“The Inclusion of Difference: The Views of Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard”

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To my Family.

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Certified that the dissertation entitled, "The Inclusion of Difference: The Views of Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard", by Andrew Jacob, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree in Master of Philosophy, is an original work of his own. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree in this university or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the board of examiners for evaluation.

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Andrew Jacob

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INTRODUCTION:

Before going into the particulars of this dissertation, I think it is important to provide a reason for my interest in this topic. My father works for the government of India. Due to his responsibilities of holding such an office it was required of him to be transferred to various places around the country with his family. As part of this process, I experienced diversity in race, language, custom and ethnicity. I also experienced another kind of diversity- a diversity in aims, goals and interests. It has been claimed that this second kind of diversity is reducible to the first, but I want to argue that this difference in aims, goals and interests is not reducible to a unified whole. This second diversity has two important characteristics: A) It is heterogeneous, in the sense that there is the presence of many that cannot be reducible to one and B) that it is incommensurable, that is, there is no possibility from such difference to come to some form of agreement. So, even two individuals sharing the same race, language, custom and ethnicity can radically differ in their interests and forms of life.

Society in the present is, in certain areas, radically diverse. In the sense that there is the presence of many who are different, heterogeneous and incommensurable. It is this aspect of diversity that creates fundamental problems in conceiving an inclusionary democratic politics. Radical difference exists within a state, a boundary, a certain kind of exclusion. In effect, this difference would become a threat to the democratic values of an overarching state. The threat would come in two ways. Firstly, if the state were to suppress difference it would become undemocratic. Secondly, to give difference free reign would generate too much particularity, endangering the state. The guiding question of my research then is - what kind of democratic political system can effectively include radical difference? What I am looking for is a viable democratic political theory that is able to construct itself to pay attention to radical difference- to those voices or concerns that have been marginalized by disciplinary, normalizing and totalizing power regimes. Further, such a theory must be able to provide the balance between the democratic values of the state and the radical difference the state encompasses.

However, the formation of any democratic political theory presupposes that one makes a judgment upon a certain set of rules or principles on the nature of man/ideas of subjectivity/humanism and structure. These ideas of subjectivity and structure have been termed as the 'non-political benchmarks' from which 'the political', as inclusive of radical difference, can be judged. I will argue that an appeal to 'non-political benchmarks' (subjectivity/humanism and structure) is exclusionary. Once this is shown, we can further recognize how democratic political theories based on non-political benchmarks, become exclusionary to radical difference.

Once these democratic political theories constructed upon non-political benchmarks are shown to be exclusive, the ideas of Lyotard and Habermas become important. The importance of these writers, to me, is their search for a democratic political system based, not on the exclusive principles of subjectivity/humanism or structure, but rather, on their understanding of language. Both writers believe that language should no longer be thought of as a neutral medium for knowledge, nor as a tool that we use to describe and decode the world. Language shapes our knowledge of ourselves and of the world we live in. Language, then, can be said to be what is common to all human beings. At the base of Habermas's philosophy, therefore, is a theory of the presuppositions of linguistic communication. The uncovering of the communicative dimension of speech and the development of a universal pragmatics secures reason from a reduction to purely instrumental reason, the total dominance of which had been theorized by Horkheimer and Adorno. Similarly, Lyotard's philosophy rests upon a theorizing of social oppression through a rewriting of domination in terms of the agonistic dimension of language use. Social oppression results from a suppression of the plurality of forms of rationality embedded in language. Whereas Habermas relies on the liberating force of communicative speech, Lyotard seeks to demonstrate the heterogeneity of forms of discourse and the incommensurability of the forms of rationality that organize them.

Based upon their understandings of language, both writers create democratic political theories aimed at making democracy more attuned to including radical difference. My argument, though, is that the Habermasian theory is not fully capable of understanding radical difference. Rather, it is Lyotard's theory that can best understand and include radical difference. I further demonstrate how Lyotard's theory can provide helpful insights for a democracy that can effectively include radical difference.

In the First Chapter of my dissertation I demonstrate how political theory's appeal to humanism or individual subjectivity and structure is exclusionary and therefore not sufficient to understanding radical difference. This inadequacy of political theory, as I will demonstrate, has been shown through the post-structuralists' continuing critique of humanism and structuralism. Further, I will demonstrate how post-structural political thought aims to analyse the social and political world immanently, that is on its own terms by not subordinating the political as inclusive of radical difference to a judgement based on an exclusionary non-political benchmark. Finally, I will map out the way poststructuralists reconceptualize the relationship between reason and criticism. It is here that the fundamental similarity and difference between the Lyotardian and Habermasian projects appears.

Chapters Two and Three: Habermas and Lyotard both pursue the ideal of effectively including radical difference in a democratic political system. In these chapters, the second on Habermas and the third on Lyotard, I will try to show how they include radical diversity in their respective political systems. This I do by following three interrelated moments[1] in both the thinkers' philosophies. The first, sometimes called the *epistemological* moment is, in fact, their critique of scientific rationality; the second, the *linguistic* moment follows their acceptance of the linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy, this shifts the emphasis, in both writers, from science to language and to the intersubjective world of linguistic norms and actions by which we are all commonly bound. Finally in the third moment, the *ethico-political* moment, wherein both writers having developed their ideas from the first two moments (the *epistemological* and

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[1] These moments are not chronological, rather, they help me organize the ideas of both writers more effectively in light of the way in which they have understood and included radical diversity in their respective political systems.

linguistic) reveal their techniques of dealing with the political (inclusive of radical difference). I must add here that the recognition by Habermas and Lyotard, of intersubjectivity leads them to formulate ethico-political ideas of respect and care for radical diversity/difference.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, Chapter Four, my goal will be to point out the major difference of views between the theories of Habermas and Lyotard as they relate to the inclusion of radical difference present in society. I will argue that it is Lyotard's theory which is most suited for the inclusion of radical difference. Lyotard's ideas though, begin to pose certain problems: firstly, where does the space of the political exist; secondly, how is judgement and action possible especially when the standards of judgement are missing; thirdly, to what extent does a forum exist for an open contestation of phrases; and finally, whether Lyotard's theory helps in formulating an idea of democracy suitable to include radical difference. I will answer these questions in this chapter. Finally, I analyze how Lyotard's political system contributes to our reflection on the condition of contemporary democracy as it relates to including radical difference.

CHAPTER I: Political Theory and the Exclusion of Radical Difference

In this chapter I will demonstrate how the appeal to humanism or individual subjectivity and structure is exclusionary and therefore not adequate to including radical difference. This inadequacy of political theory, as I will demonstrate, has been shown through the post-structuralists' (I use the ideas of Derrida and Foucault) continuing critique of humanism. Further, I will try and show how post-structural political thought aims to analyze the social and political world immanently, that is on its own terms, by not subordinating the political as inclusive of radical difference to a judgement based on a depoliticized non-political benchmark. In the last section of the chapter entitled, **'Post-structuralism and its Challenge to Political Theory'**, I will map out the way poststructuralists reconceptualize the relationship between reason and criticism. It is here that the fundamental similarities and differences between Lyotard's and Habermas' projects begin to appear.

1. Classical Liberalism, Autonomy and Difference:

My endeavor in this section is to try and arrive at a notion of the humanism implicit in classical liberal thought in the light of the work of John Locke and John Stuart Mill.

To begin with, both writers valorize the importance of difference enshrined in the ideas of individual autonomy and liberty (difference in the sense of difference in aims, goals and interests which are to be respected through a mechanism of rights and liberties). The works of Locke and Mill revolve then around a central tension, between the spheres of individual liberty (i.e., differences of aims, goals or interests of every singular individual being) and governmental authority. Like Locke, Mill regards the individual as an independent being endowed with a right to liberty that springs directly from this independence[1]. Further, Locke and Mill also share in common the view that individual rights and liberties can be preserved by way of the conception of minimal interference on the part of government or popular opinion. Both take 'freedom' then, to mean, the liberty of individuals to act according to their own desires, goals and interests providing that such actions do not infringe the liberties of others. To them difference is secured through a notion of rights and liberties.

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[1] Thus Mill says of the individual that, "his independence is, of right, absolute", Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) p. 59.

Of course, Locke and Mill take rather different routes in order to arrive at their respective defenses of individual liberty that protects and promotes differences. From this we can note that liberalism is not to be defined in terms of the use of a particular methodology that tells us how to conceive of the most desirable form of social order. So, where Locke turns to the state of nature, and therefore a model that subtracts the social context from the individual as a means of arriving at an account of the principles of right and liberty, Mill does not. As a matter of fact, Mill regards the individual in a more socially embedded manner and sees the esteeming of individuality in modern society as the direct result of social and historical development. That said, Mill does remain committed to viewing individual rights and liberties as being of primary importance in accounting for what goes to make the most desirable form of society. What can be noted here is that Locke and Mill both make a firm distinction between the public and private spheres. We can say that for a liberal what individuals decide to do with their own goods is of no one else's concern (and certainly not an affair of government) so long as it does not affect other people's rights.

This emphasis upon the individual as being autonomous, independent as well as the fundamental 'unit' of political discourse is the humanism implicit in classical liberalism. We might then say that in general, a liberal is committed to an ontological conception of the individual in so far as the individual is regarded as an irreducible entity, one that transcends the socio-historical boundaries that separate different cultures even if, as with Mill, the individual is produced by specific historical processes. Again this is the 'humanism' of classical liberalism.

2. Structuralism and Difference: Marx and Althusser's ideas.

Amongst the critiques of liberalism, for the purpose of my project, I choose the ideas of Marx and Althusser primarily because of their movement away from agency or the individual as the fundamental unit of political discourse and their valorizing of the social and historical conditions or situatedness of the subject or individual (i.e. the 'structure').

Liberals like Locke and Mill would take the individual as an entity endowed with a personal 'sovereignty', to use Mill's word, that can be articulated independently of the social and historical conditions that charcaterize any particular society. Marxists, though, would argue that this is simply not the case. For it is not individuated self-consciousness that determines the nature of historical change, but material conditions, and these material conditions are at the same time, in the last instance, characterizable in material/economic terms. The Marxist understanding of historical and dialectical understanding of human social development would in this way immediately take issue with the liberal account of the self. Whereas the liberal would see the self as functionally independent of the social order, a Marxist analysis would turn precisely upon socio-economic conditions that serve to constitute the identity of those who are individuated within any political order. So, when Marx discusses the 'capitalist' or 'landlord' in the text of the *Capital*, they are not to be identified primarily by way of their individuality, but as "personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class interests."[2] We should note two things from this relation: (A) that Marx explicitly defines 'interests' as being central to any analysis of the social processes that underlie political standards (the base-superstructure distinction). These interests moreover are antagonistic; (B) that the individual capitalist is rendered a kind of metaphor by Marxist analysis, a 'personification' of objective social forces. Individuals are depersonalised by way of this personification. It is as such personifications that they have social and historical significance. If individuals are mere personifications of impersonal social forces and these forces are themselves indicative of the presence of antagonistic interests, it would follow that an analysis of the nature of politics ought not to start with a conception of the individual as independent of the social context in which he or she might be situated. Individuals cannot be identified as such independently of the social antagonisms of economic and class interests from which they spring. Therefore, the individual is not autonomous or independent or free or characterized by difference (in goals, aims or interests), rather difference is itself defined by the socio-historical situatedness of the individual (the structure).

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[2] Marx, Karl, *Capital* ed. David Mclellan, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p.5.

It is in appreciation of this kind of 'metaphor' or notion implicit in Marx that Althusser's Marxist project takes its leave from the more 'humanist' or 'individual centered' variants of Marxism.

Althusser first came into prominence in the 1960s with the publication of a series of articles in which he expounded a combination of what is called 'structuralism' and Marxism. This structural Marxism put forward a revised role of economic determinancy with regard to the ideological, political, legislative and cultural structures present within capitalist social orders. Althusser seeks to displace the perceived emphasis of much of Marx's work upon a classical model of political economy which, coupled with an empiricist model for the analysis of social relations has been taken as providing the basis for the purportedly 'scientific' status of Marx's conclusions. For Althusser, each of these structures (ideological, political etc) possesses a relative autonomy within the larger network of social relations that constitute capitalist society. Capitalist society is a totality, but it is also a structure that does not have a center of organization. It is because of this, that rather than advocating a direct determinancy according to which the economic base dictates the superstructure (the model of classical Marxism), Althusser views capitalist society as a network of interrelated structures. The autonomy of these structures however is seen as relative rather than absolute since, in the last instance, economic factors exert a causal influence over the structure as a whole.

What I would like to draw from Althusser for the purpose of my project is the Althusserian view (already atleast implicit within the quotation from Marx) that individuals do not in any sense exist independently of the constitution of economic and social structure. Difference (i.e., in aims, goals or interests) of the individual, that is what makes him autonomous is already defined by the social, economic and historical relations in which the individual is situated. It is this view that lies at the heart of Althusser's critique of humanism, and so he is labeled an 'Anti-humanist'. Althusser's contention is that individuals are themselves essentially an expression of the relations which inhere with the historically determined structures which make up the capitalist mode of production. The notion of 'structure' therefore becomes more important than the notion of an autonomous self or individual. But where has this notion of structure (the 'mesh' of socio-historical conditions) intellectually been derived from? And, what is its significance to the post-structuralist critique? To answer these questions, I will now turn to the linguistic field where the notion of structure was theoretically first espoused.

The Linguistic Influence on Structuralism

It is from this notion of 'structure' that all individual parts like the individual, social or political processes etc., gain their meaning. If the logical necessity that governs the whole can be found out, then it is also possible to derive the logical workings of the individual parts situated within this whole, this structure. In other words political science came to be the study of this structure, present in all individual parts, as well as guiding these individual parts. It is then from the notion of structure that the parts, such as, the social and political world could be confidently evaluated. The enterprise of trying to understand this structure came to be called 'structuralism'. A term coined by Russian formalist theorist Roman Jackobson (1896-1982). However this 'enterprise' traces its origin further back, to the ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913) and his important text, *The Course in General Linguistics*[3].

In this book Saussure seeks to construct what he regards as a scientific account of the process of 'signification', that is, how words present meaning. He terms this science

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[3] Saussure, Ferdinand, *Course in General Linguistics* trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983)

'semiotics' or the science of signs. On the Saussurean conception all language is susceptible to being analysed in terms of a structural system of relations. In turn, Saussure argues that the meaning of an individual word is determined by this structural relation, not by way of any direct referential function that the word might have. According to this view, we do not arrive at an understanding of what a word or any other sign means by way of what it refers to.

A sign is held to posses a meaning as a direct consequence of its relationship to other words with which it is associated. Meaning thus is regarded as resulting from the difference that pertains to signs, and this difference is secured first and foremost by way of reference to their relation to one another (for example, the word 'cat' has meaning by being related to the words 'dog', 'mouse' and so on {a structure}, rather than by being related to the furry animals it represents). Additionally, Saussure contends that language in general can be articulated in terms of one fundamental distinction: 'langue' and 'parole'. Within this model 'langue' constitutes the fundamentally structural element of language. 'Langue' is the structurally organised network of possible meanings that have to be in place at any give time if a speaker is to utter a sentence, 'Parole' in contrast, is a term that denotes the use of these elements as they are actualised within any individual utterance (i.e. speech).

One notion that is central to structuralism is that of 'binary opposition'. This effectively states that all meaning is ultimately determined by a relationship of opposition that inheres between different signs (good/bad, light/dark, man/woman) and this oppositional structure exerts a determing force on the constitution of meaning. What marks out the structuralist project, be it that of the textual analyst, of the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss[4] or the structural marxism of Althusser[5], is a commitment to the view that it is possible to decode, with scientific validity, the organization of meanings which are to be found in written works or social relations alike. This leads to the view that it is possible to construct an objective and universal account of meaning that can, in turn, be used to reveal the particular meanings hidden within texts or social and political relations.

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[4] Levi-Strauss, Claude, *Structural Anthropology* trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoef (New York: Basic Books, 1963)

[5] Althusser, Louis, *For Marx* trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1969)

To conclude this section, structuralism, therefore, seeks above all to elucidate the objective conditions that constitute all linguistic and social relations. As such, structuralism claims to be regarded as an objective science. The emphasis on structure has led many exponents of structuralism to take a critical stance towards 'humanism'. The reason: if meaning is a matter of nothing more than the causal relationship between signs that pertains with any given structure, then issues of human agency of the individual or shared interests, of community and so forth are susceptible to being either ignored or accounted for within the confines of the structural-causal framework of analysis that the structuralist adopts. In other words, this 'critical stance' was critical primarily because of structuralism's antagonism to humanism. Humanism, it seemed, only focused its analysis on the actions and intentions of agents without interrogating the deep structures that enable those agents to act and think in the first place. Humanist work, it was argued, ignored the background frames of reference that were not immediately apparent if one simply sought to observe people and what they do. In consequence it was believed that structuralism could reveal, behind mere phenomena, a unity and coherence that could not be brought out by mere simple description of facts. The structures that were unearthed were not 'humanized', that is, they were not treated as if they were agents that act in a social and political world. Crucially, this vision led to the important place relations, rather than things-in-themselves, play in shaping our view of the world around us. This new concept (structuralism), that the world is made up of relations rather than things-in-themselves, in effect constitutes the first principle of the way of thinking that can properly be called structuralist. The aim then of structuralism is to move social and political analysis away from a mere focus on subjects by invoking the deep structures which shape the way subjects act and by treating these structures as a complex series of relationships rather than as things-in-themselves.[6] A good example of this is Althusser's structural Marxism. Althusser espouses the view that individuals do not in any sense exist independently of the constitution of economic and social structures.

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[6] Hawkes, Terrence, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Routledge 1977) pp. 16-17.

3. Post-Structuralism

Post-structuralism is the attempt to fulfill structuralist goals. Both envisage a thorough going critique of humanism but the former claims that the latter never lived up to this aim. In a sense, despite being aware of the danger of treating structures in much the same way as humanists treat agents, the structuralists it seems did not always avoid the trap. I must mention, though, at this point a problem that emerges- to define post-structuralism as work that uses the lexicon of Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard etc in anyway would not show the exact linkages from the original context of post-structuralism. Thus there is a tendency to focus on difference for example, without regarding or recognising that the post-structuralist emphasis on difference is a specific response to structuralist concerns. Then, say in political theory, for example, this kind of non-structuralist post-structuralism often descends into a variety of liberal political theory. While there may be a certain merit in pursuing the claim that liberals are not sensitive enough to difference, if these are the only terms of engagement then one is not really a post-structuralist critic of liberalism but a kind of liberal critic of liberalism. After all, the liberal framework of rights is promoted precisely to enshrine difference in our political institutions: that it may not do this effectively is hardly a fundamental critique of liberalism's core assumptions. Rather than querying liberal politics per se, post-structuralism challenges the claims that liberals make about the 'political'- by invoking a broadly structuralist account of the political as opposed to a liberal humanist one.

