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Remarks on the Concept of Critique in Habermasian Thought

Simon Susen

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of critique in Habermasian thought. Given that the concept of critique is a central theoretical category in the work of the Frankfurt School, it comes as a surprise that little in the way of a systematic account which sheds light on the multifaceted meanings of the concept of critique in Habermas's oeuvre can be found in the literature. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the various meanings that Habermas attributes to the concept of critique in 10 key thematic areas of his writings: (1) the public sphere, (2) knowledge, (3) language, (4) morality, (5) ethics, (6) evolution, (7) legitimation, (8) democracy, (9) religion, and (10) modernity. On the basis of a detailed analysis of Habermas's multifaceted concerns with the nature and function of critique, the study seeks to demonstrate that the concept of critique can be considered not only as a constitutive element but also as a normative cornerstone of Habermasian thought. The paper draws to a close by reflecting on some of the limitations of Habermas's conception of critique, arguing that in order to be truly critical in the Habermasian sense we need to turn the subject of critique into an object of critique.

Introduction

The concept of critique is a central theoretical category in Habermasian thought. Thus, it comes as a surprise that little in the way of a systematic account which sheds light on the multifaceted meanings of the concept of critique in Habermasian thought can be found in the literature.¹ Given its pivotal importance and referential relevance in the work of both 'the early' and 'the late' Habermas, it would be no exaggeration to ascribe paradigmatic status to the concept of critique in Habermasian thought. As a concept with paradigmatic status, the notion of critique lies at the heart of Habermasian thought and, therefore, deserves to be examined in detail. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the concept of critique can be regarded not only as a constitutive element but also as a normative cornerstone of the social and political thought of Jürgen Habermas.

If, following the predominant view in the literature (see, for example, Outhwaite 1996), we divide Habermas's work into different thematic areas, we can identify at least 10 overarching and interconnected topics in his work: (1) Habermas's *theory of the public sphere*,² (2) Habermas's *theory of knowledge*,³ (3) Habermas's *theory of language and communication*,⁴ (4) Habermas's *theory of morality*,⁵ (5) Habermas's *theory of ethics and law*,⁶ (6) Habermas's *theory of evolution*,⁷ (7) Habermas's *theory of legitimation*,⁸ (8) Habermas's *theory of democracy*,⁹ (9) Habermas's *theory of religion*,¹⁰ and (10) Habermas's *theory of modernity*.¹¹

Although these themes are closely interrelated and overlap on various levels in Habermas's writings, it is useful to separate them from one another to illustrate the analytical complexity and

wide-ranging scope of Habermasian thought. In light of the paradigmatic centrality of Habermas's theory of communicative action, it would be fair to say that the foundational idea which underpins all of these themes is the view that in order to make sense of society we need to make sense of linguisticity: from a Habermasian perspective, what lies at the heart of any form of human society is the linguistically mediated, rationally guided, and communicatively coordinated realisation of social actions. In other words, to analyse social relations and social formations in communication-theoretic terms means to reconstruct their linguistic mediation, rational foundation, and communicative consolidation. According to Habermas's communication-theoretic view, then, social order is possible only as a communicative order, the purposive reproduction of humanity is unthinkable without the communicative coordination of society, and the substantive impact of social transformation always depends on the coordinative power of communicative interaction.¹²

If, in accordance with Habermas, we give paradigmatic priority to communicative relations for understanding the very possibility of society, then our explanatory task consists in uncovering the linguistic foundations of the developmental contingency of society. The far-reaching implications of this view are reflected in the communication-theoretic presuppositions which undergird almost all of Habermas's – i.e. both his 'early' and his 'late' – writings. Habermas's communication-theoretic interpretation of the 10 thematic areas identified above can be summarised, somewhat aphoristically, as follows:

- (1) Public spheres cannot do without public communication (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of the public sphere*).
- (2) Knowledge claims are only conceivable as linguistically articulated validity claims (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of knowledge*).
- (3) Human language is essentially a product of human communication (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of language*).
- (4) Our moral development, as subjects capable of judgement and action, is intimately intertwined with our linguistic development, as subjects capable of speech and action (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of morality*).
- (5) Ethical and judicial conventions produced by different societies are historically specific arrangements based on communicatively established normativities (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of ethics and law*).
- (6) The historical evolution of society is shaped by the linguistic constitution of humanity (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of evolution*).
- (7) The stability of political legitimacy depends on its capacity to be considered worthy of rational acceptability (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of legitimation*).
- (8) The civilisational consolidation of political democracy is impossible without the communicational realisation of linguistic intelligibility (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of democracy*).
- (9) The metaphysical power of religious faith can and should be challenged by the postmetaphysical power of communicative reason (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of religion*).
- (10) The emancipatory potential of modern society is located in the critical potential of communicative rationality (*Habermas's communication-theoretic account of modernity*).

The communication-theoretic presupposition that subjects who are 'capable of speech and action'¹³ are also capable of reaching mutual understanding underlies most of Habermas's writings.¹⁴ The centrality of this assumption is indicative of the ambitious nature of the Habermasian project: in essence, the theory of communicative action represents a systematic attempt to

explain the constitution and evolution of human society (*Gesellschaftlichkeit*) in terms of the nature and development of human linguisticity (*Sprachlichkeit*).

Yet, if we acknowledge that Habermas's communication-theoretic account of society stands in the tradition of critical theory, we must ask the following question: what is 'critical' about Habermas's critical theory? Hence, not only do we need to pose the general question of what makes critical theory 'critical' (cf. Fraser 1991), but we also need to ask the specific question of what makes Habermas's critical theory 'critical'. A satisfying answer to this question may allow us to demonstrate that it is not only for biographical, but also – more importantly – for intellectual reasons that Habermas's writings can, and should, be conceived of as standing within, rather than outside, the tradition of critical thought commonly associated with the work of the Frankfurt School.¹⁵

The most obvious way to make a case for this view is to demonstrate that the central and unifying theme which underpins other versions of critical theory belonging to the tradition of the Frankfurt School is a fundamental and enduring concern in Habermas's communication-theoretic variant of critical theory: *the concept of critique*. In other words, just as alternative versions of critical theory developed in the tradition of the Frankfurt School – such as Marcuse's (2002 [1964]) need-theoretic approach, Adorno's (1997 [1970]) art-theoretic approach, Horkheimer's (1976) reason-theoretic approach, and, more recently, Honneth's (1995 [1994]) recognition-theoretic approach – are essentially concerned with the problem of critique, Habermas's version of critical theory – i.e. his communication-theoretic approach (Habermas 1987 [1981]-a, 1987 [1981]-b) – grapples with the idiosyncratic nature and social function of critique.

