 1902, p. 302. Cited in Guy Oakes' introduction to the English edition of Rickert's work, *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science* (abridged edition). Edited and translated by Guy Oakes. Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. vii-viii.

[16] Windelband, "On History and Natural Science", p. 178.

[17] Heinrich Rickert elaborates his conception of the role of the cultural sciences in *Science and History: A Critique of Positivist Epistemology*. Translated from the German by George Reisman. Edited by Arthur Goddard. Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand, 1962. See especially Rickert's preface to the sixth and seventh German editions, pp. xvi-xix.

[18] H.H. Bruun, *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard Press, 1972, p. 85.

[19] Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*, pp. 78-79.

[20] Ibid., p. 100.

[21] Ibid., p. 80.

[22] Thomas Burger, *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation: History, Laws and Ideal-Types.* North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1976, p. 41.

[23] Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*, pp. 105-106.

[24] Burger, p. 42.

[25] Rickert, *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*, p. 91.

[26] Ibid., p. 199.

[27] Ibid., p. 89.

[28] Ibid., p. 88.

[29] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 72.

[30] Ibid., p. 150.

[31] Weber, "The Logic of the Cultural Sciences" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 152.

[32] Ibid., p. 150.

[33] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 84.

[34] Weber discusses these guidelines on pgs. 72-79 of the "Objectivity" essay.

[35] Ibid., p. 72.

[36] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[37] In his article, "How are Social Scientific Concepts Formed? A Reconstruction of Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation" in *Sociological Theory* Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1996, pp. 71-88, John Drysdale discusses the "bi-directional" approach, which is central to Weber's methodology. As noted, unlike Rickert, Weber believed that values are historically variable and culturally specific. Furthermore (according to Drysdale) Weber emphasized the need to take account of not only the "subjective" aspect of culture (values which guide the investigator) but the "objective" aspect as well – that is, values which were significant to individuals who lived during the period under investigation. This "bi-directional" approach is absent from Rickert's work. In Drysdale's view, the discrepancy between Weber's and Rickert's orientation to values calls into question the extent of Weber's methodological dependence on his supposed intellectual "mentor" – a dependence which in Drysdale's opinion has been over-emphasized in the secondary literature – for example, in the writings of Thomas Burger and Guy Oakes.

[38] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 82.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Examples of Weber's "bi-directional" approach to cultural phenomena can be found in many of his writings. See especially "The Social Psychology of the World Religions", pgs. 267-301, and "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions", pp. 323-359. Both of these essays are

reprinted in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. See also "Theodicy, Salvation and Rebirth", pp. 138-150 and "Asceticism, Mysticism and Salvation Religion", pp. 166-183 in *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fiscoff. Introduction by Talcott Parsons. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964. Weber's seminal work on the connection between self-mastery and the rationalization of the economic order is of course *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons and with an introduction by Anthony Giddens. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976.

41 Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 72.

42 Ibid., p. 57.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 90.

45 Ibid., p. 105.

46 Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 140.

47 Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 110.

48 Ibid., p. 57.

49 Weber, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*. Translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1975, p. 152.

50 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Writings*. Edited and translated with an introduction by H. P. Rickman. Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 162.

51 Dilthey, cited in H.A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 113.

52 Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, p. 67.

53 Dilthey, *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*. The Hague, 1977, pp. 76-77.

54 Ibid., p. 28.

55 Ibid., p. 26.

56 Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, p. 67.

57 Ibid., p. 226.

58 Dilthey, *Meaning in History*. Edited with an introduction by H. P. Rickman. London: Allen and Unwin, 1961, p. 67.

59 Heinrich Rickert, cited in Michael Ermath, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 191.

It should also be noted that in spite of Rickert's vehement critique of Dilthey's method of "re-experiencing", he held him in high esteem as a historian. Furthermore, according to Rickert, "Few authors have been as influential as Dilthey in stimulating others... Certainly Dilthey's gift for 'reliving' and 'empathizing' history (to avoid using the word 'understanding' in this context) was extraordinary and perhaps unique in its time. However, this estimable man was not gifted in the same measure with the capacity for rigorous conceptual reasoning. It thus became necessary to advance beyond his theoretical formulations, and that is what has been done precisely by those who originally stood close to him". Rickert, *Science and History: A Critique of Positivist Epistemology*, p. xvii. Whether Rickert actually succeeded in surpassing Dilthey in terms of "rigorous conceptual reasoning" is a debatable point.

60 Georg Simmel, *The Problem of the Philosophy of History.* Translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1977, p. 78.

61 Ibid., p. 87.

62 Ibid., p. 75.

63 Ibid., p. 66.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., p. 76.

67 Guy Oakes' introduction to Simmel's *The Problems of the Philosophy of History*, p. 18.

68 Ibid., p. 23.

69 Simmel, *The Problems of the Philosophy of History*, p. 77.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., p. 82.

72 Ibid., p. 86.

73 Ibid., p. 163.

74 Ibid., pp. 163-165. Oakes also discusses and clarifies this point in his introduction to *The Problems of the Philosophy of History*, p. 26.

75 Weber, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*, p. 152.

76 Ibid., p. 153.

77 Weber, "Georg Simmel as Sociologist" in *Social Research*, Vol. 39, 1972, pp. 162-163.

78 In his essay, "Georg Simmel as Sociologist", Weber admits that, "In evaluating the work of Georg Simmel, one's responses prove to be highly contradictory. On the one hand, one is bound to react to Simmel's works from a point of view that is overwhelmingly antagonistic. In perticular, crucial aspects of his methodology are unacceptable... In addition, his mode of exposition strikes one at times as strange, and often it is at the very least uncongenial. On the other hand, one finds oneself

absolutely compelled to affirm that this mode of exposition is simply brilliant and what is more important, attains results that are intrinsic to it and not to be attained by any imitator." – see p. 58

Klaus Lichtblau offers a fascinating (although controversial) account of the relationship between Weber and Simmel in his article, "Causality or Interaction? Simmel, Weber and Interpretive Sociology" in *Theory, Culture and Society: A Special Issue on Georg Simmel.* Vol. 3, No. 8, August 1991, pp. 33-62. Lichtblau argues that Simmel transcends criticisms directed against his methodological approach "by means of a logically consistent theory of interpretive understanding" (*verstehen*) both in the second edition (Simmel, 1905, 1977) of his study of *The Problems of the Philosophy of History* as well as in his 'Digression on the Question: How is Society Possible?' in Kurt Wolff (ed.) *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics* by Georg Simmel et. al. New York: Harper, 1959. Lichtblau asserts that in these works, Simmel renders Weber's criticisms of him obsolete. (See Lichtblau especially p. 45.)

[79] In his article, "A Defense of Objectivity in the Social Sciences, Rightly Understood" (preliminary draft, November 1997) Frederick Bird argues that the work of Max Weber, particularly in the essay "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" represents an excellent example of "objectivity rightly understood". (See Bird especially pp. 28-29.) Bird points out that Weber underlines the necessity of distinguishing between judgements of fact and judgements of value, "even though no absolutely clear line could be drawn between them".

CHAPTER II: WEBER'S MODEL OF HISTORICAL CHANGE

A) CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS OF WEBER'S

Max Weber's vision of the nature of world-historical development is open to conflicting interpretations. Given Weber's strong denunciation of evolutionary thinking, it is startling to find that authors as diverse as Talcott Parsons[1], Wolfgang Schluchter, and Friedrich Tenbruck, among others, all manage in varying degrees to place him in the evolutionary camp.

Indeed, as Schluchter points out, Weber's work can be viewed as a "gigantic effort to refute the basic assumptions of every kind of evolutionism"[2]. Therefore Schluchter reconstructs Weber's project as an evolutionary theory of the west only in a very limited sense. He thus avoids the temptation of consigning Weber to the now largely discredited nineteenth century evolutionary tradition, whose theories offered little more than a simplistic rendering of the well-known argument that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny".

Schluchter thus asserts that Weber formulates an evolutionary perspective combined with a comparative approach. His analysis focuses on Weber's sociology of religion, which he views as a "rudimentary historical theory of the stages of rationalization, which are classified according to the systematic degree of the world-image, and according to the degree of its magical content".[3] Schluchter emphasizes, however, that such an interpretation does not require that we impose an endpoint on historical directionality. Rather, it offers an "open-ended" theory of religious evolution.[4]

Friedrich Tenbruck presents an intriguing perspective on Weber's work which combines idealism with neo-evolutionism. Tenbruck asserts that Weber's intent was to provide an analysis of rationalization processes which advance according to their own laws in all spheres of life. We may thus speak of the rationalization of religion, law, asceticism, politics, etc. Tenbruck nonetheless is keenly aware of Weber's warning that what is rational from one viewpoint may be irrational from another, and furthermore, that the desirability of goals is unprovable.[5]

Nevertheless, Tenbruck points to what Weber calls the "world-images that have been created by ideas"[6] as the catalyst which allows for the progressive process of adaptation which he uncovers in Weber's theory. If modernity is disenchanted, we have no choice but to conform to the demands imposed by it. For Tenbruck, then, Weber's orientation is based on "the acceptance of an original pragmatist orientation that is geared to success in its encounter with the surrounding world".[7] The compelling nature of the Protestant belief in predestination and the adaptive ethic of self-mastery, which it engendered, are but one example of a powerful "world-image".[8]

Frederick Bird's essay, "Max Weber's Perspectives on Religious Evolution" deserves particular mention in this connection as well. Bird is careful to point out that he is not attempting to place Weber in the category of "arbitrary" evolutionary thinkers whose schemes are flawed as a result of their reliance on monocausal, unilinear views of historical development. Nor does Bird see Weber as ordering religions in a hierarchical fashion.[9]

Nevertheless, Bird does discern an evolutionary perspective in Weber's work, and is especially concerned with the connection between "spiritual realities and their

orientations toward various spheres of worldly existences, like economic activities, politics and eroticism".[10] Bird and Tenbruck thus both see Weber's primary historical concern as increasing rationalization of many aspects of life.[11]

In the sphere of religious ethics, for example, there is a trend towards the rationalization of religious symbols, an emphasis on the creation of the unified personality achieved through discipline rather than magic or incantations, and a growing systemization or formalization of ethical codes. Weber's intent, as Bird interprets it, was ultimately to make a connection between increasingly rational religious/ethical mores, and their impact on practical economic conduct.

It should be emphasized, then, that although these contemporary Weber scholars do detect evolutionary tendencies and/or language in Weber's work, these are linked to his concern with the growing process of rationalization. None of the aforementioned writers (with the exception of Parsons) would describe him as an evolutionary thinker in the conventional sense. Thus, Weber's "unwitting" evolutionary bent may (to the extent that it exists at all) be more properly described as a concern with *development*. An examination of Weber's own views on this subject (to be discussed in the next section) will help to clarify the reasons for his repudiation of evolutionary schemes.

B) WEBER'S REJECTION OF EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES

Weber's rejection of evolutionary theories of world-historical development emanates from his passionate and steadfast adherence to the fact/value distinction, which is the "fundamental coordinate" of his methodology.[12]

In spite of Weber's occasional use of evolutionary language, then, or the notion of "adaptation" which may be embedded in his work, he makes it clear that writers such as Stammler and Roscher are guilty of intellectual dishonesty and self-delusion in their reliance on so-called "scientific" models of societal development. Such models offer the illusion of objectivity, but in Weber's view, are in fact shot through with value judgments which hopelessly confuse the "is" and the "ought". At best, they are philosophies of life which attempt to impose meaning on the constant flux of reality. At worst, they are "charlatanism" of the most pernicious sort.[13]

Weber thus explicitly rejects the "Volk" model utilized by Roscher in his explanation for the rise, aging and decline of national cultures. Because Roscher sees all cultures as ultimately organic or "God-created", all develop in essentially the same way, and all reach the same conclusion, the finitude of death. The cycle is repeated endlessly in Roscher's opinion, implying a physiological reductionism which does not even offer the saving grace of genetic mutation to rescue us from the horror of the Nietzsche an "eternal return". As Weber remarks with atypical understatement, "At some points it has an almost fatalistic ring".[14]

In a similar vein, Weber criticizes Stammler's attempt to provide a scientific "refutation" of the materialist conception of history. Stammler asserts that religious attitudes, and not economic conditions, are the catalysts of historical change.[15] Weber rejects Stammler's one-sided interpretation of the social world, arguing that "scientific knowledge of this 'totality' is possible only though synthesis, only by progressing from a 'monocausal' to a 'comprehensive conception'".[16] In Weber's view, then, any theorist

who attempts to explain the totality of history through reference to the evolution of religious ideas is engaged in a "futile" effort "inconsistent with established facts".[17]

It is Weber's use of ideal-types which can be seen as his reply to, and reaction against, the evolutionary schemes of his time. In his opinion, the pseudo-scientific attempt to find law-like regularities in social life misses the point of any such investigation, which should be to reveal the meaning of history, and the reasons for the existence of phenomena under study. Conventional evolutionary schemes, on the other hand, are monocausal and indifferent to socio-historical contexts *because* they are organic. God-created organisms are by definition everywhere and always the same, so the question, "*Why* does change occur in such and such a way?" is rendered irrelevant.

Weber thus seeks an understanding of motivation – of value-oriented action which can never be deduced from an account of nomothetic "laws". His aim, then, is analytical rather than descriptive.[18] How does the use of ideal-types further this project? They allow Weber to employ a comparative strategy which permits him to discover the differences between modern societies and earlier ones. More importantly, as has been indicated, the use of these typologies uncovers the reasons for these differences. Weber explains their utility in the following way:

> All expositions for example of the "essence" of Christianity are ideal-types employing only a necessarily very relative and problematic validity when they are intended to be regarded as the historical portrayal of empirically existing facts. On the other hand, such presentations are of great value for research and of high systematic value for expository purposes when they are used as conceptual instruments for comparison with and the measurement of reality. They are indispensable for this purpose.[19]

Nevertheless, Weber warns that we should guard against the tendency to reify these concepts. He cautions that "...the ideal-type and historical reality should not be confused with each other".[20]

An examination of Weber's treatment of "patrimonialism" as an ideal-type reveals the vital importance of motivation and meaning, and their roles as causal links in the chain of historical development. Weber explains that monarchs through the ages have exercised patriarchal domination – that is, a pre-bureaucratic type of rule patterned after the fashion of the family. Obedience is thus based not on commitment to an impersonal goal or to abstract norms, but rather on "individual privileges and bestowals of favour."[21]

In order to consolidate their power, it was thus necessary for monarchs to curry the favour of both the influential nobility and the lower classes. Their "welfare-minded" impulses (which arose mostly as a result of prudential, rather than ethical or affectual concerns) manifested themselves in gift-giving and other forms of noblesse oblige. The effective monarch was thus forced to also play the part of a kindly and benevolent father-figure. The linkage between ideal-types, Weber's view of social reality, and the concept of rationalization will be explored further in the following section.

C) RATIONALIZATION AND WEBER'S IDEA OF "PROGRESS"

Weber's rejection of evolutionary theory manifests itself not only in a general repudiation of unilinear, mono-causal schemes, but more specifically, in the meaning he attaches to the concept of rationalization itself. He does not employ the term in a loose or vague manner (as, for example, was the case with Hegel's notion of the "unfolding of

reason") but instead in a precise and definite way to refer to processes which advance at their own rates in different spheres of life. Weber encapsulates its multiplicity of meanings as follows:

> In fact, one may – this simple proposition, which is often forgotten, should be placed at the beginning of every study which essays to deal with rationalism – rationalize life from fundamentally different basic points of view and in very different directions. Rationalism is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things.[22]

In his "Author's Introduction to *The Protestant Ethic*" Weber further elaborates on his perspectival approach to the concept of rationalization:

> There is, for example, rationalization of mystical contemplation, that is, of an attitude which, viewed from other spheres of life, is specifically irrational, just as much as there are rationalizations of economic life, of technique, of scientific research, of military training, of law and administration.[23]

Given, then, that Weber does *not* use this term to refer simply to a process of "bureaucratization" or the "disenchantment" of the world (although these phenomena are manifestations of it) what does he mean by rationalization, and how is it related to the concept of "rationality"?

Weber uses the term "rationality" to refer to *a condition or outcome*, and "rationalization" to refer to a *developmental process*. Rationalization processes as well can take place with reference to the "external" organization of the world, that is, in the spheres of economics, law, politics, domination and knowledge, as well as the "internal" spheres of religion and ethics.[24]

However, although the distinction between condition and process provides a useful starting point for understanding the differences between these two interrelated phenomena, it is not in itself sufficient if we wish to uncover their meanings on a deeper

level. In Weber's view, rationality and rationalization are not synonymous. Rationality refers to the ability possessed by all human beings to use their reason in order to give *meaning* to their lives and to the world around them. Rationalization, on the other hand, is a process which signals the increasing necessity for individuals to shape their conduct and the external world according to certain values (which may take on any form).

The original meaning attached to such conduct may well have been lost or at least altered considerably. The best example of such a process can be seen in Weber's explanation of the transformation (or indeed the corruption) of the Protestant Ethic. The Calvinist believed in devotion to duty as an end in itself – an essential element in a holistic world-view which conferred value on his existence. Over time, however, the original meaning of the virtues practiced by the Calvinist lost their ethical substance – their "rationality" – and as part of the rationalization process, became nothing more than mere utilitarian "behaviours" which must be upheld in order to ensure success. As Weber wistfully observes, "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so".[25] Ironically, then, the rationalization process may destroy substantive rationality. Weber thus laments this transformation of reason, which is far removed from what its original Calvinist practitioners would have intended.

Weber's radical perspectivism must once again be confronted here. As we have seen, in Weber's view, values and attitudes are not "rational" or "irrational" in themselves, but only become so through their relationship with other ideal-typical viewpoints. Weber thus asserts that, "Every religious person is 'irrational' for every irreligious, and every hedonist like-wise views every ascetic way of life as 'irrational'…"[26]

An orientation to subjectively-held values thus forms the core of the "rational". The individual's conduct is rationalized to the extent that it is systematized or ordered according to a preference (articulated or not) for certain "values" which have meaning for him. Thus "rationalization" for Weber always refers to rationalization of individual action oriented towards any given life-sphere. Further, his nominalist position leads Weber to assume that the modern state is essentially a complex of individual interactions. Such an assumption is understandable given Weber's contention that only individuals, and not collectivities, are carriers of meaning, and thus are capable of "action".

Weber's radical perspectivism and his assertion that the coherent and methodical ordering of individual behaviour can occur with respect to any value are most evident in his essay, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions". A wealth of examples is offered by Weber to illustrate this point. The religious ethic of the Sermon on the Mount exhorts the believer to "resist no evil", since to take up arms against it would conflict with the ethics of brotherliness and respect for life as ultimate values. At the same time, the state often compels its members to use force in the service of a so-called "greater good", since failure to do so would result in injustice and imperil the collectivity.[27]

It is clear that these two-value-orientations are antagonistic to one another. Use of violence by the state can in no way be reconciled with Christian virtues. Yet each point of view is considered equally "rational" by its adherents. Weber comments that, "...in politics, as in economics, the more rational the political order became, the sharper these tensions became".[28]

Thus, the more the state becomes oriented towards the consolidation of its power, the less it is able to accommodate any other viewpoints. The same reluctance to compromise may be seen in the Christian "true believer". Life-spheres thus resolutely defend the truth and purity of their own form of rationality, although no objective criteria exist against which these beliefs can be tested. As Weber asks, "What man can take upon himself the attempt to 'refute scientifically' the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount? ...the individual has to decide which is God for him and which is the Devil".[29]

D) Weber's View of Social Reality as Ideal-Types of Rationalization

Before going any further, it is necessary to discuss Weber's view of social reality, and the linkage between his conception of this reality, and his four ideal-typical action orientations. These are:

1. purposive-rational (instrumental) action
2. value-rational action
3. traditional action
4. affectual action.

Each type of action will be discussed in greater detail shortly.

Weber's objections to evolutionary theory are once again apparent in his treatment of the ideal-types of social action. Unlike early sociologists such as Comte and Saint-Simon, or anthropologists such as Levi-Bruhl, for example, Weber rejected the idea that pre-Enlightenment man, imprisoned by church dogma and the dead hand of the past, was somehow incapable of rational action.

Thus, Weber does not posit a scheme in which affectual and traditional action somehow "progress" towards or are supplanted by, instrumental and value-rational action. On the contrary, all four action-orientations represent innate capabilities of man, that is, anthropological traits unrelated to any particular socio-historical context. Weber's attitude towards history and reason is clarified in the following passage, which highlights the calculation inherent in supposedly "irrational" and "primitive" religious rituals:

> ...religiously or magically motivated behaviour is relatively rational behaviour, especially in its earliest manifestations. It follows rules of experience, though it is not necessarily action in accordance with a means-end schema. Rubbing will elicit sparks from pieces of wood, and in like fashion the mimetical actions of a magician will evoke rain from the heavens.[30]

Furthermore, such ritualistic behaviour is not necessarily distinct from mundane instrumental actions, particularly if the goals served by such ceremonies are primarily economic ones.[31]

For Weber, then, the capacity for rational action lies outside of history and is innate in man, because individuals everywhere and at all times need to make sense of a chaotic social reality. The basic premise of Weber's action theory involves the ordering of this reality by individuals in a meaningful way. Once again Weber breaks decisively with evolutionary thinkers on this point.

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, Weber rejected evolutionary schemes which arbitrarily forced reality into a law-like structure – an organic unity which is linear, predictable, and therefore safe and comprehensible. Under such circumstances, the individual is freed of any real responsibility, beyond the need to adapt to existing conditions.

Weber, in contrast, offers a completely different view of the world and of the individual's role within it. As he sees it, we are continually forced to create order out of the chaotic flux of reality. Thus we are compelled not only to adapt to the world as it is, but often to transcend mere conformity through our opposition to prevailing values. It is only as a result of our ability to either accept or reject these values that the torrent of events and perceptions becomes meaningful at all. Our capacity to make choices (although admittedly not without certain constraints) thus defines our personality and allows us to become truly human. This assumption forms the core of Weber's "will-centered" conception of man. As he expresses it:

> Life with its irrational reality and its store of possible meanings is inexhaustible. The concrete form in which value-relevance occurs remains perpetually in flux, ever subject to change in the dimly-lit future of human culture. The light which emanates from these highest evaluative ideals always falls on an ever-changing finite segment of the vast chaotic stream of events, which flows away through time.[32]

"Meaning" can only be achieved if the individual is able to orient his conduct to a particular value. How can this be done? As previously mentioned, Weber distinguished between four ideal-typical action-orientations:

1. purposive-rational (zweckrational) action
2. value-rational (wertrational) action
3. traditional action
4. affectual action.

This typology orders reality by classifying the (more or less) self-conscious actions of individuals in response to others in terms of their motivations. As stated earlier, for Weber the concept of rationality and its relationship to human action lies in our ability to behave purposively, in a self-disciplined and coherent way. Only in so doing can we

develop a personality oriented around values rather than mere whims or shifting interests. Our commitment to be rational thus constitutes an "imperative" which must be upheld if we wish to remain truly human. In Weber's view, then,

> … the rationality, in the sense of logical or teleological 'consistency' of an intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical attitude has and always has had power over man, however limited and unstable this power is and always has been in the face of other forces in his historical life.[33]

We can come to understand ourselves and others better to the extent that we can evaluate the different kinds of motivations which serve as catalysts for behaviour. In this sense Weber recognizes that although all human beings have the capacity to behave rationally, and thus impose meaning and structure on the world, not all human action is necessarily "rational".

Analyzing actions into relation to ideal-types is thus an integral part of Weber's *verstehende* sociology. If we can identify (through highlighting certain features) exactly what makes an action purposive-rational, for example, and in what way this differs from a value-rational orientation, we can come to understand how far empirical reality differs from these hypothetical constructs. Similarly, we may be better able to uncover the motivations of those whose actions appear to be less purposive and rational.

It must be noted, however, that "pure" forms of action are seldom found in reality. Our motivations may be mixed, combining an orientation to both values and instrumental goals, or they at times may be opaque and shifting, and thus unclear even to the individual himself. The twin problems of intentionality and outcome arise in this connection as well. Even action oriented towards self-interest, which the individual

would expect to engender "predictable" results, may, as Weber says, lead to a "situation different from that which he had foreseen or wished to bring about".[34]

Instrumental or purposive-rational action (*zweckrationalitat*) thus refers to behaviour which is carried out in relation to a practical goal. The individual orients his actions to the expectations of others insofar as it is necessary to ensure his own success. In this sense, they function as what Weber describes as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of one's rationally calculated goals, rather than as *ends* which are valued for their own sake.

As has been noted, Weber emphasizes that such an orientation to action is not the culmination of man's development as a species, which reaches its apex in modernity.[35] Rather it is an anthropological trait manifested in the "primitive" religious rituals designed to coax rain from the heavens, as well as in the prudence of the civil servant who arrives at work punctually at eight o'clock every morning.

The *zweckrational* employee is thus not acting out of devotion to duty (value-rationality) or habit (traditional action) but rather out of awareness of his own self-interest.[36] In fact, the more self-interested their actions become, the more it is likely that individuals will react to situations in the same way – the hallmark of *zweckrationalität* is thus its predictability. Interestingly, as Weber observes, this kind of calculation often brings about "law-like" regularities in action, "comparable to those which imposed norms prescribe, very often in vain".[37]

Value-rational action, on the other hand, is distinguished from instrumentality by its concern with a value which is considered to be desirable for its own sake, regardless of whether it enhances the individual's chances for success. This ultimate value may of

course take on any form whatsoever – ethical, aesthetic, religious, etc. Like purposive-rational action, value-rationality is self-conscious and methodical. The individual knowingly orients his conduct around a cause which is precious and meaningful to him. However, value-rationality, unlike instrumentality, does not count the cost. It is exemplified by the belief-system of the Calvinist who declares that "The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord".[38] Similarly, the bureaucrat who truly believes in punctuality as a value (an expression of one's devotion to duty) and who would practice it even if it were not useful to him, can be said to exemplify value-rationality.

It must once again be emphasized, then, that purposive-rational behaviour and value-rational behaviour are both equally "rational" and organized. They differ, however, in terms of the motivations of the actors involved, and thus in the nature of the ends which they attempt to achieve.

The instrumental or *zweckrational* actor is motivated by a need to adapt to the world as it is, and uses certain means or *tools* to enhance his adaptive capacity. One who engages in value-rational action, on the other hand, is concerned with ends, rather than means, and is thus consumed by his commitment to a particular cause which is cherished above all else. The value-rational actor thus focuses on transformation, rather than adaptation.

As has been noted, both purposive-rational and value-rational actions are fully self-conscious and planned in nature. Traditional action, in contrast, "lies very close to the borderline of what can justifiably be called meaningfully-oriented action, and indeed often on the other side".[39] Such habitual behaviour is often carried out with little or no

thought attached to it. The individual thus performs an action because he is accustomed to doing so. Motivation and meaning are crucial components in explaining why the *same* action may be carried out for different reasons, or perhaps for a variety of reasons. Once again, the punctual civil servant may arrive at work in a timely fashion out of self-interest, duty, or unreflexive habit – or perhaps a combination of all three.

Purely affectual action, like traditional action, is often unreflexive, although the individual may at times seek out a cathartic release of emotional tension. It more often indicates a spontaneous need to express love, hatred, devotion, anger or a need for revenge, and thus, like value-rationality, is unconcerned with the achievement of "practical" goals.[40]

E) WEBER'S TYPES OF RATIONALITY – PRACTICAL, THEORETICAL, SUBSTANTIVE AND FORMAL

We have seen that Weber's typology of action-orientations encompasses a wide range of possible behaviours. An examination of the four types of "rationality" which he outlines reveals a similar diversity in relation to different ways of life. These will be elaborated briefly as follows.

Practical rationality refers to life-choices oriented towards the individual's self-centered, pragmatic goals. It signifies an instrumental attempt to manipulate one's environment in order to maximize the possible cost-benefit ratio, and is thus the foundation for, and manifestation of, man's capacity for purposive-rational (*zweckrational*) action discussed earlier.

