Critical Distance: Politics Between the Habermasian Dualisms

Patrick Burkart

Department of Political Science
McGill University, Montreal

June, 1993

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts

(c) Patrick Burkart, 1993
Acknowledgements

Joel Schalit’s critical commentary and recommendations for reading have proven invaluable. I thank Robert Hurley for his help with translation.
Abstract

This thesis explores Jurgen Habermas's dualist, system and action methodology of the social sciences as a continuation of Frankfurt School critical theory. It also interprets it as a reworking of this tradition. First, it lays out the criteria and models Habermas uses for a theory of rational modern progress, and relates these ideals to his empirical political theory of practice in the public sphere (Chapter One). Then, it looks for positivisms and objectivisms in the project that threatens its critical function (Chapter Two). Finally, it illustrates these positivisms at work in Habermas's dualist theory of new social movements (Chapter Three). Habermas's dialogue with new social movement theory illuminates some hidden instrumentalisms in his critical theory of society.

Résumé

Cette thèse explore la méthodologie dualiste de système et d'action de Jurgen Habermas dans les sciences sociales. Elle interprète cette méthodologie à la fois comme un prolongement de la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort et comme une refonte de cette tradition critique. D'abord elle expose les critères et les modèles dont Habermas se sert pour faire une théorie du progrès moderne rationnel, et elle met ces idéaux en rapport avec sa théorie politique empirique de pratique dans la sphère publique (Premier Chapitre). Puis elle repère les positivisms et les objectivisms dans le projet qui menace sa fonction critique (Deuxième Chapitre). En dernier lieu, elle montre ces positivisms en œuvre dans la théorie habermasienne dualiste des nouveaux mouvements sociaux (Troisième Chapitre). Le dialogue de Habermas avec la théorie des nouveaux mouvements sociaux met en lumière des instrumentalisms qui sont enfouis dans sa théorie critique de la société.
Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter One: Dualism and Salvation

I. 1 Introduction 8
I. 2. The Importance of Civil Society for Critical Theory 9
I. 3. Systems Theory as a Total Perspective on Civil Society 16
I. 4. Objectivation and Salvation 22
I. 5. Objectivation and Decline 24
I. 6. Critical Perspectives on the Negative Utopias of Positivism 29
I. 7. Finding Utopian Potentials in Civil Society 33
I. 8. Incommensurability in Critical Theory: Art and Enlightenment 35
I. 9. Conclusion 40

Chapter Two: Objectivating Reason Within the Theory of the Margin

II. 1. Introduction: Civil Society Between Social and Functional Integration 41
II. 2. Luhmann's Importance for Critical Theory: Pure System Integrative Language

II. 3. Weberian Themes in the Theory of Communicative Evolution

II. 4. The Politics of the Centerless Society

II. 5. The Dualist Defense of Civil Society From Internal and External Perspectives

II. 6. Mediatization, Colonization, Reification

II. 7. Systems Theory's Resistance to Action Theory

II. 8. Habermas-Adorno, Parsons-Luhmann

II. 9. Conclusion: Nature Objectification in Critical Theory

Chapter Three: Conflicts over Nature in the Margin and the Theory of the Margin

III. 1. Introduction

III. 2. Important Themes for Alternative Practice in the Habermas-Luhmann Dispute
Introduction

This thesis explores continuities and discontinuities of two generations of Frankfurt School thinking about the slavery of administered society, emancipation, science, and language. I select Horkheimer and Adorno as primary representatives of the first generation of critical theory, and Habermas as the primary representative of the second generation. Many of these themes have been explored in Martin Jay's *Permanent Exiles*¹ and *Marxism and Totality*.²

What this thesis contributes to the discussion of critical theory is an understanding and evaluation of the usefulness of systems sociology of the Parsonian style for critical theory. In the first and second chapters I select a few debates--between Adorno and Parsons, Habermas and Luhmann--that have been only cursorily explored in the secondary literature on critical theory. In the third chapter, I relate contemporary sociological studies of communications and new social movements to the development of a second-generation of critical theory. New social movement theory has only very recently received critical commentary from second-generation critical theorists.³

The first chapter explores lines of first-generation argument preserved, extinguished, and possibly supplanted by Habermas(ians). I begin with the assumption that the critique of instrumental reason and

---

ideology are maintained across the two generations of critical theorists identified earlier. Both generations project the Weberian conception of instrumental, subjective reason into civil society, and examine the effects of reification. They criticize positivist social theory as an ideology which reinforces the nefarious effects of the capitalist commodity form.

The idea of communicative rationality, new appropriations of sociological argumentation and a foundationalist philosophy, however, are discontinuities introduced by Habermas into critical theory.

I consider second generation concerns with political emancipation and salvific, or emancipatory, theory in civil society to be a primary discontinuity in critical theory. It is true that both generations associate redemption with the reconciliation of the "natures" split by objectivating reason into inner and outer spheres. The first generation hints at an aesthetic reconciliation of these spheres, but rules out a collective emancipatory enterprise. The second generation, however, insists that objectivating reason associated with the social sciences provides the only reasonable grounds for identifying unifying potentials available for collective action. Habermas employs an ideal standard of the covenant, the ideal of community implied by the ideal speech situation, to differentiate his critical project from the anti-institutionalist leanings of the idealized personal aesthetic experience in mimesis.

I also explore distinctions in critical perspectives on modern language. The importance of language for critical theory cannot be understated, for it is here that the later, dualistic thinking about

4 I have chosen to push a discussion of Marcuse outside the margins of this thesis
language derives from the earlier, monistic, thinking. Much of the philosophical burden of the Marxian idea of productive work, or labor, has been placed upon language and communications in the second generation. "Language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone, it really exists for me personally as well. Language, like consciousness arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men."5

First generation thinking about language suggests that the world was created with language.6 God's language performed a differentiating function, introducing the first quality into the monistic, unified subject and object. The word and creation are original acts of God used to determine, objectify, and negate nature. The negation is accomplished in language. Language is a mythical, primordial differentiation of being from God, a first and original quality. By the end-point of history, at the terminus of the dialectic of enlightenment, language is reduced, by the same, "subjective" reason, to quantities.7 Mimesis rejoins God and nature in aesthetic experiences. The hermeneutic experience of mimesis is a moment's reprieve from "functionalized thought." With Walter Benjamin,

6 Scholem, Gershom, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, "Religious Authority and Mysticism," (Frankfurt am Main, New York Schocken Books/Suhrkamp Verlag, 1960) (German), 1965 (English) What allows for the objectification of nature is the historical condition of mysticism. The language of tradition creates an instrumental understanding of nature and God, allowing for objectification, institutions, and tradition simultaneously.
Adorno called the exiled prophet-philosopher's moment's reprieve, "redemption." The mystic waits for brief, profane moments of illumination, which imply a prior state of pure language. Art production and translation are mimetic experiences attempting to mimic the primordial subject-object and preserve non-identity at the same time. Language is in mourning until the mythical period of undifferentiated monistic unity with the thing in itself is achieved.

Habermas retains the idea that language has a differentiating "function," and that at some point in time, God and creation were prior to logos. But he introduces a familiar alternative to mimesis and this private model of redemption with his rationally reconstructed ideal speech situation. He locates emancipatory potentials in the classical liberal "public sphere" of civil society. Here, the redemptive reprieve can be consolidated and institutionalized in a revolutionary discursive praxis. The mimetic reconciliation with nature is replaced by a rationally reconstructed ideal of dialogical, communicative reconciliation in new, radically democratized and socialized institutions and practices. Habermas relates potentials for powerless public discourse to the institutions contained in modern civil society, introducing an evolutionary theory of modernity that overcomes Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment.

Because the evolutionary theory of communicative structures is backed up by a variation of Talcott Parsons's systems sociology, I compare the responses of Adorno and Habermas to Parson's sociology, placing the style of Habermasian systems theory at the center of the disagreements over the place of objectifying reason and dualism in critical theory discussed in
Adorno criticizes Parsons as an alienating force in social theory and practice. Habermas criticizes, but still appropriates, the Parsonian "systems" concept.

The second chapter engages the dialogue between Habermas and Luhmann, specifically teasing out the critique of functionalist thought and bureaucratic sociology continuous throughout both generations of critical theory. I approach the relationship between Luhmann and Habermas from a first-generation perspective: the "total" scope of the Luhmannian social system—the omnipotence and omnipresence of the code—is reminiscent of Horkheimer and Adorno's depiction of totally reified social practices. Civil society disappears in first generation critical theory and neopositivism. Habermas's responses to neo-Parsonianism and the first generation of critical theory are similar in that he consistently rejects a monistic theory of society in favor of a dualist perspective that yields space for fully modern, free, and rational life civil society.

Luhmann returns Max Weber's sociology to Germany from a period spent in America. Parsons was an American translator of Weber into English and a major proponent of the scientific study of social action. Parsons's systems theory aids Habermas in arguing for the political primacy of discursive spaces in civil society, insofar as Habermas appropriates and uses Luhmann's theory of communications media to explain and illustrate lifeworld colonization as an interaction of systems with lifeworlds. I will explain how Habermas pins the responsibility of alienation and crisis in late capitalism to the automatic subsumption of speech structures under non-linguistic, autopoietic "steering media" in "the system."
Although Habermas critiques Luhmann's positivist social science as a final falling away of language from the world, a complete differentiation of objectivating reason from reconciliatory reason in social theory, this critique rests unsteadily with his appropriation of the cybernetic model of colonization and mediatization of the lifeworld. His critiques of Luhmann (and his artful interchanges with Gadamer about hermeneutic reflection) notwithstanding, he lingers too long in the scientistic, positivist language of systems functionalisms. Second-generation thinking focuses much critical attention upon theoros, the language of science and all positivisms. However, the attention is not sustained, because Habermas relies entirely upon an argument about transcendental foundations for theoros.

The third chapter ties both previous chapters into a discussion of Habermas's writings on the new politics of civil society and the formal requirements for emancipatory communicative praxis. Habermas's new social movement writings brings together nearly all the discontinuities of thought between generations of critical theory about language, labor, science, theory, and domination mentioned so far. In the literature on new social movements, the conflicts of new politics pose powerful challenges to civil societies organized under techno-capitalism, as well as to a critical theory of society which depends upon a rigid dualism of system and social integration. Problems of nature objectification, alienation from language, and the commodification of culture in modernity attract attention because they reverberate through the lifeworld. These become political problems when they threaten the underpinnings of dominant worldviews and social structures. If Habermas were patient with new social movement
theory, he might find unifying potentials being presently exploited in the collective action of ecologists and feminists. I will lay out some arguments suggesting how Habermas misinterprets new social movement critiques as neurotic, pathological, and false consciousness.

Critical theory is grappling with adapting its conceptual repertoire to encompass a new mode of post industrial production. Theorists of the new social movements, especially Touraine and Melucci, have sketched emancipatory potentials of collective action in the cybernetically "self-producing society." They have presented a model of structural conditions for new politics to critical theorists on a silver platter. Habermas has shrunk away from the offering.
Chapter One: Dualism and Salvation

1.1 Introduction: The Importance of Critical Theory for Civil Society

I pursue two separate critical-theoretical traditions amenable to a study of civil society, first and second generation critical theories. Both share a common history treatable with a single analysis. Transgenerational Frankfurt school philosophy retains stylistic similarities and a heritage of premises, themes, assumptions, and motivations. Both generations of critical theory place themselves in a conversation with post-Kantian Continental philosophies of consciousness, especially Hegelian dialectics of mind, self, and society and Marxist social theory. These common themes reappear throughout the primary literatures and the present discussion.

Second-generation critical theory is intent upon distinguishing itself within this discourse from the first generation. The scope of disagreement is large. The thrust of the argument seems to be that the first generation's historical analyses of the decline of subjective reason leaves emancipatory social theory without foundations in objectivities. This chapter focuses on the "new" addition to old critical theory—Habermas's theory of communicative rationality—and on what has been left behind.

---

8 Habermas also brings in a great deal of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy to his literature, especially the American pragmatism of G. H. Mead and Wittgenstein's theory of language games.
Critical hermeneutics and systems theory are the two planks of second generation critical theory. They support a critical science that is amenable to the demands of "post-conventional" practice. The rational reconstruction of individual communicative competence and social learning systems are the two levels of Habermasian historical materialism. 9 This is a grandly unifying theory of agency and social self-production. It answers the criticism that Marxist social theory, since Horkheimer and Adorno, has been unable to recover a model of a social subject with the fortitude to act collectively to make history in a liberationist, revolutionary effort. Neither Habermas nor Horkheimer and Adorno were interested in sketching a game plan for revolutionary practice. But Habermas implies the possibility of such a plan. Habermas's claim to have "saved the subject" from the clutches of negative dialectics and paradoxes of Marxist theory, seem to be interpreted as a philosophical desire for a return to a search for free, rational, progressive, democratic communities. 10

I. 2. The Importance of Civil Society for Critical Theory

Of course, the analysis of civil society as a system has a long conceptual history in Continental philosophy. Hegel and Marx located of self-transformative learning activities in civil society. Hegel analyzed civil society as a place where economic and political-cultural imperatives undergo "mediation."

When Hegel defines civil society as a system of Sittlichkeit "split in its extremes and lost," he has in mind a condition where egoistic individualism --one extreme--is integrated by means of an abstract generality (universal interdependence)--the other extreme--that is entirely foreign to the will of individuals. Accordingly, civil society as "an achievement of the modern world" involves the creation of a new type of market economy that integrates the "arbitrary wills"of self-interested economic subjects by means of an objective and "external" process that achieves a universal result unintended and unanticipated by the participants. This objective process can be reconstructed by a science specific to the modern world, namely political economy, that Hegel regards as being entirely parallel to the sciences of nature.11

Integration of the social system occurs through state manipulation of the integrative system of needs (by a proto-welfare state, bureaucrats, and police), and social integration of individuals (by corporations) into processes of socialization and education in civil society. Hegel gives an institutional grounding for integration in objective spirit whose dialectical logic is accessible through dialectical philosophy.

Marx analyzes integration according to the same "scientific," systematic logic demonstrated in Hegel's Logic. The internal logic of the capitalist commodity form is the dialectical unfolding of the categories and their class agents, but also, and most importantly, this logic serves as a means and motivation for bourgeois philosophy's self-critique.12 The logic of the material reproduction of the material conditions for existence is functional. The same forces of nature responsible for human reconstitution of the natural world also allows for its revolutionary replacement. "Marx's theory of class struggle and revolutionary praxis,

---

11 Cohen and Arato, p. 98.
along with the critique of ideology, appropriates dimensions of Hegel's concept of objectification that transcend the restriction of self-formative processes of production." Capital works from a purely functionalist systems logic to set out the class structure of exchange relations in civil society, but implies a supersession of this logic by emancipatory reflection.

What is common to historical materialism and Habermas's "reconstruction" of historical materialism is the structural predisposition of society to develop. "A reconstruction of communicative competence is needed for self-reflection and criticism--in order that an adequate basis be provided for an historically relevant critique and the exploration of developmental possibilities." Rational reconstruction distinguishes cognitive from normative reason and postulates that the cognitive progress of society in history can fit together with normative progress, as well, such that "social systems can form new structures by utilizing the learning capacities of its members in order to cope with systems problems which threaten the maintenance of the self." Rational reconstruction is suitable for critiques of transgression and regress, as we will see in the chapter on Habermas's disciplinarian attitude towards the new social movements. By identifying a fit between modern cognitive and normative development, Habermas claims to found critique upon an objective historical movement toward a "completed" modernity. The second-generation conviction

13 Ibid., p. 77.
is that the logics of cognitive and normative development, or of system and social integration, fit together.

The fit suggests that Habermas assumes that individual learning processes precede societal evolutionary advances. Piet Strydom concludes, with Klaus Eder, Albrecht Wellmer, and Axel Honneth, that "[i]t remains completely unclear as to how this translation from the individual to the social level is achieved, what learning mechanism is responsible, or how world views or collective systems of interpretation come into being." 16

Reconstruction introduces a positivist perspective to critical theory that yields new and unique conclusions about society in the name of critical theory. The explanatory mode of argumentation, the theory of social evolution, and the supporting theories for critical hermeneutics systematically split the comprehensive, monistic histories and analyses of the first generation into system- and lifeworld perspectives. Up to a point, Habermas is advancing critical argumentation along the lines suggested by Horkheimer in his essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory," where "[t]he individual steps within the theory are, at least in intention, as rigorous as the deductions in a rigorous scientific theory; each is an element in the building up of [a] comprehensive existential judgment." 17

First generation thought also incorporated social-scientistic methodologies.

