APPROPRIATION OF COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY: A STUDY OF HABERMAS' CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY

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بنام خدا

تقـــدیم به:
پدر و مادرم در شوق
آموختن را در من زنده کردند.

DEDICATED LOVINGLY TO
MY PARENTS WHO
INDUCED IN ME THE DESIRE
TO LEARN

Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Science

Date: May 22, 1996

Certificate

Certified that dissertation entitled " APPROPRIATION OF COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY: A STUDY OF HABERMAS' CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY" Submitted by Masoud Pedram, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University, and is his own work.

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I will not be able to put into words how much I owe to the support of my mother who has always taken care of me. I am also grateful to my elder brother who has constantly helped me out in difficult times. And last but not least, how can I ever thank Zahra who shares my life? I can only say that this work is not mine but ours.

Masoud Pedram

Content

INTRODUCTION

As a social theorist, Habermas is better known for his critiques of instrumental rationality, Positivism, and classical marxism. Infact these critiques form a prelude to his own conception of critical social science. While much has been said on these aspects of Habermas' writings the present work draws attention to a relatively neglected field-namely, the conception of democracy that underpins the alternative he is presenting to us.

Habermas' conception of communicative rationality affirms democratic ideas, particularly , decision arrived at through free and unrestricted participation. At this plane it commits itself strongly to both freedom of thought and speech, and equal participation. However this obvious affinity to democracy does not sufficiently capture the distinctiveness of Habermas' thought. Nor does it allow us to form a reasonable assessment of the desirability and applicability of the ideals endorsed by him.

To undertake this latter task, I begin by examining the conception of democracy through three models-liberal,marxism or direct, and participatory, to provide an appropriate framework for Habermas views relevant to the conception of democracy. In the second chapter, after providing a sketch

of the ideas of critical theorists, I focus on the key conceptions in Habermas critical theory which could be treated as relevant to the conception of democracy. Bearing in mind those key conceptions, in third chapter I see how the notion of communicative rationality, as the main theme in the key conceptions, deviates from the liberal understanding of democracy. In fact this chapter explores the possibility of treating Habermas' ideas with the framework of participatory democracy. In the next chapter I provide a critical assessment of the ideas that underpin Habermas conception of democracy-namely, his belief in autonomous, universal Reason, consensus, and revitalisation of public sphere. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the relevance of Habermas enterprise, particularly his attempt to provide a normative foundation for a theory of society which has positive effects for the development of the conception of democracy.

CHAPTER ONE

THREE MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

In this chapter I discuss three models of democracy. I start with early liberal democrats and then move to the nineteenth century conceptions of democracy. The chapter ends with the notion of participatory democracy enunciated by C.B. Macpherson and more recent theorists such as Benjamin Barber. The discussion reflects upon the main ideas associated with each of these conceptions of democracy; in particular it focuses on the way freedom, equality, and participation are conceptualised in each model. Posing liberal and marxian conceptions of democracy as two rival theories within democratic thought, I designate participatory democracy as a synthesis of the rival theories.

Liberal Democracy:

Since ancient Athens there has been a broad consensus that democracy represents government by the majority. However, beyond this, perceptions of democracy have varied with time. For instance, Aristotle associated democracy with the rule of majority; that is, the rule by the poor, but today it is described as a form of self government that functions on the basis of majority will. This latter

conception of democracy has its roots in seventeenth century liberalism. At first this conception represented struggle against monarchy and absolute state. In this context, liberty of the individual became the cherished ideal of the conception of democracy. Early liberals defended a limited, representative form of government. Initially they favoured representation for the propertied sections of the population, and even with the limited franchise they challenged the feudal order, as well as the existing forms of monarchy.

At this stage liberal democracy was closely associated with capitalist market economy. However, in response to the struggle of the working classes and women it was compelled to extend representation and political rights of participation to all sections of the population. The demands for suffrage from those who were denied this right, as well as the requirements of western industrialising societies, in respect of growing population and complexity, gave rise to a debate on the question of representation. While democracy as a form of self-government required that all citizens should participate in the decision making process, the feasibility of this proposal was itself a big issue. Could every member of society participate in the process of legislation and decision making ? Two view-points came up in this debate. A few theorists questioned whether

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ordinary people were equipped to handle the complexities of governmental work. Others maintained that "since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business , it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative."[1] Madison, one of the key architects of American constitution, was one of the first to make a clear distinction between the pure notion of democracy and its actual form in terms of direct and indirect demacracy. In his view a republic is a "government in which the scheme or representation takes place."[2] It is a government "to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens". Then he concluded, "under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by themselves, convened for the purpose".