Coming back to the general theme, I will elaborate in the next section, through brief discussions of Derrida's and Foucault's thought, how structuralist ideas are not thorough going critiques of humanism.

Derrida and Post-Structuralism

In a simplified form, Derrida begins with an enquiry into the meaning of structuralism. Derrida here invokes the idea that structuralism at its most abstract level of theorising is essentially a 'structure' which is highly dependent on a 'center'. Derrida proposes in consequence the method of deconstruction which is a method concerning itself with decentering, with unmasking the problematic nature of all centers.

For Derrida, all of western thought is based on the idea of a center- an origin, ideal form or type, a God- which is usually capitalised and guarantees all meaning (for Althusser's structural Marxism, the center was 'economic relations', for classical liberal humanism the center was the autonomous man or self or individual). For instance, for nearly two millennia a great deal of western culture has been centered on the idea of Christianity and Christ. The problem with such centers for Derrida is that they attempt to exclude. In doing so they ignore, repress or 'marginalize' others (which become the Other). Then, for example, in a male-dominated society, man is central and the woman is the marginalized other, repressed, ignored, pushed to the margins. If there is a culture where Christianity and Christ are centric to it, then Christians will become central to that culture and anybody different will be in the margins-marginalized-pushed to the outside.

Thus a civilization, culture or society that has a center, according to Derrida, spawns 'binary oppositions' or 'binary opposites' with one term of the opposition central/valorized and the other marginal/repressed. Further, Derrida argues, the center wants to consolidate, prove its truth/validity, wants to fix or freeze the 'play' of binary opposites such that the marginal term is never taken seriously or heard. The opposition of man/woman is just one binary opposite, there are numerous, spirit/matter, nature/culture, Caucasian/Black, Christian/Pagan etc. According to Derrida, we have no access to reality except through concepts, codes and categories and the human mind functions by forming conceptual pairs such as these.

Derrida further derives that all western thought too essentially behaves in the same manner, especially structuralism, forming binary opposites (like Levi-Strauss's nature/culture opposition or Althusser's economic structure/ other structure opposition) in which one member of the pair is privileged, freezing the free play of the system and in consequence marginalizing the other members of the pair.

Deconstruction, then for Derrida, becomes a tactic of 'decentering', that is, a way of reading which first makes us aware of the centrality of the central term or concept or binary opposite. Then it attempts to subvert the central term so that the marginalized term becomes central. This marginalized term temporarily overturns the hierarchy that existed for the earlier central term. This process in effect shows us how the marginalized term can just as well be central.

Of course the immediate criticism that would arise here is that deconstruction just institutes a new center, instead for example, man being central and there being a patriarchical hierarchy the process of deconstruction would allow the woman to become central and form a matriarchal hierarchy.

It is due to this criticism, Derrida argues, that one must pass over and neutralize this phase of subversion. For this "phase of reversal", as he calls it, is needed in order to subvert the original hierarchy of the first term over the second. But eventually, Derrida argues, one must realize that in principal the new hierarchy is equally unstable. In the realization of this 'instability, Derrida believes, one must then surrender to the free play of binary opposites.

In consequence, if there is a complex text like the '*Bible*' or Hobbes's *Leviathan*[7], there is through Derrida's, idea a space for a deconstruction of any fixed, authoritarian, dogmatic or orthodox reading. Of course, the texts may have a large number of binary opposites, it may be multi-faceted but the fundamental principal of reading and analyzing it can be done as I have mentioned above. The final step then is not an attempt to see the centrality of one or the other of the binary opposites but rather to continuously attempt to see the free play in all our language and texts – which otherwise would tend towards fixity, institutionalisation, centralisation and totalitarianism. For out of our anxiety to have a center- a god, an origin, a standard, a code etc – we always feel a need to construct new centers, to associate ourselves with them and marginalise those who are different from our own values.

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[7] Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1968)

To conclude, for greater clarity deconstruction first focuses on the binary oppositions within a structure or text – like Man/Woman, Nature/Culture, Light/Dark, Christian/Pagan etc. Next, deconstruction shows how these opposites are related, how one is central, natural and privileged, the other ignored, repressed and marginalized. Further, it temporarily undoes or subverts the hierarchy to make the text mean the opposite of what it originally appeared to mean. Finally, in the last step deconstruction shows how both terms of the opposition are seen dancing in a free play of non-hierarchical, non-stable meanings. Derrida calls such a situation- a situation of play and difference.

A good example of deconstruction is discussed in Derrida's book *Of Grammatology*.[8] Derrida, in this book, deals with philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the father of French romanticism. Rousseau reacts against the view of his contemporaries that progress in arts and science will make human beings happy. Instead, Rousseau argues that civilization and learning corrupt nature. He celebrated the "Original", "Natural" civilized man, the "Noble Savage", who was innocent of writing, private property and the powerful institutions of the political state. (Rousseau yearned to return to a "Natural" state of idyllic simplicity, innocence and grace). Derrida points out that Rousseau's writings have a center, a logocentrism[9], that of nature, which forms one half of the binary opposition, the other being culture. Rousseau's writings thus depend upon a binary opposition between nature and culture. Nature is 'the good', original, virtuous, noble. Culture is corrupt, degenerate, a "Supplement" to nature's truth.

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[8] Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)

[9] Logocentrism is derived from the Greek word 'logos', which means truth, reason, law. The ancient Greeks thought of logos as a cosmic principle hidden deep within human beings, speech and the universe. If then something is logocentric, there is the belief that truth is the word or expression of a central, original and absolute cause of origin. The logos is seen to live outside the universe, it is thought of as centering and limiting the play of difference, it makes the rules, it is the centre of structure. See Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) p. 3 and p. 43.

Rousseau also feels that writing is perverse- a product of civilization, a dangerous supplement to natural speech. He argues that in small-scale organic living communities the face-to-face presence of speech had eventually given way to civilization, to inequalities of power and economics and to the loss of the ability to speak one-on-one. For Rousseau it is writing that has intruded upon the idyllic, intimate, communal peace and grace of the one-to-one intimacy of natural speaking societies. Thus Rousseau's dream of an idyllic, intimate, primitive speaking community is the social and political equivalent of logocentrism.

Derrida then demonstrates how Rousseau's writing deconstructs itself.[10] Derrida points out that Rousseau is not present to us. He is actually absent, that is, he speaks to us only through his writing.[11] We see him through his writings. Derrida argues further that Rousseau admits to this problem in his '*Confessions*'. Rousseau realizes that even though writing is artificial and decadent, he is a writer. He must rely upon writing to make his own most intimate thoughts and feeling known, even to himself. Rousseau also confesses that it is when writing down the history of his life and emotions, that he feels tempted to embellish, to fictionalize, to dress up the original natural truth. Thus Rousseau concludes that writing is a dangerous "Supplement" to speech.

Derrida seizes upon the fact that supplement in French (Suppléer) can mean not only (A) to supplement – to add to but also (B) to take the place of, to substitute for.[12] Thus 'supplement' is paradoxical, it can mean adding something onto something already complete in it self, or adding on something to complete a thing. Derrida posits thus that for Rousseau writing is both something that is added on to speech, which is supposedly, natural, complete, the truth. But speech as Derrida points out is obviously not complete if it needs writing to supplement it. It is not the full truth. It must contain absence. Derrida then shows that for Rousseau all his human activities involve this play of Truth/Un-Truth or as Derrida writes "Presence/Absence"[13]. It then seems that everything Rousseau found that had fullness of presence or truth or the centre always already had an original lack or untruth or the possibility of the other at work. Yet, Rousseau's whole argument depends on maintaining that speech is full, is the centre.

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[10] See Part II, Chapter 2 entitled, "...that dangerous supplement...",in, Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)
[11] Ibid, pp. 142-143.
[12] Ibid, pp. 144-146.

Thus Derrida shakes up the stability of these pairs of binary opposites, like speech/writing, melody/harmony, by playing upon the double meaning of the term supplement. Supplement then cannot be defined easily. It is two things at once: a) adding something onto a thing already complete in itself, or b) to complete a thing, by adding onto it. Derrida then points out, that all life is like a text, or like the term supplement, nothing but a play of differences, a play of presence and absence.

The above argument is typical of Derrida's deconstructive approach. Rousseau wishes to tell us one thing, but he shows us the contrary to be the case. The hierarchy of terms that Rousseau must resort to, which valourises what is 'natural' and denigrates what is 'unnatural' is itself shown to be dependent upon the whole of its range. What is natural could not be defined as being 'natural' at all without what is unnatural. Derrida thereby shows us that the inferior term in Rousseau's discourse is at the same time essential to it. What is taken by Rousseau to be a mere supplement (writing) turns out to be a condition of possibility for his talking about language at all. As such, writing, too, lies at the very origin of language.

Let me now consider Derrida's account of Saussure and Linguistics.[14] Derrida argued that Saussure rather than trying to understand meaning on the traditional model by analysing the relationship of words to their referents (that is, things in the world) began to tie meaning more to the relationship of signs (words being merely one type of sign) to one another. It is from the differences between signs in a system of signs that the meaning of any given sign arises.

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[13] Presence, a notion Derrida uses that signifies 'original moments', 'golden ages', transcendental principles, an unarguable meaning of a text or utterance because it is divine. See Chapter I entitled 'Force and signification' in Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2003)

[14] Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) pp. 27-73.

The structuralist method, then, assumes that meaning is made possible by the existence of underlying systems of conventions that enable elements to function individually as signs. In other words, individual action is meaningful and can be understood by the existence of economic, political or social structures/conventions that enable the individual to function in his aims, interests or goals. Structuralist analysis thus often took the form of developing models of such systems/structures. In the social sciences an important work of this sort is Levi-Strauss's model of myths and kinship systems[15]. Such models, whether of social or literary texts, promise to provide the net within which the meaning of particular actions, practices or passages could be captured. Structuralist analysis typically made such meaning emerge with the logical workings of key sets of binary oppositions such as raw/cooked, nature/culture, man/woman, light/dark. Against such a background, the point of poststructuralism can be understood as the displacement of the status of such foundational meaning-endowed oppositions. Derrida's idea of deconstruction thus refers to deconstructing such oppositions, showing how their claimed foundational character collapses or undermines itself when they are thought through.

Levi-Strauss in effect bases all his arguments of the structure of myth and cultural anthropology on the binary opposition between nature and culture. Levi-Strauss argues that 'nature' is innocent, pure, and natural and 'culture' is corrupting and perverse. Levi-Strauss posits that he favours nature over culture, and importantly, sees writing as a perverse supplement to natural speech. Derrida proposes then to deconstruct Levi-Strauss' "*the Writing Lesson.*" This essay is essentially the story of Levi-Strauss' anthropological fieldwork in the wilds of Brazil. There he finds the 'Nambikwara', a tribe in which he sees (due to his notion of valourising nature over culture present in Levi-Strauss' grand structure to map out myths and kinship systems) the perfect example of primitive naturalness. In fact in his role as anthropologist Levi-Strauss confesses that he feels guilty – an alien 'civilized' man who can only corrupt the pure communal innocence of this primitive culture which knows no writing – only speaking.

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[15] Young, Robert, ed., *Post-structuralism: An Introduction in Untying the Text* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996) p. 3.

When he is writing in his notebook, some of the Nambikwara begin to imitate him making various wavy lines. This is unusual, thinks Levi-Strauss, because the Nambikwara neither write not draw. The closest they come to either is a few dots and zigzags they make on the ground. But then Levi-Strauss notices that the leader of the tribe immediately grasps the utility of writing – how it can be used to reinforce his power and to maintain the unequal distribution of goods in his own favour. This leader is able to convince his followers that he knows how to write and therefore has power. And this, as Derrida is quick to point out, is where Levi-Strauss' argument begins to deconstruct itself. For the Nambikwara are always already engaged in a system of differences – of inequalities in power and the distribution of "goods." Though the members of this tribe cannot write in the usual sense, Derrida illustrates how the tribes in nature are already present with unequal relations which are in fact already indicated and maintained by various taboos, myths, codes, and customs which are in effect a form of marking, of "writing" without an alphabet. So Levi-Strauss' belief of the Nambikwara as innocent and pure, as free from writing and the corrupting influences of civilization is just a fantasy. It only showed that Levi-Strauss' structure valorized one half of the binary opposition, that of nature over culture. In other words, Derrida showed us that it was even within nature that there existed elements of culture, that is, unequal power relations etc.

Of course, Derrida's insights are not just attacks on structuralism. Rather, he found that this habit of starting with unquestioned binary oppositions is a characteristic of the dominant currents of Western metaphysical thinking as well.[16] And political thought is deeply implicated. This has been illustrated, for example, by Michael Ryan's[17] deconstruction of Hobbes' foundational opposition between reason and the clear use of language, on the one hand, and unreason and the ambiguous and metaphorical use of language on the other. The first half of the opposition delimits the sphere of what is privileged and foundational for the construction of a secure political world; the latter the sphere of what is marginal, suspicious, and ultimately seditious – what post-structuralists often refer to as the “Other.” Ryan deconstructs Hobbes’ imposing edifice by simply pointing out that it undermines its own authority when it appeals initially to the metaphor of a leviathan. “Hobbes’ entire theory then rests on a linguistic form – metaphorical displacement, transposition, and analogy – that he will later exclude and banish as seditious.”[18] Ryan illustrates how the use of deconstruction has an almost intrinsically political character. The method always states what is claimed to be authoritative, logical, and universal, and breaks those claims down, exposing arbitrariness, ambiguity and conventionality – in short, exposing a power phenomenon where it was claimed only reason existed.

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[16] See, Chapter I entitled, "Force and signification" in, Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass(London: Routledge 2003)

[17] Ryan, Michael, *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984)

Thus one can say that the practice of deconstruction always has a politicizing effect. This insight means that the cognitive machinery of political inquiry is exposed as less reason driven and more power driven than previously realised.

Foucault and Poststructuralism

Foucault’s work is more politically and historically focused than Derrida’s. Although he continually deconstructs (in the Derridean manner) hierarchical distinctions such as reason/madness and normal/abnormal, his underlying intention is to show how social institutions give practical force to such discursive distinctions and how such distinctions are reconstituted in radically different ways in different historical periods. Thus for example, in examining the discourse of criminality, he analyses both the significance of the emergence of the prison in the nineteenth century for the establishment of our distinction between normal and abnormal as well as how changing conceptions of criminality gave rise to a new “object” of state power. The “criminal”, as he begins to emerge in the late eighteenth century, is no longer simply the isolated threat to royal power on whose body the king must inscribe his vengeance through torture, torture in a public arena, but rather he becomes the deviant from dominant social norms who must become the object of extended surveillance, discipline and therapeutic function.

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[18] Ibid, p. 4

It has been assumed that with this shift in discourse there has been a growing humanization of the penal practice. But Foucault, as always, wants to turn our humanist self-congratulations into self-doubt by to showing us that any new discourse is always also another new mode of power. For Foucault, this insight about power/knowledge is not just a general philosophical thesis about modernity. He sees the modern as something wherein power is insinuating itself into our lives in ways which we are not able to grasp very well with the traditional cognitive machinery of political reflection.

In one sense, Foucault would agree that contemporary western society has seen a diminishing of state power by which we mean the arbitrary and repressive employment of mechanisms of coercion. His key point, however, is that we must understand power in another way, namely as a slowly spreading net of normalisation that invades our language, our institutions, and even (and especially) our consciousness of ourselves as subjects. This sort of power does not so much repress, in the purely negative sense, as it does constrain, if one uses this term in its sense of persistently channeling activity. One is not so much stopped in engaging in some activity, as one is given directions for how it is normally carried out, with these directions typically being accorded some sort of scientific status. Power in short becomes productive of action not just prohibitive.[19]

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As with Derrida, Foucault's position is a source of insight. This insight results from Foucault's determined attachment to the project of elucidating an ontology of discord. If the underlying purpose of our cognitive machinery-political, philosophical, etc-has been to introduce clarity, unity and consensus into our lives, then Foucault's purpose can be described as that of elucidating how an "other" is always pushed aside, marginalized, forcibly homogenized and devalued, as that cognitive machinery does its work. This "other" may be other actors, groups, or aspects of our own physical or psychological life. In every case, Foucault awakens in us the experience of discord as otherness is generated. I must mention here that Foucault especially in his genealogies is engaged in the task of describing phenomena in a way that "incites the experience of discord or discrepancy between the social construction of the self, truth and rationality and that which does not

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[19] Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) pp.79-81, 136-138, 208-209.

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fit neatly within their folds."[20] By proceeding in such a way Foucault is proving the reality of his ontological views indirectly, that is, by exposing the persistent and ineradicable but submerged presence of discord in our lives. Discord, in other words, is allowed to show itself in our modern, deep-rooted quest for harmony and unity.

4. The Three Criticisms of Structuralism

From my general discussions of Derrida and Foucault three major criticisms can be derived which are in effect the post-structuralist critique of structuralism.

A) While the structuralists had stressed relationality, the post-structuralists questioned whether the concept of relation itself was sufficiently developed within structuralism. In essence, the post-structuralist pre-occupation with difference comes from this interrogation of the structuralist notion of relation, the argument being, that the structuralist conception of relation ultimately tended to nullify difference by treating it in simple oppositional terms or binary opposites – valorizing one half of the opposition and marginalizing the other. Derrida's method of deconstruction showed that either terms or both halves of the opposition can be equally important or form the center of structure. Further, in realization that both halves can equally form the center, Derrida posits, one must appreciate that in principle, one must then surrender to a complete free play of binary opposites where the over arching structure becomes useless. It is only in this 'free play' that one can become truly open to radical difference without marginalizing it. B) It was thought that the structuralist's concept of structure tended to overstress the elements of deep structure uncovered by its analysis such that these structures were given a timeless role in shaping human activity. Poststructuralists like Foucault then argued for greater temporal sensitivity (diachronic sensitivity). This has led to a new vocabulary that replaces the emphasis on mere structure to rather 'discourses' or 'regimes' etc, in order to signal a temporally or time sensitive account of the structures that shape our social or political lives. Foucault' genealogies of punishment have provided a great impetus for this criticism.C) Taken together, the above criticisms pointed to a political problem with structuralism. In trying to outline the structures that shape our activity, structuralism tended to lapse into an uncritical engagement with the dominant forces of the social and political world (there was just a need to create models or structures to merely describe existing relations in society). To the extent that structures were timeless, universal features of existence there seemed no room for critical engagement with them. Furthermore, to the extent that relationality was viewed in simply oppositional terms or binary opposites like Nature/Culture, Caucasian/Black etc it seemed to legitimate dominant conceptual binaries rather than challenge them.