But the nature of Habermas's "comprehensive existential judgment" is of a very different sort than Horkheimer's. Habermas identifies a positive

dialectic which does not appear to the first generation. In the following passage, Horkheimer describes the content of the value judgment made by the critical theory of society.

[The critical theory of society is, in its totality, the unfolding of a single existential judgment. To put it in broad terms, the theory says that the basic form of the historically given commodity economy on which modern history rests contains in itself the internal and external tensions of the modern era; it generates these tensions over and over again in an increasingly heightened form; and after a period of progress, development of human powers, and emancipation for the individual, after an enormous extension of human control over nature, it finally hinders further development and drives humanity into a new barbarism.]

It is illuminating to compare Habermas's argument that the world is reasonable because our language redeems us, and his frequent invocation of the "binding force" of communicative reason, found in intersubjective understanding and reciprocal recognition. Whereas for Horkheimer, history ends with "new barbarism," it still ends with socialism for Habermas.

The objectifying role of interpretation in the human sciences is not relinquished with "critical science." For Habermas, a dualism of explanation and understanding is in the very center of the human sciences, which also includes critical science. "As can be shown through the example of psychoanalysis, as interpreted in terms of communication theory, the two procedures of reconstruction and of self-critique can still be brought together within the framework of one and the same theory." Rational

18 Ibid.
reconstruction and "methodically carried out self-critique" represent two possible modes of its employment, as well a synthetic, third possibility. Hermeneutic Interpretation is meta-theoretically prior to empirical theory and also more self-sufficient.

[Hermeneutical] self-reflection leads to insight due to the fact that what has previously been unconscious is made conscious in a manner rich in practical consequences: analytic insights intervene in life, if I may borrow this dramatic phrase from Wittgenstein. A successful reconstruction also raises an "unconsciously" functioning rule system to consciousness in a certain manner; it renders explicit the intuitive knowledge that is given with competence with respect to the rules in the form of "know how." But this theoretical knowledge has no practical consequences. 21

What Habermas's dualistic model tells us is that, through rational reflection in conversation and in critical social science, substantive moral and political judgments can be arrived at and verified; that these judgments must include a positive space for the identification of reason with progress; and that human progress can be guided to liberating ends with the practical wisdom of critical theory and critical science.

A key feature of Habermas's positive dialectic, then, is the idea that the freedom to make history still remains despite massive alienation, reification of consciousness, and barbarism. Below, I consider the significance of Habermas's use of the metaphor of the covenant of Yahweh with the people of Israel as an expression of a communicative covenant. 22

This motivating idea of the covenant is reflected in dualist critical

theory. Habermas insists that a meaningful interpretation of social norms, values, beliefs, and worldviews must accompany a functionalist explanation of class conflict, and also be aware of its own commitment to the covenant and its contributions to the progressive evolution of society's structures.

It is the responsibility of "critical hermeneutics" to inform the practice of critical theory. The dual rationality of the theory of communicative action grounds evaluative philosophy in an empirical theory such that "the empirical theory presupposes the validity of the normative theory it uses."23

Habermasian critical science justifies, interprets, and guides possibilities for progressive political practice in civil society. "The idea of the public sphere" is of primary political interest for second-generation critical theory because it relates the emancipatory potentials in "public communication" to a "rational reorganization of social and political power."24 The public sphere embodies the discursive rationality of civil society. Nancy Fraser argues that, the prejudiced omissions of women and other traditionally silent groups from Habermas's discourse about the public sphere notwithstanding, "[t]his concept [...] permits us to keep in view the distinctions between state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic associations, distinctions that are essential to democratic theory."25 The distinctions important to democratic theory are system logic and communicative rationality, which compete with each other in the

25 Fraser, Nancy, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Social Text No. 25/26, 1990, p. 57.
public sphere. These distinctions suggest that sustained critical reflection in the social sciences and in social theory separates into two moments, but that these moments resolve in a social practice of critical theory.

The next section shifts to the exclusive language of systems theory, a pole of the dual perspective on theoretical language that threatens to overcome its hermeneutic counterpart.

I. 3. Systems Theory As A Total Social Perspective On Civil Society

There is an explicit positivism dispute between the generations of critical theory about systems theory. Habermas requires an empirical-analytic systems theory to argue the case for the co-development of norms and social systems. Horkheimer and Adorno rejected both the systems approach to social science and the temptation to use it. First generation writings on "objectivating" logic suggests that what makes systems logic plausible as a mode of social-scientific explanation makes it unsuitable for ideology critique.

I begin the present section by distinguishing "pure" systems theory from Habermas's idea of a "critical" systems theory, which is a communicative systems approach purged of "neo-conservativism." Pure systems theory is the practice of cybernetics—a highly refined, positivistic social theory working to provide disinterested, value-free, technical knowledge aspiring to noiseless and nomological communication. Pure systems theorists, represented here by Niklas Luhmann, refine a

26 The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 352.
practice of social control by speaking the language of cybernetics. Cybernetics mimics rationalized practices of social domination by programming out all normative expectations in social theory and replacing them with cognitive parameters.

While Talcott Parsons is not a "pure" systems theorist by my account (Luhmann is), he initiated a severe reduction of political theory to purely technical concerns. Norms and language are considered to be the pre-given and automatic "facts" fueling integration, facts that can be studied as helping or hindering the adaptive functions of the highly developed and differentiated social system. However, Parsons has not yet given up the idea of the good life served by social theory. Even by Parsons's model, civil society retains a flavor of Hegelian "objective spirit," as it has been understood in such Hegelian formulations as "the solidarity of the ethical spirit," or "the community of ethical customs."27

"Social integration" "demands" respect from actors for a moral authority, so that collectively binding rules--norms--can structure action in roles and institutions. The "societal community" is the Hegelian category of civil society and Durkheim's concept of "the social" combined and translated into systems terminology.28 It grounds a worldview or tradition or universe of discourse in what Durkheim also called "the sacred."

What is lost with Parsons's system theory is a qualitative sense of individual experience in "the system," in modern society. Parsons offers a thin cross-section of experience with his account of what is attributable

28 Cohen and Arato, p. 313.
to the "personality system." Subjective motivations, the stuff studied by psychology, are reducible to functions of the system of personality. The personality system exchanges information with the social system, the former functioning as a necessary subsystem of the latter. Selfhood is a system fully integratable with the social and cultural systems.²⁹

Parsonian structures appear eternally aloof and indifferent to particulars. Transient, historical, particular, unique, nonidentical, or wholly other events or experiences are touchable with the systems theory of personality structure. Also, Parsons treats individual and social systems separately and compartmentally, as fields for different disciplines. Sociology and psychology departments should each study the logics that are still peculiar to their systemic fields.

However, there is a unity to these fields which is implied by the idea of integration. Problems of boundary-maintenance are problems of disunity and integration failure. Parsons anticipates the day when sociology will come to enfold all conflicts and contradictions between systems within an over-arching abstraction, bringing modernity to a kind of sociological conclusion. The conclusion will not look very different from the modern social system. Parsons keeps sociology responsible to the given norms and values of the society from which his ideological discipline sprung.

The differentiation and separation of "spheres" or "systems" of social reality is a defining characteristic of cultural modernity, first

²⁹ Habermas writes in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity that systems functionalism "tacitly sets a seal on 'the end of the individual,' which Adorno encircled with his negative dialectic and protested against as a self-inflicted fate." See p. 353.
described sociologically by Weber. "Integration" into social institutions and organizations unifies them for Parsons. He integrates the individual into society by showing the interdependencies of rule-guided action and rule-providing institutions. Integration is to the sociological merging of subjective, individual differences into objective, "social" unities what synthesis is to the philosophical merging of concepts. The psychological self-sufficiency of the individual subject, known affectionately as "the average superego" to Parsons, and the "functional need" of an objective and authoritative social system to survive and perpetuate itself "integrate."

Parsons's disciple, Luhmann, deletes all references to society as a source of legitimating normative sanctions and rules, however. He imports nothing into his cybernetic structuralism that cannot be processed by the terms of its operational codes alone. Luhmann's system encompasses all of modern society, whereas Parsons works with three separate but interacting systems. "Communications codes" assign a counterpart to every item in a given field.

Apart from code failures or mutations, this principle makes possible a strict coordination between mechanisms for genetic reproduction and the elementary structure of organisms. This coordination, in turn, makes organic evolution possible. Now for meaning generating systems, language is the primary code.30

Codes organize communicative action so that boundaries and identities perform, persist, and evolve through time. They bear no resemblance to natural languages of speaking subjects. They are the communicatively pure

reflexes of unintended and consequential "meanings" that feed back into the system.

Luhmann's analysis of system integration frames the problem context for second-generation critical theory. It claims to explain the evolution of society without recourse to a normative theory of modernity. The differentiation of society into functionally integrated subsystems unleashes new freedoms for "choice" dependent upon continued differentiation.

Habermas finds "pure" systems theory a powerful demonstration that modernity summarizes the evolution of communicative competence. However, the powerful explanatory force implicit in neo-Parsonianism is misused.

In one way, the most recent systems functionalism is an heir-successor to Marxism, which it radicalizes and defuses at the same time. On the one hand, systems theory adopts the view that the systemic constraints of material production, which it understands as imperatives of a self-maintenance of the general social system, reach right through the symbolic structures of the lifeworld. On the other hand, it removes the critical sting from the base-superstructure thesis by reinterpreting what was intended to be an empirical diagnosis as a prior analytical distinction. The barbaric condition predicted by Marx in case revolutionary praxis failed is characterized by a complete subsumption of the lifeworld under the imperatives of a valorization process decoupled from use-values and concrete labor. Undisturbed by this, systems functionalism proceeds from the assumption that this condition has already set in—not merely at the entrance to the capitalist economy, but in the forecourts of every functional system. The marginalized lifeworld could survive only if it were to be transformed in turn into a media-steered subsystem and if it were to shed everyday communicative practice like a snakeskin.

32 The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 353.
Luhmann's complete disregard for practices of social integration and his identification of progress with increased system complexity make Luhmann a "neo-conservative" in Habermas's eyes; but this is not Habermas's final opinion of neo-Parsonian sociology.

"Complexity" is a standard derived from a positivist criterion of control. By taking sociological structures as facts and things for theoretical manipulation, systems theory claims a "norm-free" analysis of existing structures and functions. Whether this attitude provides critical theory with anything but a target of critique is of great importance to second-generation critical theorists. Habermas continues the first generation of criticism by engaging the positivism of sociology. He points out that theories purporting "value freedom" betray the desire to be detached from values for accurate fact-readings. Scientific claims to validity differentiate descriptive and prescriptive statements analytically. But they do not have the critical, hermeneutic ability to meaningfully synthesize these statements. 33 Luhmann, the coldest of social scientists, writes that "[t]ranslatability is a structural requirement of language but not a requirement for the communication medium 'truth.'" 34 Truth does not need to be translated or introduced to social studies.

Systems theory makes a claim to a universal and total understanding of a social "logic," however one-sided and narrow this understanding may be. Habermas's interest in incorporating the narrow model of rationality

34 The Differentiation of Society, p. 395, note 5.
contained in the logic of evolutionary communicative systems is to find a foundational interrelationship of systems sociology, evolutionary theory, and communications theory. This complex of mutually-presupposing theories is called upon to ground a critique of modernity in dialogue with its own tradition.

I. 4. Objectivation and Salvation

Habermas changes the terms of critical theory's relation to scientific discourse by reconciling critical theory to "rational reconstruction." We have seen already how this is achieved in a new appeal for sociological investigation into the mutual evolution of normative and "system" structures, and in his recourse to psychological, genetic structuralism. These investigations intend to find criteria for progressive practice. This section introduces a hermeneutic argument proposing that Habermas has a theological preoccupation guiding a vision of a self-controlled, positivist social science, whose role is to serve as the critical conscience for leading humanity to a promised modernity.

Habermas wants to insist that language can be "natural," with full access to a reservoir of normativity, and also reflect itself outside its traditional context with objectivating, "hermeneutic" reflection. Through a process Habermas calls "controlled distancing," a hermeneutic understanding of effective history mitigates positivist distortions.

36 On the Logic of the Social Sciences (Cambridge: The MIT Press), 1989, p. 166. This formulation seems to be borrowed from Paul Ricoeur.
Habermas anticipates a scientific confirmation and validation of the rational disposition of the evolutionary structures he is describing, moreover, he gives critical social theory a leading role in reconstructing and expanding potentials for rationality in society. These are potentials that were denied (or not recognized, by the Habermasian account) by the first generation. Objective spirit still awaits fulfillment. It is not yet too late to heal sacred intersubjectivities broken by modernity. With normative progress comes evolutionary systemic leaps.

The metaphor of the "covention" describes a rational, universal solidarity implied by the reconstruction of an "ideal speech situation." The covenant is the name Habermas gives to the rational potentials bound up in intersubjective communication, potentials which promise the historical necessity and eventuality of emancipation from immaturity. It is possible to compare the argumentative centrality of the Habermasian covenant system to the central image of the kingdom of ends in Kant's ethical philosophy.

The covenant implies a rational, contractual promise from God to redeem a fallen human nature. The redemption of the promise depends upon a free, rational acceptance of the terms of the deal, given by God. Critical hermeneutics finds these terms, the most important of which is that the power of reconciliation lies in communication. Communicative reason includes the potentials for agreement, peace, mutual respect, and properly functioning system and social integration. The cultivation of communicative reason should yield unifying community-building. "[T]he kind of confederation which is meant here is the covenant of Yahweh with the people of Israel. Just as God's wrath against sin protects the covenant,

37 The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, pp 303-6.
so communicative reason has its own dialectic of 'betrayal and vengeance.'\textsuperscript{38} Communicative confederation, through the public sphere of discourse, exerts a potentially rational kind of vengeance, or normative sanction, against transgression and misunderstanding.

I. 5. Objectivation and Decline

There are reasons why these potentials were not considered by the first generation. The chapter of \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment} entitled, "Elements of Anti-Semitism" provides the background. The Jew and nature are both natural essences in a society subject to the dictatorial control of scientistic and systematic scrutiny, functionalization, and domination. The same logic of capitalism animates people and "natural" objects, with inevitably catastrophic results. Jews and nature share the role of Other in Germany, and both face the threat of annihilation. Jews experiencing the Nazi atrocities are more the chosen race than ever before--and not because God is with them, but because they have been "chosen" to be the first to fully experience the inevitable horrors of a modern, autonomous systems rationality that was initially bound up in the dialectic of enlightenment. The Jews have suffered inordinately, and there is no reason to believe that the same fate will not befall other classes of people.

The same process at work in fascist states is also emerging in human studies. In his essay on Parsons, Adorno writes that positivism, "the court of judgment of enlightened reason," reproduces with every

objectification a the dominating attitude toward nature nurtured by all scientisms. A primary theme in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that there are paradoxical consequences to enlightenment thinking. For instance, scientific pursuits in the name of progress destroy the normative standard and goal of progress. Social science operating in a positivistic mode begins with the idea of free and rational politics of the subject.

However, a control criterion in the center of scientific discourse about society brings society’s nature into opposition with the instrumental rationality of the social science. Society becomes an object awaiting the history-making interventions of a powerful human subject. "Since Bacon science has been conceptualized in terms of power over nature, and those methods that were most effective and successful in the domination of nature were celebrated as the sole road to truth, while competing theories were rejected."39

Enlightenment’s philosophical narrative tells the story of a spectacular subjectivity, whose power over the object is simultaneously its triumph and its own tragic flaw. "The sciences, particularly the logical and mathematical sciences, have set about the liquidation of philosophy with an earnestness which hardly existed before."40 But the object takes revenge upon the subject as fate. Enlightenment arose from myth and returns to myth. The history of improving control over nature comes full circle: nature, that mystical quality eroded with subjective reason, returns in the form of catastrophe, ruinous decline. Critical theory is

---

also a product of this process. Its duty, according to Horkheimer and Adorno's critical social philosophy, is to trace the historical manifestations of this logic.