Thus, if there is one feature that the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School have in common it is the fact that both their *theoretical preoccupation with the nature of critique* and their *practical engagement in the activity of critique* lie at the heart of their respective normative projects. The following analysis seeks to contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of both the meaning and the role attributed to the concept of critique in Habermasian thought. Before examining the analytical and normative significance of the concept of critique in Habermas's writings, however, it seems sensible to reflect briefly upon the place of critique in contemporary social and political thought.

Different social and political theories put forward different notions of critique. To be sure, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School does not possess, and does not claim to possess, a monopoly on the concept of critique in the universe of social and political thought. The discursive and substantive force of critique cannot be said to have been confiscated by one particular paradigmatic approach or philosophical tradition. On the contrary, the multifaceted and eclectic ways in which the concept of critique can be interpreted and employed is symptomatic of its *hermeneutic and pragmatic elasticity*: critique can *mean* different things, and it can be *used* in different ways.

Just as it can refer to the reflective – i.e. 'critical' – *distancing* from a given state of affairs, it can designate the actual *immersion* in a complicated – i.e. 'critical' – state of affairs. While critique can be used to *denounce* a particular set of social relations, it can be brought into play to *defend* a particular set of social relations. Both the political *left* and the political *right* take part in the discursive exercise of critiquing the constitution of social relations. Both *dominated* and *dominant* social groups can convert critique into an ideological weapon to defend their respective interests. And, contrary to the illusion that only intellectuals are capable of critically engaging with the world, both professional *social scientists* and ordinary *social actors* are equipped with the capacity to reflect upon themselves and the world by which they are surrounded. Critique can be written or spoken, sung or painted, justified rationally or brought forward impulsively, raised implicitly or evoked explicitly, positive or negative, constructive or destructive, integrative or disruptive, consensus-oriented or conflict-ridden, concessional or

uncompromising, moderate or radical, contingent or categorical, local or global, open or dogmatic, and – as some might argue – genuinely critical or essentially uncritical. In short, the concept of critique has a wide variety of context-specific meanings.

This paper seeks to explore the various meanings that Habermas attributes to the concept of critique in his writings. As stated above, Habermas's work can be broadly divided into 10 thematic areas. The task of the following sections is to demonstrate that the concept of critique plays a pivotal role in each of these areas, illustrating its overall importance in Habermas's social and political thought.

1. Critique and the public sphere

One of the most fundamental characteristics of critique is that it is *public*. Critique is never simply a private but always also a public affair because the reflective exercise of critiquing the world is acquired through the social exercise of participating in the world. 'With the linguistic turn epistemic authority passes over from the private experiences of a subject to the public practices of a linguistic community' (Habermas 2000b, 324). Every criticising individual is a socialised individual, and the way in which individuals criticise the world is unavoidably affected by the way in which they have been socialised into the world. Since we cannot avoid acting in relation to society, we cannot avoid acting in relation to the public: just as every social persona has a public persona, every form of social critique is a form of public critique.

If – following Habermas (1989 [1962], 27) – '[t]he bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public', then public critique can be regarded first and foremost as a critique of private people come together as public carriers of communicative reason. The existence of a healthy public sphere depends on the existence of healthy public reasoning: 'the connection between rational-critical public debate and the legislative foundation of domination' (Habermas 1989 [1962], 178) allows for the construction of a society whose legitimacy is exposed to the constant scrutiny of critical rationality. In short, the public sphere is a social arena for communicative critique based on intersubjective reasoning.

2. Critique and knowledge

Another fundamental characteristic of critique is that it is inextricably linked to the production of *knowledge*. Indeed, the whole point of critical theory is to produce critical knowledge about the social world, that is, knowledge which refuses to take its own existence – or, to be more precise, the social constitution and the social function of its own existence – for granted. The 'early' Habermasian account of the intimate link between knowledge and human interests demonstrates that there is no comprehensive typology of critique without a social epistemology of interest. Just as our '*technical cognitive interest*'¹⁶ in producing '*predictive knowledge*'¹⁷ is epitomised in the rise of the '*empirical-analytic sciences*',¹⁸ and just as our '*practical cognitive interest* [...]' in the preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding'¹⁹ is embodied in the development of the '*historical-hermeneutic sciences*',²⁰ our '*emancipatory cognitive interest*'²¹ in human liberation from 'dependence on hypostatized powers'²² is expressed in the emergence of the '*critically oriented sciences*'²³. As purposive entities, we have an interest in acting *upon* the world; as communicative entities, we have an interest in acting *with* the world; and, as reflective entities, we have an interest in acting *beyond* the world. *Purpose-oriented* knowledge is concerned with explaining and controlling the functioning of the world; *understanding-oriented* knowledge is about establishing communicative and consensual ties with the world; and *critically oriented* knowledge is aimed at uncovering and overcoming hidden power mechanisms in the world. As purposive beings,

we are oriented towards *instrumentality*; as communicative beings, we are oriented towards *intelligibility*; and, as critical beings, we are oriented towards *reflexivity*.

Our critical capacity permits us to transform our existential orientation towards instrumentality, intelligibility, and reflexivity into an object of scrutiny. In fact, it is particularly in situations of individual or collective crisis, caused by a clash with the unknown or a confrontation with the unexpected, that we are forced to question the validity of intuitive knowledge by virtue of discursive knowledge. Critique and knowledge are intimately intertwined because the development of knowledge is subject to the development of critique: the potential *falsifiability* of every knowledge claim is due to the intrinsic *criticisability* of every validity claim. As long as both ordinary and scientific claims to validity can be criticised, both common sense and expert knowledge can – at least in principle – be falsified. Thus, from a developmental perspective, the critique of knowledge is both in the interest of knowledge and in the interest of the species, for the evolution of the human condition depends on the evolution of human cognition.

3. Critique and language

One of the most essential assumptions underlying Habermas's theory of communicative action is that the normative foundations of critique are to be located in the rational foundations of *language*. Put differently, our ability to criticise stems from our ability to communicate; our critical capacity emanates from our communicative capacity; critique is embedded in language. If we recognise that human beings acquire the capacity to establish a *critical* relation to the world by virtue of their capacity to establish a *linguistic* relation to the world, then we are forced to acknowledge that their reflective competence cannot be divorced from their communicative competence. We develop our ability to contemplate and judge through our capacity to communicate and reason. Paradoxically, to accept that our critical capacity and our communicative capacity are intimately intertwined means to comprehend that the act of critique is both a privileged and an ordinary affair: as a *privileged* affair, the act of critiquing something or somebody constitutes a distinctly human matter; as an *ordinary* affair, the act of critiquing something or somebody constitutes a quotidian matter.