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[20] Connolly, William, 'Taylor, Foucault and Otherness', *Political Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 3. (Aug., 1985) p. 368

Post-structuralists aim, in consequence, is to fulfill the critical agenda set by structuralism (that is the continuing critique of humanism.). Because of the three reasons above it was obvious they could not follow structuralist methods. Therefore there came to be the development of novel strategies of criticism which are a central plank of their activity.

The critical approach adopted by post-structuralists is to expose the contingency and historicity of structures in order to show that the way we conceptualize the social and the political world could be radically different to the ways which seem most natural to us. In consequence post-structuralism is an attempt to fulfill the structuralism project of a thoroughgoing critique of humanism by placing the structuralist notions of structure, difference and criticism under scrutiny in a way that avoids the 'humanizing' of structures that shape our everyday lives. By avoiding the 'humanization of structures' poststructuralists hope to prevent: (A) Any fixity in concepts, for such fixity tended to marginalize the other; and (B) to provide a way to be open to radical difference in society. With such a definition we can go on to assess the nature of the challenge post-structuralism poses to dominant paradigms of political thought.

5. Poststructuralism and its Challenge to Political Theory

There is a wide disagreement over what constitutes politics and the political world. For post-structuralists though, this disagreement tends to obscure an underlying commonality among dominant paradigms of political thought when it comes to understanding today's political world. In various forms, a great deal of political thought views our political lives as distinct from other aspects of our lives, such as family life, commercial life etc. Crucially, this distinction is turned into a hierarchy such that much contemporary political theory works by positing a non-political realm as a necessary pre-requisite for understanding the political world. The most obvious expression of this is the debate with liberalism regarding the relationship between the public political world and the private world of individual belief and interaction.

Moreover, those other dominant paradigms of political thought that criticize liberals for relying upon this distinction between the public and the private are not immune to the post-structural challenge, the most obvious being Marxism. For many Marxists, every aspect of our lives can be linked to the all-pervasive and distorting power of capitalism such that even our most intimate relationships are tainted by an ideology that fosters individualism, competition and greed. From a post-structuralist perspective, though, Marxist analysis usually depends upon the promise of a de-politicized world to the extent that they rely on problematic assumptions about human nature and the progression of history. Further, normative political theory of all persuasions comes under fire from post-structuralism as an attempt to limit the political by reference to de-politicized modes of moral justification. Rather than ask 'what is the right way to organize our political affairs?', post-structuralists typically interrogate the concept of right and assess the consequences of different courses of action without assuming the priority of normative judgment. In general, therefore the aim of post-structuralist thought or political theory is to analyse the social and political world immanently, that is, on its own terms by not subordinating the political to a de-politicised realm of human life.

Other than humanism and structuralism mainstream political theory is also dominated by the Enlightenment understanding of the relationship between two other core concepts, that is, reason, and criticism. The common argument is – reason was the only legitimate source of critical intervention against the powers of mysticism and superstition. The irrationality of a belief in the absolute authority of the sovereign and the natural subservient populace was exposed by subjecting all aspects of political life to the demands of reason. Political theory, in consequence, had a new function in the political world – to act as the standard bearer for criticism of the dominating powers by providing the reasons for intervening in political life. Thus the maxim in much of political theory was the idea that what on 'rational grounds' holds for theory holds for practice. However these 'rational grounds' have came under criticism from poststructural thinking.

The relationship between reason and criticism is rather different for post-structuralists and so therefore is the task of political theory. For post-structuralists reason is not itself beyond criticism. This line owes a great deal to the ideas derived from the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, especially Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno.[21] These thinkers saw reason as the source of critical activity. They argued that the deployment of Enlightenment reason had led to new forces of enslavement as well as emancipation.[22] Lyotard as well as Habermas are indebted a great deal to the Frankfurt School as well as to the poststructuralist line of thinking.[23] Based on these influences, both writers seek solutions to the problems that Horkhiemer and Adorno had faced. However these solutions have been outside the techniques of mainstream political theory and therefore I have classified both of them under the common heading 'poststructuralist'.. Both Habermas and Lyotard are looking to include radical difference outside of the structuralist/humanist discourse. In a sense their projects are similar. On the one hand Habermas criticizes society as not being attuned to radical difference because society has become a technocratic system. All knowledge therefore in this society has been reduced to a mere technical means. People's different aims, goals and interests have been subsumed under a scientific-technical rationality. For Lyotard too, various different discourses have been captured by discourses oriented towards maximizing performance.[24] Radical difference is at risk from the encroachment of a techno-scientific conglomerate interested solely in marketability and efficiency.[25] This is clearly similar to the Habermasian notion of functional subsystems encroaching upon action oriented towards understanding, which is characteristic of the lifeworld.[26] Lyotard however believes that what is being questioned is the capacity of reason for leading us to true knowledge and just norms for better lives. Indeed, Lyotard's argument in his book *The Postmodern Condition* is that in postmodern contemporary societies, the idea of knowledge as *Bildung*, that is, as education of the spirit with a view to its emancipation from ignorance and therefore from domination, has become meaningless. Knowledge has become interchangeable, depersonalized 'bits' of information technology and this transformation reduces it to a technically useful knowledge, which is either efficient or irrelevant. Habermas, however, stresses the relevance of a proper understanding of the enlightenment tradition. This tradition, often thought of in terms of a reduction of reason to science, is, in fact, particularly in the works of Kant, an acknowledgement of the limits of scientific rationality and the recognition of the superiority and necessity of the moral and the aesthetic as rational domains. In effect Habermas further argues for a differentiated critique of reason, such that it is the deployment of instrumental reason in the spheres of value and meaning that has led to the many pathologies of the modern world, while the reconstruction of the communicative (intersubjective) basis of reason holds the key to emancipation.[27] The problem, argues Lyotard, is that the recognition that there are other dimensions of reason is seen through the eyes of a unifying and totalizing scientific rationality which transforms even that which it is not into that which it is. Lyotard tends towards a total attack on the primacy of reason by detaching it from the base of social and political criticism. The question asked is, how a critique of reason can only be raised by reason? This, Lyotard argues, is a paradox making reason both the tribunal and the accused: constituting it as both the 'judging' and 'judged'.

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[21] Adorno, Theodore and Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* trans. John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973)

[22] I will explain this in greater detail in the beginning of Chapter Two of this dissertation, section on 'Frankfurt School and Critical Theory".

[23] Habermas's influence from the Critical theorists is more direct, however his influence from the postmodern intellectual movement bears itself out in his criticism of the philosophies of subjectivity. Lyotard is influenced greatly by postmodernism as well as by Theodore Adorno. The influence of Adorno can be seen in his acknowledgement of Adorno's theories in his essay 'Argument et Présentation: La Crise des Fondements' in *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, VOL .I (Paris: PUF, 1989) p. 749

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[24] See, Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) pp. 41-43.

[25] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982-85* trans. ed. by Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas. Afterword by Wlad Godzich. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1992)

[26] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987) p. 355.

[27] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action* Vol. I. trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1984) Chapter I.

Conclusion

To briefly conclude this chapter, all this amounts to saying that the challenge post-structuralism poses to political theory is that of understanding and critically engaging with the radical diversity of social world without the need to posit a centre, a non-political perspective from which to judge it (such as structure, individual-human nature, non-political moral arguments.) Or to give a different formulation for better clarity, the aim of post-structuralist political theory is to understand political conflicts from within rather than to bring them before the court of an authority that stands outside the conflict itself.

Post-structuralism is the attempt to continue and complete the structuralist critique of classical liberal humanism and its challenge the dominant paradigms of political theory on the grounds that our attempts to understand political life, will remain problematic unless we have an 'immanent' understanding of the political, that is, one that does not posit or pre-suppose a non-political benchmark (a centre) against which to judge/understand the political. The above ideas are intrinsically linked. At its most basic, political theory has sought to understand political affairs by beginning with an account of human nature. A structuralist understanding of politics is one which eschews this theoretical gesture by conceiving of the political as a series of interlocking structures that condition human action. The problem from a post-structuralist point of view is that structuralism tends to become another variant of the human-nature argument; humans will act in such a way as conditioned by whatever structures – class, mythological, ideological, psychological etc – that shape our lives. By highlighting the contingency and historicity of structures and by reconfiguring the notion of structural difference, post-structuralists aim to remove once and for all the drive to understand politics on the basis of transcendental claims about human nature. In this way, it is hoped, will an immanent understanding of the political actually emerge. I have demonstrated how the appeal to humanism or individual subjectivity and structure has been proved to be exclusionary and therefore not adequate to understanding the political (inclusive of radical difference). The inadequacy has been shown through the post-structuralists continuing critique of humanism. Post-structural political thought aims then, to analyse the social and political world immanently, that is, on its own terms, by not subordinating the political to a judgement based on a depoliticized non-political benchmark. However in analyzing the social and political world immanently, that is, 'on its own terms' by not subordinating the political to a de-politicized realm of human life, Lyotard and Habermas are in disagreement. This disagreement centers around the importance of reason in society. For Habermas, communicative reason can become the true benchmark from which the political can be judged. However, for Lyotard, such an overarching theory of reason is seen as another grand narrative ready to silence other narratives (radical difference).This arises out of their respective understandings of firstly, what knowledge and reason constitute and mean, secondly, on what the 'linguistic turn' has meant for both of them and finally based on the earlier two points, what ethico-political ideas can be derived. The next two chapters will deal with Habermas and Lyotard in greater detail to scrutinize how their ideas pan out.

CHAPTER II: The Rule Bound Inclusion of Difference in Habermas

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Habermas provides a theory which can effectively include radical diversity present in an intersubjective linguistic world. This I do by following three moments in his philosophy: the *epistemological* moment; the *linguistic* moment; and the *ethico-political* moment.

The first, sometimes called the *epistemological* moment is, in fact, the critique of scientific rationality. Through the critique of scientific rationality Habermas analyzes various knowledge constitutive interests and theorizes that the true goal of critical theory is understanding leading to emancipation. The second, the *linguistic* moment, follows his acceptance of the linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy. This shifts the emphasis, of Habermas, from science and knowledge constitutive interests to language and the recognition of an intersubjective world of linguistic norms and actions by which we are all bound. Habermas now posits that true emancipation of diverse people can only occur if there is, what he terms, "undistorted communication"[1]. Habermas posits, in this moment that all social action is geared towards understanding and therefore emancipation.[2] However this understanding is characterized by language. In effect, influenced by the linguistic turn, Habermas believes that if there is the possibility of finding, in language, the conditions of possibility of understanding, then we would have found the conditions of possibility of all social action leading to true emancipation. The conditions of possibility of understanding, Habermas terms as validity claims[3]. Finally, the third moment, the *ethico-political* moment- reveals Habermas thoughts on instituting these validity claims and its concomitant discursive practices to a deliberative democracy[4], the purpose being, to include radical difference by uncoerced, free and just debate on government and other matters.

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[1] See Habermas, Jürgen, 'On Systematically Distorted Communication', in *Inquiry*, 13. (1970)

[2] Habermas, Jürgen, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' in Habermas, Jürgen, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann 1979) p.1.

[3] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 88-89

[4] Habermas, Jürgen, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed, *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) pp. 21-30.

1. The Epistemological Moment in Habermas:

The Frankfurt School[5] and Critical Theory

Before I discuss the ideas of Juergen Habermas it is imperative that I discuss the intellectual horizon from which he is speaking. The horizon is critical theory. It arose as a result of the upheavals during the early and mid-twentieth century. Its declared task was to interpret the scenario which unfolded as a result of the World Wars. Primarily the Frankfurt theorists were disappointed by the failure of Marxism to usher in a new era in which the workers and the people who were suppressed were expected to participate in a big way. What shocked them even further was what ensued after the failure of the workers movement- the alarming rise of Nazism and Fascism. The theorists were worried over increasing authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies as well as the tendency of the increasing dominance of science over other disciplines. The tendencies mentioned before in effect created a very exclusionary atmosphere wherein radical diversity could not be respected or cared for.

The Frankfurt School, as they were called, viewed these social problems as affecting all strata of society and it enrolled as its members- sociologists, philosophers, economists, psychoanalysts and historians and more importantly, it was expressly non-party. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were most important among the early critical theorists. They traced the chaos and turmoil in the aftermath of the two World Wars to a systemic malady endemic to all closed systems of thought. The malady, they believed, lay in the misconceptions and misrepresentations of reason. Reason was losing its emancipatory potential and was being misconceived and misrepresented as instrumental reason. Instrumental reason led, in consequence, to the furtherance of domination and rigid systematization of society in the name of science and technology. Instead of reason serving as the tool for liberation it took a different shade in the form of scientific-technical rationality. This scientific technical rationality was the explanation for the debacle of reason in the period of enlightenment. On the one hand it was a critical arbiter and espoused the ideal of impartial analysis of truth and on the other hand it became the instrument of perpetrating domination of nature and humans by 'technacalising' administrative, political and bureaucratic processes. Method became more important than the end. The means were more important than the ends.

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[5] The Frankfurt School constituted a group of researchers associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt who applied Marxism to a radical interdisciplinary social theory. The Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) was founded by Carl Grünberg in 1923 as an adjunct of the University of Frankfurt; it was the first Marxist-oriented research centre affiliated with a major German university. Max Horkheimer took over as director in 1930 and recruited many talented theorists, including T W Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin. The works and ideas of the thinkers associated with this institute are generally grouped together and called the 'Frankfurt School'. Much of the research was published in the institute's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (1932–41) which translated means "Journal for Social Research" (1932-41)

Horkheimer's conception of critical theory can perhaps be best understood by contrasting it with traditional empirical 'scientific theory'. Where, following on from the philosophy of empiricism, the physical scientist regards objects of study as unproblematically given prior to observation, the critical theorist pays attention to the social and cultural influences that determine the nature of knowledge. For Horkheimer, the scientist, like everybody else, is a historically and socially situated being who does not have an unmediated access to physical phenomenon, as is generally presupposed by so-called 'scientific' theories of cognition. Rather, our knowledge of objects is, Horkheimer contends, always mediated by social conditions. We can, in other words, only arrive at an adequate comprehension of the nature or end of scientific enquiry when we appreciate the fact that, in the modern context, science is a kind of social 'institution'. Any approach that ignores this is, for Horkheimer, philosophically naïve. One of the principal targets of Horkheimer's criticism is the philosophy of 'positivism'.[6]

Equally, it is evident that in adopting such a position Horkheimer commits himself to a kind of self-reflexivity with regard to knowledge. Infact this is one of the central concerns for both Horkheimer and Adorno. In their jointly authored writing, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)[7] they take up many of the above mentioned points, especially, about the nature and limits of rationality- specifically its mythological and irrational roots. Both thinkers thus engage in an 'immanent critique' of rationality, arguing that implicit within the ideal of reason is a tendency toward irrational, mythological forms of thought. This tendency can also be found in contemporary developments within philosophical discourse about the nature of knowledge; in a movement which Horkheimer characterizes in terms of a contrast between 'subjective' and 'objective' rationality.

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[6] See Horkhiemer, Max, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum, 1992)

[7] Adorno, Theodore and Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* trans. John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973)

Horkheimer and Adorno were particularly critical of the traditional theory for its obsession with classification of various phenomena and identifying them under well defined categories. Horkheimer's thoughts were permeated by the Marxist principle that philosophical, religious and sociological ideas could be understood only in relation to the interests of the different social groups so that theory was a function of social life

The Frankfurt theorists were apprehensive that an overt emphasis on technology and science would lead to a totalitarian regime by encouraging the manipulation of human beings resulting in the destruction of culture and personality which are elements of radical difference. Horkheimer in his ideas on critical theory made it clear that the world of science was the world of readymade facts to be ordered as though the perception of these facts are divorced from the social framework. For critical theory, perception cannot be isolated from its social genesis. Society is an active player, even if unconsciously so, because the individual is passive in relation to the object. Critical theory accepts its social dependence and regards itself as a form of social behaviour. Hence, it is more a movement than a concrete philosophical and systematized theory. Even though it accepts the overarching specter of society whether in the foreground or in the background on any human activity, it concedes the possibility of the critical activity vis-à-vis the society. It does not consider society a natural creation which can never be touched. Horkheimer feels that the conciliatory attitude towards society had been the reason for the edification of the status quo and the people enmasse had been alienated. The sharp polarization of society into subject and object; internal and external had led to the feeling that society is something alien to the individual. Without aspiring for complete unification or foundational explanation one can effectively address the tensions between the subjective and objective factors which are at loggerheads perpetually.

Critical theory does hold that theory and praxis can come together some time in the future if the 'external' character of society undergoes a change. It is a critique of the existent society and does not claim any universality and eternity for itself. It is a critique of the capitalist society which impedes human growth. It is a critique in that it is a social act as well as an intellectual act. It imagines a society in which human needs and powers are not externalized.

From my discussions above we can create four points of difference between traditional theory and critical theory. *Traditional theory*: is a closed system of statements constructed according to logical rules of deduction and induction; it is supposedly value-neutral; it is objective and modeled on the lines of the natural sciences; and finally it is characterized by a technical-instrumental rationality. *Critical theory* however firmly says that there is no absolute subject of knowledge and that the coincidence of the subject and object lies in the future not merely due to intellectual progress but also due to social progress in which the relationship between the subject and the object is redefined. ; the method of sciences is different because the ends determine the means whereas in the case of critical theory the means is as important as the ends ; It is a critical reflection on ideology and it accepts that as a historically grounded method it is not itself free from the influences of the societal framework. It also claims independence vis-a-vis existing doctrines including Marxism. ; Critical theory also realizes the importance of praxis and reposes faith in the cherished enlightenment ideals of freedom, justice and happiness.

Habermas's Epistemology

Jurgen Habermas, born in 1929, grew up in Nazi Germany, an experience that shaped the lives of most of the very influential thinkers of his time. He joined the Frankfurt School in 1956 where he became an assistant to Theodore Adorno. He accepted the basic position of his predecessors but he did not stop with the continued reflection and critique of ideology into which critical theory has petered out. Habermas believed that thought was not outside of reality; theory and practice, philosophy and politics are inextricably entangled. For Habermas philosophy is necessarily a critical theory of society, a reflection that should further and promote the ideal of emancipation from any form of domination. Habermas, therefore, tried to bridge the void between theory (ends) and practice (means).