Before Madison, Bentham, one of the founders of liberal- democratic theory, had argued that democracy was a

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1.   John Stuart Mill, "Consideration on Representative Government", in Three Essays : By J.S. Mill (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 198.

2.   James Madison, from "Federalist #10" in Democracy, ed. Philip Green (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993) pp. 47-8.

means for maximising the good of the maximum number of people. He put forward the view that governors must be held accountable to the governed through political mechanism; he favoured secret ballot, regular voting, and competition between potential representatives. In his writings a strong parliament of representatives became the constituent part of liberal-democratic system. Similarly Montesquieu's principle of separation of powers was used to curtail the arbitrary power of government.

In an attempt to give attention to the principle of liberty, liberal democracy emphasised the individual. The ideas proposed by political thinkers, such as Hobbes and Locke contributed to this conception. While Hobbes' contribution lay in portraying human beings as "individuals" with a right to be citizens of their state[3], Locke asserted that life, liberty, and property were inalienable rights of men and the state comes into existence in order to protect these rights over time.[4] It was this individualism and conception of individual rights that formed the core of the liberal conception of democracy. Irrespective of how the

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3. David Held, _Models of Democracy_ (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 39-51.

4. John Locke, "Two Treaties of Government, II" In the _Lock Reader_, ed. John W. Yolton (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 296.

values of liberal democracy were justified, by social contract or social utility, the interests of individual citizen were placed above that of the community.[5] The emphasis on the individual supplemented the liberal concern for liberty and right to property. Locke maintained that life, liberty and property were the three essential inalienable rights of man, given to him by nature. Hence they could not be taken away by the government. In fact the purpose of political society was to ensure conditions within which individuals could exercise these rights fully. This understanding of the primacy of human rights led to the postulation of limited government.

Over time liberal democrats argued that to ensure individual freedom, public authority should be limited. From their point of view the "only really significant threat to liberty comes from the government".[6] Even Mill mentioned that the enhancement of individual liberty required more accountable government and efficient governmental administration. However, he was also deeply concerned about the "tyranny of the majority". To guard against the tyranny of the majority and all other abuses of power Mill

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5. Micheal Margolis, <u>Viable Democracy</u> (London: Macmilan Press, 1979), p. 44.

6. Barry Holden, <u>Understanding Democracy</u> (London: Harvester, 1993) p. 26.

argued for freedom of thought and feelings, tastes and pursuits, and free assembly. There were to be no restrictions on the exercise of these rights provided no harm was done to others.[7] Besides, arguing against majoritarianism and strengthening individual freedom to present different view points, Mill defined democracy to imply a form of government in which people are free to hold different views and make whatever decision they wish.[8]

Although liberal democrats today are ardent supporters of equal political rights for all, and universal adult suffrage, the whole adult population achieved universal franchise by stages "starting from qualification, moving at different speeds in different countries to manhood suffrage, and finally including women suffrage"[9] Despite the reliance of representative - liberal democracy on the principle of universal franchise, it gives more importance to accountability and efficiency. Participation of the people is evoked primarily for electing representatives and not for the task of decision making. Over time even the accountability of the representatives to the people has

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7. J.S. Mill, "On Liberty" in, <u>Three Essays by J.S. Mill</u>, p. 17.

8. Barry Holden, op. cit., p. 18.

9. C.B. Macpherson, <u>The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 23.

diminished considerably, and the emergence of the political parties has contributed to this process.

The formation of political parties was, in a sense, consonant with the ideology of liberal democracy. The latter assumed that people would freely came together and form groups for articulating and furthering their individual interests. Political parties seemed to fulfill this function. However, the consequences of party politics have proved to be quite problematic. As is well known today it has promoted centralization and erosion of the power of legislature. As a result, elitism as well as apathy have developed in society. From Michels point of view " the formation of oligarchies within the various forms of democracy is the outcome of organic necessity and consequently affects every organisation"[10] Considering the supremacy of the leaders in democratic parties, he mentioned that "the mass will never rule except in abstracto".[11] In this vein Shumpeter referred to political leadership, advertising politics and competitive party politics as the elements which make the people in liberal-democratic systems capable of nothing but choosing leaders. "Thus the typical

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10. Robert Michels, from "Political Parties" in Democracy, ed. Green p. 69.