Theoretical rationality, unlike the practical type, refers not to result-oriented action, but rather the need to organize reality through systematic ways of thinking. This represents the human compulsion to impose a meaning on otherwise random and incoherent events, so that (for example) it becomes possible to believe in a "just world". Religious thinkers have thus offered various "theodicies of suffering" designed to explain the apparently arbitrary occurrence of misfortune even among so-called "innocents". This phenomenon can be explained, as Weber points out, by referring to sins committed in a former life, the guilt of ancestors, or the inherent wickedness of the world and all its creatures. In compensation for what Weber calls "the incongruity between destiny and merit" [41] religion offers promises of a better life at some future time, whether it is on earth or in heaven. Theoretical rationality may transcend the abstract realm by influencing a thinker's conduct – for example, the "compensatory" notion of the after-life transformed burial customs – but this is not always the case.

Substantive rationality, unlike the theoretical type, *directly* orders the individuals' actions. However, it does so with reference to what Weber calls "value-postulates", rather than practical goals. In this sense, it is a manifestation of the potential for value-rational action. A value-postulate thus represents not merely a single value, but a constellation or cluster which varies in make-up and degree of coherence, but which nevertheless orders action into patterns. A belief in the value of friendship as an end in itself, for example, may form the cornerstone of a value-postulate. It is also possible to passionately believe in the value of hedonism, duty, communism, etc., as substantive rationalities. It is central to Weber's *verstehende* sociology, then, as well as his notion of substantive rationality, that the "worth" of values cannot be scientifically verified. For Weber, then, "worth"

belongs to the individual alone and is to be evaluated by him alone. As he expresses it, "... if you remain faithful to yourself, you will necessarily come to certain final conclusions that subjectively make sense. That much, in principle at least, can be accomplished".[42] Thus, the point for Weber is not what form substantively rational action takes, but simply that we continue to practice it at all – that each individual preserves this capacity to be faithful to himself.

Formal rationality, in contrast to the practical, theoretical and substantive types, which exist outside of specific socio-historical contexts, reaches its apex in modernity. It refers to the application of rules and laws, meant to enhance efficiency and profitability, which are deemed universally valid. Formal rationality differs from the practical type because it is not a function of pragmatic *individual* concerns, but rather obliterates distinctions between people.

Formally rational regulations are thus a vital component of the economic, bureaucratic and legal spheres, in which efficiency and technical expertise are valued above all else. Thus a concern with ethical norms and distinct personalities would by definition be counterproductive in terms of the technical "machine-like" functioning of the marketplace, the bureaucracy, and the legal sphere. Once again we confront the existence of irreconcilable conflict, played out in various life-spheres. The tension between formal and substantive rationality is particularly acute, and as we will see, particularly troubling to Weber, because of its connection with what he views as the triumph of technical over moral progress. Before addressing the Weberian conception of progress, however, it is necessary to elaborate on the rationalization of action as it occurs both from "within" and "without". In this connection I will focus on the process as it

occurs in the religious and economic spheres. A discussion of bureaucratic forms of domination will be taken up in chapter three.

We have seen that with the exception of theoretical rationality, which *may* influence action in an indirect manner, but will not necessarily do so, the significance of substantive, formal and practical rationalities lies in their ability to shape the future direction of a society. This does not imply that every rational act or belief creates a rationalization process, however. Weber in fact cautions us that "not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest".[43]

Certain ideas (forms of rationality) are especially compelling, and more to the point, have greater ability to change patterns of action on a large scale if they are adopted by influential groups. In this sense, the Calvinist notion of the "calling" was well-positioned for its role as a "switchman". An ascetic lifestyle offered tangible rewards, even to non-believers, which made the sacrifices associated with it easier to bear. For the Calvinist, then, the notion of duty was a substantively-rational religious ethic which met an "inner" need for certainty of salvation. Accumulation of wealth was a by-product of no particular value in itself, except as an indicator of God's love.

For the non-believer, however, frugality and hard work were valued in practical terms. The rational businessman found that such an action-orientation was the only possible way to survive in a competitive marketplace dominated by the need for ever-increasing profit. Self-mastery (rationalization of action) arose not out of a need for inner equilibrium, but simply because it was the expedient thing to do. This was not what the

Calvinist intended, of course, but rationalization processes are not deliberate in nature. We may not know exactly *why* we adapt, but adapt we must. As Weber sees it, purposive, will-centered action is in danger of being lost:

> ...rationalization proceeds in such a fashion that the broad masses of the led merely accept or adapt themselves to the external, technical resultants which are of practical significance for their interests (as we "learn" the multiplication tables and as too many jurists "learn" the techniques of law) whereas the substance of the creator's ideas remain irrelevant to them.[44]

The sphere of the marketplace as well represents the apex of formal rationality. The businessman is thus not merely an example of practical rationality (instrumental action designed to further his own egocentric goals). His dealings with others are also objective and "correct" and the rules and regulations which govern market transactions must as well be applied without regard for persons. Such conduct is formally rational, but substantively irrational from the point of view of all other values. Any factors which disrupt or subvert the maximization of profit have been driven out. In other words, tradition, an orientation to the ethic of brotherliness, affection, etc., are rendered irrelevant in an environment in which rewards are based on achievement rather than ascription. Weber characterizes the struggle between the conflicting values of substantive and formal rationality in the economic sphere as one which almost inevitably results in the ascendancy of technique over substance. As such, it is "an abomination to every system of fraternal ethics".[45]

> Where the market is allowed to follow its own autonomous tendencies, its participants do not look toward the persons of each other but only towards the commodity; there are no obligations of brotherliness or reverence, and none of those spontaneous human relations that are sustained by personal unions. They would all just obstruct the development of the bare market relationship...[46]

Thus the rationality of the modern economic sphere rests on the successful exploitation of exchange opportunities. But just as important, according to Weber, is the use of money accounting in economic calculation.[47] Just as the structure of the market compels its participants to behave in a manner freed of ethical or emotional constraints (and in this sense influences their inner dispositions) so too does the use of money, on an objective level, provide the best means for putting these subjective orientations into practice.

Money is an external realization of the goals of the free market economy – an efficient and unambiguous method of calculating the "most desirable" (read "most profitable") course of action. It is this very exactness which forms the basis of its rationality, enabling the user to determine the value of every possible factor which might enter into his quantitative equation. Thus, as Weber puts it, "From a purely technical point of view, money is the most 'perfect' means of economic calculation".[48]

It is true that no *tangible* external force exists which would prevent the businessman from treating his workers as human beings, rather than expendable instruments (other than the possibility of economic ruin). However, in practice, any other attitude would be difficult to sustain. For Weber, then, formal rationality tends to drive out substantive rationality because it is *more* than simply a technique. It carries with it an orientation to life, which in a perverse way becomes a "value" in itself. According to Weber, it is in the modern legal and bureaucratic spheres that the "substantive" aspect of formal rationality is most apparent. In these realms, the notion of the unvarying application of certain principles takes on an almost sacred character, as if it is somehow the "right" as well as the most efficient course of action.[49] This speaks to the insidious

character of formalism. It is not a consciously "chosen" value – although it is quite possible that an individual would believe in the inherent desirability of universality and fairness. As previously noted, Weber asserts that we can orient our conduct around any value which has meaning for us. But formal rationality insinuates itself into our lives in such a way that at least appears to be implacable and irrevocable.

The relationship between formal and substantive rationality is deeply troubling to Weber, then, on several counts. The dominance of formal rationality in the economy, the legal sphere, and as we shall later see, in the bureaucratic sphere, makes other values and action-orientations seem irrelevant and absurd – almost self-destructive. As well, the line between formal and substantive rationality actually begins to blur, so that even if an individual believes he is acting in accordance with substantive ethical concerns, the imperatives of the marketplace or the bureaucracy may in truth be the real motivating factors. The individual may of course be aware of his own ulterior motives – he may quite consciously engage in an action for something other than its stated purpose. We have already seen, however, that in Weber's view, our motivations are often mixed, or are poorly articulated, even to ourselves. Furthermore, because there is often a lack of it between intention and outcome, our actions could lead to unforeseen results.

Nevertheless, the real problem, as Weber sees it, is in the wearing down of the human capacity for will-centered action. The businessman who adopts a "human relations" approach in his dealing with employees may wish to transcend mere instrumentality and acknowledge the individuality of his workers. But more likely, behaviour which appears to meet an 'inner" need (in this case, to do the "right thing") is not a true choice at all – it is in fact imposed on the individual from without in order to

better meet other needs – a happy workplace is a productive workplace, after all. If action is not purposive, then, but is merely a response to factors which are beyond the individual's control, why bother to choose from among competing values at all? The choices, it seems, are narrowly circumscribed and largely predetermined:

> There is no possibility, in practice or even in principle, of any caritative regulation of relationships arising between the holder of a savings and loan bank mortgage and the mortgage who has obtained a loan from the bank... The growing impersonality of the economy on the basis of association in the marketplace follows its own rules, disobedience to which entails economic failure and, in the long run, economic ruin.[50]

The effects of the pervasiveness of formal rationality are thus inexorable but profound – a retreat into cynicism and apathy:

> When the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as an economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all... the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport.[51]

Given that the dominance of formal rationality is accompanied by an erosion of our capacity to make moral choices, and thus to be "true to ourselves", what is to become of us? Does Weber offer hope for the future in moral terms, or will "progress" inevitably be restricted to the technical realm? This question will be addresses in the following section.

F) WEBER'S CONCEPTION OF "PROGRESS"

It is necessary at the outset to define what Weber means by "progress", and to examine the diverse guises which the term takes on in various contexts. Weber reminds us that, "One can naturally use the term 'progress' in an absolutely non-evaluative way if one identifies it with the 'continuation' of some concrete process of change viewed in isolation". However, in most cases it is difficult to avoid what Weber describes as "the entanglement with value-judgements".[52]

Weber admits that it is possible to identify progress in a technical sense. We can thus speak of progress as a means by which certain concrete problems may be solved. Weber offers the example of the Gothic style of architecture in this context. The vaulted arch eliminated difficulties in the construction of abutments. The results were thus efficacious from a utilitarian point of view – the vaulted arch "worked" better than previous architectural styles. But Weber is quick to point out that there is no way to evaluate its superiority in an aesthetic sense. What objective criteria can be used to support the assertion that the Gothic style is artistically superior to that of the Renaissance? Such a judgement, as we have seen, is based on values, the worth of which are visceral and belong only to the individual observer.[53]

The same can be said of any "objective" or "scientific" attempts to evaluate the progress of art itself. We may again speak of progress only in a very limited sense as it applies to such things as the ability to convey perspective. Beyond that, however, there is no method which can determine the "superiority" of modern over primitive art.[54] The merely technical, then, "can never elevate itself into the sphere of 'ultimate' evaluations".[55] Primitive art may in fact be more aesthetically pleasing than

impressionism or cubism, and as noted, such evaluations are visceral rather than scientific in nature. Weber in fact suggests that it is presumptuous to even create a dichotomy between "art" and "non-art" in the first place.[56]

Weber's desire to avoid the entanglement of facts and values is an outgrowth of his rejection of mechanistic notions of progress. As stated earlier, he did not believe that it is possible to equate scientific advancement with improvements in the moral and cultural realms. This does not imply, however, that scientific/technical progress was worthless in Weber's eyes. On the contrary, we *must* master the world in a technical sense, and solve practical problems in order to meet the needs of a growing population in modernity. Clearly, then, we cannot abandon the money economy in favour of one based on barter, any more than we can reject formal rationality in other spheres of life. Thus, a return to any "pre-modern" organic order is impossible. Science, in all of its guises, then, has much to offer which is valuable, but at the same time, we must be aware of its limitations. Science can explain how things work, and provide us with the information necessary to determine whether the cost of a given course of action outweighs its advantages, but it cannot tell us how we are to live. Science tells us what we *can* do, but not what we *should* do. It offers no moral guidelines.[57]

The most science can accomplish, according to Weber, is to provide the individual with the insight and autonomy needed to function in a rational man-made world – what Weber calls "self-clarification and a sense of responsibility".[58] The realization that all things are (in principle, at any rate) open to intellectual understanding and control offers man a measure of freedom from the ignorance which had enslaved his ancestors. But the decline of religion and the rise of science have robbed man of

something precious and irretrievable – the sense of moral certitude. As Weber writes wistfully, "The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the meaning of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself".[59] Rational man is thus forced to confront the loss of meaning in modernity.

This loss of meaning is inextricably linked with the rationalization process itself, because in a world dominated by scientific/technical knowledge, faith inevitably declines. The two cannot co-exist harmoniously, because science inevitably reduces faith to the level of superstitious nonsense. In traditional societies, man experienced the security which came from adherence to a universalistic and as if "ordained" set of religiously-oriented values and beliefs. But in modern secular culture, values are no longer experienced as all-encompassing. Unlike the Calvinist, whose efforts were directed towards the life to come, rather than the banality of the present, and who thus never struggled with the question of how he should live, we are bedevilled by self-doubt and ambivalence. We cannot find comfort in the notion that hard work will best serve to glorify God, because the collapse of faith has made it impossible to sustain such a quaint belief. Life itself becomes trivialized, and seems to lack any transcendent significance. Weber contrasts the modern experience of futility and alienation with the security offered by the traditional order, in which values were not contingent but given:

> The peasant, like Abraham, could die 'satiated with life'. The feudal landlord and the warrior could do likewise. For both fulfilled a cycle of their existence beyond which they did not reach. Each in his way could attain an inner-worldly perfection as a result of the naïve unambiguity of the substance of his life.[60]

It is the loss of this unambiguous set of values which results in modern man's pervasive sense of unease. While the Calvinist could never attain absolute certainty of his ultimate fate, his religion supplied the necessary answers as to how he should conduct himself on earth. Any deviation or questioning would indicate a lack of faith. In modernity, however, values must be created from within. What does this imply about the possibility of moral progress?

Weber is aware that this imposes a heavy burden on the individual, who may not have the moral courage (or the freedom) to adhere to a demanding set of ethical imperatives. Without such inner strength (which is given to very few) compromise is inevitable. In this sense, Weber's theory of values, and thus any limited hope for moral progress, is tied to a "virtuoso" or "heroic" ethic which few men can hope to approximate. Weber clarifies the distinction between "heroic" and "average" ethics in the following passage:

> All systems of ethics, no matter what their substantive content, can be divided into two main groups. There is the 'heroic' ethic, which imposes on men demands of principle to which they are generally not able to do justice, except at the high points of their lives, but which serve as points of their lives, but which serve as signposts pointing the way for man's endless striving. Or there is the 'ethic of the mean', which is content to accept man's everyday 'nature' as setting a maximum for the demands which can be made.[61]

"Man's endless striving" as Weber puts it, centers around the attempt to unify the personality in the fulfillment of an ultimate value. But such unity can only be achieved through ceaseless effort, which extends far beyond the surface to the very core of one's being. The dignity and integrity of the personality is not an intrinsic part of man's nature, but must be constantly created and re-created. At no point in his life can man complacently assert that this task is complete. Such discipline is beyond the grasp of the

"average" person, who can never hope to rise above the mundane necessities of everyday-life. Weber's conception of personality, then, is uncompromising in its insistence on dedication to values. Those who cannot endure such self-mortification are to be pitied (for they will never achieve a true humanity) but not forgiven.

Despite Weber's generally pessimistic view of the nature of the "average" man, the decline of meaning in modernity should not be perceived as wholly negative. There is hope that some of us will create new meaning, if only at the "high points" in our lives. Furthermore, the enhancement of personal freedom demands a concomitant sacrifice of certainty. Yet Weber's theory of values contains its own paradox. The way of life demanded by a "rational" society is founded on the choice between conflicting sets of values. But – and this is the irony – no "rational" criteria exist to guide us in this choice. Competing values cannot be objectively judged according to their validity or superiority. "Rational" man is thus forced to make an arbitrary and ultimately "irrational" choice as to the values which will guide his life.[62] For Weber, then, moral progress (if such a thing can be said to exist at all) is tied to individual will and responsibility, and values created from within, rather than any possibility of structural change.

Although Weber's view of modernity contains a kernel of hope, the reader might nevertheless be forgiven if at the same time he discerns in Weber's vision a trace of the profound despair which infected his intellectual offspring, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Weber would no doubt agree with their assertion that "The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression".[63] Have we not then simply exchanged one form of domination for another? Or is it possible that Weber's largely pessimistic outlook is a

consequence of several related flaws in his own argument? An examination of certain key assumptions may help to answer this question.

We have seen that Weber offers and individualistic model of human action, and following from this, that he believes human will and purposiveness is endangered by the rise of formal rationality. Let us consider the validity of these assumptions and their implications for collective action and human "progress".

Weber was steadfast in his efforts to rid sociology of any collective concepts, but it is possible that his theory of social action has carried this virtue to excess. He does speak of action as "social" to the degree that its subjective meaning (that is, conferred by the individual alone) "takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course".[64] Beyond that, as we have seen, his typology of action focuses on the understanding and interpretation of *individual* behaviour. We may happen to share goals and interests with other people, but Weber does not seem to think it possible that we will share values with them, since these are ultimately self-created.

If this is the case, then we are not simply autonomous and self-directed, but isolated from others as well. Weber is therefore suspicious of the notion that workers will share "solidarity" or "altruistic ideals" leading to meaningful social change. They see an opportunity to improve their own situations, and nothing more. How could it be otherwise, Weber asks, when they have been cynically manipulated by those in power? Their education for submission is complete – taught to grasp hungrily at every so-called "advantage" offered them, they do not act *with* other or *for* change, but in their search for a "paradise in this world"... they make of it "a kind of vaccination for the vested interests

of the existing order".[65] Weber concludes despairingly that, "The only plant which can grow on this infertile soil ... is that of spiritual apathy".[66]

In a similar vein, Weber criticizes those who enter political life in order to serve their own interests rather than the greater good – they live "off" politics, rather than "for" it, using it as an instrument to be exploited.[67] Some, of course, are able to combine reason with a commitment to ethics – but these exceptional individuals are in the minority, and in any case, as we have seen, their values are not *intersubjectively* constituted.

It is difficult to uncover the origins of Weber's implacable individualism. It could be that his extreme self-containment was the result of a troubled childhood and youth,[68] or even a consequence of his interest in economics, which traditionally depicts human beings as isolated and self-interested, often to the point of complete indifference towards others. Any conclusions reached on that score would necessarily be speculative and intuitive. Nevertheless, even if we accept Weber's view that values are an expression of the "core" of one's personality – a heartfelt struggle with demons which others cannot really understand – are there not some overarching values which can be shared? If we are all capable of rationality, and if we all have the *potential* to orient our behaviour towards values (no matter what their content) could this not be the basis of our collective life?

We already know how Weber would answer this question, of course. The rationalization process tends increasingly to obliterate values, or pervert them into expedient behaviours. To assert a belief in the existence of "solidarity" in a competitive marketplace one must be either a fool or a liar. The "ethic of brotherliness" (and the "oneness" with others which that implies) is only so much useless baggage to be jettisoned as quickly as possible.

Weber's argument that structures of domination resist our best efforts to defeat them is vivid and compelling, but does this mean they are truly impenetrable? Again, *if* we are rational, it seems that we should be able to communicate with others, not just about instrumental goals, but about shared values. Furthermore, we should be able to *use* our rationality in a purposive way to defeat the rationalization process itself. Evidently all reasonable human beings share a belief in the value of self-emancipation. The "iron cage" is not a fact of nature, but rather is social in origin. What we have done we (may) be able to undo. This is obviously not easy – as Weber has observed, there is often a lack of fit between intention and outcome. In addition, any commitment to collective, value-oriented action is difficult to sustain in modernity. The bureaucratic sphere, in particular (to be discussed in the following chapter) operates according to imperatives which ensure its own survival. Yet as rational, will-centered human beings we have the capacity to make choices which affect more than ourselves. Our collective humanity demands that we do no less. As Herbert Marcuse expresses it:

> Industrialization is the fate of the modern world... 'Destiny' is the legacy of economy and society, far removed from dependence on individuals, and only to be deified under penalty of losing one's own power. But society is not nature – who decrees this destiny? ...This fate is something which has come about and as such can be destroyed.[69]

[1] In his introduction to Weber's *The Sociology of Religion*, Parsons unequivocally states that, "Weber's perspective, especially in the sociology of religion, but elsewhere as well, was basically evolutionary". (Talcott Parsons, introduction to Weber's *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964, p. xxvii) Parsons thus places Weber not only alongside evolutionism, but also in the tradition of "German idealism, as it passed from Hegel through Marx to Weber". (Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971, p. 1) However, his attempt to ignore the fact that Weber stresses the infinite multiplicity of social realities, as well as the impossibility of discovering a master key which would unlock the direction of future development, seriously distorts Weber's intentions.

[2] Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism*. Translated with an introduction by Guenther Roth. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 4.

[3] Wolfgang Schluchter, "The Paradox of Rationalization: On the Relation of Ethics and World" in *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods*. By Guenther Roth and Wolfgang Schluchter. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 21.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Friedrich Tenbruck, "The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber" in *British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 31, No. 3, September 1980, p. 335.

[6] Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions" in Gerth and Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* Translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 280. Cited in Tenbruck, "The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber", p. 335.

[7] Tenbruck, "The Problem of Thematic Unity", p. 337.

[8] Ibid., p. 336. Tenbruck points out that many interpreters have avoided what he calls "the rise of ideas" in Weber's work, perhaps because his usage is so cryptic. Weber is of course not discounting the role of real, material interests, but as Tenbruck sees it, also wishes to articulate the part played by what should properly be called "world-images" rather than ideas. These over-arching viewpoints are so powerful that they define how man relates to his environment.

[9] Frederick Bird, "Max Weber's Perspectives on Religious Evolution" in *Studies in Religion* Vol. 13, No. 2, Spring 1984, p. 215.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 216.

[12] Hans Henrik Bruun. *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1972, p. 5.

[13] Weber makes his attitude and methodological position quite clear in the following denunciation of Lamprecht, written to his *Archiv* colleague Hellpach, dated March 31st, 1905: "Couldn't you decide to leave out any references to Lamprecht?... It is in my opinion scarcely possible for us (i.e. the *Archiv* to publish an article taking him scientifically seriously, as it will be necessary (and I'll probably have to do the dirty work myself) for us to state that we consider him a fraud and a charlatan of the worst order when he poses as a cultural critic and historian". Weber elaborates in a letter dated April 5th, 1905: "His theory of culture stages, applied willy-nilly to facts that do not fit it, was long ago anticipated by Comte and Roscher (not to speak of countless amateurs)". Cited by Wolfgang Mommsen in "Max Weber's Political Sociology and his Philosophy of World History" *in International Journal of the Social Sciences* Vol. xvii, 1965, p. 27.

[14] Max Weber. *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*. Translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1975, p. 75.

[15] Max Weber. *Critique of Stammler*. Translated and with an introduction by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1977, p. 62.

[16] Ibid., p. 65.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Guenther Roth elaborates on Weber's intentions in his introduction to Weber's *Economy and Society* (two volumes). Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Translated by Ephraim Fischoff *et. al.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. xxxviii. Cf. also Roth's article, "Sociological Typology and Historical Explanation" *in Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber* by Reinhard Bendix and Guenther Roth. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. Here Roth emphasizes that Weber's typologies are fundamental to his comparative approach, and that they in fact "emerged from his critique of organicist and evolutionary theories". (Roth, p. 114). Roth thus rejects any attempt, (in particular by Talcott Parsons) to force Weber's ideas into a "basically evolutionary" framework. (Cf. also my endnote #1, p. 39). As Roth sees it, any such efforts do violence to Weber's analytical scheme, which, as has been noted, focuses on the interpretation of meaning. (CF. Roth's footnote #11, p. 114).

[19] Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy" *in The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry Finch. New York: The Free Press, 1949, p. 97.

[20] Ibid., p. 107.

[21] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 958.

[22] Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons and with an introduction by Anthony Giddens. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976, p. 77-78.

[23] Weber, "Author's Introduction" to *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 26.

[24] As Stephen Kalberg points out in his illuminating essay, "Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History", *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 85, No. 5, 1980, pp. 1146-1147, Weber's contorted writing style often leads to confusion regarding the multiplicity of meanings which these terms convey in different contexts.

[25] Weber. *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 181.

[26] Ibid., p. 53.

[27] Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions" in Gerth and Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 334.

[28] Ibid., p. 338.

[29] Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in Gerth and Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 148.

[30] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 400.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 111. This evocative passage is reminiscent of several of Georg Simmel's essays, especially "Subjective and Objective Culture" and "The Tragedy of Life". Cf. Donald Levine (ed.) *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

[33] Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World", p. 324.

[34] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 31.

[35] Stephen Kalberg discusses this point in his essay, "Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History", p. 1148.

[36] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 30.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in Gerth and Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 120.

[39] Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. I, p. 25.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions", p. 275.

[42] Weber, "Science as Vocation", p. 151.

[43] Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions", p. 280.

[44] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 1117.

[45] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 637.

[46] Ibid., p. 636.

[47] Ibid., pp. 86-87. A similar point of view is offered by Georg Simmel in *The Philosophy of Money*. Translated by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978. As well, in his famous essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", Simmel deplores the fact that in modernity, the dominance of the money economy reduces all human relationships to the quantitative level. Thus any concern beyond the common denominator of "how much?" becomes superfluous. As Simmel expresses it, "Money hollows out the core of things, their individuality, their specific value, and their incomparability. All things float with equal specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money". Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Translated, edited and with an introduction by Kurt H. Wolff. New York: The Free Press, 1965, p. 414.

[48] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 86.

[49] Ibid., p. 226.

[50] Ibid., p. 585.

[51] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 182.

[52] Weber, "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 27.

[53] Ibid., p. 30.

[54] Ibid., p. 32.

[55] Ibid., p. 38.

[56] Ibid., p. 29.

[57] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 54.

[58] Weber, "Science as a Vocation", p. 152.

[59] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 57.

[60] Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World" in Gerth and Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 356.

[61] Weber, "Freudianism" in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*. Translated by Eric Matthews. Edited by W. G. Runciman. Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 385-386.

[62] Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 53.

[63] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum Books, 1995, p. 36.

[64] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 94.

[65] Weber, "The Prospects for Liberal Democracy in Tsarist Russia" in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, p. 283.

[66] Ibid.

[67] In "Politics as a Vocation", p. 116, Weber elaborates on the trivial but "all too human" enemy which the politician must overcome if he is to avoid the temptation of self-aggrandizement and become a true leader – that is, "a quite vulgar vanity".

[68] Marianne Weber's biography of her husband contains many references to his mental suffering, which predates his catastrophic breakdown of 1897. Shortly after their marriage in the fall of 1893, Weber attempted to allay Marianne's fears that his constant work was unhealthy. He assured her that on the contrary, it provided him with the kind of "therapy" he needed most: "When after years of loathsome torment I had finally achieved an *inner* equilibrium, I feared a profound depression would set in. It did not happen, and I believe it was because I worked constantly and thus did not let my nervous system and my brains get any rest". (p. 196) It is perhaps significant that Weber returns to this "cure" again and again (although he was unable to work for some time following his 1897 illness). This attitude may be a further manifestation of his extreme individualism – no matter how severe the problem, *self*-help is the only answer – all healing is done from within, for is it not weak and despicable to inflict one's burdens on others? Again, it is impossible to arrive at any definitive answers to the puzzle of Max Weber's psychological state, but Marianne Weber was of course in a unique position to offer insights on the nature of the "demons" which drove him. Thus her book *Max*

Weber: A Biography. Translated from the German and edited by Harry Zohn. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975, is invaluable in this respect.

69 Herbert Marcuse, "Industrialism and Capitalism" in *Max Weber and Sociology Today*. Edited by Otto Stammer. New York: Harper paperbacks, 1971, pp. 142-143.