In the century before, Marx, had tried to do the same. He believed that his theory provided both an analysis of capitalist society and the means of changing it in practice, through the revolution of the proletariat. Habermas accepts that such a revolution never came. The reasons- philosophical limitations of Marx's thought in the characterizing capitalist society.[8]

On the philosophical level Habermas saw Marx as someone who believed in what he was doing as science.[9] Habermas considered this a major flaw in Marx's theorizing (the specific Marxian notion that the study of human life can be a science on par with the natural sciences.[10]). This was a flaw, Habermas argues, for two reasons:
a) The Marxian idea produces a mistaken view of what human beings are like as capable reasoning actors who know a great deal about why they act as they do.
b) That this contributes to a tendency to over estimate the role of science as the only valid kind of knowledge that we can have about the natural or the social world.

Treating the study of society as a science led Marx and later Marxists, Habermas says, to a paradox or dilemma. If capitalism changes, as Marx posited, according to the 'iron laws' which have all the determinism of the laws and theories of natural science, where is there any room for the active interaction of human beings in their own fate? Why must anyone bother to become Marxist at all? For if human behaviour is governed by iron laws there is nothing we can do to shape our own history by actively intervening in it. When understood as a science Marxism ignores what Habermas calls the self reflective capability of human beings/agents. That is to say it cannot cope with one of the defining aspects that make us human .This is the fact that we are capable of reflecting upon our own history, as individuals and as members of larger societies; and of using precisely that reflection to change the course of history. This insight, Habermas believes, is lost in all forms of philosophy and social theory- usually referred to as 'positivism'- which try to style the social upon the natural sciences.

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[8] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Knowledge and Human Interests* trans. J. Shapiro (Oxford: Polity Press and Basil Blackwell Press, 1987) pp. 25-63.
[9] Ibid, pp. 43-46.
[10] Ibid, p. 46.

Such a criticism though is not a new one in theory. It has been quite commonly attached to what has been called the hermeneutic tradition. The stress in such a tradition has been, that to understand human behaviour 'we' have to interpret its meaning. Instead of seeing human behaviour as governed by laws (as in the ways nature is sought to be understood), 'we' must grasp the intentions and reasons which people have for their activity. Natural science in the process becomes irrelevant as a model upon which we must create theories that seek to understand human behaviour. As I will show later on in this chapter Habermas does not wish to throw out the elements of positivism wholesale, instead he attempts to reconcile hermeneutics and positivism and thereby overcome this division between them. Habermas argues further that there are circumstances in which human social life is conditioned by factors of which those involved know little. In such a situation Habermas believes that social forces resemble the forces of nature. To that degree the advocates of a natural science model are correct. But they are wrong to suppose that such social forces are immutable, like the laws of nature. The more human beings understand about the springs of their own behaviour, and the social institutions in which that behaviour is involved, the more they are likely to be able to escape from constraints to which previously they were subject.

To illustrate such an idea Habermas makes a comparison between psychoanalysis and social theory.[11] Psychoanalysis involves a hermeneutic element. After all, the task of the analyst is to interpret the meaning of what the patient thinks and feels. Interpretation of meaning- as in decoding the content of dreams- is inherent in psychoanalytic 'therapy'.

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[11] Ibid, Part III, Chapter 12 entitled, "Psychoanalysis and Social Theory: Nietzsche's reduction of cognitive interest"

But the analyst reaches limits of interpretation where repressions block off access to the unconscious. Psychoanalytic language then tends to shift to talk of 'unconscious forces', 'unconscious constraints' and so on. It tends to become more like the language of the natural sciences. Why? Because the analysis at that point becomes concerned with things that happen to the individual, rather than things which the individual is able to autonomously control. It is in such circumstances, and only in such circumstances, Habermas argues, that concepts analogous to those of natural sciences are relevant to the explication of human conduct. The more successful a psychoanalytic procedure is, the less these kinds of concepts are appropriate, because the individual is able to expand the scope of rational control over his or her behavior. The appropriate language then becomes hermeneutic. A further important consequence can also be seen from all this. Psychoanalytic therapy aims to change behaviour, by the very process of transmuting what happens to the individual into what the individual makes happen. Habermas suggests this is the same role as that which a critical theory of society should fulfill. Marxism is inadequate as a basis for accomplishing social change, insofar as it is solely concerned with 'iron laws', 'inevitable trends', etc. It is the only the science of human unfreedom. A philosophically more sophisticated critical theory must recognise that an emancipated society would be one in which human beings actively control their own destinies, through a heightened understanding of the circumstances in which they live.

It is very important, according to this standpoint, to see that there is no single mould into which all knowledge can be compressed. Knowledge can take three different forms, according to differing interests which underlie its formulation. These three 'knowledge constitutive interests' correspond respectively to an aspect of human society. All societies exist in a material environment, and engage in interchanges with nature- this relation involves what Habermas generically calls 'labor'. Such interchanges promote an interest in the prediction and control of events. It is precisely this interest which is generalized by positivism to all knowledge. In so far as Marxism relapses into positivism, it is supposes that social life is governed by developments in the 'forces of production', operating mechanically to influence social change. But all societies also involve 'symbolic interaction' – the communication of individuals with one another. The study of symbolic interaction creates an interest in the understanding of meaning – always the main preoccupation of hermeneutics, which has mistakenly sought to generalize this to the whole of human activity. Finally, every human society involves forms of power or domination. The third knowledge constitutive interest, that is emancipation, derives from a concern with achieving rational autonomy of action, free from domination – whether it be domination of nature over human life, or the domination of some individuals or groups over others. Each of the knowledge constitutive interests is linked to a particular type of discipline. An interest in prediction and control is the pre-eminent concern of the 'empirical-analytical sciences'. An interest in the understanding or interpretation of meaning is the prime guiding theme of the 'historical-hermeneutic disciplines'. Concern with the emancipation of human beings from systems of domination is the interest to which 'critical theory' is attached.

It is important to mention here that the above ideas set out are principally from Habermas's book *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Since the time of its first publication though in 1968 Habermas has substantially revised and expanded upon the ideas contained therein. In the psychoanalytic encounter, the communication between therapist and patient is 'systematically distorted'. Repressions in the patient block and deform what the he has to say to the analyst. However if communication is systematically distorted then psychoanalysis would not be able to fulfill its goal and we know, from earlier discussion, the positive goal for psychoanalysis is emancipation The logical question to ask next is, What would undistorted communication be like and how might this be connected to the ambitions of critical theory (i.e. emancipation)? In his more recent work Habermas has devoted a good deal of attention to exploring possible answers to the above question and has written extensively upon problems of communication and language and importantly how it relates to his political task of creating a "deliberative democracy"[12]?.

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[12] Habermas, Jürgen, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) pp. 21-30

Habermas's search for the character of undistorted communication led him to realize the significance of language in all forms of communication and understanding.[13] This led to the second moment in his philosophy- the *linguistic* turn.

2. The Linguistic Moment in Habermas

The predominant truth of twentieth century philosophy is the move towards language. Language is no longer thought of as a neutral medium for knowledge, nor as a tool that we use to describe and decode the world. Language shapes our knowledge of ourselves and of the world we live in.

The 'linguistic turn' for Habermas meant the affirmation of the modernist project of the enlightenment, now no longer based on isolated subjectivity, but on the ***intersubjectivity*** of language. For Habermas, the recognition of the limitations of the epistemological project, too enmeshed with the idea of philosophy as self-reflection (where reason is monological), only reaffirms the need for an intersubjective reflection on truth and justice (where reason becomes dialogical), thus asserting the need for more, rather than less philosophy.

Habermas starts controversially. Time and again Habermas clearly states his purpose for seeking the conditions of the possibility of understanding, as he thinks that 'all other forms of social action- for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general – are derivatives of action oriented towards reaching understanding.'[14]

Action in this context leads to understanding, but this action (as informed by the linguistic moment in Habermas's thinking) is constituted by language. If therefore the possibilities of the condition of understanding were to be found, i.e. the deep structure or essence present in language were to be found out, this would provide Habermas the conditions for the possibility to reach true understanding or emancipation.

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[13] Habermas, Jürgen, 'On Systematically Distorted Communication' in *Inquiry*, 13 (1970)

[14] Habermas, Jürgen, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' in Habermas, Jürgen, ***Communication and the*** *Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann 1979) p.1

This results in two things (A) that language constitutes understanding and (B) that language is present in all forms of social action. In the search for the conditions of the possibility of understanding Habermas implies that there is the presence of a deep structure in language. The knowledge of this deeper structure will provide the universal conditions for the possibility of all true understanding. This gives Habermas two important results- (A) a benchmark to judge what distorted or undistorted communication and action would be (B) the conditions of the possibility of understanding, which are in effect the conditions required for true emancipation.

The search for the conditions of the possibility of understanding in language for Habermas lies in the four "validity claims"[15] present in speech. According to Habermas, when one person says something to another, that person implicitly (sometimes explicitly) makes the following claims: (A) That which is said is intelligible – that is to say, that it obeys certain syntactical and semantic rules so that there is a 'meaning' which can be understood by the other (is meaningful- that it can be understood). (B) That the propositional content of whatever is said is true. The 'propositional content' refers to the factual assertions which the speakers make as part of what he or she says. (C) That the speaker is justified in saying whatever is said. In other words, certain social rights or 'norms' are invoked in the use of speech in any given context of language-use. (D) That the speaker is sincere in whatever is said- that he or she does not intend to deceive the listener. The argument in this fashion however sounds very esoteric, but with the help of an example things would become clearer. Suppose, in answer to an enquiry from a traveler, a ticket clerk at the railway station says 'That will be 10 rupees for a cheap day return'. The passenger might not know initially what a 'cheap day return' is, and if so may appear puzzled. In then explaining what the phrase 'cheap day return' means, the clerk is justifying the first claim- that what he or she said was intelligible and meaningful, even though the traveler was first of all perplexed by it. It is implicit in what the clerk says that the factual content of the statement is true – that it actually does cost 10 rupees for the ticket (the second validity claim). The passenger is also likely to take it for granted that the clerk has the right to make such an authoritative pronouncement about the railway fare (the third validity-claim); and that the clerk sincerely believes what she or he says (the fourth validity claim). Note, however, that there may be circumstances in which any or all of these last three validity claims may be contested by the passenger – in which case the clerk would be expected to justify or back up the statement that was made. Suppose, for example the passenger suspected that the person standing on the other side of the counter was someone temporarily standing in for the usual clerk, because the real clerk was away from work. The passenger might then be inclined to check on the factual validity of the statement, and perhaps question the individual's right to be distributing tickets when not authorized by the railway to do so.

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[15] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action*. trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 88-89.

What can be derived from the above is that undistorted communication is language-use in which speakers can defend all four validity-claims – where what is said can be shown to be meaningful, true, justified and sincere. Compare communication between analyst and patient, which may be 'systematically distorted' in various ways. What the patient says in free association may not be intelligible, either to the patient or, initially, to the analyst. Its factual content may be in some parts false (as in fantasies). The patient may make claims in an unjustified way – for example, blaming others for acts for which they could not reasonably be held responsible. Finally, the patient may either consciously or unconsciously attempt to deceive the analyst in order to resist or evade the implications to which the process of analysis is leading. The aim of psychoanalytic therapy can thus be construed as that of making it possible for the patient to escape whatever psychological limitations inhibit the successful justification of validity-claims in day to day discourse.

In effect the deep structure of language is the above validity claims. Habermas further argues that of the four validity-claims, only the second and third can actually be defended in discourse – that is to say, by means of the speaker elaborating verbally upon whatever he or she says. The meaningfulness of speech can only be justified by the speaker actually showing that an utterance is intelligible – which is usually done by means of expressing that utterance in a different way. A speaker can only show himself or herself to be sincere by demonstrating sincerity in action (fulfilling promises, honoring commitments, and so on).Truth and justification, however, can be 'discursively redeemed': the speaker can elaborate upon why a given claim is true, or is normatively justified. Habermas's theory of truth has been influential and it leads directly to his notion of an ideal speech situation.

Habermas's Theory of Truth

For Habermas 'truth' is a quality of propositional assertions contained within language-use. Truth is a validity-claim which we attach to the factual content of statements. The simplest way to understand how Habermas develops this view is to begin from what is sometimes called the 'redundancy theory' of truth. According to the redundancy theory, the term 'truth' is a superfluous one, empty of any significance which is not already carried in the assertion of a factual proposition. Thus I might say, 'the car is red'. If I might say that 'it is true that the car is red', the words 'it is true' seem to add nothing to the statement that the car is red. 'It is true' is redundant. Now in a certain sense Habermas agrees with this. In ordinary conversation we would say, in response to a question about the car's color, 'This car is red in color', not 'It is true that this car is red in color'. But in Habermas's view this is not because the concept of truth is a redundant or unnecessary one. It is because in most contexts of communication the claim to truth is implicit in what the speaker says. It is only when that claim is questioned by another person that the speaker is likely to invoke 'truth' and cognate terms. 'Truth', in other words, is a term brought into play in factual disputes or debates, and the concept of truth can only be properly understood in relation to such processes of argumentation. When we say something is true, we mean we can back up what we say with factual evidence and logical argument – that a claim can be 'warranted' as Habermas says. Truth refers to agreement or consensus reached by such warrants. A statement is 'true' if any disputant faced by those warrants would concede its validity. Truth is a promise of a rational consensus.

It follows from this that truth is not a relation between an individual perceiver and the world – although it depends upon evidence based on perceptions. Truth is agreement reached through critical discussion.[16] Here Habermas's standpoint seems to face a major difficulty. How are we actually to distinguish a 'rational consensus' – one based upon reasoned argument – from a consensus based merely upon custom and power?

Habermas argues that a rational consensus – in any area of factual discussion, including but not limited to science – is one reached purely 'by the force of the better argument'. A claim to truth, in other words, is an assertion that any other person able to weigh the evidence would reach the same conclusion as the individual making that claim. This in turn means that the notion of truth is tied to presumptions about the circumstances in which it is possible for arguments to be assessed in such a way that (A) all pertinent evidence could be brought into play, and (B) nothing apart from logical, reasoned argument is involved in an ensuing consensus. It is these circumstances which Habermas calls an 'ideal speech situation'. An ideal speech situation is one in which there are non external constraints preventing participants from assessing evidence and argument, and in which each participant has an equal and open chance of entering into discussion irrespective of difference. Public dialogue then, according to Habermas, is free and uncoerced

What I have elaborated so far is to show what Habermas wants to demonstrate, that although truth is a language related concept, it is also an unavoidable ideal of communication. In fact, Habermas wants to show that it is as a language-related concept that truth becomes the grounding ideal for communication. In fact as is clear from my discussion above, truth forms an ideal that makes language possible, as without it we could never possibly engage in communication.

What Habermas is saying is that when we engage in communication, we mutually expect each other to speak the truth, truthfully and rightfully, and, moreover, we expect reasons to be given in the case where these claims would be thought unfounded.[17] Although we might not share the same ideas of truth, the fact that we communicate and that we seek to understand each other presupposes that we share the idea that when we speak, we want what is said to be taken as a true, rightful and truthful communication. And, because we do so, we also presume that reasons can be given or sought for the claims we raise. In other words, communication presupposes a mutual understanding of intersubjective validity of what has been understood as claims that can be rationally redeemed (or as I have mentioned before discursively redeemed.).

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[16] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p. 12.

In speaking, speakers raise validity claims and they agree not so much on their content as on the possibility of redeeming these claims through rational argumentation. Of course, there is no guarantee that an agreement will ever be reached, nor that, if ever reached, such an agreement could not be further discussed and possibly changed. Habermas seeks to reclaim the notions of truth, rightness (justice) and truthfulness (authenticity, freedom) as the universal conditions of possibility of language, but these conditions are not necessarily met or realised. Habermas's universalism, so to speak, allows for the particular differences that are the everyday reality of our multicultural societies. But it also stresses what binds us together as speaking subjects (albeit of different languages). This binding is the rationality of communication as an interaction which makes validity claims that can always be discussed at the level of discourse.

For Habermas, discourse is the level of argumentation that can lead to a 'good (or rational) consensus', that is, a rationally motivated one, freed from distortions of power.[18] The conditions under which such consensus is possible stress the need for a symmetrical situation in all uses of speech, not only cognitive, but also interactive and expressive. The point here is to go beyond relativism of the truth. Indeed, Habermas's theory of discourse shows how critical reflection on a truth claim might call into question the frame of reference that makes a certain agreement on truth possible, thus recognizing that these frames are contingent and practically motivated.

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[17] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 88-89; Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis* Trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976) pp. 107-109.

[18] Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p.12, p. 67.

However a criticism of Habermas's idea can be made at this point, plainly, most actual conditions of social interaction and communication do not seem to have the 'ideal speech situation' or 'rational consensuses. We could ask, what, then is the point of attaching so much importance to these ideas? The answer to such a question is twofold. First, for Habermas the ideal speech situation is not an arbitrarily constructed ideal. As has been shown above, it is inherent in the nature of language. Anyone who uses language thereby presumes that they can justify the four types of validity-claim, including that of the truth. A single utterance holds out the possibility of the existence of a form of social life in which individuals would live in free, equal and open communication with one another. Second, since this is the case, it follows that the ideal speech situation provides a critical measure of the insufficiencies of currently existing forms of interaction and social institutions. Any consensus based either on the sheer weight of tradition, or on the use of power or domination, would be exposed as deviating from a rational consensus. The ideal speech situation[19] hence supposedly provides an 'objectively given' basis of critical theory.

For Habermas the concept of rationality has less to do with the foundation of knowledge than with the manner in which knowledge is used.[20] To say either that a statement or an action could be 'rational' is to claim that the statement or action could be in principle justified in procedures of argumentation. Argumentation, in Habermas's term, is a 'court of appeal' of the rationally inherent in communication, making possible the continuance of communicative relations when disputes arise, without recourse to duress. It is on the basis of the notion of communicative rationality that Habermas attempts to counter relativism, and in terms of which he seeks to interpret the overall evolution of human society.

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[19] Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis* trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976) pp. 107-109

[20] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.I* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press 1984) Chapter 1.

According to Habermas, we are therefore able to rank both individuals and over-all cultures on a scale of evolutionary development, in which the criterion of evolutionary advancement is 'cognitive adequacy'. By 'cognitive adequacy' Habermas means the range and depth of the defensible validity-claims which they incorporate. Habermas suggests three main phases of social evolution: the 'mythical', 'religious-metaphysical' and the 'modern'. Mythical societies are small-scale, traditional cultures which are dominated by myth. Myths are concretized and particular modes of thought, tending to see both other cultures and the material world from the vantage point of the society in question. They are characteristic of societies which have not developed distinct intellectual arenas within which argumentation can be carried on. The pervasiveness of tradition means that most social activity is organized according to principles sanctified by time, not worked out on the basis of rational discussion and understanding. In Habermas's view, the development of more encompassing religions, more broadly founded than myth, signifies a movement towards the expansion of rationality. The formation of the major 'world religions' – such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam or Christianity – tends to be associated with the differentiation of science, law and art as partly separable spheres of activity. Habermas at this juncture makes an appeal to the writings of Max Weber.[21] However he does so from a 'critical' point of view. Weber placed a strong emphasis upon what he called the 'rationalization' of culture, furthered by world religions, and finding its maximal development in modern western capitalism. Weber steadfastly refused to identify the expansion of rationalization with heightened rationality; a more rationalized form of socialized form of social life has nothing to commend it over a less rationalized one. For Habermas however this is not acceptable. Where 'rationalization' means the furthering of procedures and opportunities for argumentation, its development is convergent with the growth of rationality. Weber did not indicate clearly enough the ways in which the rationalization of the modern west differs from that characteristic of preceding civilizations. According to Habermas, the west alone is marked by the pre-eminence of 'post-conventional' cognitive domains.