11. Ibid.

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citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field".[12]   Indeed this version of liberal democracy is regarded as a mechanism for choosing and authorizing governments, not a kind of society, nor a set of normal ends.   In such a pluralist - elitist liberal democracies most people are not competing to participate in governance.   The competition is restricted to the elites; what democracy provides is a framework within which we witness the "circulation of elites"; that is, elections involve the displacement of one set of elites by another. Democracy is thus transformed to government by elites, technocrats, or powerful groups which sometimes termed as "polyarchy". "If the pluralist system was very far from being an oligarchy, it was also a long way from achieving the goal of political equality advocated by philosophers of democracy".[13]

Despite these reconceptualisations, the liberal view has remained the dominant conception of democracy through the nineteenth and twentieth century.   The aspects that gained prominence within it were representative government, political liberty, universal adult franchise, periodic and

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12. J.A. Schumpeter, from "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, in Democracy, ed. Green, p. 85.

13. Robert Dhal, from "Who Governs" in Democracy, ed. Green, p. 105.

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regular election, separation of powers and competing political powers. It seems the above-mentioned aspects were appropriate to the socio-political circumstances of nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since then the issues of equality and participation that were neglected within the liberal framework have become the focus of democratic attention.

Marxian Notion of Democracy; Direct Democracy:

The marxian notion of democracy emerged both as a critique of and an alternative to the liberal conception of democracy. Marx himself had left an ambiguous heritage: he had questioned the possibility of realising freedom within a class-divided society, however, he had not dwelt upon the institutional structure of democracy. For this reason his view led to a variety of interpretations among different marxists camps.[14] There was consensus on just one thing; namely, that without equality there could be no freedom. Since freedom requires the end of exploitation and complete political and economic equality,[15] dismantling the structures of exploitation and domination emerged as the precondition for the existence of a free and democratic society.

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14. Held, op. cit., pp. 132-4
15. Ibid., pp. 136-7.

In addition to linking democracy with equality, the marxian conception also drew attention to the need to build structures of direct and continuous participation at various planes of social, political and economic life. Democracy was to be "a system in which the rule of the people would entail equal opportunities for all to participate in making decision not only over what are conventionally termed governmental issues, but over matters affecting the workplace and leisure activities."[16] In fact participation of all in the process of decision-making raised the question of direct participation. To actualize the conception of direct democracy Marx and his followers proposed the institution of Commune.

It is important to notice that the marxian version of direct democracy was not merely an abstract idea. The Paris Commune of 1871 and subsequently Russian soviets, were constructed on the basis of this version of direct democracy. In fact, the idea of Communes and soviets was directly counterposed to that of "bourgeois", "liberal", or "parliamentary" democracy.[17] For the Commune provided for

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16. Geraint Perry and Micheal Mason, ed. <u>Democracy and Democratization</u> (London: Routledge, 1994) p.4.

17. Neil Harding, "The Marxist Leninist De Tour", in <u>Democracy; The Unfinished Journey 508 BC to AD 1993</u>, ed. John Dunn (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992), pp. 165-166.

equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making. In parliamentary democracy, by comparison, representatives of the people are authorized to perform this job, and people participate directly only to elect their representatives.

The Commune model is realized through a pyramid structure. In Paris Commune the "rural Communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegations in Paris".[18] The pyramid structure indeed may be regarded as an appropriate organization to express the general will of the people. For the Commune is "chosen by the suffrage of all citizens, responsible, and revocable in short terms"[19] Of course Paris Commune didn't live a long life, and it seemed as a premature formation of direct democracy, for " the majority of the Commune was in no wise socialists, nor could it be ".[20] But the model of Russian soviets lived about 70 years. Although this model has been criticized by several marxists camps, it emerged as the only

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18. Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France" in _Marx and Engels Selected Works_ (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 292.

19. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, _On the Paris Commune_ (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 206.

20. Ibid, p. 293.

operative example of marxian version of direct democracy.
In practice, however, Russian soviets, were propelled in the
direction of centralisation and one party domination, and
combined with other factors that brought about a host of
totalitarian regimes. Several marxists, now felt that the
totalitarian regimes of Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
countries, could not offer a viable alternative to liberal
democracy. For not only did the regimes secure equality at
the expense of limiting individual liberties, but they
destroyed both liberty and equality for the sake of one-
party domination.