CHAPTER III:
MAX WEBER'S LEGAL-RATIONAL LEGITIMACY

A) BUREAUCRATIC ADMINISTRATION

At the outset, it is necessary to ask what Weber means by the terms "bureaucracy" and "bureaucratic administration". In other words, how are they constituted, and more importantly, what effects do they have on both the individual and society? The significance of bureaucracy, for Weber, lies in its ability to transform and organize action. As he explains it:

> Bureaucracy is *the* means of transforming social action into rationally organized action. Therefore, as an instrument of rationally organizing authority relations, bureaucracy was and is a power instrument of the first order for one who controls the bureaucratic apparatus. Under otherwise equal conditions, rationally organized and directed action (*Gesellschaftshandeln*) is superior to every kind of collective behaviour (*Massenhandeln*) and also social action (*Gemeinschaftshandeln*) opposing it. Where administration has been completely bureaucratized, the resulting system of domination is practically indestructible.[1]

Yet the reader may feel compelled to press the point further and ask why bureaucratic administration, although obviously a powerful tool, must necessarily create an "iron cage" of serfdom. Before addressing this problem specifically, it is necessary to point out that Weber's "iron cage" has many meanings – all of which, however, can ultimately be subsumed under the rubric of man's helplessness in the face of his own creations, which confront him in every sphere of modern life.

The "bars" of the iron cage – scientific – technical rationality, bureaucracy and capitalism – cannot be dismantled (in Weber's view) because they have been transformed into legal codes and administrative organizations that offer much-needed order and

coherence. Their hegemony appears to be so complete that as Sheldon Wolin has expressed it, "the mind has no purchase point to attack them".[2]

Furthermore, Weber sees bureaucracies as the ultimate embodiment of legal authority, founded as they are on the principles of formal rationality which were discussed in chapter two. Thus bureaucracies have several specific characteristics intended to guard against "irrationalities" which although valuable from a substantive viewpoint (for example, brotherliness, affection, etc.) simply disrupt the machine-like functioning of the system. In order to enhance efficiency and maintain stability and productivity, then, the bureaucracy relies on specialized knowledge. This inevitably leads to the domination of the "technician", and as Weber observes, it favours "the development of a 'rational matter-of-factness' and the personality type of the professional expert".[3]

The dominance of the technocrat has other social consequences. The possession of specialized knowledge confers extraordinary power on this elite class of experts. But they are able to consolidate their power to an even greater degree through their access to what Weber calls "official secrets". Admittedly, such secrets are not exclusive to bureaucratic administration. But Weber notes that "they are a typical product of the striving for power".[4] This cannot be helped, of course, for as Weber points out, "the choice is only between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration".[5] However, it is especially troubling to Weber that given both the technical knowledge of bureaucrats and their possession of "official secrets", they could be endowed with a decision-making power which surpasses that of the state, yet which leaves them accountable to no one for their actions.

Weber would probably not be surprised to find that this tendency towards a covert decision-making process has reached its apex in contemporary North American society. It is exemplified by the fact that unelected White House staff members often wield enormous power, in conjunction with the heads of government agencies (such as the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board).[6]

Thus, for Weber, the "scientization" of politics (to use Jürgen Habermas's term) and the elevation of the bureaucrat-specialist to a position which threatens to usurp that of the political leader, is an example of what bureaucracy should not and cannot achieve – at least not without dire consequences for the state. To the extent that it attempts this, it is an aberration.[7]

The growth of technical expertise and "secret" knowledge is a result of what Weber describes as the "leveling" tendency. In contrast to more traditional, patrimonial forms of administration, bureaucracy stresses ascription over achievement as a means of obtaining social and economic advantages.[8] Yet, because of the long-term training required to attain such knowledge, which "often lasts up to the age of thirty"[9] such opportunities are closed to those who do not already possess a measure of economic security. Education has simply replaced "proof of ancestry" as a prerequisite to high office. Technical expertise creates its own elite, which ultimately fosters inequality. There is no place within the bureaucratic structure for those who lack such skills.

Thus, bureaucratic administration is rational in its dependence on specialized technical knowledge. Its formalism lies in its universalistic adherence to abstract rules – as is true within the modern legal sphere. These rules explicitly spell out how authority is

to be delegated, the specific duties associated with each position in the hierarchy, and how these duties are to be carried out.[10]

The universal, unvarying application of rules and regulations carries with it a distinctive ethos of impersonality. Individual differences and emotional considerations of loyalty and friendship are not brought to bear within the bureaucratic decision-making process. As Weber explains, "Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly the more it is 'dehumanized', the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business all purely personal and irrational elements which escape calculation. This is appraised as its special virtue by capitalism".[11]

In this sense the impersonality of bureaucratic administration mirrors the impersonality of the economic and legal spheres. Legal formal rationality is 'dehumanized' in that the law is applied 'without regard to persons' in a uniform and consistent fashion. Similarly (as discussed in the previous chapter) market transactions are carried out with the goal of maximizing profits, regardless of the way in which such actions may conflict with ethically substantive rationalities.[12]

Bureaucratic administration is also formally rational in its emphasis on technical efficiency. In fact, Weber compares its operation to that of a well-oiled machine:

> The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with other non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity...continuity...unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction, and of material and personal costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration.[13]

This efficiency, however, is achieved at great cost to the individuals within the organization, who suffer a loss of personal and intellectual freedom and spontaneity. The

bureaucrat has highly developed technical skills, but his creativity has atrophied from lack of use. He is nothing more than a "small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march".[14] The bureaucratic ethic of "adaptation" undermines the individuals' desire to strive for something beyond it. In so doing it conflicts with the ultimate substantive rationality – that which centers on personal and moral autonomy. The reasons for Weber's portrayal of bureaucracy as a structure of domination thus become clear. The individual within the administration carries out tasks which have been entrusted to him, but at the behest of someone else (the nonbureaucratic head). He cannot arrest the system, or effect any kind of meaningful change within it. Furthermore, the rewards and security, which it offers, although not manifestly coercive, actually serve to ensure his compliance. As Weber laments, "the individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus into which he has been harnessed."[15]

B) POSITIVE LAW AND MORALITY

We have seen that the modern economic and bureaucratic spheres are formally rational in their reliance on universally-applied, unvarying rules intended to maximize efficiency and profit. "Irrational" substantive considerations, which revolve around persons rather than system requirements, are counter-productive and therefore must be avoided. More will be said on this shortly. Before going any further, however, it is necessary to discuss the formally-rational character of the legal sphere in modernity, since it serves the interests of the bureaucratic machine.

In Weber's opinion, formal or "positive" law presupposes a strict separation of law from morality, which is in keeping with his adherence to the fact-value distinction as a prerequisite of "objective" social science. Therefore Weber emphasizes that formally rational law derives its legitimacy not from morality, but from legality. It thus embodies the following characteristics:

1. A system of legal norms, developed by professional jurists, which organizes social norms and renders them intelligible.
2. A legislature which creates valid laws formulated in the abstract.
3. A judicial system and a government which are bound by these laws in terms of both application and execution.[16]

The significance of these characteristics lies in the degree to which they manifest an emphasis on reason rather than emotion in the administration of justice. As has been noted, a concern with the idiosyncrasies of persons, and their particular situations, tends to fall by the wayside in modernity. This trend is evident not only in the legal realm, but in all spheres of life. The profit motive, which is antagonistic to all forms of individuality (and other substantively rational concerns), is in fact closely linked with the creation of the "professional lawyer" – an occupation which did not exist in traditional societies. A formally rational marketplace creates specific problems (for example, with respect to contracts, partnerships, and distribution of profits) which demand specialized legal knowledge. Weber thus observes that this requirement and "...the consequent stimulus for increasing rationalization of the law have almost always come from increasing significance of commerce and those participating in it."[17]

Although the rise of "positive" rational law is closely tied to the demands of the marketplace, the divergence of law and morality is actually a manifestation of the

increasing autonomy of life-spheres which reaches its apex in modernity. In traditional societies, law was considered valid to the extent that it embodied a moral code derived from religious teachings. No distinction was made between legal and non-legal norms. Ethics and law were perceived as one. In India, for example, a dominant priesthood was able to regulate every aspect of life "ritualistically". Thus, as Weber points out, they exerted considerable (although not complete) control over the "entire legal system".[18]

The advantage of formally rational law lies in the possibilities it offers for fairness and the protection of individual freedoms. In theory, at least, a system of jurisprudence, which applies equally to all, provides a bulwark against the arbitrary caprice, which often characterized pure religious (kadi) justice. The prophetic dictum, "It is written... but I say unto you" carries within it the ever-present threat of tyranny.

Yet Weber is aware of the tensions between formal and substantive rationality, which exist not only in the economic and bureaucratic spheres, but in the legal sphere as well. Again, *theoretically*, it is true that "formal justice guarantees the maximum freedom for the interested parties to represent their formal legal interests".[19] However, because legal formalism consolidates an unequally balanced structure, it is doubtful that economically deprived groups would be able to enjoy the advantages of formal justice, since they lack the power to control their own destiny. In this sense, formalism, especially as it is expressed in the modern legal contract, is at variance with substantive demands for justice and equality.[20]

The growth of legal formalism results in a loss of autonomy in yet another sense. Weber observes that, "The law is drawn into antiformal directions by the demand of the 'laity' for the system of justice which would be intelligible to them".[21] Yet the

complexity of modern law is such that in fact its subtleties are beyond the grasp of the average person. As previously mentioned, the layman is thus increasingly compelled to look to legal experts for advice on many aspects of his financial and personal life. In this sense, he allows a significant part of his fate to be controlled by others. Weber admits that this tendency "cannot really be stayed" and is "promoted by the ideologically rooted power aspirations of the legal profession itself".[22]

For Weber, then, formal or "positive" law is an entity subject to intellectual manipulation and control – and therefore, like other spheres of life in modernity, has been increasingly stripped of any sacred or mystical "irrational" elements. The invisible thread, which bound morality and legality, has been severed, and whatever we have gained in order and predictability has surely cost us equally in loss of meaning.

Weber is sensitive to the threat embedded in the passive acceptance of the existing order as legitimate. He realizes that the legal-rational order, like any other structure, could become rigid to the point of ossification, if we fail to continually evaluate and question it:

> Once a rule is familiar practice, the meaning originally more or less uniformly intended by the founders can be so completely forgotten or concealed through change in meaning that only a minute fraction of judges and attorneys actually grasp the 'purpose' for which complicated legal norms have been agreed upon or imposed.[23]

Formal law thus promises a great deal, but as always, the question reverberates: Have we not simply exchanged one structure of domination for another?

Finally, it should be noted that although Weber makes a convincing case (in spite of certain misgivings) for the assertion that in modernity, law should not be dependent on unpredictable "moral" viewpoints, he has been sharply criticized for this stance by Jürgen

Habermas. As Habermas sees it, law and morality are inextricably linked. It is not sufficient, therefore, to claim that what is "legal" in formal terms can also be deemed "legitimate". Governments cannot justifiably exercise power, then, (although their actions may be legally "correct") if they are devoid of true moral authority. Habermas's provocative and insightful critique is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it will be explored in further detail in chapter six.[24]

C) THE BUREAUCRATIC STATE

If, in Weber's view, the private bureaucratic enterprise is an apparatus, which extracts a high price from the individuals within it in order to achieve technical efficiency, modern "progress" towards the bureaucratic state is no less pernicious. It is closely allied with the demands of capitalism – as Weber puts it, "Today... capitalism and bureaucracy have found one another and belong intimately together".[25] Nevertheless, the bureaucratic state did not originate with capitalism – far from it. As Weber points out, the state – mandated system of compulsory labour which drove the economy of ancient Egypt is the first example of patrimonial-bureaucratic administration.[26] As such, it provides an excellent ideal-typical model of the "shell of bondage" to which Weber fears we may all become tethered.[27]

The development of bureaucracy in Egypt arose in large part because of the necessity of regulating the country's water supply.[28] But, as Weber reminds us, it accelerated due to an aggressive building program, as well as the demands of power politics. Therefore, everyone was assigned a task from which he could not deviate. Even officials, although "formally free" were subordinate to the Pharaoh.[29] Mobility was

severely restricted as well, since an individual who left his community could be called back at any time to pay taxes. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that private enterprise could have done the job efficiently and profitably, state monopolies swallowed up and regulated the production of even the most basic goods, such as oil and salt. Their intent, then, was to crush any efforts at establishing private capitalism, which might compete with the state bureaucracy.[30]

Weber's examination of the ancient Egyptian bureaucracy thus reveals a set of characteristics which strangle initiative and lead to social and cultural decay. These include a nationalized economy with a repressive tax system, little or no possibility of free labour, and forced military service. If the state allocates all tasks, makes all decisions, and provides all the necessities of life, what countervailing force exists to enact a system of checks and balances? None – as Weber warns, "State bureaucracy would rule alone if private capitalism were eliminated..." Unfettered, it becomes an "inanimate machine" which is mind objectified. "Only this provides it with the power to force man into its service and to dominate their everyday working life..."[31]

Although we have much to learn from Weber's analyses of ancient agrarian civilizations, analogies between premodern and present-day capitalist bureaucracies cannot be taken too far. As Weber reminds us, these older bureaucracies were still essentially patrimonial and irrational in nature. Modern bureaucracy, on the other hand, "has one characteristic which makes its 'escape-proof' nature much more definite: rational specialization and training".[32] We have refined the instruments of our own submission so well that the Pharaohs would indeed be envious:

> Who would not then smile about the fear of our literati that the political and social development might bring us too much 'individualism' or 'democracy' or other such-like things, and about their anticipation that 'true freedom' will light up only when the present 'anarchy' of economic production... will be abolished in favour of social 'order'... that means, in favour of the pacifism of social importance under the tutelage of the only really inescapable power: the bureaucracy in state and economy.[33]

The problem, then, becomes how to gain and keep control of a growing state bureaucracy. Weber here is especially concerned with democracy in its purest form, that is, direct democracy, which has several important characteristics. Direct democracy is based on the assumption that all members have equal ability (and therefore equal right) to participate in public affairs. A second, related stipulation limits the scope of power and term of office which leaders may hold. If everyone is (theoretically) equal, then no one has the right to untrammeled power. Positions must be rotated, drawn randomly, or decided through elections.

Nevertheless, if power is being held at all, it always involves domination in some form. In direct democracies, this appears in its most "innocent garb". Under these circumstances, as Weber says, "the ruler may be regarded as their 'servant' by the ruled, and he may look upon himself in that way".[34] Yet, as soon as any functionary has the power to command, "His position is always in suspense between that of a mere servant and that of a master".[35]

The tension, or one might say the hypocrisy, embedded in such a situation, is perhaps the least of its problems. Even more troubling is the inherent instability of direct democratic administration. Weber warns that there is always the danger that control will fall into the hands of the wealthy – not because they are more able or better-informed, but simply because only they can afford the sacrifice of time (and by extension, income)

which such positions demand.[36] Inevitably, then, the creation of a new elite *within* a democracy subverts the process, and results in the alienation of the mass of its members.

Weber realizes, too, (just as Rousseau did) that direct democracy is not feasible outside of small associations. Yet it is the only type which truly deserves the name. "As soon as mass administration is involved, the meaning of democracy changes so radically that it no longer makes sense for the sociologist to ascribe to the term the same meaning as in the case discussed so far".[37] As we have seen, a growing population renders administrative tasks more complex, and their execution thus increasingly depends on the specialized knowledge of those who have had specific training and experience. Such complexity and differentiation may therefore necessitate what Weber calls "the continuity of at least some of the functionaries. Hence, there always exists the probability of the rise of a special, perennial structure for administration purposes, which of necessity means for the exercise of rule".[38] In other words, beyond a certain point, direct democracy is corrupted and may itself be transformed into bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy, then, although ostensibly congenial to democratic principles, is in perpetual conflict with them. True, both bureaucracy and democracy strive in principle to eliminate arbitrariness and the "playing of favourites" which were characteristic of traditional societies. Success in both the bureaucratic administration and the private enterprise, as in direct democracy, is supposedly based on achievement rather than ascription. But in actuality, bureaucracy creates its own elite (as is sometimes the case with direct democracy) which jealously guards its power and resists encroachment from the masses. We have seen that Weber refers to the role played by "official secrets" and jargon in this regard.

Weber thus deplores the progressive bureaucratization of institutions in modernity, which inevitably leaves one with the sense that bureaucratic administration, in particular, is an implacable and numbing sphere of domination. Can anything be done to counteract this? An examination of the role played by the plebiscitarian leader will help to clarify Weber's position.

D) The Plebiscitarian Leader and the "Illusion" of Democracy

We have seen that Weber finds much that is admirable in "pure" democracies, in spite of the fact that in his view they are impractical and unstable – that is, they tend to degenerate into a self-created form of elitism. Nevertheless, for Weber, basic democratic principles are indispensable – the preservation of personal freedoms, the notion of fair representation, the consent of the governed, and following from that, at least some measure of involvement on the part of the populace.

However, Weber became increasingly convinced, particularly during and following the First World War, that the only possible antidote to the deadening effect of bureaucratization would be found in the person of a great statesman. Only a true political leader would be able to galvanize the public, and make them believe in the compelling power of his message. Weber's vision thus revolves around the idea of a charismatic leader, yet one who is imbued with a highly developed sense of personal responsibility and the capacity to function within existing bureaucratic structures.

Before elaborating on this issue, it is necessary to acknowledge the ongoing debate in the secondary literature which focuses on the question: Will the *real* plebiscitarian leader (and by extension the real Max Weber) please stand up? It should be

emphasized that although it is unlikely that interpreters of Weber's position will ever arrive at a definitive answer to either question, it is nevertheless necessary to confront the ambiguity inherent in Weber's conception of the plebiscitarian leader, and the possibilities for democracy which it offers.

Sven Eliason asserts that it was the publication in 1959 of Wolfgang Mommsen's "solid historical dissertation" *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, which changed the image of Weber "from a kind liberal to an ugly nationalist."[39]

Eliason claims that this characterization of Weber is supported by Mommsen's own words in the first edition of his book – that Weber's concept of charismatic leadership democracy served "to make the German people inwardly willing to acclaim Adolph Hitler's leadership position."[40]

However, Mommsen himself points out that he "gladly" accepted Ernst Nolte's suggested modification of this strong language, and thus in the second edition of his work altered the wording to read that "Weber's theory of charismatic leadership combined with the radical formalization of the meaning of democratic institutions helped, if only marginally, to make the German people receptive to support of a leader, and to that extent to Adolph Hitler."[41] It is apparent that in Mommsen's view the change in wording was a prudent and responsible decision intended to "permit less room for misunderstandings".[42]

Yet it seems that misunderstandings still abound, particularly among interpreters of Weber (Eliason, for example) who neglect to place Mommsen's views in the larger context of his discussion of Weber's plebiscitarian democracy. Eliason unfortunately chooses to focus on Weber's presumed (but debatable) contribution to the drafting of the infamous Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, which granted the president

extraordinary powers in times of crises.[43] In spite of this, Eliason admits that Weber "envisioned balance" and that his writings leave us "in no doubt about Weber's democratic creed."[44] He further points out that for Weber the "power capabilities of the popularly elected president" were "much in line with a monarch... as a means of *strengthening* parliamentarianism, by preventing the system from undermining itself."[45] Weber's hopes for a stable form of rule controlled by parliament were not to be realized, however. The Weimar parliamentary system collapsed, and in January of 1933 (almost thirteen years after Weber's death) President Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor, using his emergency powers under Article 48.[46]

Eliason concedes that "the fact that Weber simultaneously supported parliamentarian democracy and plebiscitary rule raises many questions of interpretation."[47] It seems likely that Eliason's own interpretation of Mommsen's writings (particularly his supposed characterization of Weber as an "ugly nationalist") results from a selective reading of certain passages.

As previously noted, Mommsen took the opportunity to reframe and clarify his views of Weber, but he emphasizes that even in the first, more strongly worded edition of *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, there was no attempt on his part to "speak of a direct or even indirect identification of Max Weber with National Socialist or fascist tendencies... I have said here and elsewhere that Max Weber would have fought National Socialism with all his might."[48]

It thus seems possible that in spite of Eliason's insistence that Mommsen's work fundamentally changed Weber's image, Mommsen's account may in some ways be closer to that of the "normative" or "orthodox" view of the liberal Weber. In any case,

Eliason's emphasis on Weber's possible role in drafting Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution makes an unwarranted connection between his efforts to support parliamentarian democracy and the rise of National Socialism. It must be asked: If Eliason did not intend to (at least implicitly) make such a linkage, why bring the issue of Article 48 up at all?

Peter Lassman takes a more moderate approach in his article "The Rule of Man Over Man: Politics, Power, and Legitimation." Lassman avoids the depiction of Weber as an "ugly nationalist," but nevertheless expresses doubts about the possibilities for democracy within the Weberian "iron cage." In fact, he asserts that, "For Weber there is no form of democratic legitimation as such."[49] Lassman goes on to say that:

> Democracy is one of those political forms which do not fit easily into his classification of forms of legitimation. Weber discusses modern democracy under the heading of charismatic rule and not as an example, as one might expect, of legal rule. Democracy in the modern state primarily takes the form of plebiscitary democracy which Weber sees as itself being a version of charismatic "Leadership Democracy" (Führer-Demokratie)[50]

Lassman's interpretation of Weber thus rests on the assumption that in a disenchanted world, the "rule of man over man" is our inevitable fate.[51]

Wolfgang Schluchter shares Lassman's pessimism, but for different reasons. In his study, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination: A Weberian Perspective,* Schluchter raises the question: "*How can concentrated power* be controlled, regardless of whether it is private or state power?"[52]

Schluchter examines (and discards) the possibility held out by Weber that the autonomous individual, whether in the person of a politician or an entrepreneur, could function as the locus of change in a "statified" economy and society. Schluchter points

out that under such circumstances, all that is left to politicians or entrepreneurs is the dubious "power" to ratify decisions. In Schluchter's view, then, the alternatives Weber proposes to counter growing bureaucratization are "somewhat dated."[53] This is an odd position for Schluchter to take, in view of the fact that in almost the same breath he admits that Weber was well aware of the "statification" of society. At the same time, Weber (and the reader) might ask: Is it truly "dated" or "passé" to assume that some leader-statesmen might yet adhere to the politics of responsibility?[54]

Robert Eden wrestles with the question of Weber's liberalism as well, and concludes that he was a liberal in form only, not out of conviction. Eden's work is of course concerned with the "traces" of Nietzsche to be found in Weber's own conception of leadership. However, these "traces" or imprints do not necessarily mean that Weber was nihilistic, and it would be equally one-sided to characterize him as a naïve utopian for whom liberalism represents a simple-minded faith in values, freedom and progress. Rather, it seems that Weber's liberalism is realistic and cautious in tone.[55]

This last point, especially, is fundamental to Weber's vision of modernity and the role to be played by the leader-statesman. Even the greatest of such men would not, in Weber's opinion, bring an end to the bureaucratic administration of modern societies. As Weber points out, in spite of the human costs involved, the bureaucracy is the only structure which can meet contemporary needs, and is therefore a technical necessity. Traditional authority is not adequate to the demands of the day, and pure democracy, as well, is unfeasible outside of small, self-sufficient groupings. Only a limited number of options, then, are available. Yet formal-legal rationality, although the rock upon which

bureaucracy is built, is not *in itself* sufficient to inspire the population and compel mass loyalty, for the simple reason that it is devoid of true leadership.[56]

What Weber has in mind, then, is a variant of pure charismatic authority – one stripped of the caprice and domination which makes the pure charismatic leader at once so irresistible and so treacherous. As Weber expresses it:

> 'Plebiscitarian democracy' – the most important type of 'leader democracy' – is in its genuine sense a type of charismatic rule concealed behind a type of legitimacy that is *formally* derived from and persists as a result of the will of the ruled. In fact, the leader (demagogue) rules by virtue of the devotion of his political followers and their faith in him as a *person*.[57]

In this sense, the plebiscitarian leader is a powerful agent of change, and in Weber's view, the need for such change was especially acute in early twentieth-century Germany. Weber feared that a leadership vacuum would prevent Germany from achieving vital national goals – in particular, the need for the country to carve out a niche between the United States and Russia, lest either power become too dominant on the international scene. Weber instead saw a nation mired in both stagnant traditionalism (which should and could be swept away) and technically efficient but lifeless bureaucracy, which probably would not be:

> Since the resignation of Prince Bismarck, Germany has been governed by 'bureaucrats', a result of his elimination of all political talent. Germany continued to maintain a military and civilian bureaucracy superior to all others in the world in terms of integrity, education, conscientiousness and intelligence... But what about the *direction* of German (domestic and foreign) policy during recent decades? The most benign thing said about it was that 'the victories of the German armies made up for its defeats'. We will be silent about the sacrifices involved and ask instead about the reasons for these failures.[58]

According to Weber, "the reasons for these failures" are to be found in the fact that bureaucrats can never be leaders. Yet his attitude on this issue does not spring from nationalism alone. Although Germany's stature was of great importance to him, it is clear from Weber's political and ethical writings that it was not his only, or even his main, preoccupation. The question of responsible leadership in fact has global implications – ones which are closely tied to Weber's hope that at least some of us, politicians included, will choose to live a life oriented towards deeply held values. Weber's stance on leadership, then, is an outgrowth of his will-centered conception of man.

Having said that, it is necessary to examine why, (in Weber's opinion) bureaucracy is antithetical to leadership. As Weber reminds us, the bureaucrat and the political leader do not share the same responsibilities. The bureaucrat is, and is intended to be, a functionary, who carries out his assigned tasks in a conscientious and efficient manner. But he is required to do this, as we have already seen, "without hate and without love" – in other words, without bringing his own personal opinions and passions to bear. The bureaucrat is thus meant to be neither a decision-maker nor an innovator, for the bureaucracy fears change and craves stability and predictability. Even the most sterling and honourable of such men, however, are "useless at the helm of a private enterprise as of a government". Returning once again to Germany's crisis of leadership, Weber goes on to observe that, "unfortunately, our own government has proven this point".[59]

This does not mean, of course, that bureaucrats always agree with policy directives, or that they have no right to voice their objections to their superiors if they feel that such directives are wrong. What it does mean, however, is that if one's superior insists on the execution of such an order, then it is the functionary's obligation to carry it

out with no further protest, as if he in fact truly believed in its validity. Under these circumstances, then, duty takes precedence over personal opinion, and it is only fitting that it should. As Weber proclaims, "This is the ethos of office".[60]

While obedience may be the ethos of office, it is not the ethos of power properly exercised. Weber firmly asserts that, "A political leader acting in this way would deserve contempt".[61] The leader's responsibility, as opposed to that of the bureaucrat, is to bring about change by pursuing goals which are consistent with subjectively held value-orientations. He *must* be both passionate and persuasive, or else he will fail to imbue his followers with his vision. He is obliged to fight for his beliefs while at the same time accepting the need (for a true leader is a realist as well) to make accommodations. But at a certain point, it becomes the leader's duty to assert the primacy of his views. He must then be ready to demand of his master, that is, either the monarch or the people, "You either give me now the authorization I want from you, or I will resign". If he cannot do this, "he is a miserable *Kleber* (one who sticks to his post) – as Bismarck called the type – and not a leader".[62]

Clearly, Weber's conception of the plebiscitarian leader does not coincide with generally accepted notions of democracy – for example, as in North America, where leaders are meant to "represent" the views of those who elect them. The received version of democracy thus envisions power as emanating *from* the people upwards, whereas Weber posits the need for an individualistic model of political action. A strong politician-statesman competes with others like himself in order to win the support of voters, and if successful in the defense of his ideas, is entitled, indeed is *obligated*, to impose them on

the electorate, for how else can change be brought about? Weber explains the process as follows:

> In a democracy, the people choose a leader whom they trust. Then the chosen man says, 'Now shut your mouths and obey me'. The people and the parties are no longer free to interfere in the leader's business.[63]

Nevertheless, some recourse is available to those who become disillusioned with such an arrangement. As Weber admits, "Later the people can sit in judgment. If the leader has made mistakes – to the gallows with him."[64] Such an attitude may seem arrogant, but as Weber sees it, the choice is clear: We must accept leadership (plebiscitarian) democracy with a 'machine', or be condemned to leaderless democracy, "namely, the rule of professional politicians without a calling, without the inner charismatic qualities that make a leader".[65]

However, it should be emphasized that power confers responsibilities and therefore must be earned. Weber thus asks, "What kind of man must one be if he is to be allowed to put his hand on the wheel of history?"[66] Three qualities are indispensable, in Weber's opinion – passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion.[67] We have already seen that the true leader, one who lives "for" politics rather than "off" it, as Weber says, must be imbued with the conviction and transmit this sense of mission to his followers. Without the desire to serve a cause there is no true calling for politics. But Weber cautions us that this is not identical with the "sterile excitation" of the fanatic who cares nothing for the consequences of his actions. On the contrary, the true leader must act with both conviction and responsibility, constantly aware of the need to accommodate himself to the world as it is, rather than rejecting it in favour of an unattainable illusion.