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[21] Ibid, Chapter 2.

'Post-conventional' forms of institutional order are those which have not only freed themselves from the dominance of traditional codes of conduct, but have become organized according to warranted principles. The most notable institutional sectors in which this process first comes to the fore are those of science and law.

For Habermas, therefore, there is a real sense in which West is best. In advocating such a view, he self-consciously stands in opposition not only to relativism – in whatever sense may be attributed to that term – but also to those schools of social thought which hold the development of Western capitalism to be fundamentally a noxious phenomenon. But he by no means accords unequivocal approval to Western society. On the contrary, modern capitalism is a form of society riven by tension and conflicts. Habermas seemingly still wants to retain elements of the Marxist notion that capitalism is a type of society whose transcendence holds out the possibility of the achievement of a superior type of social order. It is here that Habermas's ethical and political insights begin to appear. His analysis of the nature of modern capitalism and the avenues of social change lead to what he terms as the 'legitimation crisis' and the beginning of the ethico-political moment in his thought.

3. The Ethico-Political Moment in Habermas

Legitimation Crisis[22]

An updated critical theory, Habermas suggests, involves seeing the wider role which science has played in developments since Marx's day – meaning by 'science' here the natural sciences. Habermas sees today's society as a place where science and technology have become fused. This science, Habermas posits, has also extended into the realm of politics. In capitalist societies, science and technology are harnessed to the aim of delivering stable and extended economic growth. In effect the scope of politics is simply reduced to a question of who can run the economy best – a matter of technical decision-making instead of it being a space for the struggles for values and ideals that make life meaningful. Politics becoming a sort of technology like any other is one of the chief features of modem capitalism. Habermas believes that such a development will have very serious consequences.

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[22] See, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis* trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976) pp. 36-37, 77-78, 82-83

A pragmatic and technocratic government drains away over-all values and ideals in favour of – a 'who can run the economy best' ethos (as mentioned earlier a technical decision-making matter). This 'scientisation of politics' represses meaning. Habermas posits therefore, that repression of meaning by positivism in the more technical spheres of social theory and philosophy has as its counterpart the repression of meaning in many spheres of modern life. This repression of meaning, Habermas posits, will lead the political system to a 'crisis of legitimation'. That is to say, because of its confined, technocratic character, the political order cannot be open to the varied demands of a radically diverse society. In consequence the political order looses its legitimating authority.

Rather than economic contradiction, the tendency to legitimation crisis is for Habermas the most deep-lying contradiction of modem capitalism. Just as class division and economic instability gave rise to the labor movement in the nineteenth century, so this 'emerging contradiction', Habermas posits, will tend to spawn new social movements in the twentieth century. Movements which will attempt to inject back into political life the values it has lost- for example, with the relations between human beings and the natural world, and human individuals with one another. Such relations are important fundamental moral values and there are limits to the degree to which they can be subordinated to technocratic imperatives. At those limits, oppositional movements arise which fight back, to recover lost values or change existing ones.

In recent decades there has been a spread of organized capitalism (welfare capitalism) albeit through the spread of western liberal democracy in Eastern Europe or in parts of the third world. The ascent of this liberal democracy, Habermas posits, has also carried with it the 'crises of legitimation'. Effectively this means that politics having become a largely pragmatic affair, the population feels no real commitment to the political system, and readily becomes alienated from it if that system fails to maintain sustained economic growth. This has led to various movements that have tried to force back into the political order, some lost values and ideals that would make life meaningful. However not all these movements as Habermas suggests, have been for the benefit of society as a whole. With the ascent of liberal democracy, it has been accompanied by "ethnic" nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, civil wars and genocide. Further more, much as in the West, in those developing countries with already well-entrenched liberal democratic regimes, there has been growing public dissatisfaction with democratic institutions. This unease is evidenced by such phenomena as the rise of popular protest and social movements, lower voter turnouts, and the inability of public institutions to meet the demands and needs of the citizens.

Deliberative Democracy[23]

Habermas speaks directly to this "crisis". Habermas envisions a "deliberative democracy" that relies on the reasoned and inclusive public deliberation that is geared to reaching consensual decisions. Habermas's project therefore is about promoting democratic participation and decision-making without impeding sociocultural difference. To put it another way, Habermas wants to democratically represent radical difference without thereby sanctioning injustice and intolerance.

Habermas first develops the notion of the "public sphere" as a discursive space, distinct and separate from the economy and state, in which citizens participate and act through dialogue and debate without fear and influence.[24] Habermas further elaborates the specifically discursive aspects of this public sphere, arguing for a procedural model of democracy that he labels "deliberative democracy."[25]

For Habermas, to encourage public participation in order to strengthen peoples loyalty to the political system and government (also to encourage people to discuss values and ideals that make life more meaningful) politics must be viewed as a public conversation governed by legitimating procedures and reason: "Democratic will formation draws its legitimating force... from the communicative presuppositions that allow better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberation and from procedures that secure fair bargaining processes."[26] Habermas encapsulates these "fair" procedures in what he calls an "ideal speech situation"; that is, a situation in which public dialogue is free and uncoerced. Democratic deliberation, Habermas posits, approaches an "ideal speech situation" if it satisfies the following conditions: (A) it is inclusive (i.e. no one is excluded from participating in the discussion on topics relevant to her/him, and no relevant information is omitted); (B) it is coercion free (i.e. everyone engages in arguments freely, without being dominated or feeling intimidated by other participants); and (C) it is open and symmetrical (each participant can initiate, continue, and question the discussion on any relevant topic, including the deliberative procedures).[27] It is worth noting that while the formal procedures entailed by the ideal speech situation enforce free and uncoerced dialogue, they impose no limits on the scope or agenda of public deliberations: topics are always open, determined only by those participating in the discussions and subject to revision if required.

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[23] Habermas, Jürgen, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) pp. 21-30.

[24] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989)

[25] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996)

Habermas recognizes that the ideal speech situation is not easy to bring about. He is aware that there are many obstacles standing in its way, not the least of which is trying to minimize power relationships among participants. For him the ideal speech situation is not empirical: it is a regulative ideal, a counterfactual stance from which to assess and criticise non-deliberative processes and power politics.

As a way of better guaranteeing, regulating and expanding deliberative democracy, Habermas argues for the institutionalization through legal and constitutional means of these legitimating rules.[28] According to him, laws enacting "fair" procedures can help organize democratic politics. For example, they can delineate, regulate, and check state powers to ensure better accountability of public institutions; in turn, this will help protect the public sphere from being overtly influenced and colonized by state administrative and technocratic interests. Habermas seeks not simply legitimating procedures but just outcomes as well. For this purpose, he resorts to the use of reason. Yet for him, rationality cannot be autonomous, insulated from society and imposing its will without accountability; it must be a dialogical or "communicative" rationality through which participants advance arguments and counterarguments. Consensual decisions are reached only by the force of the unforced "force of the better argument", so that at the end of the deliberative process, all concerned are convinced by the decisions reached and accept them as reasonable.[29] Like the discussion topics these decisions can be revisited when information and participants change.

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[26] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 24

[27] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 88-89; Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976) pp. 107-109; Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 70.

To end this chapter I would like to conclude with some dimensions of the above process Habermas has outlined. First, communicative rationality not only helps coordinate information, plans, or actions but performs an important critical and adjudicative function. By making speakers give (or test) reasons for the claims they advance, deliberative democracy enables participants to criticize unsubstantiated or unconvincing claims and distinguish between better and worse claims. Decisions reached are "right" because they are supported by good reasons. Second, it is not the status of the speaker that counts, but the force of the speaker's arguments. Reason prevails over power. In this sense, Habermas complements his legitimating rules (noted above) with communicative rationality to criticize and minimize power inequalities within the deliberative public space. Finally, Habermas upholds the quality – the quasi-transcendental quality[30] – of public deliberation. For him just outcomes are reached through "higher level intersubjectivity of communication processes."[31] Decisions happen not by aggregating individual preferences, adding votes, or finding commonalities rather, each participant begins with his or her interests, and through the course of deliberation transcends these interests to seek the good of all. Thus, the outcomes represent a movement from "mere agreement" to "rational consensus".[32]

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[28] A detailed analysis of this can be found in, Habermas, Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

[29] Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p. 88, 167.

[30] Quasi-transcendental because deliberative democracy does not impose an outside agenda on public deliberations: the agenda is specific to, and dependent on, participatory politics. Habermas also has in mind quasi-transcendence of ethical/cultural background, believing that rationalization requires self-reflexivity and transcendence regarding one's own traditions and beliefs; thus, culture is both the backdrop of communicative reason and its object. However, he ends up championing the "moral" over the "ethical",

It is such quasi-transcendence that gives consensual decisions their universal appeal, since all participants discover norms that are generalizable (or potentially generalizable) and accept them as universally binding. To this end, Habermas prioritizes morality (the domain of impartial procedures and universal right/justice) over ethics (the domain of different conceptions of the personal and social good, or the "good life"): he argues for the need for communities to distance themselves from their taken-for-granted beliefs and tradition so that they bring "universal principles of justice into the horizon of the specific form of life of [the] particular community".[33] As a consequence communicative rationality's transcendental qualities form the basis of his defense of justice and universalisation.

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which amounts to prioritizing transcendence/universality over particularity/culture/the personal. That is the point at which Habermas runs into feminist and other criticisms.

[31] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 28

[32] Habermas. Jürgen. *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p.12, 67

[33] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 25

CHAPTER III: Lyotard's Project of Rejoicing in Difference

As with Habermas, Lyotard too seeks to include radical difference in society. Just as in the chapter on Habermas, here as well, I follow three moments of Lyotard's thought. The first, the *epistemological moment*- here Lyotard provides a critique of science and philosophy which taken together he calls the grand narrative of modernity. The critique centers on the silence and the violence the grand narrative of modernity imposes on other radically different stories. This leads Lyotard into the second moment called the *linguistic moment*. In this moment Lyotard shows how language is heterogeneous and incommensurable, and how the human/social subject too has similar characteristics of such a language. For Lyotard, language is a multiplicity of language games. The themes Lyotard posits here are further guided by his notion of the differend, defined as, the recognition that there always exist differences in language games and that every difference is incommensurable and therefore never fully expressed by another language game. There is no final language game, no metanarrative that sums up the truth. With the idea of the self, multiplicity of language and the idea of the differend, Lyotard moves into the third moment of his philosophy. The new moment is called the *ethico-political moment*. Here Lyotard seeks to locate the political nature of the differend and the meaning of the political in relation to it. The purpose for such a project, for Lyotard, is to find a notion of a political realm that has the competence to include the radically other or the radically diverse of society.

1. The Epistemological Moment in Lyotard

The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge[1] was an account commissioned by the 'Council of Universities' of the Quebec government. The report surveys the status of science and technology. Lyotard posited that technological changes would have a major impact on knowledge. In consequence he predicted that no knowledge will survive, that cannot be translated into computer language- into quantities of information. Learning will no longer be associated with the training of minds- with teachers training students. For the transmission and storage of information will no longer depend on individuals, but on computers. Information will be produced and sold. Lyotard argues further that nations will come into conflict for information the way they once fought over territory or boundary. Lyotard predicted that information would travel around the world at high speed and there would be people who would try and steal it. He also posited that the role of the state would get weaker and taking its place would be huge multinational corporations that would dominate society. But having said all this about the direction of scientific knowledge, Lyotard adds that scientific knowledge is not the only kind of knowledge. His interest, it turns out, is not so much in scientific knowledge and the scientific method, per se, but in how scientific knowledge and method legitimize themselves- how they make themselves believable and trustworthy.[2] And at this point Lyotard makes an analysis and distinction between 'scientific discourse'[3] and 'narrative discourse'[4].

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[1] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989)

Narrative discourse for Lyotard is like a chant or an incantation or a myth, say for example, about the creation of the world etc. Such myths, Lyotard posits, legitimize themselves- make themselves believable- just in the telling. And at the same time they legitimize the society in which they are told. The teller of the myth does not have to argue or prove, like a scientist, when he chants about the creation of the world or heaven or hell etc. Merely in performing the myth, in the vibrations of the chant- the sense of natural time is dissolved and the awareness opens to mythic time to narrative time.[5] According to Lyotard, nursery rhymes and some repetitive forms of music attempt to enter the same space of mythic time.

The 'chanter' of the myth legitimizes the myth simply by stating it. The narrator has authority to chant because he has heard it chanted himself.[6] Anyone listening gains the same authority merely by listening. Lyotard further adds that sometimes it has been claimed that the chant has been chanted forever. The myth, the chanter, the audience, all form a kind of social bond- a social group that legitimizes itself through the chanting of the myth. The myth defines what has the right to be said and done in the culture.[7] But according to Lyotard scientific discourse is a different kind of 'language game' than narrative discourse- than myth. Scientific discourse cannot legitimize itself.

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[2] Ibid, section 2
[3] Ibid, section 7
[4] Ibid, section 6
[5] Ibid, pp. 21-22.
[6] Ibid, p. 20.

The reference to the concept of 'language game'[8] here by Lyotard owes its influence to Ludwig Wittgenstein and especially to his book *Philosophical Investigations*[9] and I think it would be profitable if we were to take a brief detour to Wittgenstein's theory of language games to develop a greater understanding of Lyotard's analysis. Wittgenstein develops an approach to language and meaning that is couched in terms of the motion of 'language games'. One can in crude terms, grasp what Wittgenstein is doing by way of the following question: how is it that words have meaning? One possible answer, and a common one, is to say that a teacher instructing a child in the meaning of words. The teacher points to an object and names it (what is called 'ostensive definition'). The child repeats the name. Hence, the meaning of the word is secured by way of reference to the thing that is named through the act of ostensive definition. One problem with this view concerns how it is that the meaning of pointing to the object itself is secured in the first place. For, in order for the child to know that a certain word denotes a certain thing he or she must already understand that the act of pointing is a way of indicating an object. In other words, resorting to pointing in order to establish how the meaning of words is secured is insufficient, for pointing itself has a meaning that cannot be defined in this way. Wittgenstein proposes an alternative way of conceptualizing meaning. Think, he says, of the process of learning the meaning of words as being akin to "one of those games by means of which children learn their native language."[10] Children learn by playing games. A game is composed of rules. If a child is engaged in learning the meaning of words by repeating them after the teacher, the child is acting according to a set of rules and conventions wherein he or she repeats the words of the teacher. This is what Wittgenstein terms a 'language game'. Language games are composed of gestures, rules, etc. All of these taken together constitute a structure of conventions. These conventions are in place in order to serve the purpose of the game. On this view, the meaning of a word, at least in many if not all instances, is 'to be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language [game].'[11] In turn there are many different kinds of language game, and different language games represent instances of different 'forms of life': 'the term "language game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of languages is part of an activity, or a form of life.'[12]

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[7] Ibid, p. 23.
[8] Ibid, Section 3
[9] Wittgenstein Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
[10] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) para 7

In consequence there are many language games that we play. For instance- praying, singing, telling jokes, making a promise, telling a lie etc. Science is a different kind of language game from that of myth. It cannot legitimize itself or validate itself by its own procedures. In the language game of science the scientist makes ***denotative statements*** rather than mythical ones. An example of a *Denotative statement* can be- "Moon is a term that denotes a material body which rotates around the world at a known speed and definite distance, according to the laws of Newtonian or Einsteinian laws". In the language game of science 'moon' does not refer to some part of a mythological story of the creation of the universe. The scientist unlike the chanter must be able to prove his denotative statement about the moon and disprove any opposing or contradictory statements about the Moon. In the 19th century, this was known as the rule of verification. In the 20th century, this is called the rule of falsification.

Scientific discourse and narrative discourse are different language games, and what counts as a good move in one game does not count as a good move in the other. You cannot prove narrative mythic knowledge on the basis of science. And what science cannot do is to legitimize its own activity.[13] It cannot answer questions such as: why there must be scientific activity in the first place? Or why must society encourage and support scientific research? on the basis of the "scientific method or procedure" (the language game of science) it has as its disposal.

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[11] Ibid, para 43

[12] Ibid, para 23

[13] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) p. 26

According to Lyotard, since science cannot depend upon its own procedures to legitimize itself, it must turn to narrative discourse. Lyotard posits that science has depended upon two other narratives. The first is political, the second, philosophical.[14] The first narrative discourse science relied upon in order to legitimize itself is associated with the 18th century, the Enlightenment and the French revolution.[15] The 18th century was also called the 'Age of Reason'- because the great thinkers of the era, men such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Condillac and Diderot, applied reason to every area of life: religion, morality, politics and social life.

The idea of a place in society for a generalized critical intellect- in fact, the very idea of an intellectual- was a product of the Enlightenment. Intellectuals were called "philosophers". In France they were called *philosophes*, where they enjoyed great celebrity and prestige, and do to this day. Religious authority was to be rejected. Metaphysics, superstition, intolerance and parochialism were to be devalorized. As Lyotard argues, rational faculties of the mind, wedded to science, were to advance knowledge to ever expanding vistas. Reason was to unlock the laws of nature and usher in an optimistic age. Practical discoveries of science would allow men and women to get on with the proper business of seeking happiness. And happiness of humanity on earth meant liberty- the liberation of humanity. All this, as Lyotard posited, meant 'progress', and in consequence the conviction was that science and reason would bring progress and freedom. Joined to this political narrative of the French, Lyotard also posits, a 'German philosophical narrative': Hegel's philosophy of the unity of all knowledge.[16] For Hegel, knowledge played an essential part in the gradual evolution of the human mind from ignorance to total being. Both the French enlightenment and the German knowledge narrative are what Lyotard terms *meta-narratives* or *grand narratives*, big stories, stories of mythic proportions- that claim to be able to account for, explain and subordinate all lesser, little, local narratives.

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[14] Ibid, sections 8-9

[15] Ibid. p. 30.

[16] Ibid, section 9

Thus the fact of men landing on the moon and sending pictures of it back to earth- is a little narrative that is part of the metanarratives- of the freedom, the liberation of humanity (French), and the attainment of a pure, self-conscious spirit- the unity of all knowledge (German).