In contrast to this model, marxists of the New Left
persuasion, inspired by Rousseau, anarchists, and
"libertarian" and "pluralist", marxist positions[21], tried to
reformulate the left conception of democracy by giving
attention to the concept of liberty. The New Left began to
value political rights and freedom in themselves; further
they began to realise that the existing structure of
democratic institutions creates political space which can be
used to challenge the existing structures of capitalism.[22]

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21. Held, op. cit., p. 254.

22. Ibid., pp. 256-7.

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On Participatory Democracy:

Liberal democracy's affiliation to unequal property
holding, and the tendency of marxian experience of direct
democracy towards centralization of power and
totalitarianism, gave rise to the theory of participatory
democracy, from 60s onward. The theory drew upon Mill's
conception of self development, Rousseau's direct democracy
and Marx's view of socio-economic equality. Liberals,
dissatisfied about the marginalisation of the people in
political decision-making, tried to revive the idea of
active participation,while simultaneously rescuing liberty
from capitalist market relations. They searched for a
theoretical context, as well as institutional arrangement
for the greater participation of citizens in collective
decision making.

On the other side, the marxists, frustrated by
sacrificing the idea of liberty to that of equality,
recognised the dangers of a centralized authoritarian
arrangement. They endeavoured to throw a new light on the
concept of liberty, and in this context a new formulation of
democracy - namely, participatory democracy - emerged as a
point of convergence between liberals and marxists.

C.B. Macpherson was one of the first to offer a
theoretical foundation for participatory democracy. Owing a

great deal to Marx, Macpherson attempted to revise several aspects of liberal - democratic theory.[23]

To theorise the model of participatory democracy, he set forth two pre-requisites for its emergence. " One is a change in people's consciousness, from seeing themselves and acting as essentially consumers to seeing themselves and acting as exerters and enjoyers of the exertion and development of their own capacities".[24] The second pre-requisite is indicative of the necessity for a change in the structure of society before participatory democracy can become possible. Macpherson was of the view that a society of unlimited appropriation and unequal property holding set aside "the equal right of all individuals to develop themselves".[25] After enunciating these preconditions, Macpherson proposed two models of participatory democracy. The first was " a pyramidal system with direct democracy at the base and delegate democracy at every level above that".[26] This was for him the first approximation to a

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23. David Morrice, " C.B. Macpherson's Critique of Liberal Democracy and Capitalism" in <u>Political Studies</u> (1994) XL II, p. 646. 24.

24. Macpherson, op. cit., p. 99.

25. Morrice, op. cit., p. 650.

26. Macpherson, op. cit. pp. 108-9.

workable model. For it was the simplest sketch of participatory democracy, irrespective of "the weight of tradition and actual circumstances that might prevail in a country."[27]   Considering the weight of tradition and actual circumstances in Western Europe countries he developed this idea by proposing the second model.   This was to be a "combination of a pyramidal direct/indirect democratic machinery with a continuing party system."[28]   As such, to argue for a transformation to participatory democracy, Macpherson considered the tradition of political parties in Western   countries,   and   combined   party   system   with organisation of direct democracy.

With due attention to Macpherson's view it may be inferred that participatory democracy in one sense, is a theoretical attack against liberal democracy, and in another sense, it is an argument for more democracy within the framework of liberal democracy.   In fact it depends on the liberal democratic tradition in so far as it appreciates electoral procedure for choosing representatives, and the belief that individuals have different conceptions of good life. However, it entails   something more than a liberal democratic perspective.   Equal access to economic resources

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27.   Ibid, p. 108.

28.   Ibid, p. 113.

as well as equal access to knowledge, information and
political skills were the necessary condition for
actualisation of a participatory democratic system. And here
it was argued that equal opportunity requires not only
formal equality before the law, but equalising the condition
of the runners before the race starts.[29]

Macpherson dwelt more upon the institutional
arrangements rather than the value of participation which
has been taken into consideration by later advocates of
participatory democracy. Nonetheless, both have laid
emphasis on the change in the consciousness of individuals.
It has been argued that if the masses are made aware of the
problems of mass society and they discuss that, they would
no longer remain simple - minded. The involvement of the
individuals in socio-political decision-making makes them
aware of, and sensitive to, the collective interests, while
they bear in mind their own individual interests.
Therefore, when choice is offered they don't pursue their
own private pleasures.