Science and its technical imperative of control is a model of enlightenment reason. The scientific subject knows itself through its work upon external substances, or things. It evaluates its progress and improvement according to evaluative criteria of utility, efficiency, and success by which to guide social life into predictably ruinous productive endeavors.

Francis Bacon's instrumentalist criteria for the natural sciences have come to guide social life into predictable productive endeavors. Positivist social sciences, the administrative and economic systems of authoritarian states, and culture industries bring the logic of domination bound up in the late capitalist commodity form and science together. Controlling consciousness effaces human nature. The state scientifically appropriates forces of commodity production, functionally organizing society into technocratic hierarchies. The highest stage of enlightened politics—fascism—is responsible only to the effects of the single, functional logic of interested capital accumulation.

Turning to the first generation's accounts of what happens to theoretical languages in the final throes of modernity, we find a hermeneutic discourse running parallel to the analytical arguments of the political-theological discourse just reviewed. Functionalist theory that is also positivist is an example of enlightened thought par excellence. It

41 The identity logic found in the bourgeois philosophies of capitalist economies, the monological sciences, mathematics, and formal logic are treated as expressions of controlling consciousness.
demonstrates the regression of language to communications. Anticipating second-generation analyses of communicative rationality, Adorno writes in The Jargon of Authenticity, "[c]ommunications clicks and puts forth as truth what should instead be suspect by virtue of the prompt collective agreement." Adorno elaborates with great hermeneutic virtuosity the revenge of the "mythical" upon de-mythologizing enlightenment in language; moreover, with his analysis of Parsons's positivism, he demonstrates enlightenment's "return to myth" in language.

The following quotation reveals critical theory's hermeneutic attention to the "dialectical moment" of facts and interpretation:

In its semantic directions positivism has constantly noted the historical break between language and that which it expresses. Linguistic forms, as reified--and only through reification do they become forms--have outlived what they once referred to, together with the context of that reference. [...] That without language there is no fact remains [...] the thorn in the flesh and the theme of positivism, since it is here that the stubbornly mythical remainder of language is revealed [...] Neither [the Heideggerian jargon of authenticity nor positivism] bothers about the dialectical moment in which language, as if it were something else, wins itself away from its magical origins, language being entangled in a progressing de-mythologization.

Ignoring the charge against Heidegger, and focusing specifically upon the same charge against positivism, we can put together a first generation, hermeneutic thesis about communicative rationality and social-scientific mythologies. If language is denigrated to communication by the force of

---

43 Ibid., p. 42.
44 This proposition is addressed to Martin Jay and others who insist that a search for first generation hermeneutics is fruitless.
reason and debased, becoming a mere technical means to the end of
domination, then the "liquefying" pressures of science and positivistic
social science upon philosophy are part of the same history of the
dialectic of enlightenment.

First generation critical theory charges itself with the task of
telling this story. There are no covenants, redemptive potentials of
reason, or emancipatory claims to be made. The hermeneutic tradition to
which Adorno (and perhaps Horkheimer) belong is the Jewish tradition of
"oral Torah," a principle of which is that the Torah is a living history
actualized in the speaking of the story. Horkheimer and Adorno, like the
Jewish storytellers of the Torah, cannot but use a fallen language. The
fallen language of reified consciousness tells the paradoxical story of the
dialectic of enlightenment, but cannot support the conceptual requirements
for a praxis philosophy in the Marxist tradition. All that can be said is
that functionalized thought has totalized or turned inwards upon itself,
thereby allowing for its own total critique.

Horkheimer and Adorno theorized science, language, and politics as
they theorized the Holocaust--as messianic, Marxist hermeneuts, and also as
Jewish theologians. They brought their education in Western philosophy, a
tradition which presupposed the reasonableness of modernity, to bear upon
the insanity of unthinking fascism Their "critical" careers were
dedicated to drawing out the relations of reason to modern forms of

45 We can think of Adorno's word, "liquefying" as an expression of the
fluidity and adaptability of the logic of capital to all areas of human
experience, including scholarly experience
46 Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy"
47 See Scholem. Also, Joel Schalit has expressed this idea in a thesis in
progress at The Berkeley Graduate Theological Union.
domination, without recourse to positive dialectics or an idea of salvation. I have already suggested some problems that Habermas sees with the first generation, problems that arise from a Marxist perspective operating in the absence of a positive thesis about collective praxis and emancipation.

I. 6. Critical Perspectives on The Negative Utopias of Positivism

Critical theory engages in a critique of ideology when it attacks positivism and pragmatic philosophy. Adorno and Habermas share a concern with exposing this distinction of positivistic sciences, especially social sciences, through a critique of their logical foundations and their social effects in domination.

Adorno began a thoroughgoing critique of Parsons with the observation that the split of society into its subjective and objective spheres is false consciousness, "perpetuating conceptually the split between the living subject and the objectivity that governs the subjects and yet derives from them." Parsons is unwittingly describing a severe alienation in society, and moreover, reinforcing its hold with sociology. "What compartmentalized disciplines project on the reality merely reflects back what has taken place in reality. False consciousness is also true: inner and outer life are torn apart."  

48 I thank Joel Schalit for this idea also.
50 Ibid., p. 49. My emphasis.
Adorno objects that Parsons's model of reality, his description of integration, is nothing more than the appearance of a reality of the model, to use Bourdieu's phrase here. The abstraction required for finding personality systems meshing with cultural and social systems is actually a bourgeois exhortation to accept the operational codes of bureaucratic society and the consequences of the objectification of nature.

Adorno concludes that unity is not realized in reality; objective contradictions remain. For this discrepancy between sociological abstraction and social reality, we can be at most only ironically thankful. Were there unity, Adorno suggests, then the world would look much more like Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the differences between subjective and objective spheres have been obliterated by formal rationality, the dictatorial rationality of expediency and technological efficiency.

But how does one describe total reification without using reified language? Horkheimer also chooses the *Brave New World* metaphor as an illustration of the problem of describing reification. Philosophy must determine whether or not the world now quite closely resembles the novel. First generation critical theory says yes to this question: the world is utterly dominated by subjective reason; there are, however, moments of reprieve in the hermeneutic experience of mimesis.

To say no implies that there is an extant example of rationality in the world, a hope and alternative to the "functionalized thought." Horkheimer calls this the "irrationalist" way of describing reification. Huxley raises the question in literature, and answers it irrationally. He rejects functionalized thought entirely, replacing it with "individuality." "Culture" could also work against the brave new world: if people only
listened to the authoritative voice of tradition, super-organized life would never come automatically or automatically become a desired model for social life.

Both the subjective/individualistic and objective/cultured positions reject reason out of hand with their alternatives to reified consciousness. Both irrationalist responses to the prospect of total rationalization "serve the rejected tendency" and cynically blame the victims of the "tendency." Horkheimer gives critical theory the role of finding an alternative to thinking its way out of dystopia. While he offers no indication of whether or how "thought can remain master of itself in this dilemma," Horkheimer insists that technocratic apologetics for and glorifications of instrumental, subjective reason, on the one hand, and "naive rejection" of reason, on the other, are a false choice between extremes.51

As we have seen, Adorno's article on Parsons says neither yes or no to the question, Is the end of the world at hand or immanent, an already "functionally totalized," Brave New World? Adorno does not answer the question directly. Instead, he answers by rejecting the terms of "integration" discourse of systems theory, for fear of serving the dominant tendency and bringing the world to a sociological conclusion. Rather than presuming to integrate the nomological (sociological) and interpretive (psychological) disciplines into a total and unified systems sociology, Adorno focuses on the irreconcilability and particularity of social

phenomena, and the irrationality of the whole. Adorno deliberates upon and rejects a methodological solution to the brave new world problem.

The contradictory determinations found by sociology and the arbitrary natures of personality "systems" found by psychology resist a systematic treatment. "The only totality the student of society can presume to know is the antagonistic whole, and if he is to attain to totality at all, then only through contradiction." Parsons ignores the reflection of our contradictory world in his social theory. His sociology operates in the service of market-driven social functions to dissolve conflictual resistance to domination with the expectation of a cognitive solution to system problems.

Adorno imagines that Parsons is the technocratic peak in enlightenment social theory. Sociology bureaucratically replaces politicized critical theory with a battery of conceptual and empirical domains and departments. The reification of thought required to abstract smoothly functioning exchanges between discrete systems from an aggregate of contradictory particulars hardens the hold of functionalized thought. Parsons claims to resolve, but in fact ignores, classical political antimonies with what he calls sociological "levels of abstraction," where contradictions of subjective motivations and objective social structures are imagined by Parsons to be resolvable by more powerful integrations. However, Parsons leaves his reconciliatory hermeneutic un-theorized.

52 Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," p 74.
I. 7. Finding Utopian Potentials in Civil Society

Adorno argued against Parsons in a monologue. Habermas's introduction of communicative rationality and its unique logic of social integration brings critical theory into a dialogue with positivism. There is also a dialogue within his own critical theory about positivist thought. Habermas describes the importance of obliterating social-scientific objectifications. But choosing a hermeneutical field, the lifeworld, involves bringing language into an objective relation with interpretive methods. 53

Habermas's writings on Parsons in System and Lifeworld tries to access avenues of critique left open by Horkheimer and Adorno. The problem of "gaining access to the object domain of social science through an understanding of meaning" is solved with the "derivation of the concept of society" from the concept of action. 54 "Parsons [...] joined the system and action models too soon" for Habermas. 55 Culture, society, and person cannot be connected up in a functional analysis without "shifting" between system and action analyses in an unpersuasive way.

The theory of communicative action considers functional and social integrative logics as two aspects of the same metabolic process. Problems in the symbolic and material reproduction of the lifeworld can be linked to each other in a new way, as "reverberations" from one realm to the other.

53 "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in The Hermeneutics Reader.
55 Ibid., p. 204.
This new approach depends upon engaging Parsons. Methodological errors, not faulty concepts, prevents Parsons from reconstructing a social theory amenable to critical theory. Habermas's suggestion here is that there is nothing about systems theory that cannot be amended to explore, in Adorno's words, "the split between the living subject and the objectivity that governs the subjects and yet derives from them."56

From the perspective of action conceived as value-regulated purposive activity we cannot explain how culture, society, and personality hang together. That concept does not yield the complementary concept of an intersubjectively shared world. Without the brackets of a lifeworld centered on communicative action, culture, society, and personality fall apart.57

Communicative rationality is, of course, the mediating notion required for a proper derivation of the idea of society from the idea of action. The separate departments of "autonomous" systems find unity in rational reconstruction. "The latent functions of action call for the concept of a systemic interdependency that goes beyond the communicative intermeshing of action orientations."58 "The coordinating mechanism of reaching understanding in language," the telos of speech, can be functionally rendered with the theory of communicative action.59 This gives Habermas an opportunity to address the differentiation of public and private spheres in a way the first generation of critical theorists did not pursue.

56 Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology."
57 Ibid., p. 225.
58 Ibid., p. 233.
59 Ibid.
The systematic sciences of social action, that is economics, sociology, and political science, have the goal, as do the empirical-analytic sciences, of producing nomological knowledge. A critical social science, however, will not remain satisfied with this. It is concerned with going beyond this goal to determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed.

Habermas defends the rights and liberties dependent upon an available civil society by distinguishing relations of power from genetic evolutionary structures of systems rationality. "Systematically repressed communications" is the sociologically reconstructed basis for pursuing a critique of ideology.

1. 8. Incommensurability in Critical Theory: Art Versus Enlightenment

The dispute about positivism reveals deep discontinuities in critical theory. The first generation's critique of positivism is a thorn in the side of Habermas's systems-and-action approach to modernity. Insofar as it indicts systems sociology as an ideological discourse, it also calls into question Habermas's relationship to radical social theory.

What I call Habermasian "positive dialectics"—intersubjective communicative rationality, social integration, and life world—is a necessary set of concepts for disclosing a re-rationalization of Enlightenment-turned-myth. The argument is that the dualism of system and action, if pursued both objectivistically and hermeneutically, allows for an objective critique of the whole of social experience. System and action models are portrayed as mutually complementary, a perfect fit of explanation, description, and critical interpretation.

60 Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 310.
If Habermas were to follow through with Adorno's monological critique, he would be forced to relinquish his claim to have found a social scientific methodology that confirms a structuralist theory of modern progress by which the normative sphere guides the cognitive. This for three reasons.

First, because, negative dialectics always tells the same story of historical decline of subjective reason and objective reason in structure. The second generation argues that the theory of reified consciousness accepts a devolutionary theory of modernity as a philosophical fate, where it need not do so. Habermas criticizes Horkheimer and adorno for excluding possibilities for evolutionary or revolutionary praxis out of hand. Axel Honneth makes the claim that the critique of consciousness alone, without any counterfactual idea of salvation, "foregoes any theoretical claim concerning possible political solutions" to catastrophic reification.

Adorno gives up critical theory's claim to guide political practice since the instrumental nature of politics would draw it into the world of reification. This refusal to fall into reification both in terms of its philosophical content as well as its literary form de-politicizes Adorno for the sake of preserving its critical power.61

If social reification is a premise and conclusion of critical philosophy, then doubt should plague critical theory's own normative claims about ideology and domination. "The critique of instrumental reason conceptualized as negative dialectics renounces its theoretical claim while operating with the means of theory."62

Second, the theory of communicative action alludes to a true, or genuine consciousness Horkheimer and Adorno reserve for no community. The anti-institutional bias built into first generation critical theory cannot answer the Habermasian theory of communicative action directly. There is no collective, mimetic, linguistic experience. Honneth elaborates.

Against identity theory and its inherent reified nature, [first generation] critical theory can offer only the alternative of mimetic knowledge reactivated in the form of artwork. Only aesthetic perception can break the monopoly of conceptual knowledge and open to experience phenomena which cannot conform to natural or socio-technical regulations.

A fully rationalized and alienated social consciousness could never recognize or pursue anything like the "emancipatory interests" recovered by Habermas's philosophy. Under the spotlight of negative dialectics, potential expressions of solidarity, creativity, and spontaneity are unrecognizable as positive terrain. Third, as we have seen, the argument for a fit between systems and action theory appeals to the same functionalist logic condemned by Horkheimer and Adorno as the root cause of technocratic evils in modern society.

Habermas uses the new model of communicative rationality to ground a critique of instrumental reason. Bourgeois civil society, the place of free and rational democratic politics borne in "the conversation of the citizens," educates a "self-controlled learning process" which grounds and gives content to emancipatory critical theory. Processes of social production and the philosophical hermeneutic of "controlled distancing"

63 Honneth, p. 50.
confirm this ground. Work and communication, imputed to be the "metabolic processes" spoken of by Marx, reproduce material and symbolic lifeworld structures which can be now be described and assessed scientifically by critical theory through the concepts of systems sociology. Learning, or agency, has a goal-point in modern social practice.

The ideal speech situation is a standard for identifying structures that perpetuate "suppressed, i.e. latent, claims and needs." It is a counterfactual normative standard "reconstructed" from the requirements of a speaker in a good conversation. The aspiration to a unity, expressed in the ideal speech situation, is further confirmed with the theory of the evolution of modern communicative structures.

The ideal speech situation and socialist practice imply each other in the theory of communicative action. Socialism is defined as the production of complete agreement without factions, the form of communicative intercourse itself. The ideal speech situation is the promise of salvation from the lapidary dialectic of enlightenment, a universal subjectivity promised and implied by the "telos of speech." It suggests a communion through the experience of intersubjectivity, the dissolution of egoistic and distorted communications with undifferentiated intersubjectivity. "If [self-reflection] cannot cancel out interest, it can to a certain extent make up for it."