This sense of responsibility thus manifests itself in several ways: First, there must be a willingness to give an account of the consequences of one's actions (as far as possible) while still recognizing the tension between expectation and outcome. Second, an acceptance of the fact that a leader must sometimes use ethically dubious means to achieve "good" ends. No system of ethics can determine whether this is ultimately justifiable, but in any case, a leader worthy of the name does not attempt to repudiate his actions when they do not meet with the desired results.[68] Anyone who makes the facile claim that "The world is stupid and base, not I ", is not a "mature man", but as Weber describes him, a "windbag", who does not fully realize what he has taken upon himself, but instead chooses to intoxicate himself with romantic sensations.[69]

Thus, the leader who makes both devotion to a cause and personal responsibility his "guiding star of action" possesses a sense of proportion as well. He is fully aware that he lives in an imperfect world, one in which faith and meaning have been largely displaced by impersonal structures of domination. This of necessity limits not only what he can achieve (and he must not permit vanity, or what Weber calls the "power-instinct" to blind him to this fact) but even what he may allow himself to hope.[70] Nevertheless, the authentic leader realizes that even (or especially) in a rationalized world, it is imperative to continue to believe in *something*.

The need to believe, and the responsibility to act on those beliefs in a balanced manner, inevitably brings the true leader into conflict with others whose convictions may match his own in intensity – or what is even worse, those who may have no convictions at all. As previously noted, bureaucracy considers passion to be an abrogation of the ethos of duty. Conflict, and the struggle for power which that implies, is viewed as

similarly disruptive. Yet it is the lifeblood of the politician, who must continually assert his individuality and honour in the world arena.[71] The leader wants and needs to be like no one else – the bureaucrat, on the other hand, is required to be as much like everyone else as possible. As not only the workplace and the state, but all structures in modernity become increasingly bureaucratized, we move further and further away from a concern for the individual and his uniqueness. He is thus devalued almost to the vanishing point.

Yet bureaucratic legitimacy offers a type of domination so cunning and insidious that those who are subject to it often have little sense of being dominated at all. Conflicts are quickly reconciled and all runs smoothly – or so we like to think. We are not even told what to do by a specific individual *acting* as an individual. Rather, as Weber explains, "...every single bearer of powers of command is legitimized by that system of rational norms, and his power is legitimate insofar as it corresponds with the norm. Obedience is thus given to the norm rather than the person".[72]

In Weber's view, then, because bureaucratic dominance has increasingly displaced political leadership, the result is a moral and creative vacuum. Politics should be concerned with values – the decisions which must be taken in order to sustain not only a well-oiled machine, but also a just and decent society. But bureaucracies cannot espouse values – only individuals can do that. Given Weber's emphasis on the individual as the only carrier of meaning, it is easy to see why he presents the plebiscitarian leader as a possible antidote to bureaucratic hegemony. Without such an agent of change, the exercise of power would be left to the professional experts (since everyone else is mired in what Weber calls "spiritual apathy"). Yet Weber dismisses them scornfully as

"specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved".[73]

Nevertheless, as has been indicated in the previous chapter, Weber's highly individualistic model of political action does contain some drawbacks. For one thing, the threat of totalitarianism is pervasive, and it is one which Weber acknowledged, at least to some degree:

> It is characteristic of the *Führerdemokratie* that there should in general be a highly emotional type of devotion to and trust in the leader. This accounts for a tendency to favour the type of individual who is most spectacular, who promises the most, or who employs the most effective propaganda measures in the competition for leadership. This is a natural basis for the utopian component which is found in all revolutions.[74]

Weber nevertheless believes that the plebiscitarian leader should have as much freedom as possible to implement his personal vision – while at the same time remaining within the confines of the democratic state. In the context of free elections, fair representation in parliament and the informed participation of the electorate, the struggle for the hearts and minds of the masses seems, in Weber's opinion, to be perfectly legitimate. Furthermore, the results, although a bit top-heavy ("Now shut your mouths and obey me") do not appear truly authoritarian as Weber understands it, since he asserts the need for a strong parliament which ultimately will hold the leader in check.

Weber would remind us that what he has in mind here is quite different from "pure" charisma, which in its explosive, non-routinized form is not accountable to anyone. Nevertheless, it must be asked: If the plebiscitarian leader has galvanized the masses, why should the legislators be impervious to the force of his personality? Furthermore, what constraints would prevent him from citing the "will of the people" as

sufficient cause to ask that parliament be abolished? Weber's theory of democracy thus appears to advocate a reconciliation of charisma with legal rationality which although theoretically possible (why not have both a strong leader and a strong parliament?) may be difficult to implement in practical terms, especially when human vanity – rampant among politicians – comes to the fore. Weber has made clear, of course that the responsible leader, the "mature man", is above self-regard and chicanery – but believing in all of this may require too great a leap of faith on the part of the observer.

Weber has also failed to explain exactly how values are transmitted from the leader downwards to those who have been inspired by his sense of conviction. If values are, in the final analysis, self-chosen and a product of our own internal struggles, can we really transmit them to anyone else? We can communicate with other people, of course, but as already argued in chapter two, given that Weber sees individuals as basically self-contained, we may be more capable of communicating about goals and interests than about values. Is this enough? It may be all we can reasonably expect – but the question then becomes: What is the real basis of the plebiscitarian leader's appeal?

It is transformative, to be sure, but are the electors responding to his message, which presumably relates to issues, or simply to his magnetism? If it is the latter, then the leader's beliefs are irrelevant, or at the very least, secondary. This is surely not what Weber had in mind, but it is certainly a disturbing possibility, one which evokes the spectre of totalitarianism in a particularly ominous form. If the electorate does not really care about the *content* of the message offered by the plebiscitarian leader, or the issues raised by him, but instead seeks only euphoria and escape, does this mean that they will

accept (or perhaps choose to ignore) any sort of message if the messenger is an effective rhetorician?

Weber of course did not believe that we would have to contend with the dangers of charisma run amok. In a disenchanted world, it was much more likely that charisma would be "routinized" – that is, attached to an institutionalized role, rather than a specific individual who possesses a "gift of grace".[75]

Ultimately, the only hope for responsible political leadership and moral autonomy and creativity lies in what Weber calls "the resolute *will* of a nation not to be led like a flock of sheep". Yet he recognizes that this task is not an easy one: "We 'individualists' and supporters of 'democratic' institutions are swimming 'against the stream' of material developments... The historical origins of modern freedom presupposed a certain conjunction of unique and unrepeatable conditions".[76]

It is nevertheless possible that there may be some individuals who have the strength to meet the challenge of self-responsibility. Weber expresses both hope and despair in an especially poignant passage:

> We know of no scientifically demonstrable ideals. To be sure, our labours are now rendered more difficult, since we must create our ideals from within our chests in the very age of subjectivist culture. But we must not and cannot promise a fool's paradise and an easy street, neither in the here and now or in the beyond, neither in thought or in action, and it is the stigma of our human dignity that the peace of our souls cannot be as great as the peace of one who dreams of such a paradise.

So it seems that we are back where we started. Weber, as a resolute individualist, feels that we must fight entropy "from within our chests" and that in the final analysis, this is the responsibility of not just scientists and politicians, but people everywhere who

have the strength to live up to "heroic" ethics. These men and women must indeed be very different from the "average" folk among us, although Weber does not explain how they alone escape the numbing paralysis of disenchantment. In addition, as has been noted, the possibility that social change could be arrived at through collective action is left largely unexplored in Weber's analysis. As we shall see, this is an issue, which is deeply troubling to Jürgen Habermas, and one which his proceduralist model of discursive democracy strives to overcome.

[1] Max Weber. *Economy and Society*. Two Volumes. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Translated by Ephraim Fischoff et. al. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, Vol. II, p. 987.

[2] Sheldon Wolin. "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory" in *Legitimacy and the State*. Edited by William Connolly. New York University Press, 1984, p. 77.

[3] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 998.

[4] Ibid., Vol. I , p. 225.

[5] Ibid., p. 223.

[6] Ronald M. Glassman and Vatro Murvar (eds.) discuss this issue in their introduction to *Max Weber's Political Sociology*. London: Greenwood Press, 1984. See especially p. 5.

[7] David Beetham offers a very useful account of "aberrant" bureaucratic domination in his book *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985.

[8] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 1000.

[9] Ibid., Vol. I , p. 225.

[10] Ibid., Vol. II , pp. 956-957.

[11] Ibid., p. 958.

[12] Ibid., Vol. I , p. 85.

[13] Ibid., Vol. II , p. 973.

[14] Ibid., p. 998.

[15] Ibid., p. 987.

[16] Ibid., pp. 656-657. I am indebted to Peter Bal for his cogent and lucid encapsulation of Weber's rather unwieldy discussion of the characteristics of formally rational law. See Bal's essay, "Discourse Ethics and Human Rights in Criminal Procedure" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Vol. 20, No. 4, 1994. Special Issue on Habermas, Modernity and Law, see especially p. 73.

[17] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 775.

[18] Ibid., p. 816.

[19] Ibid., p. 812.

[20] Anthony Kronman provides an informative discussion of Weber's ideas on legal rationality in his book *Max Weber*. London: Arnold, 1983. See especially chapter four, "Formal Legal Rationality", pp. 72-95.

[21] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 894.

[22] Ibid., pp. 894-895.

[23] Max Weber, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" in *The Sociological Quarterly*: 22, Spring 1981, p. 178. Translated by Edith Graber.

[24] For an elaboration of Habermas's critique of Weber's sociology of law, and in particular Weber's assertion that the spheres of law and morality are autonomous in modernity, see Habermas's essay, "Law and Morality: How is Legitimacy Possible on the Basis of Legality?" in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Vol. VIII. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 219-279.

[25] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, pg. 1465 (footnote).

[26] Ibid., p. 1044.

[27] Ibid., p. 1402.

[28] Weber, "The Development of Bureaucracy" in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation.* Translated by Eric Matthews. Edited by W.G. Runciman. Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 348.

[29] Ibid., p. 344.

[30] Max Weber. *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations.* Translated by R.I. Frank. London: Verso Books, 1988, p. 234.

[31] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 1402.

[32] Ibid., p. 1401.

[33] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 1403.

[34] Ibid., p. 948.

[35] Ibid., p. 949.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 951.

[38] Ibid., pp. 951-952.

[39] Sven Eliason, "Constitutional Caesarism: Weber's Politics in Their German Context" in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber.* Edited by Stephen Turner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 141.

[40] Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920.* Translated by Michael S. Steinberg. The University of Chicago Press, 1984. See Mommsen's footnote no. 73, p. 410.

[41] Ibid., p. 410, text and footnote no. 73.

[42] Ibid.

[43] On p. 142 of "Constitutional Caesarism: Weber's Politics in Their German Context," Eliason discusses Weber's role in the drafting of the Weimar Constitution. He explains that: "Weber became involved in constitutional matters in a formative way at a formative moment: the creation of a new constitutional order in the wake of German defeat. In a sense, this was the call that Weber had long waited for, though it was not precisely the call that he expected or desired.

Nevertheless, he played a significant part in the writing of the constitution, especially in the way in which the powers of the president were defined, as reflected in Article 41, about the president being elected directly by the people instead of by parliament, and Article 48, which granted the president extraordinary powers in times of crises. Weber's role in relation to Article 48 is a matter of dispute while his role in promoting Article 41 is accepted knowledge."

44 Ibid., p. 143.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Mommsen, footnote no. 73, pp. 410-411. Mommsen elaborates on Weber's opposition to fascism in the following passage, pp. 409-410: "A malignant inflammation of the lung brought Weber's life to a sudden end in June 1920 during a period of great creativity. He never lived to see that the plebiscitary-charismatic rule by a leader would take the form not of a powerful democracy but of a totalitarian, fascist dictatorship. There can be no doubt about his own attitude to this form of charismatic rule. *A policy that served the lowest instincts of the masses and nationalist emotions would have been anathema to him.* (emphasis mine)

Mommsen goes on to admit the Weber's "theory of plebiscitary leadership was susceptible to reinterpretation in an authoritarian sense." However, Mommsen emphasizes that Weber's focus on "the ethic of responsibility, which demanded of politicians that they account rationally for their ultimate motives and all possible consequences of their actions, was diametrically opposed to the brutal intolerance of fascist rule."

49 Peter Lassman, "The Rule of Man Over Man: Politics, Power, and Legitimation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Max Weber*. Edited by Stephen Turner. Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 95.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 98.

52 Wolfgang Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination: A Weberian Perspective*. Translated by Neil Solomon. University of California Press, 1989, p. 391.

Schluchter examines the issue of ethics in his book *Paradoxes of Modernity: Culture and Conduct in the Work of Max Weber*. Translated by Neil Solomon. Stanford University Press, 1996. See especially Ch. 1, "Activity and Renunciation: Max Weber on Science and Politics as Vocations" pp. 9-47, and Ch. 2, "Conviction and Responsibility: Max Weber on Ethics," pp. 48-101. On p. 37, Schluchter muses that, "...Weber brutally confronted the idealism of politicians of conviction with the entanglement of all political action in questions of power, and thus gave the impression that political action had nothing to do with values." Schluchter quite rightly goes onto emphasize that, "There is no doubt that Weber did not argue this way. But one had to listen in an unbiased manner in order to grasp the complex mesh of relations among power, ethics and truth in which he placed the form of politics that he undoubtedly advocated, the politics of responsibility."

53 Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination: A Weberian Perspective*, p. 391.

54 Ibid.

55 Robert Eden expands on the "traces" of Nietzsche which are embedded in Weber's work in his book *Political Leadership and Nihilsm*. Tampa: University Press of Florida, 1986, and in his

article, "Doing Without Liberalism: Weber's Regime Politics" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 10, 1982, pp. 379-407.

Nietzsche's influence on Weber is also examined by Wilhelm Hennis in *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*. Translated by Keith Tribe, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988. Hennis considers the question of Max Weber's liberalism in Ch. 5, "Voluntarism and Judgement: Max Weber's Political Views in the Context of his Work," pp. 165-197.

56 Wolfgang Mommsen offers an illuminating explanation of the reasons underlying Weber's advocacy of plebiscitarian leadership in his book, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. See especially chapter one, "Politics and Scholarship: The Two Icons in Max Weber's Life", pp. 13-23.

57 Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, pp. 1404-1405.

58 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 1404-1405.

59 Ibid., p. 1404.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid. Weber makes the same point using different language in his essay, "Politics as a Vocation", when he asserts that, "it is immensely moving when a mature man – no matter whether old or young in years – is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says, 'Here I stand, I can do no other'". See p. 127 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

62 Marianne Weber. *Max Weber: A Biography*. Translated from German and edited by Harry Zohn. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975, p. 653.

63 Ibid.

64 Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", p. 113.

65 Ibid., p. 115.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., pp. 120-121.

68 Ibid., p. 127.

69 Ibid., p. 116.

70 Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, p. 1404.

71 Ibid., p. 954. Tracy B. Strong provides insightful explanation and commentary on the nature of covert bureaucratic domination in the article, "What Have We To Do With Morals?: Nietzsche and Weber on History and Ethics" in *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992. See especially pp. 14-15. Strong observes that, "...bureaucracy effaces or disguises that there is ruling going on at all".

72 Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons and with and introduction by Anthony Giddens. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976, p. 182.

[73] Weber. *Economy and Society*. Vol. I, p. 269.

[74] Weber discusses the phenomenon of "routinization" of charisma in *Economy and Society*. Vol. II, pp. 1121 ff., "The Genesis and Transformation of Charismatic Authority".

[75] Weber, "The Prospects for Liberal Democracy in Tsarist Russia" in *Weber: Selections in Translation*, p. 282.

[76] Weber's 1909 address, cited in Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, p. 82.

Section II

Habermas's

Defense of Modernity

Chapter IV:
Habermas's Evolutionary Theory of Social Change

A) Introduction

This chapter has several related goals. Initially, I wish to situate Habermas in relation to his forerunners in the Frankfurt School. In so doing I will focus on Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of reason, which in their view functions as an instrument of domination and control – quite the opposite of its avowed purpose, which is to liberate mankind.

Habermas rejects this negative dialectic, and claims that Horkheimer and Adorno (like their intellectual ancestors Nietzsche and Weber) overlook the potential which can be realized only through a true communicative rationality.

Habermas's evolutionary approach is intended to uncover this rational core, and in so doing, offer an escape from the repression which threatens to overwhelm the individual in modernity. His project is thus intended to avert the problems inherent in Weber's rejection of evolutionary theory, which allegedly prevents him from specifying the direction of social change, and therefore from elucidating possible solutions. Habermas further asserts that because Weber's action theory focuses on the individual as an acting subject, he cannot conceive of change in structural terms.

Finally, I will briefly consider the possible drawbacks of Habermas's reliance on the ontogenetic models offered by Piaget and Kohlberg. Habermas's appropriation of these models renders him vulnerable to charges of ethnocentrism, as well as scientism and rationalistic bias. In addition, Habermas constructs "ideal" stages of evolution which

may not necessarily exist in reality, at any rate not in all societies at all times. Thus, his model exhibits a tendency to conflate issues of "is" and "ought".

The central concern of chapter five (forthcoming) relates to theory and *praxis*. The problem, therefore, is to ascertain whether it is possible to derive any implications for concrete or ideal social/political formations from Habermas's philosophical groundwork. What specific political practice should be adopted and by whom?

Although Habermas does provide general procedural principles, and speaks of an "emancipatory interest" guiding us in the direction of a rational society, the shape of such a society remains rather nebulous. Even though Habermas disavows any intention of "sketching out" a normative political agenda, he has always *implied* that discourse ethics leads to a theory of democratic legitimation. Only recently, however, in his latest work *Between Facts and Norms*, has Habermas attempted an investigation of the specific political foundations and direction of discourse. I would like to argue, however, that even this reformulation remains more of an ideal-typical model, rather than a program for action, and that furthermore, it would be almost impossible to imagine an interaction or political process free from domination, much less enact one in reality.

B) Horkheimer and Adorno: Dialectic of Enlightenment

There are two broad themes running through Jürgen Habermas's work. The first of these separate but related themes can be seen as emanating from the works of the Frankfurt School and Habermas's reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This not only became the source, or as Habermas terms it, "the key"[1] to

his interest in critical theory, but also to his defense of modernity, which is central *to* Habermas's own critique of Max Weber.

The second theme is what has been described by Albrecht Wellmer as Habermas's "linguistic turn".[2] It is in the context of this linguistic turn that Habermas develops his theory of social evolution, the concept of communicative ethics, and his consensus theory of truth. Let us now turn to the first of these themes- Habermas's relation to Horkheimer and Adorno - which must be explicated if we are to adequately situate him within the tradition of critical theory.

Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason is vividly, even brutally set forth in their best known and most representative work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* A brief overview of this work will help to elaborate their view of modernity, a view which was inevitably and understandably, shaped by the grotesque events of World War II. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a dark meditation on the fate of man, described by Jürgen Habermas as a "strange" book, with evident linkages to not only Nietzsche, but de Sade as well. Habermas further characterizes it as Horkheimer and Adorno's "blackest, most nihilistic book..." written "in order to conceptualize the self-destructive process of Enlightenment".[3]

At the outset, the authors ask why it is that mankind, "instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism."[4] Horkheimer and Adorno explain this paradox by focusing on the very device which, ironically, was intended to catapult mankind away from ignorance and towards emancipation – Enlightenment itself. Yet instrumental reason, far from liberating humanity, has instead unleashed catastrophe upon the world, which has fallen victim to a new myth.

Men were once enslaved by ignorance, and thus felt themselves incapable of transforming their situation through their own efforts. Their very survival was subject to the capricious and unknowable gods of nature, who might be temporarily appeased but could never be vanquished.

The Enlightenment quickly taught men that they could ensure their own survival, not through rites or incantations, but through reason – which soon was transformed into domination, not just of nature, but of other human beings as well. Yet as Horkheimer and Adorno characterize it, this was a false promise which contained its own myth:

> Men pay for their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things in so far as he can make them. In this way their potential is turned to his own ends.[5]

Enlightenment thus offers the seductive myth of unlimited power – the belief that everything on Earth is mere prey, which exists only to be exploited. This sobering realization compelled Horkheimer and Adorno to move away form Marx and his followers, particularly Georg Lukacs, and towards Weber. An explanation of the reification thesis is necessary if we are to better understand the reasons for this shift.

Critical theory has traditionally been deeply grounded in Marxism, and thus indebted to the idea that human labour could transform the world in a practical and emancipatory way. There is thus the possibility of a political solution to man's domination by instrumental reason, or as Lukacs terms it, "reification".

Simply put, reification is the phenomenon which occurs when social and economic relationships take on the form of rigid and immutable "laws of nature" – thing-like structures not amenable to human intervention or control. Lukacs asserts that the

tendency to reify or objectify concepts is rooted in the specifically *capitalist* need to conquer nature. "Reified structures of consciousness", as Lukacs calls them, are conditioned by capitalist relations of production. Not only is nature perceived as an object to be crushed and exploited, but so too is the worker, who within this monolithic edifice is stripped of his uniquely human attributes.

The demands of the capitalist productive process appear to us as implacable – what Lukacs calls "the universal structuring principle" of society.[6]

Its reach extends even further to permeate the very nature of thought itself. As Lukacs puts it, "The fate of the worker becomes the fate of society as a whole".[7] The result, inevitably, is passive acceptance of the reified "natural order" – we become blind to the fact that these structures of domination are not "given" but *created* – and therefore *can* be changed.

There is yet hope, however, that we can explode the parameters of self-created domination, and Lukacs believes it lies within the power of the proletariat itself. Thus he envisions a political solution to the iron cage of reification – as the proletariat recovers a true consciousness, as they will "re-enchant" the world. For Lukacs, then, the working class is the only true "subject/object" of history, and the only force which has the potential to overcome reification.

While Horkheimer and Adorno accept much of Lukacs' theory, as has been noted, they move away from the Marxist emphasis on labour as specifically transformative and emancipatory, and therefore rejects Lukacs' political solution to the disenchantment dilemma. Not only does the notion of man as labourer carry with it unsettling echoes of man as exploiter, but Horkheimer and Adorno argue that reification extends far beyond

the demands of the capitalist mode of production. In this sense their position is more radical and far-reaching than that of Marx or Lukacs – reason demands the domination of nature, not just under capitalism, but in *modernity*.

This necessarily begs the question: Why do human beings feel the need to use reason in this predatory way, why must it manifest itself in the desire to dominate? Horkheimer and Adorno answer by invoking Nietzsche – we seek to dominate whatever we fear the most; and we fear that which stands apart from us, that mere idea of outsidedness".[8] It is this outsidedness which fills us with resentment, to put the matter in Nietzschean terms.

Horkheimer and Adorno carry the Nietzschean analogy further when they note that our terror of and resentment towards nature expresses itself most forcefully in the elevation of Platonic (logical, rational) modes of thought and the repudiation of all that is Dionysian. The authors remind us that "even the patriarchal gods of Olympus are absorbed in the philosophical *logos*".[9]

Thus man struggles against what he fears, and sets it outside of himself, against himself, in order that it may be conquered. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, there is no better example of the will-to-power than the myth of Odysseus. It is nothing less than the history of western civilizations as renunciation – the introversion of repression.[10]

What is it about the journey of Odysseus which speaks so forcefully to our compulsion to dissociate mind from nature? Odysseus's encounter with the sirens and his cunning in extricating himself from the seductive power of their "liquid song" offers a wealth of insights.[11]

The sirens represent all that is ecstatic and forbidden in nature – the promise of

eternal pleasure which cannot be denied except at great cost to the self. Yet logic dictates that Odysseus must renounce his impulses in order to preserve his own life. He thus confronts the one non-negotiable rule of civilization – those who are incapable of self-mastery face annihilation at the hands of society. But as we have seen, self-mastery equals self-abnegation. Odysseus must be quick and cunning, to be sure, in order to outwit those who would tempt him, but it is self-denial which is central to the effective use of instrumental logic. Thus the ears of Odysseus' oarsmen are stuffed with wax, so they are oblivious to the sirens' song and may continue rowing. Odysseus himself suffers an even crueler fate. He is lashed to the mast of his ship so that he hears but cannot act on the sensual desires which the sirens arouse in him.

Calculation and sacrifice are thus integral to the project of modernity. However, one may reasonably point out that all living beings are subject to certain constraints if the social order is to be maintained, and that this order is in turn crucial to our own survival. If the dilemma is stated unequivocally in Hobbesian terms – do we choose conformity or annihilation – the decision, for the most part, is quite clear. Few of us are that attached to our liberty.

Even if one does not wish to characterize the situation in quite such dogmatic liberty-or-death terms, it is evident that it is impossible to conceive of a truly human personality outside of the parameters of society. Speech and indeed thought itself is interactive and thus socially determined. Therefore to conceive of a disconnected and completely atomistic subject would be ludicrous.

Horkheimer and Adorno admit the inevitability of constraint (through clenched teeth) at the conclusion of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. But for them it produces "a cancer

within..." which "turns good will into bad".[12] Resignation and bitterness are the end-points of a process through which hope is relentlessly denied, and finally peters out.[13]

Thus Enlightenment promises much – a siren song, in its own way – but delivers little. The cost of disenchantment is too great to be borne, because it leads to the disintegration of the psyche. Horkheimer and Adorno remind us that "Everyone who practices renunciation gives away more of his life than is given back to him".[14]

Yet there is no possibility of redemption in this dark and Nietzschean universe. True, we are clever enough to survive, but not as clever as we think we are, for in a world where everything is instrumental, the one prize we cannot win is happiness, which is possible only through a genuine communion with others. The authors offer this stern warning to any foolish enough to try:

> ...society demands that the man who tried to escape from universal, unequal and unjust exchange, and not renounce but immediately seize the undiminished whole, must thereby lose everything – even the miserable leavings that self-preservation allows him.[15]

Horkheimer and Adorno have immeasurably enriched our understanding of the disenchantment thesis by showing that Enlightenment is inevitably dialectical, signifying not only unrestricted advancement, but also self-centered entropy. Max Weber's somber prediction reverberates on every page: "Not summer's bloom lies ahead of us, but a polar night of icy darkness and hardness..."[16] Weber accepted the instrumentalization of reason with stoic resignation, offering only the wistful hope that some individuals may have the strength to live according to self-chosen values which transcend cynicism and opportunism.

Such a challenge is almost impossible to undertake successfully, however, at least in part because of what Nietzsche referred to as the "devaluation of values". Horkheimer

and Adorno take note of its pernicious effect in the following paragraph:

> Mythologizing itself sets off the unending process of enlightenment in which ...every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief – until the very notions of spirit, of truth and indeed, enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic.[17]

Horkheimer and Adorno thus concur almost completely with Weber's (and Nietzsche's) bleak diagnosis of modernity as a "twilight of the idols",[18] which admits no redemption, no political solution in the form offered by Marx or Lukacs.

They can salvage only the faintest glimmer of hope, embodied in the related concepts of *Vernunft* and *Mimesis*. This hope waned somewhat after the war, but is nevertheless hinted at in both *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason.*

Vernunft or "reason" refers to the overcoming of contradictions, in particular the false contradiction with severs the connection between man and nature. As Horkheimer and Adorno have demonstrated, this is fundamental to the Enlightenment project of domination. We fear that which lies outside of us – we are alienated from nature – but in our arrogance we believe that knowledge, which has transformed men into gods, gives us both the right and the power to vanquish it.