It seems that the most viable way to actualize
participation is through local bodies, particularly
neighbourhood. The local bodies, such as, community school

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29. Green, ed., Democracy, p. 16.

board, or neighbourhood association could be the most susbstantive base for institutionalising participatory democracy. In neighbourhood meeting the common people may talk about their individual interest as well as the collective interest, and in the process of discussion the individuals would establish link between the two types of interests. The function fulfilled by the meeting is that it raises the consciousness of the people and, at the same time, arouses discussion on regional and national issues.[30]

In small groups and face to face meetings - the possible settings for actualising participatory democracy - mutual trust and understanding develop among the participants. In this vain the most distinctive feature of participatory democracy would be revealed. Instead of preserving pre-given or fixed interests of individuals, participatory democracy deals with consciousness - raising and identity creation. Moreover involvement of individuals in both individualist and collectivist interests is likely to lead to a reflection on structures of social and economic organisation.

The advocates of participatory democracy have also thrown light on another half of the adult population of the

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30. Benjamin R. Barber, <u>Strong Democracy</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 261.

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world, i.e., the women. From their point of view formal equality is appropriate to representative (liberal) democracy and to voting for electing representatives. But this kind of equality has nothing to do with voicing the demands of women. For women a genuine participation would be a "prior and continuing process" through which they create their identity, construct their interests, and form their political views.[31] But behind the formal equality in liberal democracy there is the discrepancy between the electing and elected women which reveals the need for a mechanism for the redistribution of household task and responsibilities,[32] as well as the re-examination of childcare provisions, so that women as well as men can take up the opportunity to participate. Without any substantial change in the structure of family, women are always conceived as the second sex and their participation is not identical to that of men. In fact presence of women in the public arena depends on a substantial change in their private sphere.

Direct participation of the individuals through small groups or face-to-face meeting directs our attention to

31. Anne Phillips, Democracy and Differences, (Cambridge: Polity Press 1993), p. 113.

32. Anne Phillips, Engendering Democracy (London: Polity Press, 1991), p. 157.

direct action as an alternative and, in some cases, an introduction to liberal democracy. At this juncture it is important the distinguish between participatory democracy and direct action.

Although the element of participation is very strong in direct action, it is quite different from participatory democracy. Direct action is primarily a method of protest and resistance and its role is necessarily limited to opposition.[33] In fact it is counter governmental action and treats government as an outsider. Almost all actions which imply civil disobedience and non-cooperation with the state constitute direct action. Whereas, participatory democracy implies an institutionalised action of citizens within governmental limits to articulate a varied range of demands. Moreover participatory democracy, following upon liberal democracy, endorses electoral process and freedom of others.

In contemporary times participatory democracy has received a great deal of attention, as well as elaboration, within political theory. In fact the project has not been confined to political theory rather it has attracted the attention of social theorists, such as Jurgen Habermas. One

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33. April Carter, from "Direct Action and Liberal Democracy", in Democracy, ed. Green, pp. 240-3.

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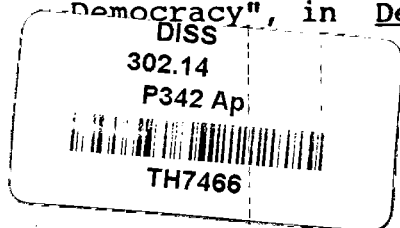
might even say that participatory democracy is quite compatible with his account of public sphere and the theory of communicative action. Democracy, as Habermas understood it, is equal access to language; or in other words, it is wide-spread and ongoing participation in discussion by the entire citizenry.[34] He called the situation where expression is uncoerced and equally accessible, " ideal speech situation".

Habermas is of the view that speech specialization and expertise of "technical - rational elites", bring about the domination of elites. For him democratic order is marked by stressing language as the medium of mutual understanding. Moreover public debate on political issues is the essence of democracy, and all citizens, as speaking subjects of a lifeworld, should be in equal situation in order to participate. Gathering of individual to participate in open discussions, according to Habermas, entails the constitution of public sphere in which individuals participate in discourses about public issues on the basis of their shared norms.

Although participatory democracy has shown the the existence of active, autonomous citizens who act

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34. Barber, op. cit., p. 197.

deliberately, it has been criticized for its incompatibility with the real exigencies of modern-technological mass societies. Critics have pointed to the difficulty of actualising a participatory, or a more direct democracy in large and complex modern societies. A few have also show concern for the behaviour of individuals in the real world. In face-to-face meetings behaviour is, they argue, affected by such facts as unequal knowledge of participants, overlapping friendship and politics, and a hidden structure of power.[35]

Despite this criticism participatory democracy, though not fully actualised, has proved to be the main base of a normative political theory today, and it appears to be the more accepted democratic path for the future. Infact, against those who point to the impracticality of participatory democracy in modern nation-states, it has optimistically been argued that with the improvement of the means of communication, involvement of the whole society in the process of decision-making, may be feasible in the foreseeable future.