Not linguistic reflection, but art is what makes up for alienation in first generation theory. Mimesis is a concept equivalent to the ideal

---

67 Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 314.
speech situation. It is a counter-warrant to the self-destructive tendencies of instrumental and discursive rationality, redeemed in every aesthetic experience. "Art's semblance is a semblance of the overcoming of the differentiation of reason into the isolated spheres of truth, normative rightness, and beauty." 69

These isolated spheres "overcome" by mimesis are precisely the bases for validity claims upon which Universal Pragmatics and rational reconstruction labor. Mimesis threatens the potentials for communicative rationality in the ideal speech situation. Habermas argues that mimesis is merely a "placeholder" and "code" for the concept of truth in first generation theory. It resists philosophical truth claims, postponing rational reflection in an experience with artistic auras. 70

70 Theory of Communicative Action v. 1, p. 382.
I. 9. Conclusion

Habermas claims to find what Horkheimer and Adorno said could not be found: "intrinsic criteria of rightness" derived from the "reflexivity of an objectified relation."71 His dualistic social theory is energized by self-objectifying, emancipatory reflection. It finds objectifications in language and society with which to make positive truth claims about the goodness and rightness of existing and imaginary social practices. It also critiques ideology and domination in civil society by the same model of reflection.

In this chapter, I have explored the differentiation of critical science from first generation critical theory, demonstrating various continuities and discontinuities within the tradition that have emerged along the way. I have been concerned to describe the importance of the "fit" between systems and action theory for the second generation, and to show that the link has been used to discontinue lines of critical argumentation initiated by Horkheimer and Adorno. The next chapter looks more closely at sociological systems theory from the perspective of critical science to explore this fit further.

71 Ibid., p. 395.
Chapter Two: Objectivating Reason and The Theory of the Margin

II. 1. Introduction: Civil Society Between Social and Functional Integration

The last chapter analyzed civil society as the theoretical focus of a second-generation critical theory concerned with political emancipation as a practice of communicative rationality. Civil society is positive terrain for emancipation. It emerges from a dual perspective as an analytical "center" of society, derived from both systems and action theory, enjoying structural primacy as a public sphere and normative primacy as a symbolic representative of the rejuvenating lifeworld. Dualist theory considers civil society as the overlap of complementary "reflexivities," which are distinguished with the two types of integration. The discursive structures of the public sphere are understood as emancipatory terrain threatened by the system.

This chapter focuses more specifically on the fit between languages of social and system integration. In the first five sections, I delve into some premises of cybernetic systems theory. Systems sociology, as appropriated by Habermas, purports to describe the historical dialectic of enlightenment in positive and critical terms. The argument for a fit between systems and action theories, between Marx and Weber, allows Habermas to continue the critique of instrumental reason. The "margin" between system and lifeworld is also reflected in the margin between system and action theories.
The sixth section continues the exploration of the fit of systems and action theories by examining the argumentative structure of the "colonization of the lifeworld" thesis. As we have seen, Habermas introduces civil society as a terrain of opposing linguistic principles, a margin between system and lifeworld. The systems sociology required to make this argument eradicates civil society from its analysis, however.

I argue in the seventh and eighth sections that dualism falls far short of a satisfactory critique of the positivist sciences. Habermas's use of sociological categories to construct a theory of modern progress depends upon nature-domination, which Horkheimer and Adorno found to be carried in objectivating reason in the language of the natural and social sciences. All systems and functional analyses share a common objectivistic attitude, namely, that the society under consideration is a unified totality explainable as a unified system.

Not only the cybernetic theory of communications, but also the idea of communicative rationality requires that linguistic practices in the lifeworld be objectified from a systems perspective. Habermas presents an analytic correlation between levels of complexity in society and levels of communicative rationality. The pursuit of reflexive language structures objectifies linguistic relationships into propositionally differentiated speech hierarchies and corresponding levels of social complexity.

Dualism strives for a critical, or philosophical, science described best by Horkheimer in his "Traditional and Critical Theory." 73 "Self-

---

72 This distinction emerges in the form of a critical appropriation of Luhmann's theory of communicative evolution.
reflection is determined by an emancipatory cognitive interest. Critically oriented sciences share this interest with philosophy.74 The scientific analysis of emancipatory and salvational potentials in civil society thus requires a double distance from language: first, the search for the "reflexivity of an objectified relation" in foundational, communicative, lifeworld structures, and second, in the sociological search for systemic threats to these structures. Finding objective "reflexivity" in lifeworld processes of social integration requires that the lifeworld be objectified from a systems perspective that can only consider the progress of history as a cognitive clicking along of communications. It also requires that nature be excluded from participating in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld, that it relinquish a role in communicative rationality.

The concluding remarks in this chapter return to the question of discontinuities in critical theory. Habermas introduces a new form of instrumental logic into critical theory that the first generation tried to avoid through negative dialectics and the reconciliatory program of mimesis. Chapter One argued that instrumentalisms are the price of second generation claims to emancipatory reflection in contemporary critical theory.

Habermas's dualistic theory abandons negative dialectics and the history of decline interpreted theologically by the first generation, replacing it with a positive dialectic, a Christian "covenant," and a promise of salvation. The mimetic hermeneutic of nature reconciliation that was a characteristic of first generation theory has also been replaced with the theory of communicative action. In the next chapter, I

74 Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 310.
will illustrate some political implications of Habermas's de-emphasis on
reconciliation. New social movements operating conflictually in civil
society, "at the seam" of system and lifeworld, stand as an implicit
criticism of the objectivating reason characteristic of the second
generation and its neglect of natural concerns.

II. 2.  Luhmann's Importance for Critical Theory: Pure System Integrative
Language

Niklas Luhmann leaves social integration to social theorists with
"faith" in metaphysics.

I cannot for many reasons share the faith Jurgen Habermas
places in the opportunities afforded by resorting to a paradigm
of intersubjective understanding. It is above all difficult to
conceive of how a sufficiently complex theory of society
resulting from an intersubjective understanding could be
generated by the discourses of everyday life. Instead, it
would seem to me to make more sense to utilize certain of the
theoretical resources that have already been quite extensively
elaborated in the course of interdisciplinary research on a
cybernetics of self-referential orders, on general systems
theory, on autopoiesis and on information and communication.75

"Autopoiesis," the characteristic of any network of same operatic's,
replaces the primary, Marxist category of production with generalized
functions. Autopoiesis is a guiding principle of social systems theory.
Work as collective social labor for reproducing material conditions is
distilled into a concept of "differentiation," the reflexive self-
production of rule structures. Differentiation is a property of reflexive

75  Luhmann, Niklas, Love As Passion: The Codification of Intimacy
communications codes operating evenly at all levels of society. Differentiation replaces social labor.

Technical improvements in system integration are achieved when functional differentiation replaces "normative" expectations with "cognitive" expectations. Systematic replacement of norms with cognitions solves problems of system complexity more efficiently and successfully.

The historical component of Luhmann's theory of communicative evolution traces the movement from segmented differentiation to stratified differentiation to functional differentiation. This follows the path of Weberian rationalization. Society progresses from simple, segmented social communications organization through its stratified and more highly complex, but still pre-modern phase, to its emergence as a modern, functionally differentiated organization of communications.

The contents of the historical categories are reviewed below. Of present interest is the characterization of systems logic as a cybernetic differentiation of a whole into constituent parts. Society is a whole social system composed of itself (its identity), the institutions within it, and its institutionalized roles.

By employing ideas worked out in the general theory of systems and in cybernetics, we can define social configurations as systems that, in an inordinately complex environment, hold constant a less complex network of expectations and that are thereby able to orient action. Because of the way actions are meaningfully related to one another and reinforce one another's selectivity, systems can be maintained as frameworks for orienting action, even though their own complexity is less than

76 Habermas will point out that the substitution of functional differentiation is another metaphor for the dialectic of enlightenment, which Luhmann fails to read into his theory of modern progress.
that of the environment. At the same time they make possible a meaningful orientation of experience and action along the lines laid down by the structure

Society persists as long as it integrates and maintains boundaries of self and other. These identity boundaries are available only to cybernetic sociology, because a centerless society cannot know itself as a whole. "Cybernetics" is the study of boundaries in linguistic practice. It finds communicative action functioning in an organized and predictable way to maintain the overall identity and survival of the system.

The modern subject is the functionally differentiated system of social communications. Society cannot know itself. That is the task of the sociologist, who follows the historical permutations of social rule structures by positing a social unity and subject, subsumed under the category, "system." The system subject is then conceived as receiving and processing meaning in the activity of reflexive, cybernetic communications with its environment and sub-environments. "Meaning" does not need to be interpreted by the systems sociologist. It is a "pre-linguistic structure of experiential possibility," a condition and a product of integration and differentiation.

Reflexive self-reference logically implies a total self. But this totality is never available as knowledge to a system, because "it" is a logical relationship between communicative subsystems, and between subsystems and their environments, and not a social relationship that can be entirely thematized. The social system is defined as a pre-existing,

78 Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, "Excursus on Luhmann"
logical universe of identity-discourse. It is presumed to already exist as "the conditions of the possibility of autopoietic self-production." "The self of self-reference is never the totality of a closed system, nor is it ever the referring itself;" "It is always a matter of those moments in the constitutive context of open systems that support its autopoiesis." Civil society is completely extinguished from cybernetic sociology's narrative, having been functionally "simplified" by the state over time.

The client, the voter, and the participant of the public are divorced from the family member, the worker, and the professional, on the one side, and do not add up to a comprehensive citizen role, on the other. It is above all this specialization into separate political roles that produces a form of acceptance of political decisions that Luhmann repeatedly describes as quasi-automatic and almost without motivation.

Rationalization eliminates civil society along with its political theory. Classical concerns for normative evaluations, values, or beliefs about the good life are transformed into positivist concerns about better system performance through selectivity, self-programmability, and so on. The disappearance of civic virtue in practical affairs and its replacement by regulatory media and steering mechanisms also reflects what happens to sociological analysis: political philosophy loses its social "function" to sociology.

79 Dallmayr, p. 248.
80 Quoted in Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, "Excursus on Luhmann," p. 373.
81 Cohen and Arato, 314.
The idea that language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs, or in Gadamer's phrase, "the linguisticality of understanding,"\textsuperscript{82} is factored away and forgotten by cybernetics. The sensitive linguistic analyses required for theoretical judgment and communicative praxis seems to disappear from social theory and institutional political life. The philosophical understanding required for interpreting discursive practices, intersubjective experience, dialogicality, linguistic socialization, identity formation, and hermeneutic reflection disappear from theory just as the last vestiges of objective spirit disappear from social life.

If [....] we take our departure not from an identity described as 'objective spirit' or in similar terms, but rather from the difference between the system and its own self-description, the state shrinks from the inflated ideals of the past into a mode of reduced complexity or self-simplification.\textsuperscript{83}

Luhmann's sociology aspires to improve system integration by improving reflexive cybernetic "self-observation," working to help instrumentally reduce social life to a more technically manageable and globalized program with each cognitivized expectation. This extremely detached theoretical perspective leaves Luhmann's speaking voice disembodied, as if it too were a contingent effect of the autopoietic, determining, social program.


Exploring The Secret Metaphysics of Systems Theory

Whereas Weber theorized social systems internally, Luhmann takes after Parsons by theorizing systems in relation to environments. System and environment are interdependent upon boundary-maintaining processes. An environment is always more complex than a system, because there are always more possibilities in the environment than in the system. For each to maintain a relation with the other, the system must maintain a "complexity gradient" vis-a-vis the environment, a boundary between complexity and reduced complexity that reduces complexity further by preserving it at a higher level of reflexivity. 84 "If Luhmann had any taste for Hegelian coquetry, he would probably speak of complexity reduction as involving Aufhebung." 85

Reflexivity, self-reference, "fundamental self-reference," and reflection are four themes Luhmann uses to describe how reflexive communications in a centerless society prevents society's dissolution into total difference, or death, whose pressures are exacted from within and without by a hostile over-complexity. Communications simplify the dark forces with systematism.

What we want to preserve is Marx's interpretation of society as a self-abstraction, self-categorizing, and self-theorizing social system—that is, his denial of any spirituality external to society (for instance, a transcendental consciousness) that explains and clarifies society to itself. 86

84 Compare Luhmann's use of "reflexivity" as a methodological technique akin to Parsons's "levels of abstraction."
86 Luhmann, The Differentiation of Society, p. 341.
Every self-thematization establishes a boundary and a field. The field is complexity, fortuna, risk, contingency, and unpredictability: it is nature. In the economic subsystem, the environment has been called scarcity. The cybernetic environment is what is outside and to be systematized and organized formally. It is the sense of restraint or limits or boundaries by which the social system reflexively adapts. It is also the promise of future growth. In our day, differentiated social systems have a multiplicity of sub-systems. Luhmann speaks of our environments, in the plural, or "internal environment," with Parsons, to indicate the total pervasiveness of the system. "Self-selection is made possible by the double experience of influencing and adapting to an environment." 87

By this model, we are forced to consider rationalization as an appropriation of cybernetic environments. The "language" of rationalization is not spoken by historical agents with bodies, intentions, or plans, but is the silent binary code, which has pre-structured communicative systems before there was thought or speech. We can think of society as a parallel information processor computer composed of discrete subcomputers that are programmed for evolution with a language that differentiates itself into subroutines. Its source code is a language that designs itself to decrease environmental complexity with an increase in its own differentiation. The environment resembles an unprogrammed nature to be dominated, civilized, and brought within the system's codes. Differentiation replicates the differences between a system and its environment, feeding upon itself by reducing complexity with increasingly

87 Ibid., p. 331.
intensified reflexivity, a process which necessarily generates new complexities.

II. 3. Weberian Themes in the Theory of Communicative Evolution

All of the following historical trends and events show an increase in communicative self-reflexivity and adaptation:

Functionally differentiated society is made possible only with the privatization of religion, the rise of territorial nation-states, with increasingly bureaucratic administrations and the open declaration of raison d'état as a political maxim, the separation of property ownership from ecclesiastical, military, and political responsibilities, rational capitalism based on the social acceptability of individual profit-seeking, the specialization of science on the basis of rigorous quantitative-hypothetical-experimental techniques, the release of art from civic and religious functions, the imposition of constitutional limitations on the exercise of political power, a displacement in the grounds for marriage from religious, economic, and other institutional considerations to romantic or passionate love and personal choice, a shrinkage of the basic kinship unit to the small and increasingly one-generational nuclear family, the advent of universal and compulsory public schooling, and positivization of law or the shift in the basis of legality from immutable "natural law" to formal procedures for changing legal codes in an orderly way.

This familiar catalog of Weberian and Parsonian themes is re-cast into a cybernetic sociology of communications. Weber gave sociology empathetic insight into the subjective realm of needs, desires, and meanings behind the structural transformations, and was himself moved to diagnose the modern disenchantment associated with rationalization.

88 Holmes, Stephen, and Charles Larmore, Translators' Introduction to The Differentiation of Society, note 2, p. 364.
processes. Luhmann has no interpretive equivalent to Verstehen with which to access subjective, "internal" dimensions or to give an account of the needs, beliefs, and desires supporting rationalized communications. Identities and subjectivities are logical, not social.

The market, or economic subsystem, serves as a model and ideal type of sociation. The market uniquely preserves the pure communicative conditions necessary for functionally integrating uncoordinated egocentric utility through the communicative medium of money. Market exchange relations require an economy differentiated from the rest of the system.

It is crucial to note that Luhmann does not give the economy a central or primary position in his sociology, as Marx and Weber do. The market is but another subsystem in the system of society, operating alongside the political and legal subsystems. The function of capital does not pass through the economic subsystem to permeate communicative relations throughout the system. There is no analysis of the commodity form. Consequently, Luhmann cannot analyze the uniqueness of the capitalist commodity form as a superior colonizer of internal and external nature.

He cannot discuss power relations as structures of class domination legitimated by legal and political subsystems, nor does he want to do so. Rather, he prefers to separate the "normative" contents of action systems from their functional analysis, and show how advanced society avoids problems of integration through more successful differentiation and increases in system complexity.
II. 4. The Politics of The Centerless Society

This section presents the Habermasian argument that cybernetics' claim to have explained a total system is refuted by its own findings. It has been offered by Jean Cohen, Andrew Arato, and (as we shall see in the next sections) Thomas McCarthy.