From Habermas's communication-theoretic point of view, then, every ordinary subject capable of speech and *action* is capable of speech and *reflection* and, therefore, capable of speech and *critique*. Our expressive ability to speak *about* the world is closely interrelated with our critical capacity to reflect *upon* the world. If critique is at home in the universe of language, then the normativity of every society is contingent upon the reflexivity of linguisticity. Indeed, the 'reflexivity of ordinary language'²⁴ is symptomatic of the normativity of ordinary life: the reflexive potential inherent in human linguisticity can be mobilised to realise the normative potential built into ordinary sociality. It 'is thereby presupposed that those acting communicatively are *capable of mutual criticism*. But as soon as we equip the actors with *this* capability, we lose our privileged position as observers in relation to the object domain' (Habermas 1987 [1981]-e, 119, italics in original), for ordinary subjects capable of speech and action are ordinary subjects capable of critique and action. In brief, critique's house of being is the house of language.

4. Critique and morality

A key concern in Habermas's reconstructive exploration of critical capacity is the study of the communicative nature of *morality*. In essence, critique and morality are inextricably linked because our moral ability to claim ethical validity is contingent upon our judgemental ability to make sense of normativity. In other words, moral subjects can either accept or reject the

normativity imposed upon them by their social environment, and – more importantly – they can *give reasons* for either complying with or deviating from the social norms to which they are exposed in their day-to-day interactions. The world of humanity is never simply a world of facticity but always also a world of validity: the world of social facts is a world of social norms. Our linguistic capacity enables us to question the givenness of the world by virtue of the outspokenness of the word, thereby submitting our daily immersion in morality to critical scrutiny. Our enclosure in society is inconceivable without our daily exposure to morality. Yet, the absorption of our subjectivity by the moral standards which are thrown at us by society can be challenged by mobilising the normative resources which are embedded in our critical capacity.

Our interest in morality is due to ‘the interest of reason in human adulthood, in the autonomy of action, and in the liberation from dogmatism. This it achieves by means of the penetrating ideas of a persistent critique’ (Habermas 1988 [1963]-c, 256). If – following Kohlberg – we divide the moral development of human beings into a preconventional, a conventional, and a postconventional stage,²⁵ and if – following Habermas – we assume that the moral formation of human beings is contingent upon their linguistic maturation (see Habermas 1990 [1983]-c, esp. 160 – 70), then the development of our communicative capacity goes hand in hand with the development of our critical capacity. Critical capacity is an invaluable source of human autonomy in a world of moral diversity. Whereas preconventional morality obtains its validity from its unreflective obedience to authority and conventional morality gains its currency from its convenient immersion in conformity, postconventional morality derives its legitimacy from a discursively grounded sense of autonomy.

To be sure, our critical capacity is both the motor and the outcome of human morality: as a motor of morality, our critical capacity can *shape and transform* the normative standards of society; and, as an outcome of morality, it is *influenced by and embedded in* the normative standards of society. Regardless of the question of whether an analogy can be drawn between the moral evolution of individual entities and the moral evolution of collective entities, there is no doubt that both individual and collective learning processes are subject to the discursive interplay between our moral and our critical capacity. Put differently, the critique of morality cannot escape the morality of critique.

5. Critique and ethics

From a Habermasian perspective, *ethics and law* are essentially an evolutionary outcome of our moral condition. The moral universality of humanity manifests itself in the ethical contingency of society: the more differentiated the political and cultural arrangements of a particular society, the more complex the ethical and judicial standards of its polity. The gradual juridification²⁶ of society is indicative of the increasing complexity of modernity: modern societies are ethically and judicially codified because modern lifeworlds are systemically functionalised. Habermas’s plea for a discourse ethics is based on the conviction that the *purposive regulation of systemic functionality* does not have to be – and should not be – disentangled from the *communicative regulation of social normativity*. In order to preserve the critical potential of modernity, the systemic colonisation of sociality, which is driven by the instrumental power of functionalist reason, needs to be challenged by the discursive re-autonomisation of sociality, which emanates from the intersubjective power of communicative reason.

Discourse ethics [...] views the moral point of view as embodied in an intersubjective practice of argumentation which enjoins those involved to an *idealizing enlargement* of their *interpretive perspectives*. Discourse ethics rests on the intuition that the application of the *principle of universalization*, properly understood, calls for a joint *process of ‘ideal role taking’*. [...] Under the pragmatic presuppositions of an inclusive and noncoercive rational discourse among free and equal

participants, *everyone is required to take the perspective of everyone else*, and thus project herself into the understandings of self and world of all others; from this *interlocking of perspectives* there emerges *an ideally extended we-perspective* [...]. (Habermas 1995, 117, italics added)

A universal perspective on ethics is based on a universal ethics of perspective. A society of ideal members is a society of ideal role-takers, for only insofar as we can imagine ourselves as part of a common humanity can we project ourselves into a kingdom of ethical responsibility. One of the functions of critique is to criticise function. The critique of function aims to functionalise critique. The critical stance of discourse ethics permits us to regulate the systemic orientation towards functional differentiability through our discursive orientation towards ethical universality. Putting oneself in the particular perspective of another member of society is the first step towards embracing the universal perspective of humanity. Critique allows us to comprehend our ethical beyondness as part of our societal withinness.

6. Critique and evolution

The *evolution* of the human species cannot be separated from the mobilisation of social critique. Throughout history, humans have used the power of critical capacity to determine the development of society. In light of this insight, Habermas's philosophy of critique can be conceived of as an anthropology of critique: first, insofar as critical capacity constitutes an anthropological *invariant*, it can be considered as a *species-constitutive* capacity; and, second, insofar as critical capacity constitutes an anthropological *driving force*, it can be regarded as a *species-generative* capacity. As a species-constitutive capacity, the ability to reflect upon both our external and our internal world represents a distinctly human faculty. As a species-generative capacity, the ability to determine both our personal and our collective life histories by virtue of critical reflection denotes a developmental faculty.

Indeed, our 'rational will that allows itself to be determined by good reasons' (Habermas 2000b, 328) puts us in the anthropologically privileged position of being able to claim authorship²⁷ for our personal and collective life histories. 'Insofar as the historical subjects, as mature and responsible [*mündig*] individuals, are in essence the subject of history' (Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, 246), their 'reflective capacity of judgment constructs the progress of history' (Habermas 1988 [1963]-b, 246). We have learned to make history as co-reflective creatures, that is, as rational beings who are potentially critical of both themselves and their environment. As long as social development remains subject to social critique, the evolutionary course of human history will depend on the emancipatory force of critical capacity. Social critique gives us the social power to determine social development according to social needs.