This myth can be overcome only if we dissociate ourselves from our own arrogance. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it, "Enlightenment must consider itself".[19] Thus, self-critique (which is a central aspect of critical theory) requires insight and objectivity. Such reason is in fact a vital tool in the transcendence of subjective instrumentality. Yet, as Horkheimer explains:

> The two concepts of reason do not represent two separate and independent ways of the mind, although their opposition expresses antimony. The task of philosophy is not stubbornly to play the one

> against the other, but to foster a mutual critique, and thus if possible, to prepare in the intellectual realm the reconciliation of the two in reality.[20]

Man's liberation – breaking through the hard crust of instrumental reason – may be achieved through aesthetics or what Theodor Adorno calls mimesis. Mimesis checks our compulsion to dominate nature by encouraging a new and more authentic way of knowing and seeing the world. The mimetic experience is based on our recognition that the natural world is not alien, but resides within us. For Adorno this recognition does not imply a naïve attempt to return to a "noble" past – for that would be impossible – but again, a fusion of subjective reason.

Mimesis reaches its apex in art which is a reflection of our true relationship to nature, not the false dichotomy of predator and prey intrinsic to Enlightenment thought. Yet Adorno recognizes that the mimetic experience will probably exert little influence in practical terms. Not only is it painful and difficult for Enlightenment to "consider itself", as Horkheimer and Adorno have insisted it must, but it is also clear, as Adorno admits, that in the context of a rationalized world, any celebration of aesthetics will appear ludicrous and absurd – a romantic anachronism. The power of art to enchant and to expose the "irrationality… of the status quo" is subversive and hence it must be delegitimized.[21] What, then, is to be done? Can modernity be vindicated?

c) Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School

Jürgen Habermas offers a program for the vindication of modernity which focuses on the *reconstructive* goal of critical theory – a goal which Horkheimer and Adorno had abandoned as untenable. In this sense, Habermas asserts, they have betrayed the

Frankfurt School's original ambition – to not only critique the given order, but to do so with a practical and transformative intent.[22]

In elucidating his own reformulation of critical theory, Habermas ponders (with more than a twinge of regret and sadness) the reasons for his intellectual estrangement from his former mentors. His musings on this painful subject are worth quoting at length. Initially, he wonders how it is that Horkheimer and Adorno could have dismissed the achievements of western rationalism in such a cavalier manner.[23] He goes on to ask:

> How can the two advocates of the Enlightenment (which they always claimed to be and still are) so underestimate the rational content of cultural modernity that they observe in its elements only the amalgamation of reason and domination, of power and validity? It is Nietzsche who inspired them to derive the standards of their cultural criticism from the radical but isolated and somehow totalized experience of aesthetic modernity?[24]

Perhaps Horkheimer and Adorno would quarrel with Habermas's description of them as "two advocates of the Enlightenment", when they have in fact declared the "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant".[25] In any case, it is this very attitude towards the legacy of the Enlightenment which decisively separates Habermas from his forerunners, and which, as he convincingly demonstrates, can indeed be traced back "point for point" to the pernicious influence of Nietzsche.[26]

Habermas thus argues that Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* provides the blueprint for Horkheimer and Adorno's lacerating critique of instrumental reason. Certain paragraphs offer especially rich material for comparison. According to Nietzsche, as soon as men were robbed of their instincts, they had to depend on their "consciousness", or rather, their ability to dominate nature: "They were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, co-coordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures".[27] The more we

think, infer and reckon, the less we feel, want and need. Yet these primal drives do not disappear – they are instead repressed and sublimated. We must transcend them, we must master ourselves, as the myth of Odysseus cautions, lest we perish, or even worse, suffer from a "bad conscience". Thus what Nietzsche calls "the curse of society and of peace" is embedded in all institutions which turn "wild, free, prowling man" against himself.[28]

Habermas asserts that Horkheimer and Adorno are speaking in Nietzsche's voice when they dismantle the sanctimonious claims of positivism, reason, and even ascetic Christianity to reveal the hidden agenda of instrumental domination. But this totalizing critique inevitably presents a serious problem which both Nietzsche and Horkheimer and Adorno attempt to resolve – with only partial success. Habermas encapsulates the dilemma in this way: Nihilism is an intellectual dead end because once it has been established that *all* so-called reason is nothing but repression and hypocrisy, then the concept of critique itself is invalidated. The critic cannot claim the existence of any Archimedean point which excludes him from the same self-imposed judgment. Simply put, then, "In the face of this paradox, the totalizing critique loses its direction. It has two options."[29]

Nietzsche took refuge in the idea of "taste" ("the yes and no of the palate") rather than "reason" as the ultimate arbiter. Therefore statements of "right" or "wrong", "truth" or "falsity" are defined in Nietzschean terms as *preferences*. But why should we prefer one belief over another? Nietzsche's theory of the will to power offers a plausible explanation. We prefer one belief, style or way of life over another not because their intrinsic "goodness" or "badness" can be empirically demonstrated, but because they carry with them connotations of *power*. This is what Nietzsche means when he refers to

the *genealogy* of morals. That which is ancient is elevated, and considered to be noble because it is superordinate. Any beliefs or values which as Nietzsche says, we consider "common, plebian, or low" are ultimately "transformed into the concept 'bad'".[30] In one stroke Nietzsche has thus transformed the will to power into the explanation for, as Habermas puts it, "the accidental success of the belief in truth and the ascetic ideas, as well as the belief in science and morality".[31]

Habermas demonstrates that Horkheimer and Adorno's reliance on Nietzsche led them ultimately in not just a different, but rather an *opposite* direction. Nietzsche still grants the individual the capacity to behave as an acting subject, at least to some extent. He has, at a minimum, the ability to state preferences, if not to make moral judgments of right and wrong. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that Habermas considers Nietzsche to exemplify merely a variation of the totalizing critique. He points out of that "clearly Nietzsche's doctrine of the active and merely reactive powers also does not offer a way out of the predicament of a critique which attacks the validity of its own premises; at best it prepares the way for an escape from the horizon of modernity".[32]

For Horkheimer and Adorno, however, human will and consciousness are now held as cancelled. Their "Grand Hotel abyss" excludes nothing.[33] There is a profound skepticism about the individual's ability to change his situation because in post-fascist late capitalism, all political institutions, and even the social sciences and academic philosophy, are seen as either open or covert agents of domination.[34] All avenues for action or even reflection are cut off, and because the sense that we can choose between alternative courses of action is basic to our humanity, the result is the death of the self.

D) HABERMAS ON WEBER'S THEORY OF ACTION

The radical pessimism of Horkheimer and Adorno, as Habermas has indicated, negates the intention of a critical theory, which assumes the existence of an autonomous subject.[35] Thus, above all else Habermas castigates his former mentors for renouncing hope and a sense of connectedness to the world. "No longer desiring to overcome the performative contradiction of a totalizing critique of ideology, they intensified the contradiction and left it unresolved".[36] For Horkheimer and Adorno there is no way out of this dialectic of decline – not even to go back.

Habermas's mission, then, is nothing less than to rescue critical theory from its normative deficiencies. He asserts that Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason is based on an overly myopic, constricted definition of the word "reason" itself. If we see "reason" as limited to practical-technical domination of the world-typical of egocentric western individualism – then it is inevitable that a "negative dialectic" of catastrophe will follow. What has been overlooked in this "emphatic concept of reason" is the potential for "the unity of theoretical reason with practical-moral insight and aesthetic judgment".[37] This true rationality can be achieved through communicative action founded on linguistic theory.

It is natural that Horkheimer and Adorno would view reason as a one-dimensional abyss – "the logic of self-annihilation"[38] – given that they are the intellectual progeny of not only Nietzsche, but of Max Weber as well. Habermas presents his critique of Weber as follows: "He does not see the selectivity in the pattern of capitalist rationalization. He does not see that in the development of capitalism those elements are repressed that he himself analyzed under the heading 'ethics of brotherhood'"[39] Certain radical religious

movements, such as the Baptists, exemplify an attempt to give voice to just such an "ethic of brotherhood" and to create "new institutional forms" – transcending that which was functional for emerging capitalism.[40]

According to Habermas, the reason for Weber's exclusion of these "ethical visions" from his analysis can be traced to his dependence on an exhausted paradigm – the subject-centered philosophy of consciousness which ultimately reduces all action to the level of self-preservation (instrumentality). Habermas argues that this "Weberian thorn still in critical theory" can only be exorcised through what he calls a "change of paradigm" which will "make it possible to return to the undertaking that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason; and this will permit us to take up once again the since neglected tasks of a critical theory of society".[41]

This orientation of course has a very long taproot and can be traced back to, as one example, the methodological individualism of Thomas Hobbes and his view of human beings as nothing more than squirming bags of insatiable appetites.

This is not to imply, of course, that Weber's work suffers from the sort of gross oversimplification which impoverishes Hobbes's depiction of human nature and the political process. However, Habermas does argue that Weber's view of modernity and rationality is one-dimensional, focusing as it does only on the negative elements embodied in instrumental action.

What does Habermas mean by communicative action (ethics) and how specifically does Weber's philosophy of consciousness limit the possibilities of achieving it – a goal which, according to Habermas, is the true task of a critical theory? Habermas explains that the following elements are present:

> I shall speak of communicative action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding... In this respect the negotiation of definitions of the situation is an essential element of the interpretive accomplishments required for communicative action.[42]

Habermas argues that Weber's theory of action, which includes "meaning" as a basic concept, cannot reach the level of true communicative interaction, because meaning itself is defined monologically.[43] Weber's definition is well known, but nevertheless it is worthwhile to reproduce it here:

> Human behaviour – be it external or internal, activity, omission or acquiescence – will be called 'action' if and insofar as the actor attaches a subjective meaning to it.[44]

According to Habermas, "at this first switchpoint Weber parts company with a theory of communicative action".[45] Why is this so? Because what counts most here is not the attempt of at least *two* interacting subjects to reach a mutual understanding, but the ultimately ego-centered goals of an isolated subject, who is the only locus of "meaning". To that extent Weber does not offer a true theory of meaning at all, but rather a theory of consciousness which in the final analysis is instrumental, and therefore offers no possibility of self-transcendence.[46]

The implications of such a theoretical position are profound. Habermas argues that whether an individual decides to fulfill practical personal interests, such as acquiring power and wealth, live up to "values" such as truth and honour, or even pursue pleasure as an end in itself, the concept of "social action" cannot be brought to bear as a way of achieving understanding with *others*. No matter how "noble" (or alternatively, how self-serving) the individual's goals may be, fundamentally they are just that – individual

goals, instrumentally conceived, and thus not communicatively oriented.[47] For Habermas, then, the tragedy of the philosophy of consciousness is that it cannot allow us to escape from the ever-narrowing concentric circle of the self.*

Habermas does admit that Weber extends his definition of "meaning" in order to include conditions which would satisfy the requirements for "social action". Thus Weber asserts that "action will be called 'social' which, in its meaning as intended by the actor or actors, takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course".[48] In section three of *Economy and Society* Weber stresses that the action orientations of participants must be *reciprocally* related to one another: "The term 'social relationship' will be used to denote the behaviour of a plurality of actors insofar as, in its meaning context, the behaviour of each is reciprocally related to that of the others and is thereby oriented".[49]

In Habermas' opinion, however, this does not suffice, because the orientation towards others which Weber has asserted is a prerequisite for social action is not carried forward in his well-known typology of action, which distinguishes between purposive-rational, value-rational, affectual and traditional behaviour. As Habermas explains, Weber does not start from the social relationship, but is concerned with discovering the extent to which action is rationalizable – in other words, as Habermas expresses it, Weber's focus is again on "the means-ends relation of teleologically conceived, monological action".[50] Habermas makes his position quite clear:

> If one adopts this perspective, the only aspects of action open to objective appraisal are the effectiveness of a causal intervention and the truth of the empirical assumptions that underlie the maxim or the plan of

* As David Rasmussen points out in *Reading Habermas*, pg. 25, it is not an overstatement to say that "Weber conceived of things instrumentally *because* he conceived of them in terms of subject-object relations". (emphasis mine)

> action – that is, the subjective belief about a purposive-rational organization of means.[51]

One may thus infer that according to Habermas, Weber's view of "rational" action must by definition exclude values and the potential for liberation which they embody. Like his predecessor Nietzsche, and his offspring Horkheimer and Adorno, it would appear that Weber sees the individual as trapped in a seamless web of repression – with no possibility of communicative redemption. The question of whether Habermas has mischaracterized Weber's position is a debatable one, and will be taken up later.

In any case, Habermas argues that the Weberian conception of action emphasizes its "disenchanted" character. The subject within such an instrumental universe acts not in accordance with substantive ends (which had been the point of reference in the "enchanted" world) but with his *own* ends.

Both Weber and Habermas recognize that even the capacity to exercise this degree of freedom is compromised in modernity. But in Habermas's view, Weber is wrong to conceive of this situation solely as a function of the *individual's* ability to act in accordance with subjectively-chosen values. This perspective inevitably colours the *solutions* Weber offers – which are tentative at best – either charismatic leadership as an escape from rationalization, or adherence by the individual to an "ethic of responsibility".

Habermas thus accuses Weber of being unable to conceive of change in *societal* terms. His emphasis on the isolated actor overlooks "the mechanism or coordinating action through which interpersonal relationships come about".[52] Weber's action theory thus strips modern institutions and structures of all rationality. Furthermore, the relationship between the actor and the natural/social world is prejudiced (as Habermas

expresses it) by the demands of the "anonymous process of capital realization with the economic system".[53] This relationship thus takes on the characteristics of a thing-like commodity – a process which Habermas refers to as the "reification of the lifeworld".[54]

Yet rationalization and its attendant demands need not overwhelm the individual. Habermas insists that this process of growing domination is a reversible one, and possible solutions will be revealed if the problem is examined from an *evolutionary* standpoint. Habermas's evolutionary theory will thus be the subject of the following section.

E) HABERMAS'S EVOLUTIONARY THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Despite Habermas's rigorous critique of Weber's action theory (or perhaps because of it) it is clear that the Weberian problematic (the disenchantment of the world and corresponding loss of freedom) is the rock upon which Habermas's own theoretical house is built. Weber's alleged shortcomings allow Habermas to explicate the need for a theory of *communicative* action. His systematic analysis of Weber's work permits Habermas to deepen and enrich his own version of the disenchantment thesis, and finally, Habermas attempts to strengthen his own theory by showing specifically how it overcomes certain drawbacks which are intrinsic to not only Weber's work, but other critics of technical rationality as well, such as those of Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer.

Habermas's evolutionary perspective on the human condition is rooted in his conviction that the Enlightenment promise of reason and freedom is as yet an unfulfilled project – not a "deformity" to be rejected, as Horkheimer, Adorno and Weber would characterize it, but an ideal which must be salvaged and nurtured.[55]

Habermas thus asks: How can we vindicate an admittedly troubled modernity and allow it to accomplish its true purpose? The first step in this endeavour, as Habermas sees it, is to enrich our understanding of the past: "The horizon open to the future which is determined by our expectations in the present, guides our access to the past."[56]

If we do not at present live in a world imbued with reason, freedom and equality, we should not assume that such an ideal is impossible. It may yet be achieved, Habermas insists, if we come to a deeper understanding of how we have arrived at our present state of incomplete development, and in so doing, how we may hope to transcend it. Habermas points out that Weber's anti-evolutionary stance prevented him from elucidating any structural solution to the complete dominance of instrumentality, which he (like Horkheimer and Adorno) could not help but perceive as terminal and irreversible. Habermas thus argues that Weber "does not distinguish sufficiently between the *substantive* problematic that guides rationalization and the *structures* of consciousness that result from the ethical rationalization of worldviews".[57] At the very least, as Wolfgang Schluchter suggests, "in the absence of a belief in determinism and evolutionism…" Weber has left his vision of the future "open-ended".[58]

Habermas believes, however, that if we examine human evolution, which he takes to mean, in broad terms, "cumulative processes that exhibit a direction", a hitherto unrevealed source of growth will be discovered. It is human moral evolution which will allow us to distinguish the potential of modernity from its present reality. This does not necessarily imply that human history has or will manifest continual movement onward and upward. Periods of stagnation and regression are inevitable, and Habermas points to the rise of Nazi Germany as one tragic example of such devolution and decline. Yet

according to Habermas, the dark and nihilistic observers of the present age have failed to grasp the distinction between potentiality and actuality, and therefore they remain trapped in a narrow and indeed "deformed" concept of reason, which cannot redeem a pathological modernity.

Implicit in the conventional understanding of "evolution" is the assumption that the stages involved can be ranked hierarchically from least to most "progressive" or "desirable". Yet as the previous discussion of Horkheimer's and Adorno's work has indicated, the generally accepted Enlightenment benchmark of "progress" – positivism and technical mastery over nature – conceals a negative dialectic of repression. Habermas, in spite of his profound disagreement with the pessimism inherent in Horkheimer's and Adorno's vision, agrees that this standard, taken by itself, is deficient.

Habermas's challenge, then, is to elaborate an evolutionary point of reference which has been largely abandoned since the Enlightenment era – the sphere of moral development. Modernity is thus not intrinsically "evil", but suffers from a one-sided dependence on the purposive-rational sphere. Nevertheless, it can be reclaimed through what Habermas calls a "counterfactual line of inquiry" which will enable us to discover "possibilities of expanding cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive knowledge – possibilities that are grounded 'in abstracto' through the modern understanding of the world".[59]

For Habermas, the stages of moral development are (theoretically, at any rate) "universal and unavoidable – in this sense, transcendental".[60] However, because they are not always fully realized empirically, the potential for human moral growth is as yet incomplete. Habermas claims that his analysis of communicative action provides the key

which will unlock this normative potential. This will be elaborated shortly, but first I will turn to a brief discussion of Habermas's reformulation of Marx's historical materialism, as well as his debt to Piaget and Kohlberg.

Habermas's synthetic, dialectical approach to theory – building is revealed in his attempt to remedy the neglect of the normative dimension which impoverishes Marx's materialist conception of history. Habermas's reconstructive aim thus necessitates "taking a theory apart and putting it back together again to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself".[61] Habermas's reconstructed paradigm mirrors Marx's own, but begins with a refutation of certain Marxist assumptions which in Habermas's view are problematic.

First, Habermas feels that Marx erred grievously by focusing on productive forces (labour) as a catalyst for change. This is a Hegelian residue which caused Marx to misperceive the logic of history. Habermas does not assert that the technical sphere is unimportant, but rather that Marx neglects the equally vital issue of *moral* learning.

Habermas's project thus attempts to overcome the limitations inherent in any view which elevated the technical sphere at the expense of the normative. In defending his position, Habermas argues that:

> Whereas Marx localized the learning processes important for evolution in the dimension of objectivating thought – of technical and organizational knowledge, of instrumental and strategic action, in short, of *productive* forces – there are good reasons for assuming that learning processes also take place in the dimension of moral insight, practical knowledge, and the consensual regulation of action conflicts.[62]

Habermas goes on to assert that "the development of these normative structures is the pacemaker of social evolution."[63] He admits that this provocative statement may make it appear that he is "quietly dropping the materialist assumptions regarding the motor of social development,"[64] but insists that those who suspect him of this,

misunderstand his intentions. Habermas concedes that in spite of his own increased emphasis on the normative sphere, "culture remains a superstructural phenomenon".[65] Nevertheless, how successful Habermas has been at avoiding the one-sided reductionism which bedevils Marx's materialist conception of history is an open question which will be addressed later.

Habermas points out that the explanatory power of Marx's base-superstructure paradigm is compromised because Marx himself conceived of it too dogmatically (the "base" need not be identified solely with economics, and furthermore, class conflict is not the only catalyst for social change.)[66]

More specifically, Marx did not reckon on the growing role of the state in regulating the dysfunctional tendencies which plague capitalism. Increasingly severe economic crises have occurred since Marx's day which can only be resolved through political intervention. The market can no longer be seen as a self-regulating system based on fair exchange, and if this essential feature of capitalism is called into question, then so too is Marx's crucial distinction between base (economy) and superstructure (the political realm.)

This renders Marx's theory of society inadequate, founded as it was on a critique of political economy. If the distinction between base and superstructure can no longer be sustained – if politics does not depend on economics, but is identical with it, then the class antagonisms which Marx assumed would precipitate revolution are likely to remain dormant.[67] That is not to say they are eliminated, but the dangers in them are deflected and managed by the state. Dysfunctions are no longer localized as "class" interests, but rather as "system" problems, which can be dealt with discreetly, often by co-opting, or

what Habermas calls "the compensatory distribution façade".[68]

One may ask – what of "underprivileged" groups? Do they not still act as a locus for class struggle? No, according to Habermas, because in his view, underprivileged groups are not social *classes*, and neither do they represent the mass of the population.[69]

Furthermore, such groups may well be impoverished and excluded from the political process, but this is not synonymous with exploitation, because in fact the system considers them to be expendable. They do not labour and therefore have no leverage which can be brought to bear in pursuit of their goals, which can be easily dismissed.[70] In Habermas's view, then, it is evident that ideology and class struggle, at least as Marx understood them, have become outmoded concepts.

If the Marxist assumption of the almost complete dependence of superstructure on base can no longer be sustained, then according to Habermas, neither can his assertion that superstructural phenomena (for example, language, art, morality, religion, etc.) "have no history" except as offshoots of the mode of production.[71] Human beings must do more than learn to exploit nature in ever more sophisticated ways – growing adaptive capacity also necessitates the formation of moral communicative competences. Thus, although Habermas admits that "culture remains a superstructural phenomenon"[72] and that "the rules of communicative action do develop in reaction to changes in the domain of instrumental and strategic action..." he nevertheless insists that "in doing so they follow their own logic."[73]

Habermas further emphasized that although Marx links the evolution of the species with the concept of *social* labour (which is cooperative in nature) he nonetheless ignores the importance of socialization itself (through kinship and the use of language) as

a catalyst for change. Marx's dogmatic emphasis on labour, severed of any connection to the transmission of underlying values, means that history is nothing more than a "succession of different modes of production."[74] Ultimately, then (as Habermas expresses it) "Marx does not actually explicate the interrelationship of interaction and labour, but instead, under the unspecific title of social praxis, reduces the one to the other, namely, communicative action to instrumental action."[75]

Again, this is not to say that in Habermas's opinion labour is merely a marginal expression of man's essence, but rather that Marx has failed to recognize this central truth: "What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know – language".[76] Thus Habermas argues that Marx has oversimplified the process of human evolution, by ignoring the existence of an "indigenous learning mechanism… which can be employed to solve an evolutionary crisis".[77] It is only through the refinement of communicative capacities that we can learn to act in a truly cooperative manner, without relying on the "relations of force" which admittedly have predominated throughout much of human history.[78]

As has been indicated previously, Habermas rejects the Weberian typology of legitimacy, because it does not receive any direction in political development, and therefore is unable to answer the question of where such development is taking us. As Guenther Roth has suggested, this stance springs from Weber's repudiation of an evolutionary approach to history.

Habermas's own evolutionary scheme may offer a promising modification – one based on an extension of Marx's materialist conception of history, and an adaptation of the moral-cognitive developmental models provided by the work of Piaget and Kohlberg.

However, it is necessary to ask: Does Habermas's project indeed supply the specificity and concreteness which he claims is missing from Weber's work? Habermas asserts that he wishes "to develop the idea of a theory of society conceived with a practical intent".[79] The reader may thus feel safe in assuming that a political direction or agenda will be specified, but it appears that instead of outlining the shape of a good society, Habermas merely offers procedures which will allow members to argue about what it might look like.

In order to assess the validity of Habermas's claims, however, it is first necessary to examine the foundations of his evolutionary scheme. As has been indicated, the work of Piaget and Kohlberg provides a base which posits congruence between individual development (ontogenesis) and social evolution (phylogenesis). Implicit in such a model is the assumption that higher stages of learning encompass and transcend lower ones, and that this therefore represents a cumulative advance in learning ability.

The application of these ontogenetic models to the study of society furthers Habermas's purposes in two ways. The first assumption – that congruence exists between ontogenesis and phylogenesis, and that therefore "every child who passes from one (cognitive or sociomoral) stage of thought to the next can be brought by mautic means to explain why his or her way of judging things is now able to solve given problems than at the previous stage"[80] enables Habermas to argue that modern societies are somehow privileged in cognitive-moral terms. Their enhanced rationality is this dimension may better enable them to deal with disturbances and crises, but as has already been pointed out (further to Habermas's second assumption) "there is no guarantee of unilinear development".[81] In other words, increasing complexity in structures of thought – whether

it be in cognitive – moral or instrumental terms – does not necessarily imply that a society will be able to solve its problems – particularly those which revolve around the allocation of goods and the normative legitimation of political regimes. As Habermas expresses it, "There is no clear relation between complexity and self-maintenance".[82]

A brief discussion of Piaget's and Kohlberg's schemes will clarify Habermas's intentions. Piaget's genetic structural account of child development focuses on the individual's growing ability to "decenter" or move away from an egocentric perspective on the world and towards one which takes account of the needs of others, and in so doing, encompass a multiplicity of viewpoints. The more a child is capable of "decentering", the better he will be able to adapt to the norms of his society, in a way that is presumably advantageous for both. Indeed, Habermas argues that the highly complex formations which he calls "worldviews" are simply individual cognitive, linguistic, and moral-practical learning abilities that are reflected and embedded in culture.[83]

In a similar fashion, Habermas makes use of Lawrence Kohlberg's model to delineate the development of moral consciousness through pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional stages of problem-solving.[84] The cognitive-moral capacities of the individual progressively move away from a limited, hedonistic perspective and towards a higher level of self-chosen principles, arrived at through a process of reflection and critique, which nevertheless have the ability to envision notions of "fairness", as one example, in global terms. The autonomous, morally evolved individual thus does not ask, "What do I want?" or "What is most convenient for me?" but rather, "In this situation, what norm could be followed by *all* rational men?" As Habermas explains: "The orientations that guide action become more and more abstract –

from concrete needs through duties to the autonomous will – and at the same time more and more differentiated in regard to the validity claim of rightness (or "justice") that is concerned with norms of action".[85]

If human history can best be understood not only as a process of increasing technical rationality (as Marx asserts) but also as a progressive elaboration of what Habermas calls "worldviews", how does this development manifest itself in concrete terms? In other words, can we find empirical support for Habermas's contention regarding the growth of moral-cognitive competencies?

In answering this question, it is best to first elucidate what Habermas means by a "worldview". He explains that a worldview can be seen as an ideational core that functions "in the formation and stabilization of identities, supplying individuals with… basic concepts and assumptions that cannot be revised without affecting the identity of individuals and groups".[86]

Habermas further argues that the "rationality structures which find expression in successive worldviews depict a developmental logic inherent in cultural traditions and *institutional change*".[87] Specifically, this tendency is revealed in ever more rational forms of political legitimation.

The authority of political regimes is always drawn from the broader worldviews which predominate in particular historical epochs. These worldviews (which inevitably undergo changes) provide shared norms and values – a sense of moral community. The only way, then, that political legitimacy can be made possible is through a demonstration that those in power are fit to rule. Furthermore, the degree to which they are seen as "fit" depends on the extent to which their regimes embody the normative order cherished by a

given community at a given time.

Fitness is thus a function of the regime's ability to understand, express and uphold the worldview of its people. If the people do not see themselves reflected in their leaders, the legitimacy of the regime is jeopardized.

Habermas elaborates this theme by noting how the legitimacy discourses which buttressed past regimes have been superseded by the emergence of higher-order levels of communicative competence. As he explains it:

> In early civilization the ruling families justified themselves with the help of myths of origin. Thus the pharaohs represented themselves first as gods... on this level narrative grounds are sufficient, viz., mythological stories... the need for justification grew; now not only the person of the ruler had to be justified, but a political order against which the ruler could transgress.[88]

Thus, later legitimizing discourses were based not on myth, but systems of ethics or higher religions which could be linked with doctrines (revealed knowledge) offered by the founders – Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, etc.[89] In a similar vein, David Ingram points out that religion itself has been transformed – earlier polytheistic belief-systems retain residues characteristic of pre-critical stages of development. Monotheistic religions, on the other hand, "subsume reality under a single unifying principle, thereby exhibiting a strong impulse toward universalism and logical consistency".[90]

In modern times, however, the legitimation of the state rests increasingly on formal principles of reason (neither myths nor dogma). This higher level assumes, as Habermas says, that "the formal conditions of justification themselves obtain legitimizing force. The procedures and presuppositions of rational agreement themselves become principles".[91]

Habermas asserts, therefore, that a whole new *kind* of reasoning is at work here –

first exemplified in Rousseau's *Social Contract* – one which is reflective in nature, and is based on the notion that all parties to an agreement must be free and equal, and that the agreement itself must be open to criticism. Such new learning levels can only be attained, however, as the result of what Habermas terms "social-evolutionary transitions" which open up new possibilities both in terms of insight and practical knowledge.[92]

Thus we can see that Habermas's theory of social evolution focuses on two forms of rationalization, which must be carefully distinguished from one another – the dimensions of *system* and *life-world.* The rationalization of social systems can be measured in terms of their growing complexity. The market, for example, is organized around the medium of money and corresponding expansion of political and administrative organizations.