Any attempt to discover unified agency or subjectivity representing this society is merely an illegitimate transposition of a partially genuine possibility of political society and leads inevitably to conceptual mythology.89

In a functionally differentiated society "there is no specifiable standpoint left from which the whole--whether one names it society or state--can be accurately observed."90 But it is precisely this whole that has been posited as a totality before its self-differentiation and interactions with the environment(s) is observed, described and explained.

Luhmann the sociologist gives himself an important, if not central role in the social system. Cybernetic systems theory finds its own function in programming a norm-free society by thematizing this eventuality in a systems theory.

Today's world society can only manage to reflect on itself [i.e., thematize itself] by combining more highly abstract means of thought, which in turn permit an ancillary thematization of the historicity and contingency of each previous self-thematization. This culminates in self-reflection's becoming reflexive. Self-thematizations thereby

89 Cohen and Arato, p. 306.
90 Luhmann, quoted in Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 374.
become conscious of themselves as processes that occur within systems. 91

Pure systems theory fancies itself a facilitator of modern cognitive progress. Like the separation of the normative from the cognitive "spheres" of practice, the same analytic separation "pulls apart" aspects of sociological analysis that properly belong together, according to the second generation critical theory.

Habermas argues against Luhmann that a purely cognitive-instrumentalist analysis of society works alongside other reflexive social functions to reduce the hypercomplex environment, complementing the "penetration" of the lifeworld by the system. The political dangers of systems theory, as brought out by Habermas, begin when this seemingly passionless theory grows technocratic. Its own practice in a centerless society functions along with an unquestioned and unquestionable logic of complexity-domination. 92

Systems theory lets cognitive acts, even its own, meld into the system's achievement of mastering complexity and thus takes away from knowledge any moment of unconditionality. Systems theory understands itself as functional analysis and, owing to the reference problems that come with this method, sees itself as seamlessly woven into the functional contexts of systemic self-maintenance—with neither the power nor the intention of transcending these contexts in any way. 93

An extensively functionalist systems theory does not recognize the regressive consequences of its own practice. With no figures of thought to

91 The Differentiation of Society, p. 344. My brackets.
92 Habermas himself divorces cognitive from normative spheres, although he privileges the latter over the former.
93 Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, pp. 371-2.
correspond to "social integration," legitimacy, praxis, interpretation, judgment, or civil society, Luhmann can make no explicit appeal to criteria derived separately from scientific criteria such as utility, efficiency, and so on. Theorizing a centerless society in systems language also makes it impossible to analyze stratified hierarchies, or class politics.

A working premise of The Differentiation of Society and its successors is that class politics has differentiated into more complex, diffuse, and humane domination. It is therefore difficult to attribute praise and blame or responsibility for power relationships, because "power" has lost any normative charge, responsibility, or location in a social subject. Power is a condition for communications within the political subsystem. 94 Everyone and no one is responsible for the logic or the effects of systemic communications.

"Systems theory has at its disposal no figure of thought that corresponds to the injurious and oppressive act of reification." 95 Anonymous sociological objectifications-of-objectifications get re-programmed back at the foundational level of social codes. This leads to a reification of linguistic consciousness.

Systems theory penetrates into the lifeworld, introducing into it a metabiological perspective from which it then learns to understand itself as a system in an environment-with-other-systems-in-an-environment—as if the world process took place through nothing but system-environment differences—to that extent there is an objectifying effect. 96

94 Compare Habermas's idea of lifeworld "mediatization," where power escapes its proper subsystem. See the final chapters of Theory of Communicative Action v. 2.
95 Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 375.
96 Ibid., p. 385.
Adorno's idea that "positive theories harbor a potential for legitimation that can be used, in opposition to their stated intentions, for purposes of exploitation and repression" is taken up here by Habermas.

II. 5. The Dualist Defense of Civil Society From External and Internal Perspectives

Habermas is concerned to unmask systems theory as an alienating discourse. The "something outside" of the system are people, left over after their communications are cybernetically divorced from their living existence in the world. Cybernetics cannot touch their symbolic interactions, but replaces them nonetheless. System objects are people-objects, considered from the extremely distant perspective of their communications effects. Society's self-control requires a domination of its environments.

It is only because a system has an environment that it can relate itself to itself. The possibility of reflection [...] depends upon dismantling a system's "projective" relation to its environment. In the case of society, this entails a desocialization of nature.

Horkheimer and Adorno showed that the domination of nature becomes social domination. The "desocialization" of nature also entails a desocialization of social agents in the monistic neo-Parsonian theory.

The dualist model gets Habermas out of the problem of choosing between strictly monistic perspectives of Luhmann, Horkheimer and Adorno,

98 Ibid., p. 329.
between glorifying or apologizing for the effects of subjective reason. In his writings on Parsons, particularly, he shows how the concept of communicative rationality distinguishes rationalization of the lifeworld from increasing complexity of the social system according to criteria of learning and moral development.

Habermas reworks Luhmann's systems theory to include a space for civil society. The counter-concepts, "system" and "lifeworld" give him the "critical" perspective on communicative evolution he charges Luhmann with avoiding. Weberian "rationalization" is both reification by technology ("technicization") and the potential for liberation in modernity. Rationalization unleashes potentials for learning and growth by "delinguistifying the sacred," but can also turn back upon itself in many instances to undermine these same potentials.

Civil society falls somewhere between system and lifeworld. It consists of increasingly formalized, institutionalized roles organized by the functional logic of "steering media" of the economy and state administration. A civil society increasingly dependent on system integration takes on "pathological" characteristics of internal colonization, on the one hand, but also comes to be "one of the initial conditions for modernization processes," on the other. 99 There are costs and benefits to rationalization.

The communicative structure of the public sphere of civil society is defined with reference to systematized action domains, but not as dependent upon them. 100 Meaningful "lifeworld contexts" require reflective

100 Ibid., p. 321.
acceptance and legitimation of systemically structured roles. Sociation in the actually existing public sphere is just sufficiently grounded in the rejuvenating lifeworld to warrant its defense by democratic theory. Consumer and citizen roles "are tied to lifeworld contexts and cannot be taken over economically or politically."\textsuperscript{101} For a role to be critically defensible, lifeworld processes of social integration must persist despite destructive incursions of system integration. Therefore, Habermas suggests, the persistence ("resistance" to systematization) of these roles maintain and defend progressive, democratic political practice. Habermas's comments on new social movements at the end of his second volume of Theory of Communicative Action captures the precarious position of civil society. The margin of the public sphere is, in Habermas's eyes, simultaneously an impoverished sphere of communication and a threatened field of potential for new learning. It is the product of a highly rationalized lifeworld.

The thesis of the "colonization of the lifeworld" is a claim to be able to plausibly differentiate progressive from regressive historical conditions for emancipatory practice. I agree with Thomas McCarthy, however, that the scientific systems theory purportedly supporting this critical thesis threatens critical theory with a technocratic attitude. To depend on system's theory is to misunderstand issues of language, meaning, and interpretation, thus illustrating why it cannot be entrusted with grounding an evolutionary theory of modernity.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 322.
II. 5. Charting the Decline of Language: "Mediatization," Colonization, Reification

Systems theory outlines the contours of system and lifeworld from the external perspective of the system. The "colonization of the lifeworld" is a story of alienated communicative action. Habermas begins it with an analysis of the reverberation of systemic imperatives throughout lifeworld structures. The external perspective finds the "margins" of system and lifeworld through cybernetic sights, and then goes on to describe the reifications and pathologies that creep upon the lifeworld in processes of "mediatization" and "technicization." "The transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media means an uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts."102 The replacement of trust by power, influence by money, and so on, does away with the coordination of action through speech. Habermas refers to this process as the "delinguistification" of social interaction.

Exchange media replace the communications required for reproducing the symbolic conditions of existence. When they impinge on processes of social integration, alienation effects set in. Habermas insists, in his critique of Luhmann, that however fully rationalized the lifeworld becomes, the replacement of intersubjective understanding with cybernetic steering media still depends upon recourse to a lifeworld of rules and rule-following. Cultural background and personality structures are achievements of linguistic agency.

102 Ibid., p. 183.
The only functional domains that can be differentiated out of the lifeworld by steering media are those of material reproduction. The symbolic structures of the lifeworld can be reproduced only via the basic medium of communicative action; action systems keyed to cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization remain tied to the structures of the lifeworld and of ordinary language.

"Mediatization" of the lifeworld is Habermas’s shorthand for the interferences that arise "when system and lifeworld have become differentiated from one another to such an extent that they can exert mutual influence upon one another." The differentiation is achieved through generalized media of exchange. "Colonization" of the lifeworld is a condition of social pathology, occurring wherever systemic mechanisms "suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where [...] the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake." "Colonization" is the more critical term of mediatization and colonization. Habermas speaks of the "reverberation" of system crises throughout lifeworld structures, within which system imperatives clash with independent, or foundational, communication structures.

To summarize, the colonization of the lifeworld thesis uses the concept of communicative rationality to identify "costs" of progress invisible to Parsons and Luhmann. Habermas describes these costs very formally. They include bureaucratic "desiccation of the political public sphere," disintegration of ideologies, fragmentation of "consciousness of everyday life," and other reverberations.

103 Ibid., p. 261
104 Ibid., p. 186.
105 Ibid., p. 196
106 Ibid., p. 391.
Mediatization, colonization, and reverberation cannot be understood hermeneutically or "read off" from subjective knowledge of social agents. Nor can their consequences for political conflicts be described exclusively from an external, systems perspective. The phenomena of alienation in the margin of system and lifeworld, however, are criticized as regressive, modern experiences. But there is no account of how they might be otherwise, under a different path of modernization without pathologies.

Without a separate analytic of the margin, understanding what mediatization or crisis reverberation means in practice is made difficult or impossible. Equally difficult is an understanding of what "good rationalization" might look like. Habermas locates emancipatory healing potentials in technical, economic, and administrative skills, and in mass media. These do not amount to technical solutions to an impoverished class consciousness. Rather, they serve to identify the structural primacy and rational potentials of the public sphere of civil society, and to reinforce it with social theory.

The ideal potentials of communicative rationality notwithstanding, there are severe difficulties involved with teasing out a picture of emancipatory political practice within the discursive space allowed in Habermasian civil society. Civil society must maintain its high level of complexity and inaugurate a counter-discourse against forces of delinguistification simultaneously, if it is to progress. A "relinguistification" thesis is not illustrated in Habermas's theory of cultural modernity. The baggage of systems theory makes it difficult to formulate or illustrate such a thesis.

107 Ibid., pp. 390ff.
The colonization of the lifeworld is a process by which meaning and discursive consciousness are extinguished by systemic imperatives. It is a feature of this process that its description also reduces language to alienated communicative effects. Habermas's dependency upon systems logic to explain how it is that language is reduced to communications has the effect of strengthening the hold of this logic upon critical theory.

II. 7. Systems Theory's Resistance to Action Theory

While systems rationality shares a resemblance to the rationality of communicative action, it may be a mistake to call the resemblance a fit. Both are marked by circularity, self-reflection, and an appeal to truth. But while action theory considers these manifestations of reason in terms of their linguistic constitution in the discursive practices of speaking subjects, cybernetic systems theory considers self-reflection as the effect of an autonomous, reflexive communications logic operative in mediatized communications.

A cybernetic perspective on communicative action subsumes action theory under systems theory, thereby resisting thinking about the social contexts of communicative action. This has the effect of treating politics as a purely cognitive, automatic, systemic adaptation to "complexity."

People lose their sociological priority, corporeal bodies, speaking voices, and their embodied agency within a systems framework. "The idea of system elements must be changed from substances (individuals) to self-
referential operations that can be produced only within the system and with the help of a network of the same operations (autopoiesis). "108

Parsonian culture and Habermasian lifeworld cannot be theorized a system can. The concept of a world cannot be taken as a meaningful unity; systems theory replaces the world with a multiplicity of environments. Linguistic agency, discursive practices, lifeworld contexts, and so on are inaccessible to systems theory. Linguistic meanings, or symbols, are not considered in an empathetic way, but as reflexive feedbacks of self-programmed communications. Luhmann's systems theory dismisses intersubjective dimensions of civil society in order to focus on questions of technical manipulation.

"Normative" expectations insist counterfactually upon the validity of a disappointed expectation, morally condemning the unwelcome event or circumstance.109 The expectation of socialism expressed by the theory of communicative action and its revelation of the communicative covenant is an excellent example of a normative expectation. Habermas refers to revolutionary potentials of reason locked up in spoken language and normative structures in his criticisms of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Luhmann alike. What the emancipatory expectation condemns in both cases is the emphasis upon the self-sufficiency of subjective reason (Horkheimer and Adorno), or the irrelevance of the symbolic sphere to autopoietic systems and their theorists.

Luhmann's project implies that social progress requires systems to develop procedures for increasing complexity. These procedures are also

109 Ibid.
often required to alter disappointed expectations. The reality of an overly complex environment "demands" the replacement of normative expectations with cognitive expectations, if cybernetic systems are to be allowed to adapt to reality. This is what is meant by a systemic "imperative." This seemingly automatic adaptation of the political system to its environments leaves no room for decidedly un-cybernetic politics. Systems theory resists a critical or empathetic consideration of those autonomous practices which do not serve, or which are explicitly organized in opposition to, formal politics. Uncoded, un- or preformalized, or anti-institutional political expressions—the subjects of new social movement theories—are, by the constraints of the systems model, also anti-modern or unprogressive. In the next chapter, I evaluate new social movement theory as a component of dualistic critical theory.

Thomas McCarthy attacks the second-generation appropriation of systems theory for depoliticizing an originally radical theoretical program. His arguments suggest that systems theory resists action theory because the former cannot theorize political practice without reducing it to a depoliticized set of cybernetic relationships. When Habermas speaks of the political system as a communications system, he is drawing from a peculiar sociological theory whose concepts and models not only depend upon a fully depoliticized civil society—a precursor to the brave new world—but also, and more nefariously, celebrate the arrival of the totally functionalized society. Systems theory perpetuates political problems in modernity which are created by the same disenchanted systems-logic.

McCarthy argues something of a first generation case by suggesting that a scientific, foundationalist, explanatory, predictive, "empirical-
"analytic" study of formal organizations' communications was never the intention of critical theory.\textsuperscript{110} In systems theory, language as communicative action is boiled down to "so small a size that the internal intermeshing of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization disappear from view."\textsuperscript{111} Challenges to the colonization of the lifeworld go overlooked and unrecognized by systems thinking. McCarthy concludes that Habermas risks embracing a critical theory that follows technocratic, systemic imperatives by making processes of social integration seem responsible to processes of system integration in the final analysis.\textsuperscript{112} It will be recalled from the first chapter that it was Habermas's distinguishing characteristic to have insisted on the primacy of the normative over the cognitive in processes of social evolution.

In a reassuring excursus in \textit{The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity}, Habermas takes Luhmann's monistic systems theory to task by arguing that what needs to be saved and preserved from the system cannot be distinguished \textit{without} a sociological perspective on alienated language. Systems analysis, claims Habermas, offers a contemporary scientific instrument for inspecting modern regressions and power distortions carried in communications.

McCarthy's own criticisms of Habermas suggests that Habermas does, in fact, address both system and social integration in a dualist theory, but that at crucial junctures of his thinking he stresses social integration insufficiently, and even forgets his foundationalist claim that the

\textsuperscript{111} Habermas, \textit{The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity}, p. 379.
\textsuperscript{112} McCarthy, p. 47.
evolution of normative structures leads and precedes the evolution of systemic structures. It is as if Habermas looks at late capitalist society through a stereoscope, but with only one eye open at a time. He rigorously discerns two operations of thought, and routinely makes two analytical statements, rather than offering one, synthetic statement about system and lifeworld. He alternately sees either system or social integration, and never relaxes his vision sufficiently to achieve a satisfying overlap of both.
With Habermas, critical theory strengthens its anti-objectivist heritage in some ways while renouncing it in other ways. The sociological description and critique of mediatized communications correlates instrumental reason and objectification with the historical perfection of modern control technologies and languages of domination. He thereby continues the first-generation concern with ideology critique in principle. But he abandons this concern in practice with his choice of methods.