The anthropological significance of critical capacity is reflected in the fact that it enables us to determine the course of history not by resorting to the forceful force of *violence*, but by mobilising the forceless force of *discourse*: the legitimacy of a discourse-guided normativity has the evolutionary power to shape the history of a purpose-laden society. In fact, the communicative engagement in discourse is such a constitutive component of maturing societies that the employment of violence is conceivable only as the refusal to draw on the coordinative power of our communicative competence. 'To be a potential participant in discourse means to be human. The decision not to communicate, not to have any authority in discourse or to inflict violence upon others, all depends, then, on this prior competence' (Matustik 1989, 164). Every time we decide to let violence decide, we decide to let discourse hide; and every time we decide to let discourse decide, we decide to put violence aside. As a linguistic species, we have learned to mobilise the empowering resources inherent in communicative discourses in order to make the course of history contingent upon the deliberative force of critical capacity.

7. Critique and legitimation

The stability of every political and economic system rests on its capacity to claim *legitimacy* in relation to a given society. Different resources of critique can either reinforce or undermine the legitimacy of the political arrangements created by society. All processes of political institutionalisation hinge on processes of ideological legitimation that ensure the functioning of their systemic coordination. In essence, the legitimation of a polity depends on its recognition by society.

By *legitimacy* I understand the worthiness of a political order to be recognized. The *claim to legitimacy* is related to the social-integrative preservation of a normatively determined social identity. *Legitimations* serve to make good this claim, that is, to show how and why existing (or recommended) institutions are fit to employ political power in such a way that the values constitutive for the identity of the society will be realized. (Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, 182 – 3, italics in original)

In other words, the legitimacy of every polity is contingent upon its capacity to claim validity through its recognition by a given society. The fact that legitimacy claims can never free themselves from their dependence on validity claims implies that the most powerful political system capable of *control* and action ultimately hinges on acceptance by its citizens capable of *critique* and action. Hence, legitimacy is not only about systemic hegemony based on power and control, but also about discursive defensibility derived from reason and critique.

Legitimacy means that there are good arguments for a political order's claim to be recognized as right and just; a legitimate order deserves recognition. *Legitimacy means a political order's worthiness to be recognized*. This definition highlights the fact that legitimacy is a contestable validity claim; the stability of the order of domination (also) depends on its (at least) de facto recognition. (Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, 178, italics in original)

The stability of every polity rests upon its capacity to control its own contestability. The crisis of every polity is indicative of its incapacity to avoid being superseded by its own contestability. The resources of critique mobilised by subjects capable of speech and action can challenge the resources of control imposed upon them by systems capable of steering and action. The 'legitimations that a society accepts or criticizes' (Habermas 1987 [1965/1968], 313) need to reach a reasonable *level of justification* (Habermas 1984 [1976]-b, 183, italics in original) in order to ensure their own validation: political orders incapable of legitimation are essentially rational orders incapable of justification. A central function of critique consists in questioning the rational validity of political legitimacy either to reinforce or to undermine the relative stability of a given society. If the validity of political legitimacy is conditional upon the legitimacy of linguistic validity, then the systemic potential of political control is subject to the communicative potential of social critique.

8. Critique and democracy

Every genuine *democracy* depends on a healthy degree of legitimacy. If legitimacy is mainly about a political order's worthiness to be recognised, democracy is essentially about a political order's trustworthiness to be realised. Trustworthy citizens need trustworthy political systems to create trustworthy societies. Trustworthy *citizens* are citizens prepared to accept and, if necessary, reciprocate critique; trustworthy *political systems* are systems prepared to absorb and, if necessary, protect critique; and trustworthy *societies* are societies prepared to coordinate and, if necessary, stimulate critique. Critique is one of the most fundamental resources of democracy because the former ensures the legitimacy of the latter. A democracy which cannot be criticised is a democracy which is undemocratic. The key insight underlying the Habermasian conception of deliberative democracy is that democratic processes of consensus-formation rest on communicative processes of will-formation. Thus, the creation of deliberative democracy is based on the construction of a transparent polity whose coordinative power derives from its citizens' communicative power:

Communicative power is the power that emerges from the exercise of political autonomy, and hence cannot be separated from the discursive processes of will-formation, i.e., from democracy. (Preuss 1998, 331)

Communicative discourses are crucial to the functioning of democracy since they give meaning to the sociological value of our critical capacity. To 'shift the burden of justifying the effectiveness of practical reason from the mentality of citizens to the deliberative forms of politics' (Habermas 1998b, 386) means to locate the normative grounds of political legitimacy in the empowering potential of communicative rationality. Democracy without critique is tantamount to language without communication: one cannot exist without the other. Only political actions which can, in principle, be criticised can claim to be democratic; and only speech actions which can, in principle, be communicated can claim to be linguistic.

Deliberative democracy is a discursive community not of sleeping but of speaking members, for speech enables us to imbue political legitimacy with meaning-laden validity. Deliberative democracy is primarily a matter of *actively* engaging in *communicative* relations, rather than of *formally* committing to *contractual* relations. 'Consequently, a discursive or 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' (Habermas 1994, 137). Insofar as every discursively achieved agreement is open to revision, deliberative democracy converts communicatively mediated processes of collective will-formation into the cornerstone of its own existence. Criticisability is not only an integral component but also a normative principle of deliberative democracy: the criticisability of every linguistic validity claim²⁸ anticipates the criticisability of every democratic legitimacy claim.

9. Critique and religion

From Habermas's communication-theoretic perspective, the relation between critique and *religion* is not a straightforward one. Although reason and faith do not necessarily contradict one another, they are not always reconcilable. Religiously motivated validity claims might be sincere, but this does not make them true or right. Our linguistic orientation towards truth, rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility must strive for rational justifiability, rather than for wishful spirituality, in order to claim universal validity. If 'churches in modern societies' (Habermas 1992, 229) can be described as 'communities of interpretation' (Habermas 1992, 229), rational discourses in modern societies can be regarded as linguistic provinces of critical reflection.

Of course, both religious and secular discourses are embedded in the contextual contingency of their respective socio-historical determinacy. All subjects capable of speech and action – whether they consider themselves religious or secular – must be socialised into communities of interpretation in order to explore the various provinces of linguistic signification. Yet, given that '[r]eligious discourse is closely joined to a ritual praxis that, in comparison with profane everyday praxis, is limited in the degree of its freedom of communication [...], it could be said that faith is protected against a radical problematization by its being rooted in cult' (Habermas 1992, 233).