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35. Phillips, Engendering Democracy, pp. 133-4.

CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL THEORY AND COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

This chapter discusses the main concepts in Habermas' theory, particularly those that are relevant to the discussion of his conception of democracy. Since his views are embodied in the general programme of critical theory, it seems appropriate to begin with a statement of the tradition to which Habermas belongs. With this in mind, I begin with a brief account of the main themes of critical theory proposed by the first generation of "Frankfurt School" members, particularly by prominent figures such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. Then I proceed to dwell on the concepts Habermas incorporates in his social theory to enrich, supplement, and finally reconstruct critical theory of society.

Although the concepts relevant to democracy are framed and elaborated in different domains, in an analytical consideration the coherence and systematic relationship of the concepts will be easily revealed. Among the main concepts formulated by Habermas I have chose to focus on "historical evaluation", "emancipatory knowledge", "communicative action", and "public sphere". Through a study of these concepts I have attempted to draw out Habermas' conception of democracy.

Critical Theory:

Although Habermas proposed his social theory by appropriating different intellectual traditions, ranging from marxism through Weberain outlook to linguistic approach, eventually he is known as an heir to critical theory: an orientation which flourished through the immensely fruitful works of the members of Frankfurt School.

Critical theorists began with rather orthodox marxian historical and theoretical studies in the 1920s at the institution for Social Research in Frankfurt. In the course of time, however, they turned to young Marx, and, in the process, went beyond political economy. Eventually, critical theory became " a response to inadequacies with both classical marxism and the dominant forms of bourgeois science and philosophy." [1] Its adherents argued that by utilizing objectivistic methods, both bourgeois science and scientific marxism were not able to conceptualize the cause, nature and consequences of the turbulent events of 1920s and 1930s. Consequently, they took the lead in forging a materialist social theory aiming at the delineation of an alternative path for social development through the integration of philosophy and science.

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1.   Douglas Kellner, <u>Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity</u> (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), p. 22.

Critical theorists conceptualized critique as "a method of attacking the cognitive distortion, produced by ideology".[2] In Horkheimer's view, critical activity is the root of critical theory, subjecting oppression and exploitation to criticism and encouraging the struggle for a better society. With recourse to criticism, prominent thinkers such as Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, set about producing a theory of society as a whole: one that would envisage human beings as producers of their own life, from which they are alienated.[3]

In redefining marxism, the critical theorists conceded the insufficiency of Marx's mature works for the comprehension of contemporary society. Even as they recognized the significance of political economy the critical theorists maintained that there had been at least three far-reaching changes in contemporary society which needed to be explained:

a.   The defeat of working class movement in Western Europe due to economic prosperity in these countries and the corresponding decline of class conflicts;

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2.   Ibid, p. 23.

3.   Rolf Wiggershaus, <u>The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance</u>, Trans. Micheal Robertson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p.6.

b.   The pervasive domination of false consciousness which
     guaranteed the support of all the classes including
     working class, for capitalist system;

c.   The prevalence of oppression in both socialist and
     capitalist countries following the rise of stalinism,
     as well as fascism.

To understand these developments the critical theorists
dwelt upon the superstructure, particularly the cultural
aspects of society. While the study of infrastructure had
previously been the focus of marxist analysis, critical
theorists examined the process of ideology formation and
legitimation in contemporary capitalist societies.

The expansion of state into more areas, the
commodification of culture, growing interlocking of base and
superstructure, and the emergence of authoritarian
tendencies indicated, in their views, the necessity of
intermingling political economy with political sociology,
psychoanalysis, and cultural criticism.[4] The critical
theorists employed the dialectical method to comprehend and
criticize the modern society. For them, every aspect of

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4.   Axel Honneth, "Critical Theory", Trans. John Farell,
     Social Theory today, eds. Giddins and Turner (Oxford:
     Policy Press, 1987) pp. 253-5.

social life was to be studied in relation to the social structure, as well as in its historical wholeness. The mutual interrelation between the significant levels of social reality, such as individual consciousness, cultural superstructure, and economic base became the thrust of the approach of critical theorists to society. The dialectical method helped to comprehend the reciprocity of theory and practice. The critical theorists were not content with searching the truth in academic centers, hence they conceived of practice as the reliable criteria for verifying the validity of ideas.