Horkheimer and Adorno wrote in "Le Prix du Progres" that a perennial domination over nature leads to a loss of memory, a loss of historical consciousness. "The loss of memory is a transcendental condition for science. All objectification is a forgetting."

For society to be explained as a system-subject with a self-maintaining identity, sociology must ignore the possibility of nonidentity. Sociologists must also forget the pain of conflicts between inner and outer natures, positivistically advocate the domination of these natures, and deductively describe sufficient conditions for maintaining an equilibrium.

Once it has lost its capacity for remembering, functionalist explanation posits a causal explanation of objective structures, a map of causal rules. Detached spectatorship directed at a tradition, such as a political tradition, is a monological attitude desirous of objectivistic, scientific, methodistic, objectifying knowledge. Adorno's critique of Parsons revealed theoretical knowledge of an objectivist sort to be a kind

of alienation, a methodical self-removal of the theorist from any identifiable practice.\footnote{114}

It is possible to reconstruct imaginatively what Adorno would find offensive about Luhmann. Differentiation presumes market exchange relations as a natural condition of modernity, and then extends them into all dimensions of linguisticality and praxis. The "guided" appearance of autopoiesis, of self-propelled rationalization, is the telos of domination, marked by the reduction of meaning into cognitive processes. What has happened to work under capitalism now happens to logos. Language differentiates into communications systems by becoming automatic, self-reflexive, strategic, and objectivating. Cybernetic reflexivity covers the entire scope of alienated thought and action, reducing qualities to quantities, metaphors and meanings to informational codes. In the same way that Parsons compartmentalized social theory into a differentiated sociological study, Luhmann's systems theory Taylorizes social thought into differentiated compartments for a more efficient self-control. This can only serve technocratic purposes.

\footnote{114} It is ironic that H. G. Gadamer, in his debates with Habermas, raises this same point. The work Adorno and some other Institute members did in \textit{The Authoritarian Personality} is interpreted as an ironic project designed to prove anti-authoritarian theses with authoritarian, positivist methods. It is a rare example of "critical" social science combining such standard research methods as questionnaires, interviews, and socio-economic data with psychological depth analysis and Freudian personality theory. The project is designed to yield data "diagnosing potential fascism and studying its determinants." It claims to integrate sociological and psychological research into a scientific critique of ideology. Here, then, is a reflexive combination of monological research methods with a critically informed set of questions and social concepts. It stands in an uneasy relationship with Adorno's outright condemnations of neo-positivist ("American") social science. See the "Introduction" to \textit{The Authoritarian Personality}, reprinted in \textit{Critical Theory and Society: A Reader}.}
Adorno and Horkheimer insisted that an unalienated social science would be a goal of critical theory. Critical social science would affirm that its concepts are historically formed in the society it is studying. Therefore, it would be forced to use reified concepts to critique a reified society. But because societal concepts are inductively formed and "derive their critical coloring from the fact that the rift between value and reality is typical of the totality of modern culture," critical science can self-reflectively develop its concepts. Critique "relat[es] social institutions and activities to the same values they themselves set forth as their standards and ideals." 115

Habermas is clearly aware of the objectivisms of his appropriated sociologies. This is reflected in his writings on systems theory. He challenges Parsonian functionalism to explain how control values and social norms come to be forces of equilibrium in any given system, how system boundaries come to be boundaries. He also critiques the behaviorism implicit in the theory of rule-following. In fact, Habermas anticipates his future critique of Luhmann in Philosophical Discourse of Modernity in his treatment of Parsons. The following passage reproduces some of the key terms of Habermas's critique of Luhmann's sociology. 116

[T]he criterion for historical life and survival is dependent on the interpretations that have validity in a social system; but these interpretations are in turn dependent on the objective conditions of the system and its environment. Parsons makes the mistake of regarding whole social systems as if they were individual social facts. He presumes the control

116 The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.
values that define a system's equilibrium are "given" in the same way as the cultural values that determine social norms.  

Rule-following is not simply a matter of behavior, but of experience that must be interpreted by agent and theorist alike. Once it has established a sociological field of study with a priori givens, in the form of rule structures, systems sociology goes on to characterize the field as an automatic machine driven by the imperatives of a single dimension of reason, the only kind with which science can trade. This sociology feeds back its functional analyses into lifeworld structures, functionalizing them further.

Habermas objects that Parsons and Luhmann divorce meaning from validity.

Reason as specified in relation to being, thought, or proposition is replaced by the self-enhancing self-maintenance of the system. With a concept of meaning conceived in functionalist terms, the internal connection between meaning and validity dissolves. The interest in truth (and validity in general) is restricted to the effects of holding-something-as-true.

Metaphysical questions of meaning that have preoccupied philosophy shift to "metabiological" concerns with systemic autopoiesis. Meaning is empirically observable when meaning-processing subsystems branch out and reciprocally constitute environments for each other. Language and reason are abstractly compartmentalized. Thought becomes pragmatic and consequentialist, oriented only to strategic action. Experience becomes behavior. Meaning becomes pre-linguistic, a mere "referential context of

117 On the Logic of the Social Sciences, pp. 80-3.
118 Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 379.
actualizable possibilities related to intentionality of experience and action."119 A functional feedback between research and reality can occur only because objectivist sociology splits off interpretive endeavors from the scientific search for the validation of hypotheses.

Habermas's criticisms of Parsons and Luhmann are equally applicable to his own appropriations of systems theory. In "systems" mode of critical systems theory, as in pure systems theory, language becomes a "communications medium," an instrument with which to follow the rules of evolution more effectively. Language is compressed into technical functions that can come to replace processes of social integration.


So far in this thesis I have offered some reasons why positive dialectics may be an attractive, critical approach to the problems of language, labor and domination introduced by the first generation of critical theorists. Habermas wants to articulate a promise made to language speakers by the mutually evolving logics animating all languages. The communicative covenant represents not only a possibility of a theoretically guided, emancipatory, political practice, but also Habermas's certainty that evolutionary advances in the normative and cognitive dimensions of social organization will inevitably lead to a collective salvation. In Axel Honneth's words, communicative action "should generate both a meaningful self-definition and a critique of domination through a

119 Ibid.
process of collective social criticism which would reach the social space where theoretical enlightenment can be politically organized.\textsuperscript{120}

The "space" of which Axel Honneth writes is civil society, the space between system and lifeworld. Here, theoretical and practical knowledge mutually informs each other; emancipatory praxis philosophy can also find its expression and future work in civil society. Civil society is simultaneously embedded in the sacred lifeworld, dependent upon "rationalization" of the lifeworld by the system for evolutionary advances in the way citizens reproduce their worldviews, and under attack by the same desacralizing, delinguistifying system.

Habermas shows students of Western Marxism that when functionalized language impinges on natural language, new kinds of alienation emerge. In post-industrial societies, new kinds of conflict in civil society supplant "welfare state" conflicts over distribution. Habermas's political theory of post-industrial civil society is explicitly addressed in the theory of communicative action. However, if the latter is understood as both a continuation the of older critical theory in some respects, and a dismissal of older criticisms in other respects, then it is possible to see how Habermas is engaged in what has been traditionally understood as incommensurable tasks.

On the one hand, the theory of communicative action objectivistcally describes and explains the history of the structural transformation of linguistic practices into alienated systems and highly rationalized lifeworlds. The natural "reflexivities" in lifeworld languages, which include the hermeneutic understandings required for social agents'...
interpretations of needs and intentions, their processes of personal identity formation, and their normative structures, are methodically objectified once, even before their rationalization and decline is traced. On the other hand, the same theory indicates that objectifications and dualisms can collapse into the monistic, ideal speech situation.

Communicative rationality cannot guide future practices of free and rational politicking with scientific criticism, despite its emphasis on anti-objectivist, communicative rationality, because the dual model of society retains an instrumentalist conception of the relation of people and their external nature. So far I have argued that the reflexivities of social systems which Habermas links to the evolutionary advances of worldviews with systems theory are objectifications of language as communications, and of people as "elements" in a communications system. The objectivisms represent an important discontinuity of first generation thought.

Systems theory excludes natural "environments" as a principle of differentiation; to the degree that the theory of communicative action appropriates systems theory to describe and promote rationalization, it, too excludes nature as an "environment." However, and more importantly, it also excludes nature as a potential conversationalist. Dualism sweeps aside the "reconciliatory" project of mimesis initiated by the first generation.121 Habermas "suspects that an aesthetic communication with nature extends the model of social interaction to natural contexts, and

thus overtaxes it."¹²² When the monistic conception of historical
movement, the dialectic of enlightenment, is expanded into a dualism, and
negative dialectics turns positive, history is conceived strictly as a
rational progression made by autonomous individuals. This evolutionary
theory can be justified only at the expense of an instrumentalist
conception of nature.

Communicative ethics is anthropocentric. "[T]he dignity of the
subject [...] is attained at the price of denying all worth to nature."¹²³
Vincent Di Norcia argues that "[Habermas's] concern to keep technical
rationality from dominating the social world may have blinded him to the
necessity of conceiving the natural world as more than something to be
controlled."¹²⁴ "Passive objects of control are not subjects of
communication."¹²⁵ The dualistic perspective opposes nature to the history
of human subjects, and valorizes the exchange of human symbols at the
expense of nature. Rational community building and communicative
reconciliation is achieved at the expense of the objectification of nature.
The covenant does not bring nature into intersubjectivity, but excludes it
as an object.

In the next chapter, I discuss symbolic conflicts over nature, and
some problems these pose for dualist critical theory. All of the social
movement theory reviewed below has worked from a dualist model of civil
society to include new politics as a reconciliatory, history-making force.

¹²² Ibid, p. 50.
¹²³ Whitebook, Joel, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," Telos No. 40,
1979, p. 53
¹²⁴ DeNorcia, Vincent, "From Critical Theory to Critical Ecology," Telos
No 22, Winter 1974/5, p. 89.
¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 88
Studies of ecological counter-cultural movements should challenge Habermas to expand his theory of communicative action to include a critical-theoretical discourse about nature.
III. 1. Introduction

We have seen so far that a primary discontinuity between Habermas and his teachers in the tradition of critical theory is his identification and appeal for cultivation of the positive space for political emancipation in civil society from the overlap of system and lifeworld. Habermas opens a field of empirical research into the evaporating civil societies of post industrial, welfare states. New social movement theory is indebted to second generation critical theory for these basic ideas.

Habermas offers three theses about the uniqueness and significance of new social movements for a critical theory of society. Cohen and Arato have laid these out plainly. The first thesis is that the emergence of cultural modernity, of differentiated spheres of science, art, and morality, organized around their internal validity claims, "carries with it a potential for increased self-reflection (and decentered subjectivity) regarding all dimensions of action and world relations." The second thesis is that modernity selectively favors processes of system integration as it institutionalizes its rational potentials, leading to the colonization of the lifeworld. The third thesis "insists on the two-sided character of the institutions of our contemporary lifeworld, that is, the idea that societal rationalization has entailed institutional developments in civil society involving not only domination but also the basis for emancipation."126

Second-generation critical theory attempts to "reconstruct" a program of historical materialist research so as to create and sustain the

126 Cohen and Arato, pp. 524-5.
potential for emancipation from slavery. It divides its labors between hermeneutics and positivist systems theory. New social movement theory also splits along hermeneutic and positivist interpretations of movement practice.

"Reconstructed" rational potentials in history replace the dialectic of enlightenment's inevitable history of decline with a history of decline and progress. The differentiation of the lifeworld in cultural modernity into public and private spheres of civil society and the growth of the welfare state creates regressive alienations, but also unleashes new potentials for learning and growth. This happens within "sets of institutions oriented to cultural transmission, social integration, socialization, and individuation."127

In this way the theory of communicative action tries to capture the synchronic and diachronic axes of an evolutionary theory of communications, all the while charting the obstacles to the ideal situation. A hermeneutically informed philosophy of intersubjective, communicative reason and functionalist systems theory are combined into a dualist model.

Habermas generates parallel discourses "fitted" together with a functional analysis of communications. This produces binary oppositions at all levels of the philosophical system. Lifeworld and system, symbolic and material integration, internal and external nature, speech and code, langue and parole, and so on, are analytical distinctions that give reflective awareness of the dependencies of each term upon the other within the dualism.

127 Ibid., p. 544.
With slight variations, new social movement theory also works within these dualisms. It also identifies a functional fit between system and lifeworld that corresponds with the philosophical fit of scientistic and hermeneutic work. The previous chapters suggested that the fit is a Habermasian article of faith in, or wager in favor of, collective salvation and progress. As such it is a departure from previous critical theory.

In this chapter, I explore new social movement theory as a budding discipline desirous of unifying second-generation dualisms, or at the least, of reconciling their aporias. New social movement theory can also reconcile some tensions between first and second generation critical theory concerned with the domination of the nature "within and without us," in Seyla Benhabib's words. New social movement theory is interested in exploring the potentials of the radical democratic reformist pressures felt in the American civil rights movements, the various European anti-nuclear missile movements, and the German Greens (to illustrate a few movements of frequent analysis). It is also interested in thinking through various conceptual and structural obstacles to the "alternative practices" that movements pursue.

Many movement theorists such as Offe, Cohen, Touraine, and Melucci reject the characterization of movements as a "defense mechanism" of the lifeworld, choosing instead to discuss them as new political agents who engage in a praxis that positively reconstitutes—rather than negatively reacts to—a reified lifeworld. Movements demonstrate resistance rather than empowerment. Their structural location between system and lifeworld and their fundamental critiques of the grammar of everyday life do not resemble traditional party or class antagonisms, but something historically
unique and different. These critical theorists of social movements challenge Habermas to put his dualist historical theory of agency to work in a study of the progressive potentials of contemporary conflicts.

Not the class character of "new" social movements, but the positive rationalization potential of an already highly reified civil society is at issue in the torrent of literature on new social movements. The question seems to be whether movements "reconstitute" or "revaluate" a desiccated civil society, creating spaces no longer dependent on regulations, control, and state intervention for their existence.128

Before they burn out, new social movements turn the public sector of welfare state society into a field of conflict. New social movement conflicts take the form of a "symbolic challenge"129 to power bound up in the interconnected operational codes which organize information to govern highly reflexive social systems, a challenge to the same bureaucratic-administrative power Habermas attributes to functionalist systems logic.

Modern systems--state-organized political economies and the military and civilian technological systems upon which they depend--have an "enormous capacity for conflict displacement" "by which concrete conflicts can be solved by imposing the costs of the solution upon external actors or shifting it to new dimensions of privilege and deprivation."130 The system deals with new conflicts by avoiding them with numerous, interchangeable technical solutions. The stakes of failure grows as the power to avoid failure grows.

New social movement politics is a new kind of civil disobedience directed at the modern technical interdependencies of system and lifeworld. Claus Offe argues from a dualist perspective that the revisionist, 'self-restricting' new politics plays a potentially revolutionary role in a democratic, post-industrial society.\textsuperscript{131} Rather than going for state control through party or extra-legal means, they vie for aesthetically challenging interpretations of complex political situations and normative critiques of dominant institutional symbologies in civil society.

Movements do not look to seize state control through revolutionary or institutional procedures, nor can they. They are fighting against a "systemic logic that selects, creates, and rewards certain kinds of interests and excludes others;"\textsuperscript{132} specifically, they are fighting against ensnarement in a state organization constituted by market compensating measures and welfare concessions.\textsuperscript{133} Movements resist public sectorization.

Habermas and Offe agree that welfare state politics in late capitalism has brought the kinds of capital accumulation, goods production, and wealth distribution dysfunctions to bear on lifeworld dysfunctions. For both theorists, legitimation, motivation, and normative crises are "organic" reflexes transferred to the lifeworld by systems crises.