Whereas the whole point of secular discourses is to measure the contingency of their own legitimacy against the rationality of discursive validity, the mission of religious discourses is to assert the universality of their own legitimacy through the rituality of ceremonial validity. Any discourse which is immune to self-problematisation is a discourse which is immune to self-adaptation. Different epochs create different *Zeitgeister* ('spirits of the time'), but if the *Geist* ('spirit') pretends to stand above the *Zeit* ('time') it fails to recognise that its quest for temporal transcendence remains trapped in temporal immanence: we have to be situated in time

before we can transcend it. The metaphysical pretension of timeless transcendence loses all worldly credibility when confronted with the postmetaphysical recognition of the time-laden immanence of every worldly society. 'For under the conditions of postmetaphysical thinking, it is not enough to take shelter behind a concept of the Absolute' (Habermas 1992, 227). Under conditions of radical critique, critique becomes a radical condition. And under the radical condition of critique, the concept of the Absolute degenerates into connotative rhetoric demystified by the denotative magic of the concrete.

The communicative critique of the world is essentially concerned with the discursive problematisation of the world. Following Habermas's (1992, 233) three-dimensional conception of the structure of language, '[t]his problematization unavoidably occurs when the ontic, normative, and expressive aspects of validity, which must remain fused together in the conceptions of the creator and redeemer God, of theodicy, and of the event of salvation, are separated analytically from one another'. In other words, whereas the postmetaphysical problematisation of the world is founded on the analytical *differentiation* between the constative, normative, and expressive dimensions of language, the religious interpretation of the world is based on their *fusion*. Consequently, critique needs to distrust religious belief if it seeks to provide rational, rather than metaphysical, grounds for the validity of its own legitimacy.

10. Critique and modernity

The critique of modernity belongs to the condition of modernity, because the self-critical spirit of the Enlightenment is a modern precondition for the possibility of ethical self-government.²⁹ The existence of ethical self-government depends on the interdependence of our *Verstand* (reasoning reason) and our *Vernunft* (reasonable reason). As *verstandgeleitete Wesen* (i.e. as entities guided by reasoning reason), we can measure the outcome of our actions in terms of their purposive utility and social functionality. As *vernunftgeleitete Wesen* (i.e. as entities guided by reasonable reason), we can measure the outcome of our actions in terms of their normative validity and social legitimacy. The question is not whether or not *Verstand* and *Vernunft* can exist independently of one another; the question is how *Verstand* and *Vernunft* can be brought together. Hence, the challenge consists in creating the social conditions which allow for the possibility of both a *verständliche Vernunft* (comprehensible reason) and a *vernünftiger Verstand* (sensible reason).

The paradox of modernity is that it constitutes a historical era made possible by its own impossibility: too often has the promise of the *verständliche Vernunft* (comprehensible reason) led to the rise of the *unverständliche Unvernunft* (incomprehensible unreason), and too often has the guarantee of the *vernünftiger Verstand* (sensible reason) resulted in the tragedy of the *unvernünftiger Unverstand* (senseless unreason). Given the historical realisation of both its emancipatory and its repressive potentials, modernity is a condition of profound ambiguity (cf. Bauman 1991). Despite its unfulfilled promises, however, the critical spirit of modernity has never promised to be fully fulfilled. Real strength believes in its own weakness, and modernity has believed in its own weakness from the very beginning.³⁰

The critical potential of linguisticity is not undermined but reinforced by the project of modernity. Nevertheless, just as it is mistaken to paint an overly optimistic picture which stresses only the bright sides of the modern world, it is erroneous to give an excessively pessimistic account which centres exclusively on its dark sides. Indeed, a critical account of modernity should strive to come to terms with the intrinsic *ambiguity* of the type of society which started to emerge in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. In essence, the schizophrenic nature of the dialectics of Enlightenment (see Horkheimer and Adorno 1994 [1944/1969]) is

grounded in the ambivalent nature of the modern project: the interplay between the emancipatory and the repressive dimensions of modern society. We only need to consider the most influential sociological critiques of the last 150 years to understand the deeply problematic nature of modern society: the Marxian critique of social alienation (see Marx 2000/1977 [1844]), the Weberian critique of social rationalisation (see Weber 1978 [1922]), the Durkheimian critique of social differentiation (see Durkheim 1984 [1893]), the Simmelian critique of social abstraction (see Simmel 1997 [1903]), and the Lukácsian critique of social reification (see Lukács 1971). Yet, this is not where the problem ends; this is where the problem starts. It is crucial to uncover the various *pathologies* produced by modern society in order to decipher the functional rationalities which underlie its numerous irrationalities. It is also essential, however, to recognise the various *opportunities created* by modern society in order to do justice to the empowering possibilities which pose a challenge to its disempowering obstacles.

The Habermasian distinction between system and lifeworld³¹ allows us to differentiate between the disempowering and the empowering dimensions of modernity epitomised in the opposition between the two most fundamental forms of human rationality: *instrumental rationality* and *communicative rationality*.³² Whereas the functional reproduction of the utility-driven system depends on the power of instrumental rationality, the social reproduction of the linguistically structured lifeworld hinges on the power of communicative rationality. Given that the most differentiated form of society cannot exist without ordinary linguistic interactionality, the instrumental rationality which arises from the systemic steering necessity of large-scale structural complexity can colonise, but never extinguish, the communicative rationality which ineluctably emerges in every lifeworld reality. Thus, the historical predominance of functionalist rationality in the context of modernity cannot eliminate the ontological preponderance of communicative rationality, which is built into the condition of humanity. Critique needs to start where communication ends. We would not be able to criticise the disempowering effects of instrumental rationality if we could not rely on the empowering potentials of communicative rationality.

The *paradoxical* nature of modernity is that it simultaneously undermines and reinforces the emancipatory nature of communicative rationality: it *jeopardises* it insofar as it imposes the undeniable force of instrumental rationality on almost every sphere of society; at the same time, it *enhances* it insofar as it generates collective learning processes to allow for the radical critique of systemic functionality. Under modern parameters, everything 'can be exposed to testing' (Habermas 1987 [1981]-h, 133) because, in principle, everything is open to the communicative experience of discursive questioning.

Certainly, it is not only the colonisation but also the rationalisation of the lifeworld which poses a challenge to modern society. Yet, whereas the *colonisation* of the lifeworld by the system is indicative of the penetration of the communicative infrastructure by the instrumental superstructure of society, the *rationalisation* of the lifeworld is symptomatic of society's capacity to draw on the differentiation of its communicative foundations to counterbalance the detrimental effects of its systemic pathologisation. For 'the further the structural components of the lifeworld and the processes that contribute to maintaining them get differentiated, the more interaction contexts come under conditions of rationally motivated mutual understanding, that is, of consensus formation that rests *in the end* on the authority of the better argument' (Habermas 1987 [1981]-h, 145, italics in original). Ultimately, the authority of the better argument is the authority of the better critique.³³ If modernity succeeds in converting the authority of the better argument into the discursive driving force of its own contingency, it will succeed in determining the future of society by mobilising the power of critical capacity.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the concept of critique is a central theoretical category in Habermas's social and political thought. The foregoing analysis has examined the paradigmatic status of the concept of critique in Habermasian thought on 10 key thematic levels: (1) critique and the public sphere, (2) critique and knowledge, (3) critique and language, (4) critique and morality, (5) critique and ethics, (6) critique and evolution, (7) critique and legitimation, (8) critique and democracy, (9) critique and religion, and (10) critique and modernity.