Lyotard posits then that paradoxically, science actually depends upon these two grand narratives for legitimation. But the problem, Lyotard argues, is that since the world wars, people no longer believed in these two grand narratives.[17] Science during the war was put to the use of creating weapons of enormous destructive power which hardly lead people to experience freedom and liberation. Also Science did not fulfill Hegel's narrative of increasing knowledge. Physics led many to the realisation that electrons can travel two different paths through space simultaneously- or pass from one orbit to another without crossing the space in between resulting in a paradox. Questions were then raised about the efficacy of unfolding the unity of knowledge if human thought processes were not even capable of comprehending how such things happen.

Lyotard posits that due to the disbelief in the metanarratives that had legitimized science, science could no longer play the role of a hero that would lead humanity toward full freedom and absolute knowledge. The question then raised by Lyotard was, 'if scientific research was no longer to be about finding Truth- then what was it about?' Lyotard suggests- when science encounters paradoxes, such as the electron that travels opposite directions simultaneously, it abandons its search for decidable truths and seeks to legitimize itself through *performativity*.[18] Science stops asking, "What kind of research will unfold the laws of nature?" and begins asking, "What kind of research will work best?" And to "work best" means "what kind of research can generate more of the same kind of research? Can it perform? Can it produce more of the same kind of research?" so,

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[17] Ibid, section 10

[18] Ibid, p. 46.

Lyotard argues, science is no longer concerned with truth but with performativity- performing- producing more of the same kind of research, because the more research that is produced, the more proof is created, and the greater the power and monetary benefits.[19] Science therefore, Lyotard posits, is more about performativity and less about seeking the truth.

To sum up the argument so far, with the collapse of the French and German narratives science was unable to legitimize itself. Science was then forced to legitimize itself by its own procedures. Such a self-legitimation, Lyotard argues, is similar to narrative discourse like the myth or the chant.

Once the hegemony of the dominant discourses has been broken, Lyotard shows us that what follows is a postmodern society where no one narrative dominates. Postmodern societies have many micro narratives jammed together. This carnival of narratives Lyotard believes replaces the monolithic presence of one or a few metanarratives.

To Lyotard then the postmodern marks the end of 'grand narratives' of politics and history. Within the postmodern framework, grand narratives are replaced by 'little narratives'. This Lyotard argues, is a direct consequence of modern technologies. Technology also transforms knowledge: 'we can predict that anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned...the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language.'[20] Thought then becomes subject to the hegemony of computer language and the thinking subject is displaced by the inherently machine like tendencies of modern technology. What Lyotard calls 'postmodernism' fits into this scenario in that it embodies a critique of the subject, for whom knowledge, under the conditions dictated by computer language and technology, becomes externalized. Lyotard defines the postmodern in relation to the immanent consequences of technical/scientific knowledge forms but also in connection with alternative 'narrative knowledge' forms[21]. Scientific knowledge, Lyotard claims, is not a 'totality', but exists in relation to a larger domain of narrative forms of knowledge, which it has a tendency to exclude. These latter, however, form the basis of social cohesion. Science requires one discursive practice in order to function, which relies on the assumed existence of criteria of evidence (the empirical level), and the belief that an empirical referent cannot provide two contradictory proofs. This, for Lyotard, is science's 'metaphysical assumption', which it cannot itself prove. On the social level, however, this assumption, in excluding other knowledge forms, has the effect of splitting science off from the social order, and the relationship between knowledge and society 'becomes one of mutual exteriority'[22]. This in turn, demonstrates that it is not possible to judge the validity of scientific claims by reference to narrative knowledge claims, or vice versa. Questions of legitimation stem from this tension, in so far as the development of 'postmodern science'[23] has demonstrated the futility of trying to construct grand narratives which seek to describe the totality of experience. Experience thus exceeds the limits of cognitive grasp. Postmodernism steps in at this point as a pragmatic response to the problem of legitimation. A postmodern view embraces a pluralistic approach, in that it attempts to provide alternative narratives, but nevertheless spurns the pretension to universal knowledge claims.

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[19] Ibid, pp 46-53.

[20] Ibid, p. 4.

The kind of fragmentation Lyotard alludes to is, he says, a consequence of science itself. Lyotard notes that, in the same way that Nietzsche's diagnosis of European nihilism turned on the idea of science as having reached the point of realizing that it itself did not match up to its own criteria of truth, so, too the search for legitimation, which defines all knowledge forms, has a natural tendency to arrive at the point of delegitimation[24].In other words, knowledge always finds itself to be rooted in unprovable assumptions. Hence the possibility of error is encoded into the project of knowledge as one of its constituent conditions. Thus Lyotard concludes that the destruction of grand narratives is a result inherent in the search for knowledge itself. What he terms 'post-modern scientific knowledge'[25] is therefore an immanent condition of all knowledge. And it is for this reason that grand narratives are, in consequence, best replaced by 'little narrative[s]' oriented toward 'a multiplicity of finite meta-arguments'[26].

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[21] Ibid, p. 7.
[22] Ibid, pp. 24, 25.
[23] Ibid, p. 60.
[24] Ibid, p. 39.

In this space of 'little narratives' or 'multiplicity of finite-meta arguments' there is no sense of unity, no cohesive whole. Lyotard sees modernism then in terms of those discourses that emphasize a need for unity and cohesion among the multiplicity of finite meta-arguments.[27] Postmodernism too is a response to this lack of unity. But rather than lamenting this lack, the postmodernist rejoices in it. This 'rejoicing' Lyotard calls a form of 'paganism', or more recently a 'rewriting' of modernity.[28] Rewriting modernity, Lyotard posits, is a reanalyzing of "...modernity's claim to ground its legitimacy on the project of liberating humanity as a whole through science and technology."[29] We can conclude from this that the project of rewriting modernity is to be taken in political terms: it is an attempt to question the Enlightenment belief that humanity can be liberated through recourse to unifying or totalizing technological and scientific forms of knowledge. In order to strengthen this project of rewriting modernity Lyotard announces his political project at the end of *The Postmodern Condition*: "Let us wage war on totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences...." (The *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, p. 82)*[30]

Thus for Lyotard, as for Foucault, the political consequences of forms of knowledge are of utmost importance. Whereas Foucault cleaves to a philosophy of power as a means of articulating resistance to these developments, Lyotard does not. To be sure, social antagonism and issues of power relations are an important feature of our understanding of the political but the political realm need not be accounted for solely in terms of power, rather for Lyotard, it was to language that one had to look.

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[25] Ibid, p.54.

[26] Ibid, p. 60 and p. 66.

[27] Lyotard is thinking here of 'modernism' in the same sense that relates to arts and literature where there is the constant argument for unity based upon a nostalgia about the lost sense of unity. For example, the works of a novelist such as James Joyce are 'modernist' in this sense.

[28] See Lyotard, Jean-François and Thebaud, Jean-Loup, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich, with an afterword by Samuel Weber, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp 15ff. See also, Lyotard's essay 'Rewriting Modernity', in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991)

[29] Lyotard, Jean-François, 'Rewriting Modernity', *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) p. 34.

[30] The "unpresentable" are those possibilities which are not part of the received view, which have not been coopted by technocratic authority, and are thus expressions of our genuine possibilities.

2. The Linguistic Moment in Lyotard

As I had mentioned in the section on Habermas's linguistic turn, philosophy's move to language has been the predominant trait of the twentieth century. Language no longer has neutrality with respect to being a medium of knowledge, and neither as a tool that humans use to describe and make sense of the world. Language infact shapes our knowledge of ourselves and the world that we inhabit. Lyotard begins from the assumption that the structure of language radically determines our lives as human/social subjects. The human/social subject/self is: "...dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements- narrative but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations [not "necessarily' because there is no necessary structure to language or the self], and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable"[31] Lyotard thus views the self as a "territory of language," whatever is true of language will *eo ipso* be true of the human/social subject because there is no transcendental signified; all meaningful objects, the self being no exception, exist as part of the linguistic system and must be understood accordingly.[32] Since the subject, like any other meaningful object, is part of the linguistic system and since this system has the attributes of being de-centered, arbitrary and incomplete, then so too must the subject be characterized as essentially fragmented, decentered, protean, and incomplete.

Lyotard operates on the belief that these four characteristics delimit the genuine nature of the self, and it is this self which his political theory is meant to protect and his aesthetic theory meant to celebrate. In general his philosophy revolves around the attempt to protect the self against encroaching systems of unity and order which would force the subject to conform to artificial limits, structures, or modes of expression. The postmodern political project is dedicated to finding ways of presenting what was hitherto been unexpressed or silenced, or in Lyotard's terms, to finding ways of expressing or alluding to the "unrepresentable". The task is to free expression from all subordinating logics, to put under suspicion what only yesterday has been received, to rejoice in "the invention of new rules of the game".[33] The task is one of "derealization".[34]As can be seen Habermas's and Lyotard's projects are diametrically the opposite.

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[31] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* p. xxiv

[32] It follows from this argument that all objects whatsoever- not merely selves- are decentered.

I shall now explicate Lyotard's alternative view of language consisting of heteromorphous, irreconcilable language games that are, as Lyotard considers, a more adequate way of producing an idea and a practice of politics and justice attuned to radical difference.

To begin with, I believe that the strength of Lyotard's project is the way in which he unwaveringly chooses to say what cannot be said. In fact, Lyotard thrives on the difficulties engendered by such a paradox, to the pleasure that playing with reason or pushing reason to its limits, can give. Lyotard deliberately chooses to abandon reason as the purveyor of knowledge and thus, turns his back on what we call the epistemological project.

Lyotard's critique of knowledge has highlighted the transformation that knowledge has undergone, and the inadequacy of a modernist critique. In *The Postmodern Condition*, he showed how knowledge in contemporary societies has become technically efficient knowledge, translatable into marketable and computerized information. The characteristically modern questions, typical of the Enlightenment, as, for instance, the questions of truth, justice and morality of knowledge, have become reduced to questions of efficiency, marketing and profit, The idea of knowledge as a '*savoir-faire*' or a '*savoir-vivre*', that is, knowledge as an activity that encompasses more of life, has all but disappeared in the information technology world of today. This, as we know, is a critique of knowledge and technology with which Habermas, who wrote 'Science and technology as Ideology'[35] would undoubtedly agree. The main disagreement, however, is that Lyotard believes that philosophy, and not just science and technology, has also contributed to this impoverishment of knowledge. Philosophy has traditionally believed in science as a model for knowledge, sometimes overlooking the circumstances that surround the production of any type of knowledge. Thus, for Lyotard, philosophy has promoted the myth of science as the only purveyor of truth, the ultimate story about all other possible stories, in any time or space. Philosophy itself, mainly as epistemology, has become a universal 'Grand Narrative', that is, a story that purports to tell the truth and reveal the meaning of all other stories. Thus, language is reduced to denotation, a tool for knowledge with no senders and no addressees. In this way, language simply reports a reality which exists outside itself, a severe limitation, notwithstanding how important or vital this report might be.

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[33] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* p. 80
[34] Ibid, p. 78

Lyotard's linguistic turn follows Wittgenstein's approach to language as consisting of language games. This approach refuses the very idea of a definition or an essence to language, as it highlights the diversity and heterogeneity of possible language games. Language games involve concrete speakers engaging in various forms of activities and relationships, activities which are not merely reports and knowledge, but constitute possible forms of life. Lyotard's specific contribution is his stress on heterogeneity and incommensurability, not just of language games, but of activities, the speakers and phrases within them. There is no unity and no essence of language. Language for him is 'agonisitic', that is, a space of disputes and conflict (from the Greek word '*agon*') which can never be settled. The differences are incommensurable. There is no other game, no other language and no other phrase that could reconcile these differences. The idea of justice for Lyotard, as we shall see in this chapter and the next, stems from the realisation that these differences cannot and should not be settled, as they are fundamentally irreconcilable. Any settlement or any attempt to reconcile these heterogeneous voices must necessarily repress and exclude that which cannot be couched in the language of the settlement (Lyotard calls it the '*Differend*'). Lyotard further defines the differend: "As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict between two parties or more that cannot be equitably resolved for the lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments"[36]. This implies that in the case of the differend the parties do not share a common language[37] (since they follow heterogeneous rules and belong to different "systems"), and one of the parties is done an injustice if the differend is decided in the favor of the idiom/language (and its rules) of the other party. The dream of a last judgement therefore, of a language without conflict and difference is, for Lyotard, the idea of violence to and oppression of the differend. Lyotard explicitly wishes to adopt a style of writing which avoids the reduction of philosophy to theory, by evoking and showing the disputes, the conflicts and the diversity that form the heterogeneity that we call language.

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[35] Habermas, Jürgen, "Technology and Science as "Ideology"" in Habermas, Jürgen, *Towards a Rational Society* (London: Heinemann 1980)

Lyotard develops his own philosophy in the wake of Wittgenstein in his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. This is work that has one feature in common not only with Lyotard's other books, but also with the thinking of figures like Nietzsche and Foucault. Like them, Lyotard is no humanist, for he does not believe that there is an originating subject that can be posited as existing outside the different language games that constitute the realms of human life. As Lyotard puts it elsewhere, 'the first task' in elucidating a philosophy of language 'is that of overcoming this humanist obstacle ... Humanity is not the user of language, nor even its guardian; there is no more one subject than one language.'[38] Such a view also entails the criticizing of Wittgenstein, too, in so far as he remained trapped within this convention by assuming that meaning is a matter of use, i.e. that there is a 'subject' who uses language and hence is external to it.[39] At the same time the question of language is for Lyotard a political issue. For *The Differend* is a work that has as one of its central concerns the project of addressing one key question of the nature of politics. We can phrase the question in the following terms: in what way, or ways, are we to understand the meaning of the word 'politics'? This is a question that is posed in the context of Lyotard's development of a linguistic conventionalism derived principally from his reading of Wittgenstein. And it is to an account of this that we must turn first in order to appreciate the conception of politics that Lyotard advocates.

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[36] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) p. xi

[37] In the Habermasian system no such problem will arise since Habermas believes there is a common language system (communicative rationality and validity claims) shared by the disputants.

[38] Lyotard, Jean François, *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p.21

[39] *The Differend*, section 122

Lyotard's account of Language

Lyotard argues that we can understand language as operating in two registers. There are what he calls 'phrases' and 'genres'. The word 'phrase', for Lyotard, can be applied to any kind of utterance. Thus, 'hello', 'is this red?' are, for Lyotard, all examples of phrases. We might say, therefore, that the phrase is the basic 'unit' of language. All phrases are composed of what Lyotard calls 'instances'. There are four instances pertaining to every phrase. Every phrase has an addressor, addressee, a sense and a referent.[40] In order to function, that is in order for it to have meaning, it is not necessary for a phrase to have a designated addressor or addressee, a determined sense, or a designated referent. In other words a phrase need not be spoken by a named speaker, nor need it be addressed to a specific person. Equally, phrases do not have to encapsulate a specific meaning in order to be phrases. We might say, then, that taken on their own terms (if this were possible) phrases are empty bits of language. However, no phrase can be taken as such, since every phrase presents what Lyotard calls a 'phrase universe'. What kind of phrase universe is presented by a particular phrase is a matter that concerns how each of the four instances that constitute any phrase are situated, hence function in relation to one another.[41] We can illustrate this point by noting that there are, on Lyotard's conception, numerous and different kinds of phrases. Thus there are cognitive phrases, aesthetic phrases, ethical and political phrases, etc. Each of these kinds of phrases Lyotard characterizes by way of their belonging to different 'phrase regimens' or regimes. There are, then, different ways of speaking according to the kind of phrase at hand. A cognitive phrase concerns how things are, i.e. what is the case. An example of an aesthetic phrase would be, 'What a lovely car!' In so far as phrases belong to different regimens they are heterogeneous. This means that it is not possible to translate one phrase directly into another.[42] Thus 'what a lovely car!' cannot, on this view, be recast in cognitive terms, for it involves an aesthetic judgement concerning the car (that it is lovely), and this kind of judgement is not pertinent to the use of cognitive phrases.

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[40] Ibid, section 25
[41] Ibid, section 28

Genres of discourse can be contrasted to regimens. Whereas a phrase operates by way of presenting us with a phrase universe that is determined according to the manner in which each of these four instances is situated, genres supply us with the rules of linking phrases together. Above all, genres are, Lyotard says, defined by the fact that the rules they supply stipulate ways of thinking phrases according to particular purposes.[43] Again, we can illustrate this by way of the notions of the cognitive and the aesthetic. The cognitive genre has as its purpose the description of the material world. Scientific language, therefore, is cognitive. The cognitive genre stipulates a ways of linking phrases with the purpose of stating what is true and what is false, what is or is not the case. The aesthetic genre, in contrast, is a way of speaking that concerns aesthetic judgement. As with phrase regimens, genres are incommensurable with one another. It is not appropriate to respond to the phrase 'What a lovely car!' by discoursing on the mechanical design of the car or its fuel efficiency. One cannot, in short *prove* or *disprove* that the car is lovely by resorting to cognitive discourse. For what is at stake is aesthetic discourse is not something that can be validated in this way. It is therefore impossible to validate any genre of discourse by of reference to rules that are external to it. This is another way of saying that there is no metalanguage available to which we can resort in order to *judge* different genres.[44]

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[42] Ibid, section 178

[43] Ibid, section 179ff

[44] I should add here that for Lyotard it is the function of 'proper names' to allow phrases from different regimens to be linked together. 'Proper names', in this context, include not only names like 'Delhi' or 'Paul', but any name that serves as a 'rigid designator'. By this, Lyotard means that such names are 'empty'. Names are 'rigid' in so far as they do not change between contexts, but they are empty in that their content is determined by the current phrase in which they are situated, e.g. 'Kant the author of the *First Critique*'; 'I baptize thee Immanuel Kant', etc. As such, a name has no determinate sense (see *The Differend*, sections 54, 61, 62, 66-77).

To illustrate the point further, we can say that in the same way as the cognitive phrase regimen is merely one regimen amongst others, so the cognitive genre is merely one amongst many genres. Lyotard is thus, unlike Habermas, effectively claiming that we cannot arrive at a final conception of the truth, a final judgement concerning the nature of reality, even by way of scientific language. For not all language is scientific or can be accounted for in such terms. Any genre's legitimacy is, it follows, solely a matter of the internal consistency of the rules that pertain to that particular genre. On the basis of this claim, Lyotard can argue that one cannot legitimate the way in which phrases are linked from a position external to the particular genre in which a phrase is at any moment situated.