Offe and Habermas disagree about the degree of self-control and reflective direction movements possess. Habermas reduces processes of social integration to processes of system integration to explain the new

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical About Critical Theory? Habermas and Gender," \textit{New German Critique} 35 Spring/Summer 1985.
politics. New politics is presented as a distorted expression of late capitalism. Offe appears to afford movements more agency, but like Habermas, subsumes their potentials for rational action under a systemic perspective. For instance, Offe describes "stages" in a natural trajectory of the Greens movement that led to their institutionalization and concomitant relinquishment of radically democratic, anti-institutional ideals. 134

The structuralist sociology upon which new social movement theories are premised argues different lines when addressing the relationship of agency and institutional reflexivity and potential for substantive change. Cohen, Arato, Melucci, and (to some extent) Touraine stress that an historically unique commodity form has inaugurated a post-industrial society in which social conflicts explode into new areas of social life 135 Information codes are power, and movement conflicts are conflicts over power. "Conflicts shift to the codes, to the formal frameworks of knowledge, and this shift is made possible by the self-reflexive capacity of complex systems." 136

136 Melucci, Nomads, p. 86.
The global, complex, hyper-reflexive post-industrial commodity form has globalized the scope of conflicts, making quality of life issues common and global concerns. The threat of ecological crises, for example, is historically unique to the post-industrial commodity form, which brings nearly all societies together in a common interdependence, and whose side-effects have global repercussions. Crises of global systems emerge as crises, and as objects of critique, when they are taken on and expressed by new political representations.

The next section of this chapter illustrates some aspects of the Habermas-Luhmann debate of special importance to new social movement theory. The later sections introduce some analyses of new social movements that challenge Habermas's critique of new social movements with his own criteria. Before concluding, I review Klaus Eder's study of "ecological counter-cultural movements," which reminds new social movement theorists of their indebtedness to the attention paid by first generation critical theorists to the objectification of nature.

III. 2. Important Themes for Alternative Practice in the Habermas-Luhmann Dispute

The Habermasian model of new social movement theory falls too heavily on the side of systems theory and introduces uncritical and conservative prejudices into Habermas's study of new politics. His interest in movements is directed at their how they demonstrate the growing separation of system and lifeworld, and the mediatized penetration of the lifeworld by

137 Ibid.
the system, not at their emancipatory potentials. This monological study of new social movements threatens to trivialize the advances claimed by Habermasian critical theory over first generation thought. By focusing too closely on the pathological sociology of new social movements, Habermas fails to recognize those same emancipatory potentials locked up in our highly rationalized lifeworld that he claimed the first generation ignored.

The Habermas-Luhmann dispute gives us an argumentative template for evaluating the dualist theory of new social movements. First, the debate repoliticizes civil society or reconstitutes civil society as a focus for sociology, political science, psychology, and critical theory. Civil society is the focus of new social movement theory in conversation with Habermasian critical theory.

Second, dualistic critical science claims the reflective power necessary to use systems theory critically and responsibly. It seems that new social movement theorists have yet to encounter Luhmann's perspectives on new social movements. Luhmann extinguishes civil society with cybernetic sociology, so he is of little help for theorizing collective action at the margin.

New social movement theory could follow Habermas's strategy of initiating lines of argumentation against Luhmann while also re-formulating Luhmannian theses. Taking a dual approach to language—as speech and as mediatized communications—would give us a picture of symbolic conflicts

138 Luhmann's interest in ecological movements, and new social movements generally, is in characterizing them as "a 'noise' distorting human communication that can no longer be ignored" Ecological Communication, (Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 1989), p. 1
over systemic power in civil society. This approach requires that we posit a place of unity between system and action perspectives.

A dualist approach to new social movement studies would allow us, as it allows Habermas, to argue that "the operations of empirical science and philosophical conceptual analysis intermesh." Habermas first distinguishes the growth of systemic complexity from increases in institutional learning. He does this with the criterion of communicative rationality. He then translates from structure into meaning, from system discourse into action discourse. The tendency of speech to bring people into a common understanding now has a universal and inherent structure recognizable from a systems perspective.

Conversely, communicative pathologies are also translatable. The telos of speech is the potential for communicative confederation and emancipatory (rational) political practice locked up in public discourse. This salvific potential is at risk from being overtaken by the organizing powers of delinguistified media.

The battle lines between life-world and system [...] acquire a new relevance. Today economic and administrative imperatives embodied in the media of money and power encroach on areas that somehow collapse as soon as they are broken off from communication-oriented action and transferred to interactions steered by these media [of money and power]. These are processes that no longer fit into the scheme of class analysis. But one can demonstrate a functional connection between the central conflicts of the life-world and the requirements of capitalist modernization. I have shown this with examples from

---

140 However, pre-understandings exert an organizing function on communications before people exchange their first sentences, and these are not accessible to systems theory.
social, educational and family policy, and also to a degree from the new protest movements. 141

When Habermas translates the structural obstacles to communicative confederation into lifeworld conflicts, the struggle of society against the state looks like a "defensive" posture to him. When conflicts at the seam are translated from system language to lifeworld language, they demonstrate "pathologies" effected by "the transposition of communicative action to media-steered interactions" and "the deformations of a damaged intersubjectivity." 142 When new conflicts are translated from social to system integrative language, their "anxieties" and "painful manifestations of deprivation in a culturally impoverished and one-sidedly rationalized practice of everyday life" become a "reaction" to the colonization of the lifeworld. 143 From either perspective, Habermas one-sidedly focuses on new social movement politics as structurally regressive "withdrawal symptoms."

Third, Habermas argues against Luhmann that rationalization is both the evolution of communications and rationalization-as-reification. The latter is observable in practice when communications systems replace practices of symbolic interaction and processes of social integration.

Systems theory treats accomplishments of social and system integration as functionally equivalent and thus deprives itself of the standard of communicative rationality. And without that standard, increases in complexity achieved at the expense of a rationalized lifeworld cannot be identified as costs. [Paradoxically,] [T]he rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible the emergence and growth of subsystems whose

142 Ibid., p. 386
independent imperatives turn back destructively upon the lifeworld. 

Pure systems theory does not distinguish rationalization as alienation because it does not employ the standard of communicative rationality, the standard which keeps second-generation critical theory critical and gives it a dualist perspective on social life. In Luhmann's monistic theory, system complexity is the only relevant sociological criterion for evaluating modern progress.

New social movement struggles are built upon the same complex structures they conflictually politicize. The functionalization of "the grammar of everyday life" (Habermas's phrase) becomes a structural condition for, and target of, radical political protest.

Fourth, the Habermasian charge that technocratic theory becomes technocratic practice gets to the heart of the practical relation of new social movement theory to its field of study. New social movement theory wants to avoid serving the same ideological ends as Parsonian and neo-Parsonian systems theory.

Habermas goes so far as to say that pure systems theory completely objectifies the lifeworld by reducing it to differences between systems and their numerous environments. This objectification actually intervenes into social life, in a process Habermas calls "reverberation." It not only devalues linguistic practice but extends operational codes into real social practice. It helps to destroy what possibilities are left for autonomous subjects to engage in unifying discourses about issues of power of concern.

---

to democratic public life, not to mention their normative expectations for public and private life.

There is a risk that new social movement theory might also become technocratic. It might not restrict itself to theorizing the margin of system and lifeworld, but introduce an objectifying "metabiology" of the pure systems type into its analyses.145 This is more likely to occur in resource mobilization approaches to the problem of mobilization. The point is that dualism seems to be the only "critical" approach to a new social movement theory that wants to employ a sociological analysis of the social structures and conflicts of late capitalism.

Fifth, and finally, the pure systems approach to the study of the centerless society leaves no space for a communicatively rational subject. It therefore leaves out the possibility of collective learning associated with public deliberations and legitimations of political power. "If modern societies have no possibility whatsoever of shaping a rational identity, then we are without any point of reference for a critique of modernity."146 Habermas's critical hermeneutic of communicative alienation presents a narrative of who or what becomes alienated from the lifeworld. The very terms of a centerless society disallows for this central category, the subject.

145 Compare Jean-Francois Lyotard's critique of systems theory as "terrorist" practice, in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Minneapolis: U. Minnesota Press), 1988, pp. 61ff. Also, see Chapter Two for a discussion of Habermas's charge that neo-Parsonianism replaces metaphysics with "metabiology."
147 Philosophical Discourse, p. 374.
III. 3. Problems with the Habermasian Evaluation of Movement Practices

Habermas does not regard new social movements as true political subjects. He dismisses new social movement praxis as a potentially rational, emancipatory project. On this key point he differs from other critical theorists. The question becomes, then, whether or not social movements are historical subjects for Habermas.

The answer to this question depends entirely upon whether movements demonstrate potentials for communicative rationality. The internal differentiation of the political system into formal spheres of public, politics, and administration by welfare state rationalization yields a functionally differentiated public sphere with historically unique, "pathological" distortions of communicative action. Social movements are such political pathologies. They cannot take a central, rational, "reflexive" position in society. Crisis phenomena cannot unleash progressive modernization potentials in civil society, because, first, they are conflictual indicators of dissent, and because, second, they do not express themselves as industrial labor conflicts over production and distribution of wealth. Rather, conflicts have come to center on what

Habermas calls "the grammar of everyday life," on previously "private" matters of "quality of life" demanding "particularistic" rights.

The seam of system and lifeworld is the locus of conflicting and incommensurable speech and media communications. When new social movements politicize the conflicts at the seam, they acquire the impossible burden of resolving them through rational discussion and public debate. They make up for their communicative inabilities with romantic idealisms.

New social movement politics are, in Habermas's words, "surrealistic violations of the rules;" their politicized conflicts are "abstract [...] and call for technical and economic solutions which must in turn be globally planned and implemented by administrative means." Habermas ignores the unifying potentials of movements and their "radical possibilities." He gives up on the historical subjectivity of new social movements, just as he has given up on the agency of the proletariat.

III. 4. Political Formalisms in the Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas has invested a great deal in systems theory to explain the differentiation of political society into systemic spheres. What Habermas adds to Luhmann's perspective on "the political code" is an interaction between system and lifeworld. Political structures simultaneously embody the contradictions in civil society and hold some promise for resolving these contradictions. In the Theory of Communicative Action v. 2, the "political system" is conceived according to a formal, Luhmannian

149 Bookchin, Murray, "Finding the Subject: Notes on Whitebook and 'Habermas, Ltd.'", Telos No. 52, 1982, p. 83.
communicative organization model. Society's enormous complexity needs to be reduced through efficient and authoritative decision-making.\textsuperscript{150} The political code "binds" system decisions only cognitively. Binding decisions require that people-objects "affected" in the environment of a political subsystem (the subsystem's "object domain") by decision-making power learn to change their expectations from trust-relations, which are normative, to power-relations, which are cognitive.\textsuperscript{151}

Political communications are relations between a government administration conceived as a system and a public sphere conceived as lifeworld.\textsuperscript{152} As the system and lifeworld separate, and as the system colonizes and alienates the sacred lifeworld, crises from both spheres reverberate each other.

The system depends upon the lifeworld for foundational communicative structures, but also destroys these foundations. Systemic incursions into the lifeworld are responsible for cultural fragmentation, alienation ("decentered subjectivity"), routinization, and so on. Evaluative criteria of communicative rationality are needed to distinguish what is progressive and rational from what is pre- or anti-modern, irrational, and regressive.

Habermas does not apply criteria of communicative rationality to new social movements because they are not recognizably political phenomena with a role in civil society.\textsuperscript{153} They act neither within the formal political system nor within the institutions of civil society. Nor are conflicts "at

\textsuperscript{150} Compare Luhmann, \textit{The Differentiation of Society}, p. 279, note 12.
\textsuperscript{152} McCarthy, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{153} Klaus Eder has made up for this oversight by evaluating movements according to the standard of "collective learning." See the discussion below.
the seam" of system and lifeworld classifiable as rational action for Habermas. They are, rather, an organic "defense" and (from his description) an almost automatic "reaction" of the lifeworld to systemic incursions.\textsuperscript{154} They are a kind of immune response to mediatization and colonization, a resistance to autopoietic imperatives.

When Habermas does not view new social movements as social pathology, he regards them with some ambivalence. New social movements resist "switching over" lifeworld tracts into the domains of social subsystems by repoliticizing the overlap of private and public spheres. Their protests transcend the formal roles of employee, consumer, citizen, and state client by targeting the meaninglessness and powerlessness of these roles.

New social movement politics offers Habermas a great deal of sociological explanatory value. It demonstrates the side-effects of the dialectic of enlightenment, where this is understood as mediatization, colonization, delinguistification, and other objectivating types of consciousness that turn inward for self-destruction. Habermas gives the impression that movement conflicts are indicative of enlightenment's return to myth. They avenge modernization and disenchantment pre-politically. The reflexivity of the colonizing codes overpower the reconciling potentials of speech communities. Movements are evidence of the historical decline of emancipatory potentials of speech oriented to reaching agreement. They conflictually and defensively protect lifeworld institutions against further colonization. To this extent, they are

regressive phenomena. New social movement conflicts over nature symbolization, especially, are "anti-modern" in their call for communicative reconciliation with nature.

I want to suggest that Habermas's methodology allows for new conflicts "at the seam" of system and lifeworld to be viewed as remarkable reminders of the stakes of communicative praxis. They are ideal types of contemporary communicative action, demonstrating the risks of capitalist development and administrative technocracy to the rational, unifying potentials of modernity. They work simultaneously within and against the grain of civil society. Dual theory can incorporate a hermeneutic of nature symbolization that allows their communicative rationality to come to the fore. I address this possibility in the section of this chapter on Klaus Eder.

III. 5. Avoiding Instrumentalism in Dualist Theory

The dualistic model opens up a new discourse about learning potentials inherent in what remains of civil society from the colonizing effects of the welfare state. The public sphere of civil society asserts its primacy in principle, despite pressures of delinguistification. It shows the emancipatory potentials of communicative praxis.

One must distinguish between the restraint of the monetary-administrative-military complex and the rolling back of the structural differentiation of life-forms. Modern life-worlds are differentiated and should remain so in order that the reflexivity of justice and morality do not all go to hell.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Autonomy and Solidarity, p. 107.
The "reflexivity of justice and morality" is what concerns me in this section in light of what we have reviewed about reflexivity in the first and second chapters. On the one hand, reflexivity implies a critical distance within a tradition that allows Habermas to take a positive stance against the negations of previous critical theory. To the question of the total reification of consciousness in administered society, Habermas can argue teleologically for rational potentials of communicative rationality (in the ideal speech situation) for building identities, meanings, and norms, and the evolutionary potentials locked up in systemically structured worldviews.

The differentiation of the subsystems of economy and state from the lifeworld is a precondition for releasing the cultural potentials of modernity and for freeing communicative interaction from ritualistically reproducing sacralized, conventional norms. The lifeworld cannot be internally differentiated, the institutions of civil society cannot be modernized, subjectivity cannot be decentered, and roles cannot be challenged unless communicative interaction is unburdened from the task of coordinating all areas of life.

Criticisms of "the grammar of everyday life" highlight conflict over all three zones of social integration--culture, society, and personality--because they speak publicly to the functionalization of these zones. The autonomy and self-sufficiency of these "zones" are crucial for the persistence of the modern lifeworld. They should therefore be of utmost interest to a dualist account. Yet Habermas retains a purely structuralist, systems account to "explain" the reverberations in social integration effected by systems integration.

156 Cohen and Arato, p. 539.
Habermas's account thus objectifies the conflictual engagement with symbolic and material reproduction. Movements are symptomatic evidence of systemic crisis, side-effects of the powerful systems logic at work rationalizing lifeworld communications. Cohen and Arato have tried to show that a dualistic theory of modern civil society does not necessarily lead to the same objectifications, and reconstruct some idiosyncratic Habermasian decisions that lead him to his dubious analyses of new social movements.157

Collective action "at the seam" means, in principle, that new politics is amenable to both structuralist and hermeneutic perspectives. Indeed, the bifurcation of research on movements into resource mobilization and identity camps aligns nicely with system and action theories of society.

Habermas's preoccupation with "how" questions draws attention to mediatization processes rather than movement mobilization or symbologies. Functionalist sociology is employed to explain and describe the colonization of the lifeworld through linguistic media and bureaucratic-administrative power. Thus, his systems perspective on movements highlights the instrumentalisms of bureaucratic-administrative systems. Movement tactics and strategies are not correlated to their symbolic challenges.