The insights of the preceding analysis, which has sought to shed light on Habermas's multifaceted concerns with the nature and function of critique, can be synthesised as follows:

- (1) Public spheres cannot do without public critique. Critique is a discursive driving force of modern public spheres.
- (2) Knowledge claims are only conceivable as criticisable validity claims. Critique allows us to question both the discursive validity and the social legitimacy of knowledge.
- (3) If human language is essentially a product of human communication, and if our critical capacity emanates from our communicative capacity, then we are able to develop a critical relation to the world only insofar as we develop a linguistic relation to the world. Critique is embedded in language.
- (4) The moral development of subjects capable of judgement and action is inextricably linked to the linguistic development of subjects capable of speech and action. Critique enables us to face up to the fact that the human world is never simply a world of facticity but always also a world of validity.
- (5) Ethical and judicial conventions produced by different societies are historically specific arrangements based on communicatively established normativities. Critique functions both as a creator and as a controller of ethical and judicial conventions.
- (6) The historical evolution of society is shaped by the reflexive constitution of language. Put differently, sustainable sociability (*aufrechterhaltbare Gesellschaftlichkeit*) is inconceivable without criticisable linguisticity (*kritisierbare Sprachlichkeit*). Social critique has always shaped, and will always continue to shape, social development.
- (7) The stability of political legitimacy hinges on its capacity to be considered worthy of rational acceptability. Critique enables us to expose the legitimacy of a given polity to the discursive scrutiny of communicative rationality.
- (8) The civilisational consolidation of political democracy is impossible without the communicational realisation of linguistic intelligibility. Critique is one of the most fundamental resources of democracy, because every genuine democracy depends on a healthy degree of legitimacy based on discursive acceptability.
- (9) The metaphysical power of religious faith can and should be challenged by the post-metaphysical power of communicative reason. Critique ensures that rational grounds of validity cannot seek refuge in metaphysical imaginaries of rituality.
- (10) If the emancipatory potential of modern society is located in the critical potential of communicative rationality, then the condition of modernity contains the possibility of converting the authority of communicatively established validity into the discursive driving force of its own contingency. The critique of modernity is built into the condition of modernity.

On the basis of the previous analysis, it would be fair to suggest that one of the most fundamental presuppositions underlying Habermas's communication-theoretic account of society is the assumption that subjects 'capable of speech and action' are also 'capable of critique and action'. As subjects capable of *speech*, we can comprehend the world; as subjects capable of

action, we can change it; and, as subjects capable of *critique*, we can judge both our speech and our actions.

The question remains, however, where the main shortcomings of Habermas's multifaceted notion of critique lie. In other words, how can we critique Habermas's conception of critique? Given Habermas's categorical commitment to and thorough engagement with the discursive exercise of critique, it seems not only legitimate but also imperative to make the Habermasian subject of critique an object of critique. Thus, this essay shall be concluded by reflecting on some of the limitations of Habermas's conception of critique. For the purpose of this paper, this shall be done by following the structure of the preceding analysis.

(1) *Critique and the public sphere*: Critique constitutes a discursive driving force of modern public spheres. Yet, the Habermasian assumption that the modern public sphere can be regarded primarily as an arena for social critique based on intersubjective reasoning is somewhat idealistic. While largely *discursive* – such as political, scientific, and journalistic – realms of modern public spheres may be described as breeding grounds for '*rational-critical* public debate' (Habermas 1989 [1962], 178, italics added), predominantly *non-discursive* – such as administrative, executive, and indeed military – realms of modern public spheres may be more appropriately considered as systemic manifestations of a *rational-instrumental* public domain. Critique is an integral component, but not always the ultimate driving force, of modern public spheres.

(2) *Critique and knowledge*: To the extent that all knowledge claims are – at least in principle – criticisable *validity claims*, all knowledge claims are – at least in practice – relatively arbitrary *legitimacy claims*. If validity and knowledge are intimately intertwined because the evolution of cognition is subject to the constitution of *social critique*, legitimacy and knowledge are closely interrelated because the evolution of cognition is subject to the distribution of *social power*. Different positions in society constitute different sources of authority with different resources of legitimacy. The rational power of cognitive validity is always dependent upon the authorising power of social legitimacy. Critique is a vital ingredient, but not necessarily the decisive force, of knowledge production.

(3) *Critique and language*: Although Habermas is right to remind us of the fact that our critical capacity is embedded in our communicative capacity, his language-focused conception of critique does not account for non-linguistic – yet equally powerful and species-constitutive – ways of distancing ourselves from our immersion in the world. The emancipatory transcendence which inhabits aesthetic experience and artistic creativity – thoroughly explored and passionately defended by Adorno (1997 [1970]) – represents an empowering feature of a desiderative and imaginative species. If, however, *Gesellschaftskritik* (social critique) is reduced to *Sprachkritik* (linguistic critique), then *Gesellschaftsutopie* (social utopia) degenerates into a form of *Sprachutopie* (linguistic utopia). Artistic expression can be emancipatory because of, rather than despite, its capacity to transcend the realm of linguistic conceptuality and thereby establish a critical relation to the constraining preponderance of social reality. Regardless of whether or not one believes in the critical potential of language, Habermas's social theory is substantially flawed due to its lack of preoccupation with our non-linguistic, yet equally significant and potentially emancipatory, capacities to challenge the ineluctable predominance of societal immanence through the underlying presence of critical transcendence.

(4) *Critique and morality*: Despite the fact that Habermas convincingly points out that our *moral* ability to claim ethical validity cannot be divorced from our *critical* capacity to judge different standards of normativity, he underestimates the extent to which established codes of morality are a product of power-laden forms of agency in a vertically structured society, rather than an outcome of linguistic discursivity generated by horizontally shaped encounters of dialogical intersubjectivity. Inasmuch as the gradual development of our critical capacity enables us to

move from the persuasive authority of *preconventional* morality and the integrative conformity of *conventional* morality to the reflective autonomy of *postconventional* morality, our daily immersion in social reality obliges us to cope with the situational contingency of human agency. What we consider right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, and legitimate or illegitimate is context-dependent, for different interactional realms of society impose different standards of normativity upon the unfolding of human agency. Hence, it is not always 'the penetrating ideas of a persistent critique' (Habermas 1988 [1963]-c, 256) but often the persistent power of a penetrating context which determines the relative validity of the most opportune morality.