From the political - sociological perspective, the post-liberal capitalism was characterized by the replacement of free market by bureaucratic planning authorities. In this "State Capitalism", critical theorists maintained, a centralised administrative domination is formed through the coalition of economic managers and political power elites. The theory of "State Capitalism" illustrated the organisational form of production and reproduction of system of domination in new capitalist societies.

Now one of the main questions was why individuals did not show serious resistance to the system of domination. It was Erich Fromm who set out to answer the question through a socio-psychological investigation. In his view, in post-

liberal capitalism the male loses his unquestioned patriarchal authority, while the child retaining an abstract idea of force and strength, searches for a more powerful father. Therefore his/her personality becomes manipulable by the authority of state.

Drawing upon the terminology developed by Fromm in the study on authority and family, Adorno provided the book. "The Authoritarian Personality". In this book Adorno dwelt on the interconnection between potentially fascist political opinions and certain character traits, such as, the rigid commitment to dominant values or identifying oneself with power, to lay bare ethno-centrism and patriotism. "The book itself discussed fascist, potentially fascist and prejudiced personality, and the F-scale (fascist scale)".[5] With the instrument of fascist scale one would be able "to observe the spread and intensity of fascist trends even without mentioning ideological prejudices".[6]

Also, the conditions under which socialisation of the individual takes place required a theory of culture. From Adorno's point of view, culture, once the locus of truth and beauty, has been assailed by standarisation and conformity

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5. Wiggershaus, op. cit., p. 411.
6. Ibid.

and become a crucial part of the totally administered society. He conceived of culture as a mode of domination in the form of culture industry,[7] producing and reproducing what was called "mass culture". Culture industry, he maintained, was rationalized and bureaucratized structures now controlled modern culture.

In this manner, critical theorists tried to provide a substantive, comprehensive theory of the present age. They acknowledged that it is necessary to remove the demarcating lines between philosophy, economics, politics, culture and society in order to provide "a methodological orientation for doing social theory for relating theoretical work to radical politics".[8] The starting point of critical theory and its frame of reference was history and society. In case of the latter, critical theorists tried to classify, on the one hand, the "regressive" and "oppressive" forces, and, on the other hand, the "progressive" and "emancipatory" forces connected with the history of modernity. All these endeavours aimed at exposing the hindrance to consciousness of positive and emancipatory action.

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7.   Kellner, op. cit. pp. 130-1.

8.   Ibid, p. 44.

The members of the School not only focused attention on the social, but they proceeded to go into epistemology and methodology to deepen their ideas. They criticized the fundamental claims of positivism such as, uniformity of scientific method, reduction of scientific discourse to methodology, equation of scientific knowledge with true wisdom, and separation of subject from the production of science. Critical theory maintained that positivistic knowledge is inherently repressive and it is an effective factor for class domination. In this view positivism attempts to formulate universal laws which govern social phenomena through reification of social world, such that it appears similar to the natural process. As asuch, it closes the room for practices of human beings and their effects on social structures.

Moreover, critical theorists condemned positivism for ruling out the possibility of rational criticism of society and for supporting the status quo. The postulation of the social world as a natural entity lead "to the misrepresentation as eternal or natural of what should instead be seen as historically specific and alterable".[9]

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9. Russell Keat, The Politics of Social Theory, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1981), p. 2.

Accordingly the dispute about transplanting the methodology of natural sciences into the field of social sciences constituted a recurrent theme in the works of critical theorists. The concept of knowledge, set forth by them, was based on the image of man to which the Kantian idea about practical reason was central. They also employed the concept of knowledge which had been provided in ancient Greea, i.e, ethics and a good and just life.[10]

Although for analyzing the nature of modern societies critical theorists were influenced by marxist ideas, in the course of time they became gradually affected by Weberian views. They came to assume that in modern societies it was the repression emanating from rationality that supplanted economic exploitation. They also endorsed the Weberian distinction between the formal rationality and the virtual one: Formal rationality focuses upon the most effective means for achieving a goal, while virtual rationality evaluates means in terms of human values such as justice, peace and happiness.

Herbert Marcuse, whose criticism of advanced industrial society achieved world-wide impact, argued that modern

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10. John Sewart, "Jurgen Habermas's Reconstruction of Critical Theory", Current Perspectives in Social Theory, eds. McNall and Howe (Connecticut: JAI Press, 1980), p.327.