Habermas hands over the study of the reflexivity of new politics to cybernetic communications theory by drawing a mechanical and transpositional relationship between crises of system integration and crises of social integration, of which new social movements are purportedly

157 See their chapter entitled "Social Movements and Civil Society."
evidence. He thinks that class antagonisms have been concealed by shifting them into a de-politicized terrain of systemic, technical and administrative operations.

What follows is an interpretation of a political challenge to the foundational concepts in Habermasian critical theory that have been reviewed throughout this thesis. We have seen already that new social movement theory, while dependent on Habermas for its basic tenets, has challenged him to put his idea of communicative rationality to work for evaluating movement politics. We have also seen that Habermas has instrumentalized his critical theory to argue a case for historical progress.

Klaus Eder supercedes Habermasian new social movement theory by focusing attention on the emancipatory potentials of counter-cultural movements, and by showing how Habermasian criteria for judging political progress can be employed to justify radical politics in the seam of system and lifeworld.

III. 6. The Case for Collective Learning: Ecological Counter-Cultural Movements

Klaus Eder presents an unusual account of a revolutionary (and not merely reformist), "ecological counter-cultural movement" built up from "the new middle class" which understands the social and theoretical problems of an instrumental relation to nature, and which demonstrates this understanding in action. Eder fits this revolutionary subject to a new kind of progressive and emancipatory political praxis.
The new middle class promises a total transformation of the modern logic of economic growth. White collar workers and service sector workers are "the potential carriers of a new relationship with nature" that has opened up nature as a new arena of future class struggle.

Eder utilizes the standard of communicative rationality to judge the emancipatory potentials of this movement. He discusses the kinds of "collective learning" which facilitate socialization into new lifeworld institutions. He then offers a criterion by which to judge the rationality or irrationality of movement ideologies. "Insofar as the sociality which is implicit in the collective protest makes collective learning processes possible, it is 'rational'; insofar as it impedes these learning processes, it is 'irrational.'" 158

Social movements are located between upper and lower class structures. Their precarious location produces a tension between universalistic and particularistic values, between bourgeois and proletarian collective identities. Petit bourgeois radicals since the nineteenth century have been misfits, with confused values and identities. Even today, the new social movements are stuck in a perpetual oscillation between a "logic of moral indignation" and "moral crusade," on the one hand, and secularized countercultural protests on the other. 159 In the universalistic, "moral crusade" mode, they fight against a prevalent morality and for a counterfactual, alternative culture they identify, proclaim, and embody. In the particularistic, political pressure group mode, they fight against the euphemistic treatment of, or complete

158 Eder, "The 'New Social Movements': Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?" Social Research v 52, No. 4, p. 887.
159 Ibid., p. 881.
disregard for, concrete social problems generated by economic growth, whatever they may be. Social movements fight for a radical democratization of social relationships as such, not social relationships of production; however, their success depends entirely upon whether or not they maintain or lose the status they need to generate support. 160

Movements struggling with the environmental crisis are countercultural movements rather than mere social movements because they "change the cultural definition of the relation of men to nature" by "defin[ing] the relation of men to nature as one of exploitation." They recognize the environmental crisis as a "manifestation of a self-defeating modern process." 161 Eder introduces "counter-cultural movements" as a counterpoint to new social movements. Countercultural movements have a higher level of sociality that make possible a kind of "collective learning" amenable to total, radical, progressive social transformation. They make possible a new kind of communicative life praxis justifiable with reference to a structural evolution of society.

Environmentally conscious new social movements, on the other hand, are not progressive because they are stuck in an indeterminate area between universalism and particularism, and because they have strictly utilitarian concerns with how to use nature more efficiently. 162 Ecologically minded new social movements want to do modernity better, appealing to new configurations of administrative, bureaucratic, and technological resources to authoritatively solve environmental problems. Environmentalists appeal for systemic resolutions of systemically induced problems. The "common

160 Ibid., p. 888.
162 Ibid.
critique of growth" said to be characteristic of new social movements ends here: ecological new social movements do not struggle against economic growth per se, but against particular political programs' routes to growth. Social movements united around the common critique of growth appeal to modern progress brought about by better crisis management, while ecological counter-cultural movements question the very idea of historical progress brought about by instrumental means.

Social movements have defined and still define the dominant visions of modernity with appeals to individual rights and material well-being. Counter-culture movements have claimed in the past, and presently claim, "something beyond such visions of modernity: a society that, to be sure, secures individual rights and material well-being but within nature, not beyond it and in harmony with nature, not in spite of it." 163

Counter-cultural ecological movements thus seek to rework a foundational cultural code and make three claims about the domination of inner and outer nature that challenge people to learn. First, "[t]he exploitation of nature is, like the exploitation of the workforce, part of a global process of modernization and rationalization—of which capitalist development is only one aspect." Second, increasing differentiation and intensification of the exploitation of nature is changing the class structure of advanced modern societies. Third, and finally, the "emerging new class social structure replaces the model of industrialism constitutive for capitalist and socialist societies and gives counter-cultural movements a central role in determining the direction of future modernization." 164

164 Ibid., pp. 21-2.
The two fundamentally different sorts of conflicts over nature, the counter-cultural-ecological and the merely ecological conflicts, have engendered a "division between the mobilized classes of actors as carriers of modern development." The social movements work in favor of the dominant modernity, while the counter-cultural movements struggle in the name of "another modernity."

To the extent that they are structural carriers of cultural traditions that politicize the social relations of domination along with the domination of nature, Eder claims that the counter-cultural ecological movements have transformed nature into an historically new field of class struggle. Romantic nature movements have thematized social relations with nature in the past, but not in a way that linked them explicitly to social hierarchies.

Two modern, structural factors have changed this latent struggle over nature into potentially explicit class struggle over the cultural codes. First, the ecological crisis has made nature into an arena of public disputes, into a symbolic realm of conflict. Second, in post-industrial society, an increased capacity for reflexivity in addressing cultural traditions allows for the popularization of a thoroughgoing cultural critique. Post-industrial society can transform itself from within with a new class whose disputational thematizations of the exploitation of nature can lead to new agreements about what would constitute proper, social relations with nature. I read Eder as saying that counter-cultural ecological movements struggle to engage with nature mimetically. "In so far as social relations with nature are becoming the central problem of the reproduction of modern society these counter-cultural traditions are
becoming the determinants of the cultural model that is at stake in the new type of class conflict."\(^{165}\)

A potential conflict between social and cultural movements becomes a "real opposition" between the two that will be fought out as a "class conflict" over competing visions of modernity. Eder foresees a convergence of historical ages hastened by an ecological crisis and led into a post-crisis situation by the counter-cultural movements. The post-crisis situation will be a post-instrumentalist, social relation with nature, a time when art and enlightenment are not antagonistic poles. "The ecological crisis of advanced modern society establishes these counter-movements in the role of a new historical actor \(\ldots\) to carry a relationship toward nature that opposes the domination vision of nature in modern society."\(^{166}\)

### III. 7. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the justifiable skepticism Eder evokes with his claim to have identified and justified the revolutionary "new class," his work on counter-cultural movements transforms the field of new social movement theory. The idea that social movements are carriers of progress has been one-upped, along with the idea of that progress itself. An obvious question that can be put to Eder concerns the revolutionary quality of the new middle class of yuppies. Eder's peculiar thesis that the new middle class learns better than its predecessors stands or falls on the claim that

\(^{165}\) Ibid., p. 32.
\(^{166}\) Ibid., p. 40.
counter-cultural movements foster a new form of collective learning which will lead the evolution of social structure into socialism.

Eder reminds us that emancipatory political practice in civil society depends upon an idea of revolution which is connected to an idea of communicative progress. He derives this thesis from Habermas. But Eder breaks from Habermasian theory by arguing that an instrumentalist perspective on nature hinders communicative progress. The ideal speech situation, as a standard for communicative rationality, excludes the conversation with nature sought by counter-cultural movements and by first generation critical theory.

A parallel may be drawn between the different visions of modernity of first and second generations of critical theory and those of social movements and counter-cultural movements. Habermas wants to complete modernity in its own terms, as would an environmentalist. He works in favor of the dominant modernity, while the first generation of critical theory implies a struggle for "another modernity."

Isaac Balbus has written that "the notion of a post-instrumental mode of [nature] symbolization offers the possibility of a critical theory [...] that resolves the central dilemmas that have plagued this type of theory since it was initiated by Marx. Contrary to Marx, then, not the abandonment, but rather the material grounding of this notion is what is in order."167 Eder's work on ecological counter-cultural movement practices shows how the objectification and domination of nature is still a problem for contemporary critical theory.

The concerns of the students of counter-cultural ecology movements and of Frankfurt School historians come together with the problem of nature: "Cumulative progress in the rational mastery of nature simultaneously propagates a form of reification in which domination becomes the organizing principle of both internal and external nature." In light of his writings on new social movement regressions, Habermas's instrumentalist language also carries with it a dominating logic of nature objectification.

Conclusion: The Idea of Post-Instrumentalist, Post-Objectivist Politics

Historically, critical theory has used its reflexive theoretical resources to adapt and change its conceptual repertoire for social and self-critique. New social movement theory, especially Klaus Eder's, presents students of critical theory with an opportunity to renew and rework some second generation problems of instrumentalism and objectivism.

Seyla Benhabib alludes to a critical-theoretical project without "aporias" that is currently underway in new social movements. She presents these as sharing a mode of theoretical life, a kind of theoretical lifestyle, that resolves the modern political-philosophical aporias tackled by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas. What distinguishes the movements from traditional critical theoretical projects is that they express a sort of living critique of hegemonic moral and political culture that legitimates and reinforces dominant hierarchies.

These hierarchies which Benhabib identifies as the targets of the movements are patriarchy and industrial exploitation of "the nature within and without us." In the course of developing a theoretical and practical challenge to patriarchal domination and exploitation of nature, the women's and ecology movements, in particular, have put critical theory into practice. Benhabib helps to politicize these movements' collective, philosophical vision of emancipatory practice: the struggle against a hierarchical social order requires a theoretical project of reconciling inner and outer natures. Benhabib suggests that the movements begin this reconciliatory project in their own practices, which construct highly

169 "Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory."
decentralized, horizontal organizations around a guiding principle of radical democracy. Radical democracy opens up revolutionary possibilities for expanding the scope of politically addressable conflicts in civil society, and for constructing forms of life which are not as dependent upon the operational codes and anonymous power structures of the "centerless society."

It is true that "nature is a social category." A fatalistic, reified understanding of nature leaves no room for thinking about historically new symbolic conflicts over and conversations with nature. Nature should not be understood as the Greeks understood moira, as a categorical destiny resistant to new conceptualizations. Lukacs notwithstanding, it is possible today to think about nature in a way that is also sensitive to the brute fact of the environmental crisis, which has demonstrated that the historically unique consequences of an instrumentalist mode of production is not simply a matter of worldviews. Nature, in other words, is indeed a socially conditioned notion; but today more than ever before, it makes itself felt as an exteriority, as something mythical, vengeful, and outside of the cumulative contents of a socially conditioned idea of nature.

Kant inaugurated the demotion of nature to the object of an instrumentalist tradition of science and philosophy. He relegated nature to the great heterogeneous category, which lies in distinct opposition to the reason that provides us with the autonomy to legislate our maxims for rational, ethical action. The categorical imperative objectifies nature by

exclusively privileging people as ends in themselves. For Hegel, the "enlightened" conscience begins its speculative self-realization by taking nature as its absolute other. Nature exists for the objectifying consciousness only insofar as it is useful for its dialectical emergence. However, once speculative self-consciousness feels certain of its historical purpose, nature ceases to be a pure object set over against an exclusively human subject. Absolute knowledge comes to recognize that in history there is purposiveness throughout the natural world.171

If we may think of Marx in terms of Hegel's developmental, stage model of the speculative consciousness, it becomes clear that he does not progress beyond the "enlightened" stage of thought to reconcile nature and human history. Instead, Marx conceives of nature instrumentally, as the field of future growth. Nature and history stand in dialectical opposition. While he puts humans inside the system of nature, and while human labor power is thus understood as a force of nature, labor power is nevertheless a force that is opposed to all other, nonhuman forces of nature. Nature is an object that awaits the intervention of a human subject. It has no intrinsic worth, except as a necessity to be overcome by the freedom unlocked by historical processes of laborious production. Nature and production are construed as necessities because people are necessarily natural creatures, and because they must struggle against scarcity to produce the natural conditions of their existence. "In the mirror of production, Nature looks at us with the eyes of necessity."172 We can say that the Marxian model of the relationship of people and nature

171 Balbus, 141-43.
is especially devoid of any ethical significance, because it is evaluated exclusively in instrumental terms. Nature is not an end in itself. The freedom to make history and human embeddedness in nature are inversely related. "Man is one with nature because and to the extent to which he as made it over as his expression." \textsuperscript{173}

Hence, exteriority of nature has been recognized as a part of philosophical reality since the Enlightenment project of modernization and natural and social domination required this exteriority. Perhaps for the first time in history, it is also true of social reality simultaneously and around the globe.

New social movement thematizations of nature demonstrate the dialectical relationship of nature as a brute fact and as a category whose contents are determined socially. Nature as a symbolic field of the "struggle over historicity" (Touraine)\textsuperscript{174} that has also been conditioned by the environmental crisis.

It would seem that Habermas's emancipatory critical theory should, in spirit if not in substance, be amenable to ecological movements, in either their "new social" or "counter-cultural" forms. Habermas wants to be able to salvage the possibility of a theoretically guided political practice with a focus on communicative rationality.

The work Habermas has done to replace a labor theory of value with a communications theory of value has opened some interesting avenues for revising the former, which rests on an explicitly instrumentalist ontology.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[174] \textit{Return of the Actor}.
\end{footnotes}
of production.175 But a lingering instrumentalist conception of nature in the Habermasian communications theory is a blend of critical theory and systems sociology arguing scientifically at the expense of the contents of natural categories traditionally excluded from Enlightenment concerns. The result is an exclusionary and objectifying theory of communicative rationality that could be otherwise.

The communicative covenant does not extend to all communicative participants equally. Taking a reflexive distance from new kinds of alienation in post-industrial society excludes new social movements from participation in critical dialogue with second generation theory. Significantly, the "self controlled learning process" of which Habermas speaks is never presented as the process of "collective learning" of which Eder speaks.

The Habermasian deployment of the idea of communicative rationality and his appropriation of sociological argumentation for explaining new social movements introduce some new challenges for critical theory. Critical dualism is no longer dependent upon Habermas for its basic ideas and philosophical formulations. It is now possible for new social movement theory to work on a communicating-with-nature theory of value so that a reconciliatory project can find its own ground.

175 "Man's understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body [...] appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth," so that "general social knowledge becomes a direct force of production." Marx, Grundrisse (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 705.
Selected Bibliography


Adorno, Theodor W., "The Actuality of Philosophy" Lecture, 1931, Reprinted in *Telos* No. 31, Spring 1977

---- "The Idea of Natural History," *Telos* No 60, Summer 1984


---- "Sociology and Psychology," *New Left Review* No. 46, November/December 1967


Baudrillard, Jean, *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975)


Bookchin, Murray, "Finding the Subject: Notes on Whitebook and 'Habermas, Ltd.'", *Telos* No. 52, 1982


Cohen, Jean L., "Between Crisis Management and Social Movements: The Place of Institutional Reform," *Telos* No. 52, 1982


---- "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* v. 52, No. 4


--- "The 'New Social Movements': Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?" *Social Research* v. 52, No. 4, 1991

Epstein, Barbara, "Rethinking Social Movement Theory," *Socialist Review* 1, 1991

Feher, Ferenc, and Agnes Heller, "From Red to Green," *Telos* No. 59, 1984

Fraser, Nancy, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* No. 25/26, 1990


--- *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), tr Thomas McCarthy

--- *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975)


--- "New Social Movements," *Telos* No. 49, 1981


Heinrich, Klaus, *Versuch über die Schwierigkeit nein zu sagen* (Frankfurt, 1964)


The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed. (New York: Continuum, 1985)


--- *Trust and Power: Two Works by Niklas Luhmann* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1979)


Offe, Claus, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Research* 52, No. 4, 1985


--- *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, "Religious Authority and Mysticism,"* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Schocken Books, 1965)