(5) *Critique and ethics*: While Habermas's communication-theoretic account of society allows us to understand that critique functions both as a creator and as a controller of ethical and judicial conventions, it offers little in the way of a normative framework capable of doing justice to the perspectival differentiability arising from the structural complexity of modern society. The growing complexity of social life under conditions of modernity has led not to a decrease but to an increase in perspectival differentiability. If a society of *ideal* members is a collective imaginary of disembodied role-takers who conceive of themselves as unified members of a common humanity, a society of *actual* members is a collective entity of situated role-players who live their lives as divided members of a stratified reality. Paradoxically, critique can contribute to both the universalisation and the provincialisation of perspective.

(6) *Critique and evolution*: Even though Habermas's theory of communicative action permits us to shed light on the fact that the historical evolution of society is shaped by the reflexive constitution of linguisticity, it does not equip us with the conceptual and methodological tools to explore the sociological significance of non-discursive factors that can alter the course of history. As communicative beings capable of cooperative and consensual action, we are able to make the course of history dependent upon the deliberative force of critical capacity. Yet, as calculative beings capable of competitive and conflictual action, we are prone to make the development of society contingent upon the purposive force of strategic rationality. Too often in human history has the forceless force of discourse been overruled by the forceful force of violence to ignore the fact that our constructive capacity to engage in critical dialogue *with* others can be easily undermined by our destructive capacity to inflict symbolic or physical violence *upon* others. Social evolution is shaped not only by the forceless force of communicative discourse but also by the forceful force of purposive violence.

(7) *Critique and legitimation*: Notwithstanding the fact that Habermas's communication-theoretic approach provides a useful normative framework for understanding that the relative stability of political legitimacy enjoyed by modern forms of democracy rests on their capacity to be considered worthy of rational acceptability, it underestimates the extent to which the institutional and ideological authority of a given polity is a matter of material and symbolic hegemony, rather than of discursive defensibility. If radical critique hinges on openness towards potential crisis creation, successful governance depends on resourcefulness in effective crisis prevention. The legitimacy of a given polity derives not only from the discursive power of communicative rationality to convert political authority into an object of criticisability, but also from the systemic power of functionalist rationality to transform political authority into an unquestioned source of hegemonic stability.

(8) *Critique and democracy*: There is little doubt that critique is one of the most fundamental resources of democracy. It is essential, however, to recognise that the existence of institutionally consolidated and judicially protected forms of *deliberation* is in no way a guarantee of the existence of collectively empowering and culturally ingrained processes of *emancipation*. To be sure, a truly procedural notion of deliberation is based on the idea that genuine democracies need not only to *protect* but also to *promote* the discursive force of critique. Yet, the defence of critique as

an invaluable resource for the realisation of democracy will not suffice to do justice to the variety and complexity of the substantive features underlying the construction of an emancipatory society. To allow for the possibility of responsible and accountable action coordination, critique needs to be treated as an indispensable resource of individual and collective will-formation. To allow for the possibility of an emancipatory society, critique needs to explore both the empowering and the disempowering potentials of humanity.

(9) *Critique and religion*: Habermas is right to insist that the metaphysical power of religious faith can and should be challenged by the postmetaphysical power of communicative reason. Nevertheless, we also need to account for the fact that *reason and faith* are not as far apart as they may appear at first sight. Just as we may have belief in the power of reason, we may have reasons to believe in the power of faith. Indeed, given the presuppositional nature of all knowledge, reason cannot escape belief; and, given the cognitive nature of all faith, belief cannot escape reason. It would be erroneous to suggest that *either* reason *or* faith can claim to have a monopoly on the anthropological resource of critical capacity. For just as rationally grounded claims to validity cannot be abstracted from the implicit belief structure of their background presuppositionality, religiously motivated claims to validity cannot be dissociated from the communicative rationality of their background sociality. If reason cannot exist without a belief in reason and if belief cannot exist without a reason to believe, then the critique of reason cannot do without a critique of faith just as the critique of faith cannot do without a critique of reason.

(10) *Critique and modernity*: Habermas's distinction between system and lifeworld provides a powerful tool to understand the interplay between instrumental and communicative rationality in the context of modern society. The problem with this central Habermasian distinction with regard to the nature of critique, however, is that it reduces – somewhat pessimistically – the system to a utility-driven realm of efficiency and a power-laden resource of instrumental rationality, while portraying – somewhat optimistically – the lifeworld as an integrative realm of social solidarity and an interpretive resource of communicative rationality. The point is not to deny the instrumental nature of the system and the communicative nature of the lifeworld; rather, the point is to explore to what extent, in the context of modernity, the system is exposed to the critical force of communicative rationality just as the lifeworld is always already permeated by the purposive force of instrumental rationality. If the system and the lifeworld are *internally* divided between instrumental and communicative rationality, then both spheres have the potential to make the detrimental effects of a functionally driven society subject to the enlightening power of critical capacity.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Bohman (1986), Eidam, Hermenau and Stederth (1998), Garz (2000), Karácsony (2001), Müller-Doohm (2000), Nuyen (1993), Sintomer (2005), and Wagner and Zipprian (1991).
- 2 On Habermas's *theory of the public sphere*, see, for example, Habermas (1989 [1962], 1992/1999, 1995). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Calhoun (1992/1999), Crossley and Roberts (2004), Forester (1985), Gardiner (2004), Goode (2005), Holub (1991/2003 [1991]), Kelly (2004), Kögler (2005), Martin (2005), Negt and Kluge (1993 [1972]), Rochlitz (2002), Sintomer (2005), and Voirol (2003).