In contrast, the rationalization of the life-world is manifested in both separation of spheres of value (a phenomenon which Weber recognized) *and* advancement in levels of learning. Habermas feels that Weber's account, while addressing the multiplicity of values which is central to modernity, erred in not examining the shifts in world-views which inevitably devalue older, previously accepted perspectives, and render them more vulnerable to criticism. This process of reflection and critique which challenges background assumptions offers the opportunity for growth. If legitimizing discourses are no longer adequate to the task – if regimes are challenged by what Habermas calls "steering problems" – for example, difficulties in the distribution of resources – which exceed the system's stabilizing capacity – then a "legitimation crisis" may occur. Such crises often result in the movement to "a new level of human evolution involving the reconstruction of the core domain of the moral-legal (i.e., consensual) regulation of

conflicts."[93] *If* this new level of human evolution is to be achieved, however, then the rationality potential embedded in communicative action must be liberated.

As Habermas points out, this is not always possible, because corresponding system rationalization tends to react back on the life-world, stunting its growth and rendering it subordinate to instrumental demands. Economic and bureaucratic imperatives can lead to what Habermas describes as the "inner colonization of the life-world" – a phenomenon which occurs when economic and administrative subsystems overstep their roles and infiltrate the spheres of the life-world which are responsible for the socialization process – the transmission of values and the formation of the self. These processes properly belong to the sphere of communicative action, and any attempt to divert these functions into the system will have pathological effects – specifically the stifling of any challenge to authority or conventional wisdom.[94]

Habermas believes that empirical support for this trend toward colonization can be found in the increasing tendency of government to pass legislation regulating education and family life. Growing interventionism is nothing more than an attempt to control economic crises by displacing them and thus, through sleight-of-hand, rendering them invisible: "To the extent that class conflict, which is built into societies with a private form of economic accumulation, can be damned up and kept latent, problems press into the foreground which do not infringe *directly* upon class-specific interest positions".[95]

Thus we can see that for Habermas, discursive rationality, opening up as it does the potential for change and growth, is a relatively late development in human evolution – and at the same time one which cannot be taken as a "given", since its fulfillment is

often subverted by system demands. Nevertheless, the notion that validity claims must, in principle at any rate, be open to critique and reconstruction is fundamental to modernity.

As has been indicated, Habermas attempts a melding of the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, coupled with a refashioning of historical materialism, in order to further his own evolutionary project. Nevertheless, in his opinion Kohlberg's stage theory does not go far enough. In what sense, then, does Habermas consider it to be deficient?

In Habermas's view, Kohlberg's theory is flawed because it does not reach the seventh stage of *communicative* ethics. It is not enough to assert that at stage six, the individual defines the "good" in accordance with (ultimately self-chosen) universal ethical principles. Habermas argues that "only communicative ethics guarantee the generality of admissible norms and the autonomy of acting subjects through the discursive redeemability of the validity claims with which norms appear".[96]

At the heart of Habermas's critique of the sixth stage is his rejection of the Kantian dimensions in Kohlberg's thought. Habermas attempts to address these alleged drawbacks while at the same time retaining the outlines of the Piagetian-Kohlbergian approach to cognitive-moral learning.

As has been noted, Habermas argues against the Kantian (categorical) imperative embedded in stage six ethics because such a conception of the autonomous will does not allow for the possibility (or even the necessity) of exposing one's self-chosen values to the scrutiny of other perspectives. Taken to its logical conclusion, the end-point of such an orientation would be zealotry of the most extreme and destructive sort. Horkheimer and Adorno warned against the dark underside of the categorical imperative, reminding us that the ideal of "understanding without the guidance of another person" is the "work

of the Marquis de Sade".[97] Habermas was certainly aware of this warning, which Horkheimer and Adorno elaborate as follows:

> Kant's principle that 'everything is to be done on the basis of the maxim of one's will as one which, while legislating universally, can act with itself as an object', is also the secret of the superman. His will is no less despotic than the categorical imperative. Both principles aim at independence from external powers, at the unconditional maturity defined as the essence of enlightenment.[98]

It remains to be seen (and this will be taken up in chapter five, in connection with a discussion of Habermas's proceduralism) whether Habermas's own agenda indeed offers the possibility of interaction free from domination, or whether his scheme merely posits domination of another kind – albeit in a disguised and covert form. In any case, what Habermas finds even more troubling in stage six ethics is the same spectre which haunts the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Weber *et. al.* – the negation of the possibility of *societal* change.

The Kantian orientation is thus ideally suited to a reified universe, one in which, as Lukacs contends, "action is directed wholly inward... and the attempt is made to change the world at its only remaining free point, namely man himself (ethics)".[99]

Habermas's stage seven attempts to break through reified structures of consciousness, and thus offer an escape from what he describes as a "formalistic ethic..." which (falsely, as he sees it) splits action into "legitimate and illegitimate components, duties and inclinations".[100] Habermas thus wishes to draw our attention to a "free point" not dreamt of in "nihilistic" philosophy – the extent to which discourse opens up "free access to interpretation possibilities of the cultural tradition".[101] Habermas goes on to say that:

> In the medium of value and norm-building communication in which aesthetic experiences enter, traditional cultural contents would not be any longer simply patterns according to which needs are stamped: in this medium needs could seek and find their appropriate interpretations.[102]

F) Some Critical Comments on Habermas's Evolutionary Theory

As has already been noted, whether Habermas's discursive rationality truly opens up the possibility of interpretive freedom will be discussed in the next chapter. Leaving this aside, it still appears that his theory is compromised in several important ways by his dependence on ontogenetic models. Habermas has been noticeably less critical of these genetic-structural accounts of child development than has been the case in his evaluation of other theoretical traditions – again, possibly to his detriment. His rigorous approach to the work of his predecessors in the Frankfurt School and his thoroughgoing critique of classical Marxism have been elaborated earlier in this chapter. This being the case, his relatively uncritical acceptance of the developmental accounts formulated by Piaget and Kohlberg is puzzling.

Habermas's avowed purpose in utilizing these biological models is to further his evolutionary project, and thus allow him to specify a direction in human social/political development. Yet it seems that the ontogenetic approach may have been over-extended in this regard.

Not only is it difficult to support the view that later stages of development and reasoning are "morally" or "logically" superior to so-called "earlier" ones – such assertions invariably result in charges of ethnocentrism or rationalistic bias – but the superiority of "discourse" as a goal is open to question as well. Evidently, societies in earlier historical epochs were well able to do without it. Habermas himself cites the

adequacy of crude legitimizing techniques based on myth, which were the rule in ancient Egypt. Why should the claims of discourse weigh so heavily with us, and not with them?

Furthermore, it is clear that we cannot demonstrate the superiority of our stage of development, or of discourse itself, through discursive argumentation, since to do so would be to beg the question in a tautological way. The moral skeptic, the terrorist, and the zealot do not accept discourse as the "better" way to solve problems, and indeed, it is difficult to convincingly assert that they should, without falling back on intellectual tyranny or personal preference (Nietzsche's "yes" and "no" of the palate). The desirability of given developmental stages or levels of moral reasoning is inevitably culturally specific. We may be able to argue that they work *for us*, or that they appeal *to us*, but to go beyond such limited claims is manifestly arrogant.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, if these biological models are able to tell us something about the nature and direction of societal development – and Habermas evidently believes that they are – it is difficult to discern precisely how the leap from society to individual can be accomplished. Habermas makes vague references to advances in individual learning levels, which are then evinced in ever more refined and sophisticated worldviews, but he does not uncover the catalyst which would transform individual leaning into social learning. Unfortunately, without a fuller explanation of the nature of such a mechanism, and how we arrive at the endpoint of our journey, we seem to be traveling in circles.

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[1] "Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas" by Axel Honneth, Eberhard Knodler-Bunte and Arno Widman, in *Telos*, Vol. 49, 1981, p. 7.

[2] Albrecht Wellmer, "Communications and Emancipation: Reflections on the Linguistic Turn in Critical Theory" in *On Critical Theory*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1976, p. 231.

[3] Jurgen Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-reading Dialectic of Enlightenment" in *New German Critique* No. 26, 1982, p. 13.

[4] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum Books, 1995, p. xi.

[5] Ibid., p. 9.

[6] Goerg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1971, pp. 85-86.

[7] Ibid., p. 91.

[8] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 16.

[9] Ibid., p. 96.

[10] Ibid., p. 70.

[11] Homer, *The Odyssey*. Translated by E.V. Rieu. London: Penguin Books, 1946. Book XI, p. 194.

[12] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 174.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 55.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 128.

[17] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 11.

[18] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 11.

[19] Ibid., p. xv.

[20] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1974, p. 174.

[21] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 79.

[22] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*. Translated by John Viertel. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973. p. 1.

[23] Habermas, "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", p. 23.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 3.

[26] Habermas, "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", p. 24.

[27] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Modern Library, 1968, p. 520.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Habermas, "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment",p. 28.

[30] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, pg. 463 ff.

[31] Habermas, "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", p. 28.

[32] Ibid., p. 29.

[33] Helmut Dubiel, "Domination or Emancipation: The Debate Over the Heritage of Critical Theory" in *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Edited by Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer. Translated by Barbara Fultner. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, pp. 4-5.

[34] Ibid., p. 4.

[35] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, p. 386.

[36] Habermas, "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", p. 29.

[37] Habermas, "Dialectics of Rationalization", p. 9.

[38] Ibid., p. 11.

[39] Ibid., p. 18.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 386.

[42] Ibid., p. 285-286.

[43] Ibid., p. 279.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., p. 280

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., p. 281.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Thomas McCarthy, Introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. xxxvi.

[53] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 354.

[54] Ibid., p. 356.

[55] Habermas, "Dialectics of Rationalization", p. 7.

[56] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, p. 13.

[57] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 196.

[58] Guenther Roth and Wolfgang Schluchter, *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 196.

[59] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 220.

[60] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 177.

[61] Ibid., p. 95.

[62] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

[63] Ibid., p. 120.

[64] Ibid., p. 121.

[65] Ibid., p. 98.

[66] Habermas, "Towards a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism", in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1975, p. 293.

[67] Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 109.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 110.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Robert. C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978, pp. 154-155.

[72] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 98.

[73] Ibid., p. 148.

[74] Habermas, "Towards a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism", p. 289.

[75] Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Translated by Jeremy j. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, pp. 168-169.

[76] Ibid., p. 314.

[77] Habermas, "Towards a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism", p. 293.

[78] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 120.

[79] Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p. 1.

[80] Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics" in *Habermas: Critical Debates*. Ed. by John B. Thompson and David Held. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982, p. 258.

[81] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 141.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., p. 168.

[84] Ibid., p. 99.

[85] Ibid., p. 87.

[86] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 64.

[87] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 98.

[88] Ibid., p. 183.

[89] Ibid., p. 184.

[90] David Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason*, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 28.

[91] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 184.

[92] Ibid., p. 185.

[93] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. II, p. 173.

[94] Ibid., p. 452.

[95] Ibid., p. 513.

[96] Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975, p. 89.

[97] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 86.

[98] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[99] Goerg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 38.

[100] Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity" in *Telos*, Vol. 27, Spring 1976, p. 54.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

Chapter V: Jürgen Habermas's Discourse Ethics: Social Evolution and Moral Development

A) Critique of Habermas's Evolutionary Approach

As has been indicated in the preceding chapter, Habermas's evolutionary perspective relies on the assumption that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. However, as Habermas himself admits, the analogy has certain limitations, and therefore, "We must take care not to draw hasty parallels".[1] It is evident, for example, that not all individuals are at the same stage of moral-cognitive development, nor do they necessarily represent the developmental stage of their society.[2]

Given Habermas's recognition of the pitfalls inherent in such an approach, the question becomes: Why use an evolutionary learning perspective at all? The answer is quite obvious. Insofar as Habermas's focus is on the direction of societal development, the problem of learning processes is central to his project. Evolution-theoretical statements are invaluable, as Habermas sees it, in the diagnosis of developmental problems. Furthermore, their predictive value lies in their ability to explain what Habermas calls "epoch-making developmental leaps" which occur when "competing identity projections are subject to debate". In this sense, "the diagnostician of our time takes the fictional standpoint of the evolution-theoretical explanation of a past lying in the future".[3]

Habermas thus contends that the strength of the evolutionary approach lies in its ability to both diagnose social problems and specify the direction of future development. The pre-supposition is that a society "learns" new values or behaviours, and in so doing

undergoes a fundamental change. Yet as Habermas is well aware, the underlying idea on which such a societal learning process is based is shot through with complications. Among the most serious is the assumption that society itself can be conceived of as an objective entity, or a kind of macro-subject, with a will and consciousness of its own. As mentioned, Habermas is aware of the pitfalls embedded in social realism, whether it takes the form of Hegel's "world spirit" or Durkheim's "collective conscience".

To circumvent this difficulty, it is necessary to find an alternative to the dogmatic assertion that societies "learn". Thus, Habermas takes the position that such learning occurs only in a derivative and indirect sense. He explains that "individually acquired learning abilities and information must be latently available in world views before they can be transposed into societal learning processes".[4]

In taking such an approach, Habermas relies on certain tenets of genetic individualism. The first assumption is inarguable – it is obvious that the individual alone can be said to learn something. The second assumption, which flows from the first, is more contentious. If individuals alone are capable of learning, then ontogenetic learning precedes social evolution. In other words, Habermas is attempting to account for societal learning (advancement) by referring back to individual learning. He claims that "learning mechanisms have to be sought first on the individual level".[5] In advancing such a position, Habermas thus begs the question: How may we account for the connection between the two? That is to say, how does society become aware of and assimilate what the individual has learned?

Habermas has only vague explanations to offer on this problematic issue. We have seen that he refers to a process by which individual learning "finds its way" or is

"transposed into structures of worldviews".[6] Inevitably, system problems arise, which call for new adaptive mechanisms, and what has been learned by the individual is somehow translated into new institutional arrangements, which it is hoped, will meet these mobilizing resources. In other words, the growth of reason will manifest itself in new and better ways of doing things – a position which is indeed reminiscent of Hegel's dialectic.

Habermas recognizes that in spite of his contention that individual learning is the catalyst which drives social evolution, there is a need for "additional empirical assumptions" which would explain exactly how this works. Habermas refers to the role played by social movements in this regard:

> One conceives of social movements as learning processes through which latently available structures of rationality are transposed into social practice – so that in the end they find an institutional embodiment.[7]

In the light of the preceding statement, it must be asked whether Habermas does indeed make room for collective learning processes – that is to say, whether he offers a point of view which is truly interactionist rather then individualist.

It would appear that the answer to this question is "no". Since Habermas does not envision the social movement as bridging the gap between individual learning and institutional change, but rather as occurring after these last two steps in the evolutionary sequence, it seems that the individual still bears the weight of the transformative process. At most, then, social movements play a secondary role in institutional innovation and collective learning - after the fundamental work on the individual level has been accomplished. This leaves his theory still unable to account for the discontinuity between individual and societal learning, and the mechanism at work which would join the two.[8]

Habermas concedes that there is an interaction between individual and societal learning: "Since the cognitive development of the individual takes place under social boundary conditions, there is a circular process..."[9] This statement, although ostensibly giving some credit to collective learning as a formative element in individual development, still underrates the role of the social. Thus it strongly implies that the social world may act to either inhibit or facilitate individual learning, but is not formative in itself. In this sense, collective learning enters Habermas's evolutionary scheme not at the beginning, but rather near the end. This is an odd position for him to take, considering that, as we have seen, Habermas's view of moral-cognitive development repudiates the monologism inherent in Kant's approach, and instead focuses on the need to subject competing validity claims to the test of universal applicability – through dialogue.

Habermas has shown some awareness of these problems, and the need to veer away from genetic individualism and towards interactionism. Only in so doing can he overcome the pitfalls which bedevil all those who assert that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny". Habermas encapsulates the difficulty in the following passage:

> The picture painted thus far is clearly still static and does not explain the social character of the corresponding phases of learning, particularly those of moral nature. The problem of the social institutionalization of new structures of consciousness... can probably be solved only by means of a theory of collective learning processes.[10]

This self-critique contains two important modifications to Habermas's earlier position. First, he now recognizes that his theory has failed to give an adequate account of the connection between individual consciousness and the (supposed) resulting changes in worldviews. Habermas thus admits that a sociological rather than an individualistic perspective is necessary.

Secondly, Habermas concedes that collectives do more than reinforce or stabilize moral-cognitive potential already present in the individual, and that therefore, a comprehensive theory of how *institutional* change comes about must begin with the role of collective learning processes. Habermas has not as yet fully explored the changes which are necessary if his evolutionary perspective is to be salvaged, but his self-critique contains promising possibilities.

B) DISCOURSE ETHICS AND THE KANTIAN IMPERATIVE

It has been shown that in Habermas's view, discursive practice is the result of a relatively late evolutionary development in human history. We cannot truly engage in discourse until we have become fully evolved moral beings. Yet it is only within discourse that moral capacities reach their apex. Thus, for Habermas, the highest form of judgment is embodied in discourse ethics, because it is only when we must explain ourselves to others, and submit our beliefs to dialogical justification, that we can recognize and correct their deficiencies.

Discourse moves society forward in a practical and generative way as well, because debate and critique in the political realm is necessary if democracy and its institutions are to be rejuvenated. In order to fully understand the connection between social evolution and moral development as it pertains to Habermas's project, we must examine his concept of "discourse ethics" more closely. For example, what is the relationship between ethics and morality?

Habermas's conception of the relationship between these two forms of discourse has changed over time, in part because he now wishes (as shown in his latest work

Between Facts and Norms) to distinguish between discourse as a principle of morality, and its role as a principle of democracy. More will be said on this shortly, but first let us consider why Habermas has turned to the idea of "discourse" as a means by which the legitimacy of social and political practice can be defended.

Embedded in this program is a dependence on communicative ethics, which shifts moral and practical theory from the *substantive* to the *procedural* realm. In other words, rather than positing values based on "reason" or "human nature", discourse offers a set of procedures (rules) which, if followed, would validate social practices. Discourse thus presumes the existence of a moral community, one in which norms are upheld not because they have been imposed by fiat on *subjects*, but rather because they have been agreed to by thoughtful and rational *citizens*.

Habermas thus offers an account of a discourse-based morality – a perspective from which competing validity claims can be judged impartially, and at the same time, one which is grounded in an ethic of compassion and caring.[11]

Why is this moral point of view so important to Habermas? His sensitive and eloquent treatment of this question deserves further elaboration. Habermas justifies the need for such an attitude by reminding us of the "extreme vulnerability of others" (an inherent part of the human condition) which we must counteract, as far as we are able, "by being thoughtful and considerate".[12] Morality and compassion therefore dictate that we must protect others because we have the power to destroy them.

Habermas further emphasizes that this vulnerability is not primarily a consequence of physical weakness. On the contrary, our psychological-social needs supercede what he calls "cruder threats to the integrity of life and limb".[13]

What, then, is the source of this human frailty? According to Habermas, it is an outgrowth of the fact that we are creatures whose identities can only be formed linguistically, through participation in an intersubjectively shared lifeworld. We cannot have a sense of ourselves as persons, singular and irreplaceable, unless we are recognized as such by others, and the maintenance of the collectivity as well demands the participation of such autonomous subjects. As Habermas expresses it, "The more the subject becomes individuated, the more he becomes entangled in a densely woven fabric of ... reciprocal exposedness and vulnerability".[14]

Thus, our fragile identities, maintained and negotiated through sociation, are constantly subject to the threat of disintegration – a threat which must be addressed and counteracted by moralities. In fact, as Habermas points out, "moralities must solve *two* tasks *at once*".[15] They must first ensure respect for the dignity of each individual, and they must as well attempt to serve the common good. True moralities thus advance the interrelated goals of *justice* (the recognition of the inviolable rights of humans) and *solidarity* (a concern for the needs of the collectivity). Habermas unequivocally states, "Morality thus cannot protect the one without the other. It cannot protect the rights of the individual without also protecting the well-being of the community to which he belongs".[16]

Implicit in the moral point of view is a rejection of certain aspects of Kantian philosophy. In Habermas's opinion (following Hegel) Kant advocated a one-sided emphasis on the idea of *duty*, which elevates justice at the expense of *both* individual inclinations *and* solidarity, and thereby severs the logical connection between these two aspects of morality. Habermas's goal is thus a reconciliation of justice and the common

good, and he asserts that, "The ethics of discourse picks up this basic Hegelian aspiration to redeem it with Kantian means".[17]

Habermas admits, however, that "every morality revolves around equality of respect, solidarity and the common good".[18] Further, all possess a "common core" – the reciprocal assumptions which actors make when they "seek understanding in everyday situations".[19] However, in Habermas's view, "their range in everyday practice is limited", since these assumptions cannot usually extend beyond the boundaries of a specific lifeworld – in other words, the family, the friendship group, the neighborhood, or the state.[20]

How, then, are the discursive practices offered by Habermas any more promising than those which grounded moralities in the past? Habermas insists that "discourse or argumentation is a more exacting type of communication, going beyond any particular form of life".[21] Furthermore, Habermas contends that "Only the truth of propositions and the rightness of moral norms and the comprehensibility or well-formedness of symbolic expressions are, by their very meaning, universal validity claims that can be tested in discourse".[22]

Fundamental to this rigorous and "exacting" communication are two related notions: Each member's right to answer "yes" or "no" to problematic validity claims, and the equally necessary requirement that each member overcome his own egocentric viewpoint.[23] These intertwined demands – for both autonomy and empathetic sensitivity – assume that the self-actualization of each is a prerequisite for the self-actualization of all.

In formulating his discourse ethics, Habermas thus begins by critically examining Kantian moral philosophy, in particular the categorical imperative. As has been indicated in chapter four, Habermas argues that this imperative, embedded in stage six of Kohlberg's model of moral-cognitive development, elevates the autonomous will of the acting subject to such an extent that it does not allow for discursive argumentation. Furthermore, because the individual is seen as the only "free point", structural change is impossible.

Habermas wishes to correct these shortcomings by creating a discourse which "replaces the Kantian categorical imperative by a procedure of moral argumentation".[24]

What is the basic principle of such a discourse ethics? Habermas asserts that "Only those norms may claim to be valid that could meet with the consent of all affected in their role as participants in a practical discourse".[25]

Habermas admits that this retains the categorical imperative "after a fashion" but "scales it down" to a principle of universalization expressed as follows: "For a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects of its general observance for the satisfaction of each person's particular interests must be acceptable to all".[26] Habermas's principle of universalization (U) thus replaces the monological self-testing of the Kantian subject (who evaluates moral norms through a kind of conversation with himself) with a new standard based on mutual acceptability.

At the same time, Habermas recognizes that the goal of universalizability is difficult to approximate in reality. It must be subject to justifications – in other words, not only must a moral principle be *acceptable* to all, but it must also be shown that it does not serve the values and agenda of a particular group or culture. As Habermas admits, "The

ethnocentric fallacy looms large. I must prove that my moral principle is not just a reflection of the prejudices of adult, white, well-educated western males of today".[27]

Habermas thus hopes to construct a viewpoint from which moral questions can be judged *impartially*, in a manner which, as has been noted, respects the rights of both individuals and collectivities. He formulates a set of specific procedures from which the principle of universalization can be derived, retaining the basis of Kant's moral theory, while simultaneously moving it away from intuitionism and towards constructivism.

These principles (or procedures) may be described as "presuppositions of argumentation" – conditions which subjects accept whenever they enter into serious discourse. They are transcendental, according to Habermas, in the sense of being inescapable. Chief among them is the Kantian assumption of cognitivism – that is to say, the belief that our actions are *rational*, and that they can and should be defended with reasons.[28]

Almost all of us are cognitivists (at least most of the time) in the sense that we all seek understanding (intersubjective recognition) and believe that the grounds for our actions could be generally recognized as reasonable.[29] If we did not truly believe that, there would be no motive to enter into argumentation. Habermas cites the following example of how even the most peculiar and idiosyncratic assertions are, and must be, open to justification:

> To want simply a saucer of mud is irrational, because some further reason is needed for wanting it. To want a saucer of mud because one wants to enjoy its rich river-smell is rational. No further reason is needed for wanting to enjoy the rich river-smell, for to characterize what is wanted as "to enjoy the rich river-smell" is itself to give an acceptable reason for wanting it, and therefore this want is rational.[30]

The skeptic who attempts to exempt to himself from this transcendent rule will find himself embroiled in a self-contradiction, since skeptical premises undermine *everyone's* argument, including his own. Even if he steadfastly rejects the cognitivist assertion that norms can be redeemed through discourse, and refuses to follow the rules of argumentation at all, he is by definition demonstrating the claims which these rules make upon him. In this sense, he is much like an effective and cunning criminal – one who must possess an intimate knowledge of the law in order to finagle his way around it. Habermas thus insists:

> …the skeptic may reject morality, but he cannot reject the ethical substance (*Sittlichkeit*) of the life circumstances in which he spends his waking hours, not unless he is willing to take refuge in suicide or serious mental illness. In other words, he cannot extricate himself from the communicative practice of everyday life in which he is continually forced to take a position by responding yes or no… That is why the radical skeptic's refusal to argue is an empty gesture.[31]

Habermas convincingly asserts, then, that unless we are insane or dead, we are capable of engaging in discourse, and moreover, we must do so, whether we like it or not. How do we reach an understanding which takes account of both our own needs and those of others? Habermas offers three basic *formal conditions* (procedures empty of specific content) which must be met:

> 1. Every speaker with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
>
> 2. a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
> b) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.
> c) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.
>
> 3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in 1 and 2.[32]

As has already been indicated, Habermas posits no restrictions on participating in discourse (rule 1) except that one must be a mentally competent person capable of speech and action. Rule 2 states that no information can be excluded from discourse, because it is only through the discursive process that we ultimately determine what is relevant and meaningful. The same can be said of interests (rule 2b) because the process itself will uncover whose interests are valid and generalizable – *not* as a result of subtle or explicit coercion (excluded from discourse by rule 3) but rather solely through the force of the better argument.

These "presuppositions of argumentation" thus constitute what Habermas calls an "ideal-speech situation" – and "ideal" is used here in double sense. It refers not only to that which is most desirable, but also to that which functions as a model or "ideal-type" against which actual discourses can be evaluated.

Implicit in the second use of the term is the realization that no actual discourse can truly approximate an ideal-speech situation. As Habermas points out, "Discourses are islands in the sea of practice, that is, improbable forms of communication; the everyday appeal to validity claims implicitly points, however, to their possibility."[33]

As far as can realistically be expected then, participants must be treated with sensitivity and respect. We must assume that everyone has value, and is capable of contributing to dialogue. Habermas's proceduralism thus embodies the Kantian ideal that we must at all times treat each other as ends rather than means. We must therefore refrain from cynically exploiting our dialogue partners in ways that further our interests. Communicative rather than strategic action is the goal of discourse. This goal demands impartiality in the sense of truly understanding participants and the claims they are

making (the Meadian "taking the role of the other") even if we feel compelled to reject them.

It should be emphasized, however, that although strong moral assumptions are embedded in discursive argumentation, Habermas's proceduralism is still formal in the sense that it tells us nothing about what will be discussed, by whom, for how long, or what (if any) conclusions will be reached. Habermas expresses its formalistic nature, which at the same time contains the possibility of consensus, in this way:

> I shall speak of "discourse" only when the meaning of the problematic validity claim conceptually forces participants to suppose that a rationally motivated agreement could in principle be achieved, whereby the phrase "in principle" expresses the idealizing proviso: if only the argumentation could be conducted openly enough and continued long enough.[34]

C) THREE TYPES OF DISCOURSE: MORAL, ETHICAL AND PRAGMATIC: HABERMAS'S MODEL OF PROCEDURAL DEMOCRACY AND DELIBERATIVE POLITICS

As has been noted in the previous section, Habermas initially wished to restrict discourse to deliberation concerning "the truth of propositions and the rightness of moral norms".[35] More recently, however, particularly in his latest work *Between Facts and Norms*, as well as in earlier essays contained in *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, Habermas has felt compelled to distinguish among three types of discourse: the moral, the ethical and the pragmatic.