Phrase regimens are different from genres, therefore, because they do not offer any rules for the linking of phrases. Regimens are non-technological, that is, they do not of themselves pertain to any purpose. All that regimens do is provide the 'rules of formation' wherein a phrase can be characterized as being concerned with matters of fact (cognitive), questions of taste (aesthetic), right and wrong (ethical), etc. As such the rules of formation cannot prescribe which phrase from which regimen ought next to be linked onto a preceding phrase. Lyotard's analysis, then, draws a distinction between regimens and genres in terms of contingency and necessity. That phrases *are* linked together is necessary. But the question of how we *ought* to be linked together is a contingent matter.[45] What we have here is, in fact, a version of the old philosophical argument which states that one cannot legitimately derive an 'ought' from an 'is'. For it is, Lyotard argues, impossible to assert legitimately from a standpoint external to, for example, the cognitive genre that one ought to link on to a cognitive phrase with another phrase compatible with the rules of the cognitive genre. The validity of one genre, in other words, cannot be secured by means that are independent of that genre and its purposes. What we are faced with is an argument reminiscent of *The Postmodern Condition*: it is impossible to establish the legitimacy of any genre by way of a meta-narrative.

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[45] See, *The Differend*, section 136

3. The Ethico-Political Moment in Lyotard

Differends

What Lyotard's account does try to make room for, however is a consideration of those instances of phrases that cannot be voiced within the framework of a given genre. Phrases of this kind would be phrases of what can be designated 'victims'. A victim, on this view, is someone who is (A) silenced by the rules that constitute a genre and (B) who cannot articulate his/her interests in so far as such interests are not recognised within the confines of a particular genre. Phrases of this type, Lyotard calls 'differends'. Hence, a differend can be characterized as an instance wherein someone suffers 'a damage accompanied by the loss of means to prove that damage'.[46] Possible examples of the differend are many. They include the victims of Nazi death camps. Lyotard also provides the example of the French Martinican. The French Martinican is a person who cannot, as a French citizen, complain about any possible wrongs he may suffer as a result of being a citizen. The reason for this is that the genre of French law, which is the only genre within which a complaint of this kind could be stated, itself prevents the possibility of the complaint being made. One cannot complain in law about the wrongs one may suffer as a consequence of one's legal status. The victim thus has a complaint that is silenced. A differend is therefore primarily characterized in linguistic terms: it is 'the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be put into phrases cannot yet be'.[47] By arguing that phrases of this kind must be phrased, that, in other words, there is a kind of ethical imperative that transcends the limits of genres, Lyotard's text presents us with a statement of the ethico-political concern. For such an ethical imperative is, on Lyotard's view, the proper goal of culture. 'Culture', Lyotard tells us, has come to mean 'the putting into circulation of information rather than the work that needs to be done in order to arrive at presenting what is unpresentable under the circumstances.'[48] Thus, *The Differend* establishes its own stakes in terms of the need to voice differends. From this, we may conclude that Lyotard conceives of politics as involving the realisation of the cultural ideal voiced as far back as 1962, in the essay 'Dead Letter'. According to that essay, 'culture is lending an ear to what strives to be said, culture is giving a voice to those who do not have a voice and who seek one.'[49] So in Lyotard's view genuine cultural activity is both an ethical and political pursuit.

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[46] See, *The Differend*, section 7
[47] Ibid, section 22
[48] Ibid, section 260

The Political

What though does a phrase like political pursuit mean in this context? One thing is clear from the account Lyotard offers in *The Differend*, that we would be wrong in assuming 'politics' to be a form of human interaction that is definable in terms of purpose. Put in his own terms, we can say that politics is not a genre of discourse. For, in this view, the political realm is to be conceived of as a kind of space within which different, heterogeneous and hence competing discourses meet: "Were politics a genre and were that genre to pretend to that supreme status, its vanity would be quickly revealed. Politics, however, is the threat of the differend. It is not a genre, it is the multiplicity of genres, the diversity of ends, and par excellence the question of linkage ... It is, if you will, the state of language, but it is not a language. Politics consists in the fact that language is not a language, but perhaps...."[50]

Politics is not a genre since it is, in its very nature, pluralistic, it is multiplicity. Lyotard's justification for this view springs from his Wittgenstein-inspired understanding of the nature of language. The fact is that there is no 'Language' (with a capital 'L') as such. Language itself, we might say, is not something to be grasped linguistically. It is not susceptible to being conceptualized in this way, for that would be to situate it within a genre of discourse: the genre that tells us what language is. Rather, there are only phrases, and phrases are discrete, discontinuous, and heterogeneous. The problem is that although politics is not a genre, it 'always gives rise to misunderstandings because it takes place as a genre'.[51] Hence, Lyotard draws a distinction between what language 'is' (i.e. phrases) and the necessity that there be events of language, that phrases must be linked by ways of genres. It is this necessity that gives rise to the mistaken belief that politics is a genre. One can only say this ungrammatically, but it needs to be said: politics is not a genre, it is phrases. Lyotard, then, is committed to offering an account of the political sphere that is obliged to maintain this distinction. This is a distinction between (A) the general state of language, which consists of a plurality of phrases that cannot be exhausted by any single generic account of them; and (B) the fact that, substantively speaking, politics necessarily 'takes place' as a genre. As a result we can note that the issue of how to link phrases is, for Lyotard, an issue of ethico-political import.

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[49] Lyotard, Jean François, *Political Writings*, trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p. 33.
[50] *The Differend*, section 190
[51] Ibid, section 199

Nevertheless, the question of linking cannot be subsumed under any answer that is offered, as of necessity it must be, from within any single genre. This claim is made by Lyotard on the basis of agreeing with 'Russell's aporia'. This aporia tells us that any attempt within one genre to offer a universal solution to the multiplicity of questions inevitably posed by all other genres of discourse founders. It founders because either 'this genre is part of the set of genres, and what is at stake in it is but one among others, and therefore its answer is not supreme...Or else, it is not part of the set of genres, and therefore does not encompass all that is at stake...'[52]. The political level is, of course, the level at which the linkage of phrases by different and therefore competing genres is played out in terms of the pursuit of a diversity of potentially incompatible ends. As such, there is no one genre that is capable of supplying an all-inclusive and hence universally valid means of choosing one single genre or a set of genres over and above any others. This being the case, there can be no question of offering a universally legitimate account of the nature of politics. We cannot, in other words, advocate any one system of social relations over and above another. This is because the stakes of that genre will necessarily conflict with both the stakes of other genres and the diversity of phrases that constitute language.

From this it follows that advocating a purportedly 'universal' solution to specific social ills (for example, promoting revolution as a means of overcoming the injustices of capitalist society) is unacceptable. This is because even if a revolution were to succeed in so far as it is righted old wrongs, it would *at the same time* create new ones. Thus, Lyotard argues, even 'supposing the change [I.e. the revolution] took place, it is impossible that the judgments of the new tribunal would not create new wrongs, since they would regulate (or think they were regulating) differends as though they were litigations'.[53] Hence, the predominance of a new 'revolutionary' genre would merely serve to create new wrongs, since it would legitimate the universal application of a rule that would not be applicable to everyone. What therefore is a politician to do? One thing is for sure. Although we may not be able to say what politicians ought to do for the greater good, we can perhaps say what they ought not to have in mind when they act. They cannot be justifiably to be said to 'have the good at stake, but they ought to have the lesser evil'. For to pursue the greater good would mean treating the political realm as if it were a genre, as if the multiplicity of phrases that makes it what it is could be reconciled. This, in turn, would necessarily create new wrongs, and therefore new differends, i.e. those who lack the means even to assert their status as victims.

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[52] Ibid, section 189

To conclude this chapter one final question can be asked- How, then, might we interpret the notion of the political realm as it is presented within Lyotard's account? Lyotard's view entails a commitment to the standpoint that no single genre is suitable for deliberating upon political questions because pursuing such a project will generate differends. There is therefore, an ethical dimension to this account of the political. Lyotard must be committed to claiming that although they are inevitable, it is wrong to create differends. Justice is a matter of observing 'the justice of multiplicity'. Hence for Lyotard the recognition that politics is not to do with the establishing of tribunals in order to settle disputes between competing modes of life derives from the view that respecting multiplicity is itself just. Such multiplicity is expressed through the diversity of actual phrases that are linked and in relation to future possible phrases alike. What we can call 'society' is, therefore, this very multiplicity of phrases. And 'politics' is a word that signifies this variety: 'the social is implicated in the universe of a phrase and the political in its mode of linking'.[54] Hence, people are already implicated within the social world simply because they are linguistic beings. It is this fact that makes them subjects, and allows us to talk of one another in terms of our interests. Equally, therefore, everyone is also and already implicated in politics, since politics is above all the question of how one ought to link phrases together. This being the case, the political realm, properly regarded, can be interpreted as a space of possibility. Such a space offers unlimited potential for linking phrases together in different possible ways. It is for this reason that politics cannot be resorted to in order to supply a rule that can tell us how phrases ought to be linked. In short, Lyotard is committed to the view that one cannot legislate about the goal of politics. For, it is impossible to provide a universal rule concerning the purpose of that which is itself a plurality of purposes. Attempting to resolve disputes between contending purposes is impossible since the activity of solving disputes will, practically speaking, be an endless task. This is because language is to be understood as being composed of phrases, not genres. From this it follows that any act of linking a particular phrase with another phrase according to the rules supplied from one genre cannot of itself exclude the possibility of other modes of linkage, of other genres being asserted. This, we can note, follows directly from the principle, noted earlier, which stated that 'To link is necessary, but a particular linkage is not'.[55]

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[53] Ibid, section 197

[54] Ibid, section 198

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[55] Ibid, section 136

CHAPTER IV: Towards an Inclusive Democracy

In the section entitled '**The Confrontation**', my goal will be to point out the major difference of views between the theories of Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard as it relates to the inclusion of radical difference present in society. I will further argue, in "**The Criticism**", that it is Lyotard's theory which is most suited for the inclusion of radical difference. Lyotard's ideas though, begin to pose certain problems which I have already raised in the introduction of this dissertation: firstly, where does the space of the political exist; secondly, how is judgement and action possible especially when the standards of judgement are missing; thirdly, to what extent does a forum exist for an open contestation of phrases; And finally, whether Lyotard's theory helps in formulating an idea of democracy suitable to include radical difference. The answer to these questions will be the purpose of the section entitled "**Judging Democracy**". The aim of the last section entitled "**Announcing the Differend**" will be to analyze how Lyotard's political philosophy contributes to our reflection on the way contemporary democracy includes radical difference.

The Confrontation

The contradictions of the philosophy of subjectivity received most striking expression in the critical theory of the 'first generation' of the Frankfurt school as well as the postmodern intellectual paradigm, and it is significant that both Habermas and Lyotard have acknowledged their debt to philosophers belonging to these groups.[1] At the base of Habermas's philosophy is a theory of the presuppositions of linguistic communication. The uncovering of the communicative dimension of speech and the development of a universal pragmatics secures reason from a reduction to purely instrumental reason, the total dominance of which had been theorized by Horkheimer and Adorno as the result of the dialectic of myth and Enlightenment reason. Similarly, Lyotard's philosophy rests upon a theorizing of social oppression through a rewriting of domination in terms of the agonistic dimension of language use. This means, that for Lyotard, Social oppression results from a suppression of the plurality of forms of rationality embedded in language. Whereas Habermas relies on the liberating force of communicative speech, Lyotard seeks to demonstrate the heterogeneity of forms of discourse and the incommensurability of the forms of rationality that organize them.

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[1] See footnote number 23 in Chapter I of this dissertation.

The link between Habermas's philosophical project and critical theory is most apparent in the distinction he draws between system and life-world. Habermas wants to locate a sphere where reason is uncoupled from relations of domination. This is a strategy that allows Habermas to undermine the negative pronouncements of Horkheimer and Adorno that domination and rationalization always occur together. This is why a central feature of his recent work has been aimed at separating 'functional subsystems', the most prominent of which being the market economy and the administrative state, from the contexts where cooperation is organized according to practices of mutual understanding.[2] This is intended to establish the primacy of the 'communicative' over the 'strategic', thus liberating the lifeworld from 'colonization' by forms of strategic action. Habermas seeks a continuation of the modernist project through an analysis of the emancipatory potential of communicative speech. Communicative rationality, making possible as it does the 'unconstrained coordination of actions' and a consensual resolution of conflicts', resonates with the founding distinction of Kantian moral thought between treating others as ends and as means.[3]

I think the above theme has also been an important feature of Lyotard's work, that is, the critique of society as a technocratic system, with the consequent reduction of knowledge to a mere technical means. This idea has been given full expression in Lyotard's book *The Postmodern Condition*, which holds interesting parallels with Habermas's effort to distinguish strategic from communicative action. What is at stake, for Lyotard, is the capturing of truth discourses by discourses oriented towards maximizing performance. Truth and justice are at risk from a technocratic scientific conglomerate interested solely in marketability and efficiency.[4] This clearly has much in common with the Habermasian notion of functional subsystems encroaching upon the action oriented understanding characteristic of the lifeworld. However, Lyotard gives this a twist which puts his analysis in clear confrontation with that of Habermas. For Lyotard, the forms of discourse oriented towards truth and efficiency represent incommensurable configurations of rationality. When these forms of discourse meet, they give rise to a differend, which is characterized as the absence of a rule or judgement capable of deciding equitably between the ends of the two discourses.[5] Whereas, for Habermas, functional subsystems must be subsumed under the authority of communicative speech, for Lyotard the philosophy of the differend and its subsequent politics seeks to separate discourses which are assumed to be homogeneous. I think we have here an interesting contrast to Habermas's view that the threat to human emancipation comes from encroachments on the sphere of communicative speech. Social oppression, for Lyotard, is conceived as the capturing, by a form of discourse, of other forms of discourse incommensurable with it, for its own ends.

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[2] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p.355
[3] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Beacon Press 1984) p.15

The Criticism

I argue in this section that the above difference between Lyotardian and Habermasian theories tilts the scales in favour of the Lyotardian view providing for a better way of including radical difference.

To begin with, the language Habermas's politics chooses to speak is that of communicative speech and rationality. Through the use of these concepts Habermas believes radically diverse aspects of society will have a common framework through which they can be rendered commensurable. However as Lyotard has expressed in the *Differend*, the attempt to force heterogeneous discourses to speak a common language gives rise to 'torts' (wrongs).[6] Forcing a form of discourse to speak the language of a form of discourse incommensurable with it constitutes, for Lyotard a primary case of injustice. Thus the issue is whether a unity can be forged that does not result in the silencing of the heterogeneous.[7] The philosophy of the differend speaks strongly against the reduction of the heterogeneous to totality. Lyotard, like Adorno, searches for ***what is** excluded from consensus*. This involves conceiving heterogeneity as the normal condition of human interactions, in relation to which the establishment of consensus is necessarily forced. Hence, it is not because humans are mean, that they tend inevitably to come into conflict.[8]

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[4] Lyotard, Jean-François, *Postmodern Condition*, p.94

[5] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* p. xi

[6] The notion of the wrong is defined in p. ix of the *Differend*: 'A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genre of discourses'

However for Lyotard to sustain such an interpretation we must analyse what lies at the heart of his explanation of the postmodern condition. The heart of Lyotard's explanation of the postmodern condition is the linkage between politics and difference. In the face of the totalization of a Hegelian speculative meta-narrative, Lyotard advocates a presentation of the unpresentable, a sustained attention to difference and heterogeneity. This approach is consistent with Lyotard's Nietzschean appeal to an agnostics that resists the desire to reduce all language games to one standard of evaluation and performativity[9]. The postmodern draws our attention to the instability of our criteria of judgement. This instability does not remove our ability to judge rather the postmodern emphasizes the faculty of imagination, the effort to experiment and create again new criteria for judgement. Lyotard calls this form of experimentation "*paralogy*". This paralogical approach is summed up in response to Jürgen Habermas's effort to generate a consensus on the possible moves in our language games: "Consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value. But justice as a value is neither outmoded nor suspect. We must thus arrive at an idea and practice of justice that is not linked to that of consensus."[10]

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[7] It is worthwhile here recalling Adorno's influence on Lyotard's thoughts. The translation of heterogeneous discourses into a common idiom recalls the violence of subsumptive procedures analysed in Adorno, Theodore, *Negative Dialectics* trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990). Adorno's critique of identity thinking and the philosophy of the differend both inveigh against the reduction of the heterogeneous to totality.

[8] Lyotard, *Differend*, p.196

[9] These ideas are best expressed in: Lyotard, Jean-Francois, *The Lyotard Reader*, ed, Andrew Benjamin (Cambridge, Eng.: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Lyotard, Jean-Francois, and Jean-Loup Thebaud. *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich. (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press. 1985)

[10] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. 66.

In Habermas's model of universal pragmatics he assumes the counterfactual existence of an ideal speech situation wherein truth claims can be tested by groups of individuals unhindered by power relations resulting from systematically distorted communication[11]. Based on the above argument Habermas posits the need to deepen and extend democracy. To bring this about Habermas envisions a "deliberative democracy" that relies on reasoned and inclusive public deliberation that is geared to reaching consensual decisions. His arguments bring to the fore concerns of legitimacy and universal justice, concerns that Habermas believes have been ignored by poststructuralists at their peril. Habermas's project therefore is about promoting democratic participation and decision making without impeding sociocultural difference. To put it another way, Habermas wants to represent radical difference, gearing it to reach a rational consensus without thereby sanctioning injustice and intolerance. Lyotard however sees consensus as a sign of cooption or terror, of the imposition of order on multiplicity. He views the homogeneity of rationality presupposed in Habermas's politics to be necessarily repressive, for it both forces and enforces the marginalization of anything that is the other (or accepts it by making radical difference work for the status quo. The acceptance of the other usually entails a perversion of the original intent, as for example, when "do the right thing" becomes a byword on the floor of the Lok Sabha). I think Lyotard here is pointing to something which needs to be taken into account if we are to actually include radical difference in a democratic system. When people are made to speak in one voice, when "rationality" is viewed as a fixed model, as a necessary goal, then it is inevitable that voices of radical difference will be silenced. In such cases silence may be the only, even if ineffective, form of protest, for to be understood would already be to be coopted. But it is a less than potent form of protest, and by insisting on paralogy rather than consensus, rationality can be made part of the debate in a way that Habermas's model would not allow.