- 3 On Habermas's *theory of knowledge*, see, for example, Habermas (1987 [1968]-a, 1988 [1963]-a, 1988 [1967/1970]-a, 2001b). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Alford (1985), Apel (1977), Bailey (1994), Giri (2004), Honneth (1991 [1986]), and Pickering (1997).
- 4 On Habermas's *theory of language and communication*, see, for example, Habermas (1970, 1984 [1976]-a, 1985 [1984], 1987 [1981]-a, 1987 [1981]-b, 1987 [1985]-b, 1988 [1967/1970]-b, 1990 [1983]-a, 1998 [1976, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1996], 2000b, 2001 [1984]-a, 2001a). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Apel (1976), Cooke (1994), Giddens (1987), Haferkamp (1985), Honneth and Joas (1991 [1986]), Lafont (1999 [1993]), Markus (1986), May (1996), McCarthy (1973), Schnädelbach (1990 [1982]), Schöttler (1997), Susen (2009a), Thompson (1983), Wagner and Zipprian (1991), and Wellmer (1977 [1976]).
- 5 On Habermas's *theory of morality*, see, for example, Habermas (1990 [1983]-c, 1993 [1990], 2004c). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Abdel-Nour (2004), Böhler (1990 [1982]), Ferrara (1996), Finlayson (2000), Ilting (1990 [1982]), Milley (2002), Morgan (2002), Olsaretti (2003), Schweppenhäuser (1989), Whitton (1992), Young (1997a), and Zürn (1996).
- 6 On Habermas's *theory of ethics and law*, see, for example, Habermas (1990 [1983]-b, 1993 [1990], 1993 [1991], 1996 [1992]-a, 1998a). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Apel (1996), Benhabib (1990), Benhabib and Dallmayr (1990), Finlayson (2000), Gamwell (1997), Gilabert (2005), Hutchings (2005), Nielsen (1995), Rosenfeld and Arato (1998), and Thompson (2000).
- 7 On Habermas's *theory of evolution*, see, for example, Habermas (1979, 1984 [1976]-a). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Antonio (1989), Kirkpatrick (2003), McCarthy (1981), and Whitton (1992).
- 8 On Habermas's *theory of legitimation*, see, for example, Habermas (1988 [1973]). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Berndt (1989), Bjola (2005), Gaon (2004), and Pietrzyk-Reeves (2004).
- 9 On Habermas's *theory of democracy*, see, for example, Habermas (1996 [1992]-b, 2001c, 2005). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Brookfield (2005), Cooke (2000), Eriksen and Weigård (2003), Ferrara (2001), Festenstein (2004), Goode (2005), Ingram (2005), Kelly (2004), O'Neill (2000), Oquendo (2002), Rosenfeld and Arato (1998), Sintomer (1999), and Young (1997b).
- 10 On Habermas's *theory of religion*, see, for example, Habermas (2001b, 2002 [1981, 1991, 1997], 2004b, 2004c), and Habermas and Ratzinger (2005). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Arens (1989), Browning and Schüssler Fiorenza (1992), Meyer (2004), Nault (2004), Rehg (2004), and Trautsch (2004).
- 1 On Habermas's *theory of modernity*, see, for example, Habermas (1987 [1981]-c, 1987 [1981]-j, 1987 [1981]-k, 1987 [1985]-a, 1992 [1988], 2002 [1981, 1991, 1997]). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Benhabib (1981), Bernstein (1985), Blanke (1991), Bowring (1996), Honneth (1995), Hudson (1993), Kellner (1989), and Passerin d'Entrèves and Benhabib (1996).
- 2 On Habermas's communication-theoretic view of social order, see, for example, Habermas (1987 [1981]-d, esp. 94 and 99 – 100; 1987 [1981]-f, esp. 274, 278, 280, 284 – 8, 293 – 6, and 308; 2001 [1984]-d, esp. 102; 2001a, esp. 10 – 1, 33, 35, 44, and 78). For a detailed analysis, see, for example, Susen (2007, 61–100).
- 3 Habermas repeatedly emphasises the central communication-theoretic idea that human beings, unlike animals, can be considered to be 'subjects capable of speech and action' (*'sprach- und handlungsfähige Subjekte'*). See, for example, Habermas (1988 [1971], 9; 1987 [1981]-d, 86; 1987 [1981]-e, 108; 2001 [1984]-b, 9; 2001 [1984]-c, 44; 2001 [1984]-e, 118; 2000b, 343; 2001a, 16, 23–4, and 42; 2004a, 879).
14. See, for example, Habermas (1970, 1984 [1976]-a, 1985 [1984], 1987 [1981]-a, 1987 [1981]-b, 2001 [1984]-a).
15. On the intellectual tradition of the Frankfurt School, see, for example, Bottomore (2002), Held (1980), Schirmacher (2000), and Wiggershaus (1997 [1988]).
16. Habermas (1987 [1965/1968], 308) (*italics in original*).
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.* (*italics in original*).
19. *Ibid.*, 310 (*italics in original*).
20. *Ibid.*, 309 (*italics in original*).
21. *Ibid.* (*italics in original*).
22. *Ibid.*, 310.
23. *Ibid.*, 308 (*italics added*).
24. Habermas 2000a, 17 (my translation). See also Müller-Doohm 2000, 84.
25. An illustrative example of Habermas's discussion and elaboration of Kohlberg's theory of moral development can be found in Habermas (1990 [1983]-c, esp. 160 – 70).

26. On Habermas's conception of juridification (*Verrechtlichung*), see, for example, Habermas (1996 [1992]-a, esp. 172–4, 187–8, 191–3, 238, 240–2, 246, 357, 431–2, 440–1, and 482; 1987 [1981]-b, 317, 327, 356 – 73). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Bohman (1989, 393), Deflem (1994, 7 – 8), and Kelly (2004, 42).
27. On the Habermasian notion of 'authorship', see, for example, Habermas (1988 [1963]-b, 218, 244, and 246–52; 1987 [1968]-b, 155–7; 2001a, 26–8; 2004a, esp. 871–2, 874–81, 884–87, and 890). See also Cooke (1999, esp. 26–32 and 47–8) and Susen (2007, 31–6).
28. Habermas repeatedly stresses the idea that validity claims are always and necessarily *criticisable*. See, for example, Habermas (1987 [1981]-f, 287, 305, 308, and 333; 1987 [1981]-h, 125 – 6, 137, 139, and 149–50; 1982, 269; 2001a, 33, 79, and 82–3).
29. On Habermas's insistence on the self-critical spirit of the Enlightenment, see esp. Habermas (1987 [1981]-j, 1996 [1981], 1987 [1985]-a, 1992 [1988]). See also Hudson (1993), Ingram (2005), and Passerin d'Entrèves (1996).
30. See Habermas (1987 [1985]-b, 302): 'The New Critique of Reason suppresses that almost 200-year-old counterdiscourse inherent in modernity itself[...]. The latter discourse set out from Kantian philosophy as an unconscious expression of the modern age and pursued the goal of *enlightening the Enlightenment about its own narrow-mindedness*.' (Italics added.)
31. On Habermas's distinction between system and lifeworld, see esp. Habermas (1987 [1981]-g, 1987 [1981]-i). See also, for instance, Bohman (1989), Hartmann (1985), and Susen (2007, 61 – 73).
32. See, for example, Habermas (1984 [1977], 1985 [1984]). See also, for example, Johnson (1991) and Raulet (1996).
33. On Habermas's notion of 'the authority of the better argument', see, for example, Habermas (2001 [1984]-d, esp. 94 – 9; 2001a, 13, 44, 45, and 79). In the secondary literature, see, for example, Apel (1990 [1985], 35, 41 – 2, and 50), Fultner (2001, xv), Pellizzoni (2001), Power (2000), Ray (2004, 317 – 8), Rochlitz (1996), Susen (2009a, 96–7), Susen (2009b, 111–2), and Whitton (1992, 307).

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