Why has Habermas reconstructed his conception of discourse in this way, and what is the significance of this change for his model of procedural (deliberative) democracy?

Habermas's concern is with a process which enables citizens to engage in fruitful decision-making leading to societal change. As he sees it, procedural democracy is vital

to this endeavour. Public and private freedoms are safeguarded within a framework which allows for debate and recognizes the interests and contributions of all concerned.

How does this vision differ from other approaches to government, in particular those exemplified by the liberal and communitarian (republican) models? As usual, in keeping with his reconstructive approach to theory-building, Habermas retains the best features of each model, while at the same time attempting to overcome what he sees as their deficiencies.

Habermas first briefly examines the received views of democracy – liberalism and republicanism. Liberalism is a political model which sees human beings as motivated primarily by self-interest. Politics is successful to the extent that it can encourage private interests and preferences to cohere in a meaningful direction. Compromise and fairness of results is essential, and as Habermas says, is (supposedly) ensured "through universal and equal suffrage, the representative composition of parliamentary bodies… and so on. Such rules are ultimately justified in terms of liberal basic rights".[36]

According to this nominalist approach, which takes the individual as its unit of analysis, freedom is sacred and must be protected by the legal system. Nevertheless, as Habermas points out, liberalism views the state as primarily an economic entity, and thus has "comparatively weak normative connotations".[37]

Republicanism, in contrast, is shot through with normative assumptions of a much weightier sort. It focuses on the duties of all to participate in the deliberative process and reach agreement about the *common* good.[38] It thus assumes a capacity and willingness on the part of all members to forego self-interest and practice public virtue. According to communitarians, then, the state is an "ethical community".[39] Following this view, the law

is seen as an expression of shared values, rather than as a tool for the protection of individual rights and freedoms.

Discourse theory, as will be shown, retains elements of both received versions of democracy. However, as Habermas explains, it "invests the democratic process with normative connotations stronger than those found in the liberal model, but weaker than those found in the republican model".[40]

Habermas thus repudiates the liberal view that politics is little more than a contest of interests. At the same time, he recognizes that in a pluralistic society, it is difficult to arrive at a shared conception of the "good, well-spent life" (and national purpose) so cherished by communitarians.

The point for Habermas, then, is not necessarily to reach agreement – he knows we will argue, negotiate and bargain – but rather to find ways to argue which are free of irrationality and coercion. Control of information by elites is obviously harmful to this endeavour. It would be utopian (and unnecessary) to expect everyone to know about everything, but at least in situations where one is affected by the outcome, or has other reasons to be concerned about it, one's opinions should be formed rationally. It follows, then, that we cannot have good reasons for believing something if we lack adequate and correct information. Thus, "democratic procedure" … assumes that "reasonable or fair results are obtained insofar as the flow of relevant information and its proper handling have not been obstructed".[41]

For Habermas, then, a true democracy does not emanate from the enshrinement of "basic rights" or the creation of a shared ethos, but rather from what he calls "action oriented to reaching understanding". In the final analysis, the normative content arises

from the "structure of linguistic communication and the communicative mode of sociation".[42]

This emphasis on the communicative mode further distinguishes Habermas's model of procedural democracy from earlier versions. Habermas offers a "two-track theory"[43] of deliberative politics in the sense that he views will-formation as occurring along two dimensions: One is the more formal sphere of "strong publics" – the organized institutions of the political system; the other is the sphere of so-called "weak publics" – a disorganized, fluid, ephemeral semi-structure which resists easy classification. Habermas points out, however, that these "currents of public communication are channeled by the mass media and flow through different publics that develop informally inside associations".[44] Social movements, such as those which focus on the rights of women and minorities, preserving the environment, and safeguarding the welfare of animals, would fall into this category. Because of their informal nature, "weak publics" are, in Habermas's words, "wild" and "anarchic" and therefore vulnerable to distortion and manipulation. Ideally, however they should offer the advantage of unrestricted communication, encouraged by formal institutions which support equal rights of citizenship.[45]

Thus, a "strong public" which truly deserves the name is not threatened by informal vehicles of will-formation – rather, it seeks to encourage them, thriving on the generative and transformative interplay between the two. As Habermas expresses it, "the communicative mastery of these conflicts constitutes the sole source of solidarity among strangers – strangers who renounce violence and in the cooperative regulation of their common life also concede one another the right to *remain* strangers".[46]

As previously mentioned, Habermas's recent work distinguishes between three types of discourse: moral, ethical and pragmatic. He asserts that, "The need for regulation is not found exclusively in problem situations that call for a moral use of practical reason... hence discourses of justification and application also have to be open to a *pragmatic* and an *ethical-practical use of practical reason*".[47]

Thus, in Habermas's view, greater specificity is needed, particularly if we are to clarify the crucial distinction between morality and ethics, and their relationship to the direction of political discourse. In *Justification and Application*, Habermas took a first step in this endeavour by elaborating the difference between not only pragmatic, ethical and moral questions (discourses) but on corresponding tasks of practical reason as it addresses what is meant by the purposive, the good, and the just.

Pragmatic (purposive) discourses are designed to solve practical problems and meet specific goals. In such situations, the question "How should I proceed" refers not to a transcendental "ought", but rather to a rational, strategic "ought", which takes as its point of departure the preferences of the individual.[48] The wants of other actors are largely irrelevant, except insofar as they help or hinder one's particular agenda. Implicit in strategic action, then, is an adversarial relationship between actors, rather than a cooperative one.

We have already seen that moral discourse deals with the imperatives of the transcendental, generalizable "ought", which would be accepted by all rational beings. Ethical questions, on the other hand, are related to a particular context, and a vision of the "good" life, which it is assumed, is open to rational deliberation. Ethical discourses, then, may offer insight into questions of individual identity. More specifically, one might ask

"How can I construct a way of life (as embodied, for example, in my choice of a career and my relationships with family and friends) that reflects who I am and the way I would like to be perceived and acknowledged by others?" The answers which would emerge to such questions through discourse cannot assume a transcendent status, because they are inevitably a function of the life-history of the individual involved, and the values cherished by the society in which he lives. Ethical questions and the answers arrived at through the deliberative process are therefore context-specific.[49]

Ethical discourse is also relevant to questions of group or collective identity and the good life. In ethical-*political* discourses, therefore, (as opposed to ethical *individual* ones) the focus is in the *citizens* of a particular region and on the perpetuation of their national identity. What practices and traditions are most important to them – which express what they feel themselves to be as a people, and which should be jettisoned? How do these decisions affect their interactions with members and governments of other nations, who presumably are also motivated by the need for collective self-affirmation?[50]

The creation of the category of ethical discourses thus signals Habermas's new position, based on the realization that such discourses are vital to politics, and the shaping and direction of the state. In other words, the ability to engage in ethical-political discourses, and what Habermas now sees as the unavoidable ethical patterning of the state, is a vital aspect of democracy.

Habermas explains the need for what he calls a "shared political culture" or "fixed point of reference" by emphasizing that:

> The cognitive grasp of rights and principles must be linked to the citizen's motives and sentiments; for without such a motivational base, they cannot become the driving force for the project – understood here in a dynamic sense – of establishing an association of free and equal subjects.[51]

In acknowledging the ethical patterning of the state, Habermas recognizes that so-called democratic processes are not in fact neutral, but rather betray an ethical bias which compromises the assumption of universalizability. For this reason, Habermas explains, "every legal system is *also* the expression of a particular lifeform, and not merely a reflection of the universalist features of basic rights".[52]

Constitutional principles thus express a nation's history, and citizens, even those who try to break away from them, are embedded in a network of cultural traditions. The political-social context in which discourse takes place thus cannot be ethically neutral, although minimally, the state must refrain from imposing a particular conception of "the good" on its citizens. Nevertheless, as Habermas admits, the constitutional guarantees enjoyed by Christian churches in Germany "in spite of religious freedom" and the privileged legal status accorded the family are evidence that the ethical patterning of the state conceals a bias which inevitably favours one "desired life form" over another.[53]

Habermas's attitude towards ethical patterning thus betrays a certain ambivalence. He knows it is going to happen, because every legal system is an expression of a particular way of life, and not just a vehicle for the protection of certain basic rights which apply equally to all. At the same time, it seems he is not altogether comfortable with the exercise of power which this implies.

If, as Habermas contends, a neutral state should accord the concerns of all citizens equal respect, then how do we reconcile this with an ethically patterned state which

cannot help but privilege certain ways of life? Habermas offers a tentative and partial solution to this paradox – the discussion of ethical questions must be *incorporated* into political discourse (not relegated to "private life") on both the formal, legislative level and the informal sphere of will-formation. Only in this way, Habermas asserts, will political change become possible in an atmosphere free of coercion. Thus, the state cannot tell its citizens what ethical choices to make (for to do so would indicate a lack of respect for individual dignity) but we must sound them out. If, as Habermas says, "neutrality were in addition to require that ethical questions be bracketed out of political discourse in general, then such discourse would forfeit its power to rationally change pre-political attitudes, need interpretations, and value orientations".[54]

In other words, Habermas sees ethical-political discourses as the medium through which the unavoidable but not altogether desirable ethical patterning of the state may be continually confronted and challenged. Furthermore, Habermas assumes that agreement on ethical questions could be achieved if discourse were carried on long enough. His expansion of discourse to include not only moral questions, but also ethical and practical ones, opens up intriguing possibilities for discursive democracy which were not addressed in his earlier works. Nevertheless, it seems that even the reconstruction offered in *Justification and Application* and *Between Facts and Norms* glosses over certain problematic issues. I will discuss several of these in the following section.

D) Critique of Habermas's Model of Procedural Democracy

It is evident that Habermas's reconstructive approach to political discourse, which has been explored more fully in his recent works, contains valuable insights on the nature of discursive democracy. Yet key issues remain unresolved. These include what continues to be an overly rigid distinction between moral, ethical and pragmatic concerns, and a resulting inability to specify the direction of social change because of the interlocking nature and complexity of these issues. In addition, there is a persistent tendency in Habermas's work to underplay the exercise of power, and the existence of struggle and conflict, which characterizes life in a pluralistic industrial society.

We have already seen that for Habermas, moral questions are resolved through moral discourses (arguments) ethical ones through ethical arguments, and practical-pragmatic ones through practical arguments. But can such a sharp distinction be maintained empirically? This is doubtful, since the line of demarcation between such questions often tends to blur. Habermas himself admits that the question "What should be done?" takes on a pragmatic, an ethical or a moral meaning depending on how the problem is conceived.[55]

On an individual level, for example, career choices or other life-altering personal decisions often force us to confront not only the question "Is it right?" but also, "Will it work?" The two may be analytically separable, but are in fact empirically intertwined, since practical considerations often prevent us from carrying out an action which we know to be right, both in a transcendent and a personal sense. For example, an individual may experience a strong calling to abandon a comfortable suburban life, and instead devote himself to helping the poor in Calcutta. Such a course of action would be

justifiable, even exemplary in a moral and ethical sense – through reference to transcendent norms which exhort all human beings to help others, as well as the individual's belief that such behaviour is the only way he can fulfill his personal life-plan.

On the other hand, even if his desire to help remains implacable, countervailing forces, often of a practical nature, may intervene. How would such a profound life-change be accomplished in logistical terms? Would the individual experience resistance on the part of the host country, and how would this be overcome? Furthermore, is it even ethically defensible to embark on an ostensibly "noble" course of action, if that means abandoning one's responsibilities to friends, relatives and colleagues who will also be affected? Even those who have the best will in the world might falter under such circumstances.

Similarly, in the political realm, questions of morality, ethics and practicality converge. Let us assume that all affected parties agree to work towards the goal of eradicating pollution, which seems, from both a moral and an ethical perspective, to be an exemplary idea. The question then becomes, "Is it *truly* ethically justifiable from the viewpoints of all concerned?" If that could be shown to be the case, then practical issues once again emerge – "Will it work?" Those who argue against radical action to preserve the environment often point out that this goal cannot be achieved without undermining the economy and causing unemployment, which once again presents an ethical dilemma. Those whose livelihoods are being jeopardized may claim that their concerns are marginalized and rendered irrelevant in pursuit of a goal which may not be workable, or perhaps could be accomplished through other means. Thus, a double-edged problem

emerges here. Goals which we falsely assume reflect the interests and needs of *all* citizens may in fact conflict with the equally valid needs of others, and in addition may be unfeasible in practical terms.

Habermas has himself recognized the difficulties involved in sharply delineating moral, ethical and practical questions. He now admits that they should not be seen as three *distinct strands* of political discourse and will formation, but rather as intertwined concerns. Thus in his "Postscript to *Faktizität und Geltung*" Habermas amends his position by explaining that:

> Political questions are normally so complex that they require the simultaneous treatment of pragmatic, ethical and moral aspects. To be sure, these *aspects* are only *analytically* distinct. Thus my attempt in *Faktizität und Geltung*, Chapter 4, section II. 3, pp. 203 ff., to exemplify different types of discourses by ordering concrete question in a linear fashion is misleading.[56]

Habermas's acknowledgement that the demarcation of three distinct strands flowing into political will formation is unworkable is recognition of the subtlety of the problem. Nevertheless, he has not yet reformulated his account to accommodate this insight. Part of the difficulty seems to be the implications of this admission for Habermas's stand on directionality. Habermas has always asserted that the virtue of his evolutionary approach lies in its ability to outline the direction of historical change (a presumed advantage which Weber's anti-evolutionary stance lacks). This is not to say, of course, that Habermas offers a specific blueprint for the future, but rather that in his view, a growing ability and willingness to act according to certain procedures will result in discourse which takes account of the concerns of all.

Yet, if as Habermas now realizes, ethical conflicts cannot be approached solely through ethical argumentation, but must also be seen to carry moral and practical

connotations, can all of these factors be addressed through political discourse? Habermas has said that ethical concerns must not be "bracketed out" of public life, but instead should be opened up to discursive argumentation, in order to ensure the possibility of critique and change. Even if this goal were carried out, are ethical conflicts reconcilable? Again, what is ethically justifiable from one perspective is indefensible from another. Furthermore, can any direction be predicted given that moral, ethical and practical problems cannot be easily compartmentalized?[57] Discourse could conceivably be carried on indefinitely without reaching *any* conclusions.

There is one sure way to resolve ethical questions, at least in the short term – through coercion. Of course, this is precisely what Habermas's project attempts to avoid, but in reality, it appears that although discourse may take account of everyone's preferences, it does not necessarily mean that they can or will be accommodated, especially in a multicultural society. The state may hear its citizens, but it is under no particular obligation to heed them. As has been indicated, however, Habermas is distinctly uncomfortable with the notion of power differentials – even to the degree which they are manifested in the so-called "ethical patterning of the state". This is understandable, since the more politics is an expression of the will to dominate, the less it can be guided by the norms of authenticity and symmetry.

Once again Habermas's theoretical project collides with practical reality. Not only does the state often dominate its citizens (sometimes because it must do so in order to resolve problems) but struggle and conflict are an inherent part of the relations between citizens as well. This too is a natural result of life in a pluralistic society. The state in

modernity is often characterized by struggles among disparate groups, all of whom feel that their competing validity claims are worthy of recognition.

Habermas himself concedes that the need to maintain a distinct identity under such circumstances sets up boundaries between groups which may impede communication.[58] However, as previously indicated, he feels that as long as the state avoids blatantly imposing its idea of the good on members, each may cherish and maintain its distinctiveness while sharing a common horizon of values. Habermas cites Canada (and Quebec) as a case in point, "where reasonable efforts are being made to find a federalist solution which would leave the state as a whole intact, but seek to safeguard the cultural autonomy of several parts by decentralizing state powers".[59]

Habermas thus appears confident that the will to coerce – the need to oppress others in order to assert one's identity – can be overcome if we are willing to engage in continual process of enlightenment leading to the "moral point of view". This trait in fact is central to his vision of modernity, and any prospects for normative reconstruction of democracy. Habermas's optimism is revealed in his steadfast assertion that "In modernity, rigid life forms succumb to entropy". He thus posits a growing rejection of fundamentalism, which is inherently intolerant and repressive. For Habermas, such rigid doctrines:

> ...can be understood as an ironic attempt to lend one's own life ultra-stability by restorative means. The irony lies in traditionalism's misunderstanding of itself for it originates only in the vortex of social modernization and imitates a substance that has already disintegrated.[60]

The inevitable failure of fundamentalism lies not only in its reliance on dead forms, but in its dogmatism. Such world-views lack the capacity for reflection and critique so vital to the decentered self and by extension the just society. Habermas admits

that regressive belief systems continue to bedevil not only the Islamic nations (as one example) "but even the relatively stable Western democracies".[61] Happily, however, "most of the competing 'gods and demons' of the modern world are not fundamentalist in this manner. Their internalized mode of faith is distinguished by a reflexive attitude".[62]

Habermas's program for the redemption of democracy thus presupposes a society (indeed, perhaps a world) made up of decentered "seventh stage" individuals who are able and willing to reach conclusions about generalizable interests. According to Habermas, this is the point of discourse- to "filter out" those interests which are generalizable, and therefore capable of normative justification, from those which are not. The necessity of this principle, which may be identified as "G" is self-evident. Anyone who attempts to engage in discourse without following this rule is embroiled in a performative self-contradiction. Thus the statement "X is important because I say it is" invalidates itself.

A strong interpretation of "G" would require that we whole-heartedly adopt the interests of others and mentally inhabit their life-world. A weaker interpretation would merely require that we disengage ourselves from our own perspective(s) in order to accept and examine other validity claims. Habermas asserts that discourse by definition accommodates a plurality of viewpoints, and as part of the process, allows all concerned to discover whose interests are normatively justifiable (generalizable). Yet he has admitted that zealots and fundamentalists continue to exist in modernity. These are the very individuals who would unfailingly assert "X is important because *I* say it is". True, they do not seem like very promising candidates for an ideal-speech situation, but then what are we to do with them? They are exactly the sort of people who, if excluded from

discourse, could cause a great deal of harm – and as Habermas sees it, they have excluded themselves.

Furthermore, Habermas reminds us that not only does discourse require the participation of an enlightened and responsible population, but he also hints that the necessary conditions must be concretized in legal and political institutions. Discourse is thus not an abstract notion, but a real act to be carried out by real human beings in a specific time and place. In that sense, as Habermas expresses it, "Deliberative politics is internally connected with contexts of a rationalized lifeworld that meets it halfway".[63]

At the same time, Habermas remains vague about just how the requisite conditions for discourse can be met, or what it would look like in practice. He has offered *procedures* for argumentation, but even in *Between Facts and Norms* there is little clue as to how these procedures, meant to safeguard both private and public autonomy, would be carried over into the legal sphere. He has spoken of the influence of informal processes of will formation ("weak publics") which may challenge established structures. But public opinion, as Habermas concedes, is a "wild" complex,… "vulnerable to the oppressive and exclusionary effects of unequally distributed social power, structural violence, and systematically distorted communication." Habermas concludes that these weak publics "form and regenerate spontaneously, and in any case they are not readily accessible to direct interventions of the political apparatus".[64]

The twin problems of directionality and the sometimes covert exercise of power emerge once again. In *Between Facts and Norms* Habermas has offered a unique model of democracy, tied to his intersubjective view of communicative action. This approach (if implemented) would effectively overcome the self-interested, individualistic bias of

liberalism, and the often repressive collective orientation of republicanism. Nevertheless, it remains highly abstract.

This is not to say that a political theory must tell us what to do at every moment, but it seems doubtful that our present political-legal system can accommodate the demands of discourse – especially given what Habermas himself has said about the unavoidable "ethical patterning of the state", as well as the vulnerability of the informal sphere of will formation.

Until Habermas can be more specific about just what kind of a "rationalized lifeworld" is needed in order to meet deliberative politics halfway, we must continue to ask: To whom is his critical theory addressed in practical terms? How can the conditions necessary for discourse be concretized? Furthermore, how can we truly ensure that the weak and excluded will be given a voice, and not just the most effective rhetoricians? Until these questions can be answered, it seems impossible to establish any direction for social evolution, except one which continues to rely on the exercise of power by elites. Finally, is there any Archimedean point from which competing validity claims can be justified? Even "the force of the better argument" seems to contain its own perpectivism. The "ethical irrationality of the world" which haunted Weber appears to be with us still.

1 Jürgen Habermas, *Communications and the Evolution of Society*. Translated and with an introduction by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979, p. 102.

2 Ibid.

3 Habermas, "History and Evolution" in *Telos* Vol. 39, Spring, 1979, p. 44.

4 Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 121.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 123.

7 Ibid., p. 125.

8 In this discussion, I have been guided by Piet Styrdom's excellent analyses of the "ontogenetic fallacy" embedded in Habermas's work. See his article, "Collective Learning: Habermas's Concessions and Their Theoretical Implications" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 13, 1982, pp. 265-281. Styrdom offers further critiques of Habermas's collective learning perspective by various authors in a later article, "The Ontogenetic Fallacy: The Immanent Critique of Habermas's Developmental Logical Theory of Evolution" in *Theory, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 9, 1992, pp. 65-93.

9 Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 121.

10 Habermas, "A Reply", in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jurgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action*, edited by Axel Honneth and Hans Joas. Translated by Jeremy Gaines and Doris Jones. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991, p. 262.

11 Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Introduction by Thomas McCarthy. Translated by Christian Lenhardt and Sherry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990, p. 200.

12 Ibid., p. 199.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 200.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 201.

18 Ibid.

19 Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 201.

20 Ibid., p. 202.

21 Ibid.

22 Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* Vol. I Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, p. 42.

[23] Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 202.

[24] Ibid., p. 197.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, pp. 9-10.

[29] Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993, p. 20.

[30] Richard Norman, cited in Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* Vol. I, p. 16. Habermas explores the need for a shared "lifeworld" and the related question of how assertions are justified and made comprehensible to others at greater length in *Theory of Communicative Action* Vol. II. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. See especially Chapter VI, "Intermediate Reflections: System and Lifeworld", pp. 113-152.

[31] Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 100.

[32] Ibid., p. 89.

[33] Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics" in *Habermas: Critical Debates*. Edited by John B. Thompson and David Held. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982, p. 235.

[34] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 42.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Politics*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 296.

[37] Ibid., p. 297.

[38] Ibid., p. 296.

[39] Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 296.

[40] Ibid., p. 298.

[41] Ibid., p. 296.

[42] Ibid., p. 297.

[43] Habermas credits Nancy Fraser with this distinction between "strong" and "weak" publics, which she utilizes in her discussion of Habermas's "two-track" conception of the public sphere. (See Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, Endnote no. 26, p. 550). For further analysis of these important concepts, see Nancy Fraser's article, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Edited by Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, pp. 109-142. The reader may also wish to consult Kenneth Baynes's excellent article, "Democracy and the *Rechsstaat*" in *The Cambridge*

Companion to Habermas. Edited by Stephen K. White. Cambridge University Press, 1995. See especially pp. 216-217, and p. 230 (endnote no. 39).

44 Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 307.

45 Ibid., p. 308.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. Emphasis (in italics) is included in the original text.

48 Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 5.

49 Ibid., p. 6. *Both* moral and ethical discourses move away from the self-referential viewpoint of practical, instrumental action. The individual who asks, "What *should* I do?" rather than "What do I *want*?" is by definition involving others in his self-assessment.

50 Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 160. Habermas also discusses the need for collective self-affirmation in his article, "Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States" in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. I, No. 2, August, 1993. (See endnote below).

51 Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States", p. 144.

52 Ibid., p. 138.

53 Ibid.

54 Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 309.

55 Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 98.

56 Habermas, "Postscript to *Faktizität and Geltung*" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* Vol. 20, No. 4. Special Issue on Habermas and Law. Endnote no. 3, p. 149. Habermas's reference is to the original German edition. Habermas has also included this article in the 1996 English translation of *Faktizität und Geltung* (*Between Facts and Norms*) simply entitled "Postscript 1994", pp. 447-462.

57 Maeve Cooke has written several thoughtful and provocative articles which deal with the related problems of consensus and the irreconcilability of ethical conflicts. Among these are "Habermas and Consensus" in *European Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 1, No. 3, 1993, pp. 247-267. See also "Authenticity and Autonomy: Taylor, Habermas, and the Politics of Recognition" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 1997, pp. 258-288. Cooke explores this question further in "Are Ethical Conflicts Irreconcilable?" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 23, No. 2, March 1997, and "Realizing the Post-Conventional Self" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1-2, 1994, pp. 87-101.

58 Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States", pp. 128-155.

59 Ibid., p. 140.

60 Ibid., p. 143.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., p. 144.

[63] Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 302.

[64] Ibid., pp. 306-307.

Chapter VI: A Weber – Habermas Dialogue

A) Two Views of Rationality

Jürgen Habermas traces the failure of critical theory (whose exponents include Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as their intellectual mentor, Max Weber) to a reliance on what he terms the "exhausted" paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness.[1] Habermas attempts to redeem critical theory, and by extension, to salvage modernity itself, through a reformulation based on what Albrecht Wellmer has termed the "linguistic turn" in communicative action.[2]

Why has Weber's theory of action failed, in Habermas's view, and how can the "linguistic turn" which Habermas proposes redeem it? Habermas claims that Weber's program suffers from certain "bottlenecks" which "prevent him from examining the rationalization of action systems under aspects other than that of purposive rationality".[3] Habermas thus wishes to unplug these "bottlenecks" resulting from what he sees as Weber's overly narrow conception of rationality – a kind of self-preservation run amok.

This claim forms the crux of Habermas's criticism of Weber's action theory – "it is limited to the atomistic model of action by an isolated actor and does not consider the mechanisms of coordinating action through which interpersonal relations come about".[4] What Habermas has in mind, then, is a paradigm shift away from the over-emphasis on purposive-rational, goal-oriented action, which he claims is the hallmark of Weber's program, and towards a new communicative rationality which has the potential to restructure society along normative lines.

Action theory is thus fundamental to Habermas's project and the same can be said of Weber's as well. But as we have seen, Habermas criticizes Weber for allegedly restricting his conception of action to the instrumental form predominant in modernity. He instead wishes to "open up" its meaning to include a non-coercive understanding of "the other" which can be achieved through dialogue. This is not to say that Habermas believes we can ignore the technical realm – rather, in choosing Weber's work as his point of departure, he signals his intention to supplement cognitive – instrumental aspects of reason with a transcendent, other-directed rationality.

We must live in the world and accommodate ourselves to it in a practical sense, to be sure, but Habermas's complaint against Weber rests on the assumption that for him the world (and everyone in it) are simply objects to the mastered. This "Weberian thorn still in critical theory"[5] must be expunged and replaced with a new understanding of rationality and the rationalization process. Thus, rather than focusing on domination and mastery, Habermas's investigation is concerned with how acting subjects come to an understanding:

> In contrast to *representation* or *cognition*, *coming to an understanding* requires the rider *uncoerced*, because the expression is meant to be used here as a normative concept. From the perspective of the participants, coming to an understanding is not an empirical event that causes de facto agreement; it is a process of mutually convincing one another in which the actions of participants are coordinated on the basis of motivation by reasons.[6]

Thus Habermas seeks to restore sociation and intersubjective understanding to the rationalization process. He identifies rationalization with the overcoming of systematically distorted communication, *not* with the pathological and one-sided caricature of the process which results from the unwarranted intrusion of the "system"

into the "lifeworld". As has been indicated in chapter four, Habermas is aware that system demands for efficiency and profitability tend to overwhelm the sphere of the lifeworld – an ephemeral realm responsible for the transmission of values and the formation of the self.[7] Yet he emphasizes that system dominance is neither inevitable nor irreversible. It is only one among many possible outcomes. It may be equally likely that a society which is rationalized in the true sense of the word (as Habermas sees it) will place individual needs before systemic ones.