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[11] See Chapter3 of this dissertation especially section entitled, "The Linguistic Moment in Habermas". Detailed discussions of this are also present in: Habermas, Jürgen, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. (Boston: Beacon Press. 1979); Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Webber Nicholson. (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1990)

In effect Lyotard deconstructs the linchpin of Habermas's entire project, the goal of consensus. He argues that justice cannot be assured by a scientific analysis of language games because prescriptive and descriptive discourses have heterogeneous and incommensurable rules. In the *Postmodern Condition* Lyotard explores the implications of attributing to modern science a drive toward univocal, prescriptive rules for research. Borrowing from Wittgenstein's idea of language games,[12] Lyotard differentiates between denotative games (knowledge) and prescriptive games (action). Lyotard criticizes Habermas for attempting to circumscribe the task of legitimation with the principle of consensus. According to Lyotard, this approach rests on two assumptions. First, that it is possible to determine a universal rule for a set of language games; second, that the goal of dialogue is consensus. In reference to the first point, language games are subject to heterogeneous and incommensurable sets of pragmatic rules. Second, Lyotard is interested in the search for dissensus not consensus. Lyotard focuses on dissensus not consensus because he is interested in breaking up the hegemony of one language game over another. Indeed, the search for dissensus is his response to the *differend*. Lyotard argues that a search for consensus risks placing one standard or rule over and above any new phrase, that is, forcefully legitimating the exclusion of alternative voices. In Habermas's defense, the goal of undistorted communication is precisely aimed at defending the right of all interlocutors to continue participation in the discourse. What Habermas assumes but Lyotard discounts is that the conditions for free communication are in principle identifiable. Lyotard doubts the real possibility for rational consensus and expects the prospect for incommensurability between phrases. Habermas believes that radical difference in society can easily be included through communication. In the process of this communication there will be negotiation, the outcome being agreeable to all who participate. The negotiative process though will be of a special kind, it will be based on the principles of communicative rationality.[13] The principles of communicative rationality become the regulative ideal for all communication. This regulative ideal will further serve as conditions for the possibility of all understanding and if followed by all radically diverse sections of society will result in consensus (the inclusion of difference) and true emancipation. However for Lyotard the notion of communicative rationality is based on reason (the validity claims in language). Lyotard argues that the world is too differentiated to ever agree on what is reasonable. In effect this will cause a grave problem for including radical difference- no one will be able to agree on the rules of communicative rationality. Lyotard believes that for Habermas the idea of difference is reduced to the sameness of a unifying concept (i.e. communicative rationality). To unify the terrain of radical difference in society through the rules of communicative rationality is therefore to use force, to use force then is to restrict desire. The restriction of desire for Lyotard goes against the fundamental principle of Lyotardian justice, i.e. the multiplicity of desire.

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[12] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell,1996) para 7, 23, 43 .

[13] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Moral consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. C. Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) pp. 88-89; Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976) pp. 107-109; Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 70.

The paralogical goal of social science then, for Lyotard, is to continue pressing the claims of an alternative interpretation of society. As a counterpoint to Habermas' vision of peaceful deliberation about validity claims,[14] Lyotard recognises the always contested terrain of justice. One may criticise his description of justice as "games" because this approach seems to "trivialize" the very "serious" implications of injustice. However, I believe Habermas minimizes how dangerous, violent, and uncooperative argumentation about justice can become. For example, Lyotard defines terror as a political economy that eliminates, or threatens to eliminate a player from a language game. A univocal epistemology, like the Habermasian model, implies that some approaches fail to meet the objective criteria and, therefore, make prescriptive claims that distinguish, exclude and silence competing "paradigms."[15]

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[14] See Habermas, Jürgen, *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989)

[15] Carroll, David, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*. (New York: Routledge. 1987) offers a very helpful insight into the difference between forms of combinations of language games. Some combinations lead to the silencing of one language game to the benefit of another (a good example is the Habermasian combination of language games which silence those other language games that do not adhere to the rules of communicative rationality). Others, especially through the art of literature, allow a form of experimentation that continues to attest to the heterogeneity of language games. Indeed in the book Carroll argues, "Lyotard's ultimate critical project is, itself, concerned with the impossible theorising of the untheorisable,

In *Just Gaming*, Lyotard argues that science must be aimed toward paralogy, toward finding new moves or alternative interpretations. It is here, again, that I suggest Lyotard's view is more receptive to radical difference in society than Habermas. While Lyotard seems to be emphasizing only language games, his turn toward a politics of phrases in *The Differend* indicates a general concern with all forms of regulation, determination, and linkage of phrase. I agree with David Carroll that this shift of terminology from language games to phrases moves the discussion away from the distinction between games to the problem of linkages of phrases/games with one another.[16] Lyotard's attention to linkages exposes the problem of the relation between phrases (any particular voice) that may be silenced by that relationship. What is the rule that governs that interaction? Lyotard assesses the problem of linkages through his distinction between the modern and the postmodern.

The postmodern is distinct from the modern because it acknowledges its own lack of criteria. The constant task for the postmodern is to "decide what is just," what is obligatory. The obligatory enunciates a prescriptive. For example, according to Lyotard, political science (since Hobbes) is modern because it primarily seeks denotative or descriptive knowledge and attempts to justify a particular conception of justice on the basis of its description of what is. Lyotard returns again and again to modernity's logic of justice. Modernity has been characterized by a set of competing metanarratives or stories that claim universal status and that grant all other stories their true meaning. A metanarrative, lacking a ground for its own legitimation- for example, the progressive emancipation of labor, or the enrichment of humanity through the progress of capitalist technoscience- looks for its legitimation in a future that has to be accomplished, an idea of humanity, or Habermas's project of modernity.[17]

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with linking and combining elements, games, faculties, etc. that are fundamentally(that is, categorically) incommensurable- without destroying their incommensurability." (pp. 163-164.)

[16] Carroll, David, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida.* (New York: Routledge. 1987)pp. 164-65

[17] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-85* trans. ed. By Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas. Afterword by Wlad Godzich. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1992)pp. 17-18

A metanarrative seeks its own legitimation or justification of criteria in the reduction and subjection of another narrative. All of these cases assume that one discourse or language game can be appropriated for the purpose of supplying a justification for another discourse. Lyotard calls this situation the differend. Bill Readings gives a rather helpful gloss on the differend: "A point of difference where the sides speak radically different or heterogeneous languages, where the dispute cannot be phrased in either language without, by its very phrasing, prejudging the issue for that side, being unjust. Between two language games, two little narratives, two phrases, there is always a differend which must be encountered."[18]

Lyotard's goal then is to testify to the differend, to continually announce its presence. This is the task or obligation of politics and philosophy. Politics and philosophy requires no rules, rather, it sets itself against the dominance of any meta-narrative's "pretension to dominance" over other language games.[19]At this point it becomes clear what the political implications of judgement, the differend, and paralogy might be. Lyotard presents an alternative conception of science that does not merely seek regularity or maintenance of dominant paradigms; on the contrary, he advocates an experimental attitude toward science. It is guided by the ever present obligation to announce the limitations of representative thought. This constant obligation is always watchful for instances where a metanarrative, a discipline, or a tradition seeks to incorporate and discursively silence another.[20] Giving attention to the differend, wherever it occurs, places philosophy in the center for the search for justice. Lyotard does not assume there is a status quo of justice: rather, he understands that in the modern world- full with rules, procedures, and legitimations of the social order- there is a constant need for watchfulness to what is ruled "out" by that order. The differend always announces a political question: what are the implications of being together, of linkages, of relations between addressor, addressee, and referent?

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[18] Readings, Bill, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (New York: Routledge. 1991) p. xxx

[19] Ibid, p. 123.

[20] For example Kant's aesthetics draw attention to the heterogeneity and multiplicity of discourses and language games, as it acknowledges the "incommensurability" of the faculties of understanding and reason.

However it would seem difficult for Lyotard to advocate any particular "politics" because that would simply repeat the problem of the differend. Politics may be understood as the "struggle between genres" (discourses, games, faculties, phrases). But, what is more, Lyotard instructs us in the ambiguity of the differend. It testifies to the potential for one phrase to "disarm" another by forcing it to adapt to its own rules of discourse. Stripped of its own capacity for expression, the weaker phrase is left with no voice to articulate injustices. What kind of struggle is this contest of phrases? Lyotard among others from the New Left, has sought to disavow the idea that "everything is political." At the same time the differend attests to the political because Lyotard's differend indicates a space of presentation for that which cannot be presented for lack of independent criteria. The proof required of a cognitive phrase cannot be applied to all phrases without the real chance of damage (tort) to the other phrase. Lyotard treats the differend as a nonspatial reference to that site or event of an interaction where something is excluded, obscured, silenced in the attempt to subsume it under some other rubric. This political site, which is not necessarily a place, is an interaction that often characterizes the task of what Lyotard calls "being together". A question can be raised at this point- Where does the space of the political exist? The answer is that for Lyotard, the political exists where no determinant grounds exist to judge between two incommensurable phrases. How is judgement and action possible in this context, that is, where the standards of judgement are missing? To what extent does a forum exist for an open contestation of phrases?

It is my argument that Lyotard's approach implies both a radical commitment to heterogeneity and an idea of democracy that testifies to the differend. Lyotard is still critical of instances where the "people" become the law, that is, cases proclaiming legitimacy for any injustice to the individual who resists the general will.[21]In this context, one central task for political thought is the constant search for instances where democracy inhibits, facilitates, embodies the contestation of phrases, genres, discourses.

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[21] See Readings, Bill, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (New York: Routledge. 1991) p. 110.

Judging Democracy

Lyotard advocates the essential roles experimentation and indeterminacy play in the politics of legitimation and the legitimation of the political. Lyotard does not believe that injustices will never occur, that no one will try to assert a specific definition of the space of the political. As in the conduct of "normal science", alternative voices and experimental attitudes meet with continuous opposition. What is unique is that Lyotard describes the way in which the political, as it becomes expressed in various fields of inquiry, is always threatened by discursive practices aimed at limiting and abolishing conflict. A good example of this is the Habermasian project of unification through communicative reason. The unification of humanity through communicative reason rests upon the portrayal of 'understanding' as the *telos* of human speech.[22] This motif serves to unify the heterogeneous forms of discourse around the pursuit of a common end, thus rendering any possible conflict amenable to resolution through a common set of procedures (i.e. the forms of argumentation) derived from the presuppositions of the proposed telos. Other examples can be taken from those movements that express a program of appropriation or "revolution". The above discursive practices, according to Lyotard, only repeat the totalizing project of stemming regional or *disciplinary* resistance.[23]

Lyotard posits the possibility of a democracy based on heterogeneity and difference because democracy creates a locus of power that is empty. An empty locus of power means that democracy does not privilege the development of any set of standards.[24] Instead, the indivisibility of the social is yielded through the test of alterity. In other terms, the world presents itself thus from the vantage point of each unique locus.

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[22] Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987) p.311

[23] In Readings, Bill, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, (New York: Routledge. 1991) the author strongly endorses such a reading of Lyotard: "The importance of Lyotard's work is not that it gives post-structuralism a decidable political dimension that it had otherwise lacked. Rather, Lyotard's refusal to think the political as a determining or determinate metalanguage, as the sphere in which the true meaning of false metalanguages (such as 'aesthetic value") is revealed as 'political effects', pushes him toward the deconstruction of the representational space of the political." (p. 87)

[24] The privileging of a set of standards in democracy, however, would create a locus of power around those very standards. These standards would thus marginalize anything that is different to it.

impossible to encompass, it nevertheless requires debate about what is legitimate and what is not, as well as, in each individual, a ceaseless effort at judgement.[25] This is, I would suggest, basically Lyotard's conception of "judgement without criteria" which is significant because it suggests a substantial shift in democratic thought. We are reminded here that democracy should not be ashamed of its ambiguities, but rather that it is possible to denounce relativism without giving up the relativism that totalitarianism strove to destroy. How is this possible? How can we judge without criteria? How can we denounce relativism and defend it at the same time?

At this juncture, the critics of postmodernism seem certain of victory. The portrait of democracy just represented seems to rob the theorist of any opportunity for describing any specific practices or institutions for democratic politics. Furthermore, the emphasis on relativism and the maintenance of alterity suggests that there is no room for compromise, and probably no impetus for action. How does Lyotard's approach contribute anything that is different from a mere pragmatic approach to democracy?

One of the standard criticisms leveled at postmodern theory is that it fails to address concrete concerns and propose specific possibilities of action. The linkage to literary criticism tends to indicate that postmodernism is "reactive" and in Habermas's terms, "conservative". With respect to the political, however this criticism misses the mark because Lyotard does not recommend an aesthetic approach to the differend. The differend in politics-circumstances of unfreedom where the space of the political has been occupied- testifies to the obligation of the critic to announce the offense. Lyotard advances recommendations for alternative forms of expression that exceed the dominant meta-narrative, whether it be a normal science, or a limiting genre of discourse. Lyotard privileges the potential for the faculty of imagination to achieve the level of judgement, especially through art and literature. The space of the political must be described in terms that emphasize the exploratory and experimental potential that political action may demonstrate.

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[25] Lefort, Claude, "Renaissance of Democracy?" *Praxis International* 10 (April and July) :p. 1-13 (1990)

Refusing to focus on politics, a postmodern approach to democracy draws attention to instances of localized experimentation. It maintains an open consideration of new contexts of political activity. Postmodernism does not simply make everything "political", such that it is empty of meaning. It does so by calling attention to the difficulties these marginalized groups encounter in attempting to voice their claims because the system of representation does not "understand", see, or hear their concerns as such. Rather, in searching for new sites of political action, postmodernism empowers localized and often marginalized groups within a public forum for expression.

Lyotard's conception of the differend responds to the voicelessness of phrases that are constrained by a dominant language game or metanarrative. Indeed, one can recognise the differend in nondiscursive contexts wherever one confronts situations of domination. Lyotard has found a profound way of identifying the same events that Foucault described in terms of disciplinary practices and normalizing discourses. In effect Lyotard describes a political question: To what extent is democracy compatible with indeterminacy?

Democracy as an empty locus of power is only temporarily inhabited by groups under the auspices of institutional mechanisms that periodically provide for renewal and removal. Lyotard has described how attending to differends within the political requires a simultaneous commitment to institutions- such as regular and free elections, human rights, and localized political participation- and to practices that are indeterminately defined, which always contest the normalization of political discourse, the select status of privileged groups, and the subordination of right to power. In Lyotard's terms, democracy constantly responds to the differend, always providing a space for an articulation of the phrase or genre that does not confirm to the particular limitations of a metanarrative or a dominant language game. It is important to stress that Lyotard's attention to the differend is not restricted to linguistic practices. Indeed both Carroll[26] and Readings[27] point out that Lyotard resists definition of the currency of differend only in terms of language games. His early work, *Discourse,Figure*,[28] works against a dialectical logic based on a structuralist conception of language. Rather, Lyotard looks for opportunities for phrasing torts, damages, and resistances that may not be represented in the language games of the dominant metanarrative or even the medium of speaking taken up by the dominant phrase. Instead, Lyotard hopes to expose opportunities for representation of what cannot be represented in the discursive terms of the dominating language. Lyotard encourages us to look for what is "not said," what is left out of our descriptions of the state of affairs. His is a constant attention to the unrepresented, the unrepresentable, precisely because it exceeds the conditions of proof and presentation demanded by the dominant paradigm or language game. "The imposition of a master narrative perpetuates injustice because it constitutes a denial of the imagination, a denial of the right to respond, to invent, to deviate from the norm- in other words, the right to little narratives that are rooted in difference rather than in the identity established by the grand narrative"[29].

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[26] Carroll, David, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida.* (New York: Routledge. 1987)

[27] Readings, Bill, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (New York: Routledge. 1991)

For Lyotard justice is defined as the absence of the threat of being able to "move" in a language game, that is, that the game or relations between speakers not only always maintains a reactive tolerance, but defends the very possibility of difference and experimentation.

Announcing the Differend

Lyotard's work on the differend, the political, and the constant question of political judgement contributes an avenue for reflection on the condition of contemporary democracy as it relates to including radical difference.

Given the indeterminacy of criteria of judgement, democratic theory and practice need to grant greater attention to the occurrence of the differend. This question is of particular importance, I would posit, in India given the intensity of rancorous debate over issues of family values, gender issues, religion and politics, identity, etc, we can identify the differend in the way various groups from the political left, right and center attack each other and a variety of individuals, groups and classes with the goal of undermining the addressee's capacity to iterate a response and a "legitimate" defense. Most debates on these issues refer either to the variety of the empirical claims made by these groups or, to the quasi-empirical quality of public opinion research to generate statistical evidence to buttress each respective discourse's claim to majoritarian status. A Lyotardian response will demand an analysis of how that "data" is manipulated to justify changes in social policy. How do claims of empirical proof legitimate action in the political sphere? Do our representative institutions cede the task of decision to procedures, mechanisms, operatives that are unable to digest and acknowledge opinions, feelings, arguments, signs, phrases that cannot be articulated in terms legitimized by those institutions?

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[28] Lyotard, Jean-François, *Discourse, Figure* trans. Mary Lyndon (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983)

[29] Lyotard, Jean-François, *Just Gaming*. Quoted in Carroll, David, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*. p. 159. (New York: Routledge. 1987)

The ideas of Lyotard present not only a radical reconceptualisation of democratic practice, but have been implemented in certain polities and political forums. We have substantial evidence of new forms of political activity that represent the heterogeneity and difference encouraged by Lyotard. A good example is the peace and anti-nuclear social movements of the early 1980s which demanded a role in the political conversation connected to defense policy and spending.

Much of the literature on European social movements stresses the failure of both the movements and the organized political Left to formulate a working coalition. What these arguments did not consider, I think, is the special problem the Marxist or labor narrative created for these groups, who found that their concerns could not be articulated in the language of class struggle and traditional class conflict issues. We have learned that this coalition will not develop out of a vacuum but requires a new broader political vision from respective advocates. In many cases, classic grand coalitions will work *against* the adequate expression of these alternative perspectives of society today. In contrast, more real space for political activism can be excavated from the debris of conventional politics. A positive example is in evidence in the United States where the religious right is seizing the agenda of local political races. The scope of their political activism has turned from the broad national strategies to limited and often highly specialized contests. In fact if we look simply at the formal institutions of democratic politics, there are at least 80,000 elected offices in the United States alone. This does not even begin to consider the extensive possibilities for activism within local debates regarding zoning, environmental policy etc.

Conclusion

A postmodern democratic theory approaches these issues of radical diversity in the social world without the pretension of a conception of a grand coalition. Instead, it concentrates on the acknowledgement of identities and difference that attest to the radical diversity of the political realm. It looks first toward the creation and maintenance of a spirit of inclusion whereby a contestation of opinions can occur. It will be within the context of this agonistics of experimentation and diversity that new coalitions may form for limited and localized initiatives. The terrain of the political, especially today, is a complex textured space which is highly charged with the prejudices of capital, both local and international. At the same time, no one body, party, or interest has managed to occupy fully the space of representation. A postmodern democratic practice will move to exploit the remaining opportunities for new experiments that redefine the role of political action and it will support a politics of difference that responds to the differend and opens new spaces for identity and cooperation.

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