Habermas's basic argument against Weber thus revolves around the idea that for conceptual reasons, he is unable to grasp the selectivity of the rationalization process. It need not be antithetical to freedom – rather, as Habermas points out, one may uncover elements of communicative rationality embedded, for example, in democratic forms of political organization, or in radical social movements, which may give birth to "new institutional forms". According to Habermas, Weber was unable to reconcile these strivings toward freedom with his conception of formal and bureaucratic rationality, and thus relegated them to the sphere of the "irrational" – either dead residues of traditional life, or futile attempts to claw away at the constraints of modernity. Habermas asserts that Weber failed to see these impulses for what they are – processes of collective will formation, which reveal the ambiguity of modernity and the possibilities for emancipation which it offers.[8]

In Habermas's view, then, Weber could not fit these emancipatory elements into his overly rigid framework, and thus was forced to discard them. How would Weber reply to Habermas's charges? In the interests of fairness, Weber would likely be forced to admit that from his perspective (discussed in chapters two and three) rationality and the

rationalization process do imply a loss of meaning and freedom in modernity – at least to some extent. We have already seen that Habermas defines what he would call a "true" rationality in quite a different manner. Each theorist takes a perspectival approach towards uncovering the meaning and implications of these pivotal concepts and their role in the fate of modernity. Because so much of the "dialogue" between Weber and Habermas hinges on the differing ways in which each thinker uses these terms, at this point it would be useful to briefly recapitulate Weber's position. As he sees it, the rationalization process can be summarized as follows:

1) In religion, it refers to the elimination of magical practices, and the organization of religious doctrine into a coherent unity which bestows a "meaning" or "ultimate value" on this life and on the hereafter. The rationalization of religion in turn leads to the creation of autonomous "value-spheres" (e.g. – science, the economy, the political realm, etc.) all of which are subject to their own imperatives.[9]

2) In the intellectual sphere, there is an emphasis on the development of *natural science*. Research is now carried out within an institutional framework – there is less opportunity for projects to be undertaken by independent innovators.[10]

3) Knowledge obtained through such research is then disseminated in an orderly way – through reputable journals and other printed texts, which allow it to be *used* in the most technically efficient manner.[11]

4) In the "aesthetic sphere", Weber speaks of the development of perspective in art and the vaulted arch in architecture.[12]

5) In the political realm, the rise of the bureaucratic mode of domination (*Herrschaft*) characterized by an adherence to formal, written rules of conduct, and especially, allegiance to the office-holder as a trained official, rather than as an individual who inspires personal devotion. In this sense, both politics and the economy operate along bureaucratic lines.[13]

6) In the economic sphere, the demands of a growing population necessitate the organization of formally free labour and the use of rational accounting practices, which allow for the maximization of profit.[14]

7) In the legal sphere, Weber stresses the positive and formalistic aspect of modern legal rationality, which has been severed from traditional morality.[15]

The fact that Weber considers these developments, which enhance efficiency and predictability, as necessary and to some extent inevitable, does not mean that he approves of them. Modernity is often characterized by the dominance of instrumentality over humanity, with the attendant costs which this implies. Nevertheless, Weber's most passionate and strongly-worded statements reveal an element of equivocation and even of wistful hope. Weber's famous "iron cage" metaphor may itself contain a hidden key to his true attitude, and therefore his reflections on this subject are worth quoting at length:

> The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt.
>
> In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment'. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage...
>
> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of these 'last men' it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit; sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved'.[16]

Weber's language in the passages above is strong, to be sure, but he is wise enough to shy away from an unqualified indictment of modernity. Instrumental rationality will dominate because it works, but this does not necessarily mean that all other forms of reason will be crushed. There may be, as Weber reminds us, "a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals". In any case, it seems that Weber's vision of the future, as Wolfgang Schluchter has pointed out, is "open-ended".[17]

It is therefore possible that Habermas has overstated Weber's position on the negative effects of rationalization processes in modernity to some extent. He claims that Weber "does not see the selectivity in the pattern of capitalist rationalization".[18] Weber might with equal justification point out that Habermas does not see the ambiguity and tension which arises as a result of the differentiation of world views – a tension which may itself be generative. In Weber's theory, formal rationality meets resistance as it collides with substantive rationality. Traditional practices and individualistic tendencies

of human beings (however inconvenient these may be) also create forces of resistance. Thus Weber would remind Habermas that the rationalization process need not engulf every aspect of modern life – in fact, the process itself can be seen as a struggle between formal and substantive rationality, which may lead to unintended and unancipated consequences.[19]

B) CHANGE IS NOT NECESSARILY PROGRESS: EVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND VALUE-JUDGMENTS

The recognition that life resists our best efforts at prediction and control is central to Weber's rejection of evolutionary theory. As has been discussed in chapter two, he is especially troubled by theories of development slavishly modeled after the natural sciences. Habermas claims to reject such approaches as well, and for many of the same reasons – anthropological orientations tend to be simplistic, dogmatic, and unable to account for inevitable periods of stagnation and regression. Yet Habermas insists that Weber's repudiation of evolutionary theory cripples his project, not only rendering him unable to specify the direction of social change, but also preventing him from elaborating solutions to the problem of instrumental rationality.

What Habermas has in mind, then, is a new evolutionary approach based on the cognitive-developmental models of such theorists as Piaget and especially Kohlberg, rather than on the naïve anthropological approaches of the past. He asserts that the turn towards communicative rationality (absent from Kohlberg's individualistic formulation) will provide the mechanism for new levels of moral learning, and by extension, for social evolution itself. In Habermas's view, it is only our ability to embrace a true reason which will allow us to rescue modernity from nihilism and despair. We have already seen that

according to Habermas, open discourse, free of coercion, is the hallmark of such reason. It is thus essential that we subject even our most cherished beliefs to discursive argumentation, in order to test their validity.

Weber of course cannot directly refute Habermas's developmental approach to the philosophy of history, but his work offers an apt critique of evolutionary models and the normative assumptions with which they are burdened. According to Weber, it is impossible to defend the assertion that history is systematic or possesses an internal order. As has been indicated, Weber sees the future as "open-ended". Adherence to an evolutionary philosophy of history restricts us to certain courses of action (since a specific endpoint is always implied) and negates other possible outcomes.[20] Furthermore, to see these potential solutions solely in terms of enhancement of adaptive capacities (which is intrinsic to evolutionary theories) "adds absolutely nothing to our empirical understanding, although we may easily delude ourselves that it does".[21]

Weber elaborates on how the use of terms such as "better adapted" or "progressive" may raise more questions than they answer by referring to the example of the alleged "superiority" of Mormon settlements over those of the native Indians in the Salt Lake area of Utah. Weber reminds us that in the biological sense, the Indians who lived around Salt Lake before the Mormon migration were just as "well" or "poorly" adapted as the later Mormon settlers. The Mormons superceded them, however, in terms of technical achievements and material possessions. But what does this prove? In Weber's view, it is of little consequence in measuring "progress" or "adaptability" since any yardstick is by definition perspectival. The observer who favours the way of life adopted by the Mormons (and its accompanying ethical system) will no doubt assert the

superiority of their achievements. However, there are those of us who prefer "the desert and the romantic existence of the Indians". Weber reminds us that "no science of any kind can purport to be able to dissuade these persons from their respective views. Here we are already confronted with the problem of the inarbitrable reconciliation of ends, means, and subsidiary consequences".[22] Thus, for Weber, a more salient question might be: Better adapted to what? What value judgments are obscured by the use of such supposedly "scientific" terms?

Weber is thus keenly aware of a semantic difficulty which appears to have escaped Habermas's notice – "Depending on how one uses the term, either everything or nothing in society is "adapted".[23] He is also troubled by the realization that this emphasis on "adaptability" conceals a hidden agenda – the elimination of conflict from social life. as Weber sees it, such a goal is not only undesirable (since the tension between value-spheres may itself be generative) but it is also impossible to achieve:

> Conflict cannot be excluded from social life. One can change its means, its object, even its fundamental direction and its bearers, but it cannot be eliminated. There can be, instead of an external struggle of antagonistic persons for external objects, an inner struggle of mutually loving persons for subjective values and therewith, instead of external compulsion an inner control (in the form of erotic or charitable devotion). Or it can take the form of a subjective conflict in the individual's own mind. It is always present and its influence is often greatest when it is least noticed...[24]

What we call "peace" (the condition sought by evolutionary theorists) thus signifies nothing more than a change in the form of conflict – that is, what had been obvious (manifest) may become latent - or vice-versa. The covert exercise of power embedded in Habermas's discourse ethics will be discussed further in the following

section. In any case, Weber's cogent objections to the careless use of the often misleading terms "evolution", "progress", and "adaptation" are especially pertinent here.

Habermas's formulation has failed to account for the inconvenient fact that change is not necessarily *better*, but may simply be *different*. He neglects to ask: Better for whom? What *specific* problems will be solved by an increase in moral-cognitive development and communicative competence? Viewed from this perspective, it is likely that, for example, the native Indians of Utah did not suffer from an *inability* to reflect on the norms of their society and subject them to discursive examination and argumentation. One might instead conclude that in their stable community, organized in lock-step with the rhythms of nature, such reflection would not only be unnecessary but possibly harmful as well. *We* may need to develop "higher problem-solving capacities". Others may not, however – and the failure to attain them is not necessarily "regressive".

As previously stated, Habermas does not explain *how* individual learning is translated into structural change. Even if we concede the highly questionable point that it is indeed beneficial to engage in abstract thought which allows for reflection and critique, and to then share these insights with others, where do we go from there? Habermas's evolutionary model assumes that as individuals learn so do societies. An example of this "social learning", as he sees it, can be found in the modern legal system. Habermas thus asserts that "positive law in modern societies must be understood as the embodiment of postconventional structures of consciousness..."[25]

This statement is consistent with Habermas's claim that "normative structures function as the pacemaker of social evolution".[26] But the "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" argument utilized here does not withstand closer scrutiny, particularly if one

examines the Kohlbergian assumptions on which it is based. Kohlberg reminds us that only a minority of the adult population ever reaches the postconventional stage of moral-cognitive development at all (according to his own longitudinal studies). How then can social institutions be postconventional in character if the majority of the population is (at best) at the conventional level?

Habermas attempts to resolve this dilemma by explaining that "social innovations are often initiated by marginal minorities, even if they are later generalized to the whole of society at the institutional level".[27] In other words, he asserts that a small group of elites possesses the ability to reorganize society at the postconventional lines, with innovations then "trickling down" to the rest of the dull normals (so to speak). This appears to compromise the idea of uncoerced discourse in which all can participate and be heard. Furthermore, it is difficult to envision how such an obligarchy could be stabilized.

Habermas has acknowledged his difficulties with Kohlberg's developmental scheme. However, with his usual ingenuity and creativity, he manages to extricate himself from the problems it presents. Thus Kohlberg might be surprised to learn that in Habermas's opinion more adults (and even youngsters) reach the postconventional stage of morality than his research would indicate. Habermas points out that, "...it is a matter of considerable controversy whether Kohlberg's methods of collecting data do not in fact lead to artificial results in the definition of stages. For instance, children master the moral judgments of a given stage long before they have the verbal resources to articulate this knowledge in response to the familiar dilemmas".[28] In other words, we may actually be

postconventional in our reasoning – in spite of the fact that we can't express ourselves very well.

In *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Habermas finesses his way out of similar "ontogenetic fallacies" by explaining (as he does in *Justification and Application*) that we must be cautious in our use of evolutionary parallels, for "not all individuals are equally representative of the developmental stage of their society".[29] Thus, modern law may have a universalistic structure, although many individuals are not capable of "decentering" or judging according to principles". Similarly, in archaic societies, there were probably some individuals who were capable of formal thought, although mythological worldviews (representative of a "lower" developmental stage) were commonly held.[30] These provisos indicate Habermas's need to distance himself from the pitfalls inherent in the use of evolutionary models, in spite of the fact that his theoretical project depends on them.

In response to this, Weber would surely point out that the subordination of law to morality represents a naïve attempt to conflate the "is" and the "ought". He reminds us that:

> Juridicial thought holds when certain legal rules and certain methods of interpretation are recognized as binding. Whether there should be law and whether one should establish just these rules – such questions jurisprudence does not answer. It can only state: If one wishes this result, according to the norms of our legal thought, this legal rule is the appropriate means of obtaining it.[31]

Habermas has in fact moved away from the rigid identification of law with morality characteristic of his earlier works and towards greater (although not complete) agreement with Weber's position. The abovementioned passage expresses Weber's view that formally rational law cannot be dependent on value-orientations which are subjective

and idiosyncratic in nature. Thus a rational legal system applies to all citizens equally. It is positive in the sense that it expresses the will of the state (rather than a specific individual) as a law-giver. It is legalistic in the sense that it is concerned with deviations from norms (and not with inner dispositions) and formal in that what is not expressly forbidden is permitted.[32]

Habermas acknowledges that "the positivization, legalization and formalization of law mean that the validity of law can no longer feed off the taken-for-granted authority of moral traditions, but requires an autonomous foundation, that is, a foundation that is not only relative to given ends".[33] He goes on to say, however, that although formal legal rationality may relieve the modern legal system of broad problems of moral justification, it cannot eliminate them entirely. Thus, as Habermas sees it, "The separation of morality and legality effected in modern law brings with it the problem that the domain of legality *as a whole* stands in need of practical justification. The sphere of law, which is independent of the sphere of morality but at the same time demands the readiness of legal subjects to obey the law, must be complemented by a morality grounded on principles".[34]

In Habermas's view, then, neither the present-day political order nor the legal system with which it is so closely intertwined can hope to derive true validity by simply referring, for example, to the myths of justification which upheld earlier regimes – the divine right of kings, or the supernatural qualities of rulers. Modern-day legitimation processes are reflective in nature – and any regime which cannot withstand examination and critique cannot claim the *right* to rule. The procedures which would allow for the discursive redemption of legitimacy claims (according to Habermas) have been discussed in chapter five. Yet troubling questions about Habermas's project remain unanswered.

C) IS UNCOERCED DISCOURSE POSSIBLE?

Habermas rejects Weber's theory of legitimacy because he argues that the typology Weber offers (traditional, charismatic, and bureaucratic authority) is more concerned with the ability of a regime to generate a *belief* in its legitimacy than with the actual validity of the claims themselves. Weber is compelled to focus on legitimacy as a question of form rather than substance, because in his view, the irreconcilable plurality of values would render any claim to absolute truth empirically unjustifiable. Thus Weber argues that:

> Experience shows that in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or affectual ideal motives as a basis for its continuance. In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy.[35]

For Habermas, then, *belief* is the operative word here – and in his opinion Weber's use of it reveals the poverty of his theoretical scheme. Habermas insists that "every effective belief in legitimacy is assumed to have an immanent relation to truth... that can be tested and criticized independently of the psychological effect of these grounds".[36]

According to Habermas, in the absence of such an "immanent relation to truth" we are left with the assertion that political regimes may be grounded in a kind of "pseudo-legitimization" which is little more than sleight-of-hand and ideology. Yet the standard Habermas sets which would enable regimes to *earn* the allegiance of their members is an exacting one:

> How would members of a social system, at a given stage in the development of productive forces, have collectively and bindingly interpreted their needs (and which norms would they have accepted as justified) if they could and would have decided on the organization of social intercourse through discursive will-formation, with adequate

> knowledge of the limiting conditions and functional imperatives of society?[37]

The idea of self-determination is thus crucial to the legitimation of both the modern legal order and the exercise of power in the political sphere. As Habermas argues in *Between Facts and Norms*, "citizens should be able to understand themselves also as authors of the law to which they are subject as addressees... consequently a discursive deliberative model replaces the contract model: the legal community constitutes itself not by way of a social contract but on the basis of a discursively achieved agreement". Thus, for Habermas, law is linked with the democratic potential of the modern state, rather than with its growing bureaucratization (as Weber would argue).

Yet it must be asked: Is it possible to meet such a stringent standard for truth claims given the unavoidable social complexity which characterizes modernity? And furthermore, does Habermas's discursive model really offer us the opportunity to be both authors and subjects of the law (and the state) or is it nothing more than a covert exercise of power, cunningly disguised as equality?

This issue has been addressed to some extent in the previous chapter, but deserves further elaboration. It should be emphasized that Habermas clearly does not *intend* to use discourse ethics as an insidious form of coercion, but nevertheless, the possibility exists that it *could* be used in such a fashion. We have already seen that for Habermas, the ability to subject not only cherished norms, but also moral, ethical and practical questions to analysis and argumentation requires transparency. Everyone involved in the process should (ideally) possess as much relevant information as possible. As Habermas expresses it, we should have "...adequate knowledge of the limiting conditions and functional imperatives of society".[38]

The difficulty of achieving such a standard of transparency in discourse points to the twin problems of utopianism and power differentials which are embedded in Habermas's project. Information and power are often intertwined – is it reasonable to expect that elites would be willing to share information with others, if in so doing, they run the risk of undermining their own agendas? True, Habermas hopes that everyone who participates in discourse will do so with openness and sincerity, based on a desire to enhance the collective good (reminiscent of Rousseau's "General Will") But is this realistic?

Events which led up to the war in Iraq illustrate how difficult it can be to obtain information necessary to engage in open, uncoerced discourse – in this case, centering around the ethical (as well as practical) question: Should the United States go to war against Iraq?

As we know, the justification for war offered by the Bush administration relied on the assertion that Saddam Hussein possessed so-called "weapons of mass destruction" which posed an imminent threat to national security. This "clear and present danger" was so compelling that it allowed President Bush to extract money from Congress to fund defense spending, and of course, to send troops overseas.

Yet we have seen that the weapons of mass destruction which provided the rationale for the war in Iraq may no longer exist – or may never have existed in the first place. (On the other hand, it may simply be that we haven't found them yet). In any case, it seems likely that relevant information on the subject was hidden or (perhaps) deliberately distorted. One might argue that the stated reason for engaging in war with Iraq is irrelevant – that whether Saddam Hussein ever possessed weapons of mass

destruction or not, he is still a menace and the world is better off without him. That may well be true – but it still does not provide the *strong* justification for war which the Bush administration needed. Furthermore, uncovering other latent, and perhaps even more important motivations for the whole exercise presents further challenges and ambiguities which even the most unconstrained discourse likely cannot address. For example – on a practical level, was President Bush motivated by the desire to obtain cheap oil? Or were his reasons for acting psychological in nature – perhaps a need to avenge his father?

As Weber would remind us, reality is infinitely complex, and our reasons for engaging in action may not be clear, even to ourselves. But if elites withhold or skew information, they are guilty of deliberately undermining debate in an effort to serve either latent or manifest goals. Furthermore, they may use rhetorical skills (consciously or unconsciously) in order to eliminate conflict and manufacture consensus. Weber has observed that "conflict cannot be excluded from social life… it is always present and its influence is often greatest when it is least noticed".[39] The same can be said of the exercise of power as well – it is most effective when it is carried out invisibly – and as has been noted, Habermas's proceduralism contains the possibility of coercion disguised as equality – and accomplished so subtly and persuasively that we may embrace it without realizing its full implications.

This thesis has focused primarily on the issue of domination and rationalization in the political realm, and the possibilities for overcoming it. This subject is of great concern to Weber as well, although (as has been discussed) in his view rationalization processes permeate many spheres of life in modernity.

Since Weber would likely argue that Habermas's notion of discursive democracy is hopelessly utopian, what suggestions does he offer as an alternative to this formulation? Weber's conception of the plebiscitarian leader has been discussed in chapter three, but should be briefly recapitulated here. Weber posits the need for an individualistic model of political action – a strong leader-statesman who combines a commitment to value-rationality with a sense of responsibility and realism. If he is successful in convincing voters of the worth of his ideas, it is then his right, and even his duty, to impose them on the electorate, since this is the only real catalyst for change. Weber explains the process in the following way:

> In a democracy, the people choose a leader whom they trust. Then the chosen man says, 'now shut your mouths and obey me'. The people and the parties are no longer free to interfere in the leader's business.[40]

This may seem a bit top-heavy (Habermas would certainly think so) but at least we know where we stand – which as I have suggested, cannot always be said of discursive democracy. Weber reminds us that if we become dissatisfied with the arrangement, we can "sit in judgment" and send the leader (metaphorically speaking) "to the gallows".[41] Weber cautiously hopes that a strong parliament will function to hold any possible excesses on the part of the plebiscitarian leader in check (as was discussed in chapter three) and in any case, he feels that such leadership is preferable to rule by professional politicians who lack a true calling, or nameless, faceless bureaucrats – those "specialists without spirit; sensualists without heart" condemned so bitterly by Weber in his famous "iron cage" metaphor.

Weber's assertion that the "genuine man" possesses both "passion and perspective" – that is, conviction and responsibility (as previously discussed in chapter

three) hints that the attitude necessary to life in a disenchanted world lies somewhere between the two ethics. Once again we are reminded of Weber's distinction between facts and values. The religious ascetic need not adjust himself to the imperfect material world if he does not intend to live in it. Weber thus advises "the person who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man... to return silently... the arms of the old churches are opened widely and compassionately for him."[42] But for the rest of us, perhaps adherence to the ethic of responsibility is the only alternative, for it alone enables man to exert some degree of control over the imperfect world he has created. As Weber declares, "We shall set to work and meet the 'demands of the day' in human relations as well as in our vocation."[43] Weber thus concludes that as both leaders and citizens, we must live according to some value(s) for the failure to do so would mean that we are "spiritually dead"[44] – and yet we must uphold these values (as best we can) while maintaining a keen awareness of the needs and rights of others, the forces which constrain our actions, and the perspectival nature of our value-judgments. It is a difficult task, to be sure, since the rewards of pure expediency are so great. Yet it seems that Weber has left the door of the iron cage ajar, after all, and that his vision of modernity is Janus-faced – a subtle mingling of despair and hope.

Habermas's vision is imbued with hope as well. His project focuses on the possibilities for structural change in modernity, which may be achieved through uncoerced discourse. As has been suggested, the redemptive nature of such discourse could be compromised by weaknesses which Habermas has thus far failed to address, in particular its utopian character – can the tendency of privileged groups to impose their

will, in either an open, or more likely, a veiled manner, ever be overcome? And is it necessarily true that insights gained through discourse will result in "collective learning?"

In spite of its flaws, Habermas's work is informed by a worthy and even a noble goal (one which he shares with Weber) the compulsion to build. It might also be said that Weber and Habermas *both* offer "open-ended" visions of the future. Their suggestions for dealing with the problems of modernity – Habermas's structuralist approach versus Weber's more personal and individualist orientation, should not be seen as antagonistic, but rather as complementary. Like Weber, Habermas realizes that the project is an unfinished one:

> ... the constitutional state does not represent a finished structure but a delicate and sensitive – above all fallible and revisable – enterprise, whose purpose is to realize the system of rights *anew* in changing circumstances, that is, to interpret the system of rights better, to institutionalize it more appropriately, and to draw out its contents more radically. This is the perspective of citizens who are actively engaged in realizing the system of rights.[45]

The sense of purpose and optimism conveyed in Habermas's words is palpable. Although Weber would surely remind Habermas that hope must be tempered with realism, he has, as I have said, left the door of the iron cage ajar. I believe that both Habermas and Weber would find inspiration in these lines from John Cheever's short story, "A Miscellany of Characters That Will Not Appear" and so I will let him have the (next to) last word. Cheever exhorts himself (and by implication, the rest of us) to overcome the nihilism and despair contained in the following passage:

> ...all scornful descriptions of American landscapes with ruined tenements, automobile dumps, polluted rivers ... abandoned miniature golf links, cinder deserts, ugly hoardings, unsightly oil derricks, diseased elm trees, eroded farmlands, gaudy and fanciful gas stations, unclean motels, candlelit tearooms, and streams paved with beer cans, for these are not, as they might seem to be, the ruins of our civilization, but are the temporary encampments and outposts of the civilization that we – you and I – shall build.[46]

Fight entropy.

[1] Jürgen Habermas. *The Theory of Communicative Action* Vol. I Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 386.

[2] Wellmer elaborates on this "linguistic turn" in his article "Kommunikation und Emanzipation, Uber Legungen zur Sprachanalytischen Wende der Kritischen Theorie" in *Theorien des Historischen Materialismus* edited by U. Jaeggi and Heinz Zipprian. Cited in Gerhard Wagner and Heinz Zipprian, "Habermas on Power and Rationality" in *Sociological Theory* Vol. 7, 1989, p. 103.

[3] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 270.

[4] Ibid., p. 274.

[5] Ibid., p. 378.

[6] Ibid., p. 392.

[7] Ibid., p. xxxiii.

[8] Habermas discusses what he sees as Weber's tendency to ignore what is not functional for the emerging capitalist system in "Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas" by Axel Honneth, Eberhard Knodler-Bunte and Arno Widmen in *Telos* Vol. 49, 1981, pp. 5-31. See especially p. 18. Albrecht Wellmer's essay, "Reason, Utopia and the Dialectic of Enlightenment" in *Habermas and Modernity* edited with an introduction by Richard Bernstein (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985, pgs. 35-66) offers an excellent elaboration and critique of Habermas's disagreement with Weber on this issue – see especially pp. 56-57.

[9] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" in H. H. Grth and C.W. Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 328.

[10] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. Edited with an introduction by Anthony Giddens. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 1978, p. 13.

[11] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[12] Ibid., p. 15.

[13] Ibid., pp. 16 and 25.

[14] Ibid., pp. 17 and 21.

[15] Ibid., p. 25.

[16] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

[17] Guenther Roth and Wolfgang Schluchter, *Max Weber's Vision of History: Ethics and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 196.

[18] "Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas by Axel Honneth, Eberhard Knodler-Bunte and Arno Widmen in *Telos*, Vol. 49, 1981, p. 18.

[19] Jean Cohen discusses the tendency of rationalization processes to meet resistance in their encounters with substantive rationality in the essay, "Max Weber and the Dynamics of

Rationalized Domination" in *Telos*, Vol. 14, Winter 1972, pp. 63-86. Cohen asserts that, "For Weber, rationalization, as the extension of formal rationality, is not simply a unilinear, monolithic process immanently unfolding in all areas of modern life. Instead, as formal rationality advances, it evokes counter forces all along the way".

Douglas Kellner expands on this important point in his essay, "Critical Theory, Max Weber, and the Dialectics of Domination" in *A Weber-Marx Dialogue* edited by Robert. J. Antonio and Ronald M. Goldman. University of Kansas, 1985, pp. 89-116.

20 I would like to thank Prof. John Drysdale for his comments on the importance of Weber's philosophy of history as it relates to his rejection of evolutionary theory. This ontological dimension is often neglected in favour of an epistemological-methodological concern with the fact-value distinction. However, it should be emphasized that in spite of Weber's rejection of historical determinism, he does not mean that there is *nothing* in history which is ordered, structured or systematic – simply that we cannot see the whole of history in rigidly teleological terms. Weber does perceive order in the actions and beliefs of social actors, which is why he feels history is best represented idiographically rather than nomologically.

21 Max Weber, "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. New York: The Free Press, 1949, p. 26.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., pp. 26-27.

25 "Morality, Society and Ethics: An Interview with Torben Hviid Nielsen in *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* by Jürgen Habermas. Translated by Ciaran P. Cronin. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993, p. 161.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Jürgen Habermas. *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Translated and with an introduction by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979, p. 102.

30 Ibid.

31 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp. 144-145.

32 Mathiew Deflem outlines the points of convergence between Weber and Habermas on the issue of the formal rationality of law in his excellent essay, "Law in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* Vol. 20, No. 4, 1994, see especially pp. 5-7.

33 Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, p. 260.

34 Ibid., p. 261.

35 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 213.

[36] Jürgen Habermas. *Legitimation Crisis.* Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975, p. 97.

[37] Ibid., p. 113.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Weber, "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p. 26.

[40] Marianne Weber. *Max Weber: A Biography.* Translated from German and edited by Harry Zohn. New York: John Wilry and Sons, 1975, p. 653.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited, and an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 155.

[43] Ibid., p. 156.

[44] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited, and an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 127.

[45] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 384.

[46] John Cheever, "A Miscellany of Characters That Will Not Appear" in *The Stories of John Cheever* New York: Vintage Books, 2000, p. 467.

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