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technology controlled individuals in an effective and pleasant manner, and had paved the way for totalitarianism. In Marcuse's view, "Technological rationality reveals its political character as it becomes the great vehicle of better domination, creating a truly totalitarian universe in which society and nature, mind and body are kept in a state of permanent mobilisation for the defense of this universe".[11] It is "technological rationality" that created "one dimensional" society, where man had lost the potential of critical thinking. In this relation he attached great importance to mass media as the "new form of social control". It is mass media which produces false needs, one dimensional thought, and a behaviour appropriate to reproduction of advanced capitalism. [12] Subsequently as the "father of New Left", Marcuse defened radical politics to achieve a type of democratic and liberation socialism.[13]

The other pioneers of critical theory, particularly, Adorno and Horkheimer, turned to philosophy to retrieve the potentiality of a critique, free from the restraints and

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11. Herbert Marcuse, <u>One Dimensional Man</u>, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 18.

12. Kellner, op. cit., p. 137.

13. Douglas Kellner, <u>Herbert Marcuse and Crisis of Marxism</u>, (London, McMilan, 1984) pp. 1-10.

constraints placed on scientific method by existing system of domination. Their critique, however, proved to be negative and critical reason did not take a clear form. They provided a critique of the Enlightenment and its rationality but they did not enunciate an alternative theory of human emancipation. In fact, all the brilliant efforts made by the first generation of critical theorists did not culminate in a "definitive" theory. Horkheimer and Adorno confessed, "We underestimated the difficulties of interpretation, because we still trusted too much in the modern consciousness".[14] Enlightenment, they maintained, espouses an ideal of self-determination and prescribes a method which eventually usurps this. Their analysis was indeed important because it marked a shift from a multidisciplinary social theory, with the centrality of critique of political economy, to a philosophical critique of science, technology, culture industry, and instrumental reason.[15] In a sense "Dialectic of Enlightenment" was a theory of the trajectory of modernity, and a combination of a critique of western civilization and rationality. Since in this period of critical theory no positive theory was

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14. Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkheimer, <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, (London: Verso, Second Edition, Fourth Impression, 1995) p. XI.

15. Kellner, Critical Theory, p. 85.

formulated, it have been often called as the dark side of critical theory. Some scholars went so far as to pronounce critical theory as a dead entity. But it was Jurgen Habermas who breathed a new life to the critical theory.

The first generation of critical theorists set out to frame a theory of society by which human beings would become the producers of their own life, from which they were alienated. But eventually Horkheimer and Adorno, as the founding fathers of Frankfurt School, found out that the actualisation of the rational struggle of the oppressed classes for reconstruction of their own society confronted crucial historical obstacles. Consequently they were propelled towards negative criticism and pessimism. From this time, late 50s and early 60s onward, Habermas set out to reconstruct the central themes of critical theory. Although his affinity to critical theory emerged from the "Dialectic of Enlightenment", his response to the disenchanted critical theory of the "Dialectic of Enlightenment" was to return to the marxian tradition to reconstruct historical materialism. In the mean time, his focus was on the concept of rationalisation as the main characteristic of the modern era. His first theoretical project was an analysis of bourgeois public sphere; this was published in early 60s, but is still considered as an

authentic, though disputable, text for participatory democracy. Habermas proceeded beyond socio-historical analyses and provided a methodological - epistemological base for a critical theory of society; then he turned to constitute a normative base for practice. For this reason his ambitious project of "knowledge and Human Interests", was shifted to an immensely complicated. "Theory of Communicative Action".

Evolution and Rationality:

In his endeavour to complete the project of modernity, which was left uncompleted by his predecessors, Habermas sketched the reconstructed process of evolution of species being proposed by Marx. This evolutionary path, in modern time, is combined with Weber's theory of rationality, again in a reconstructive manner.

Habermas embraces what Marx saw as the path in which species being evolves, socially and individually, by reconstructing the theory of historical materialism. He conceded that Marx correctly postulated "work" and "interaction" as the elements for reproducing social life. According to Habermas, work or productive labour in Marx's theory of historical materialism implies, instrumental and purposive - rational action, displaying the technical mastery of natural and social world. It is this technical

activity which reproduces the material conditions of life and is regarded as the material (economic) basis of society. In this manner work forms the forces of production. Interaction, in turn, implies communicative action which brings about the organisation and alteration of social relations. This practical activity depending on the structure of symbolic interaction and the role of cultural tradition, makes the transformation of society in social struggle feasible. Interaction in this sense forges the relation of production.[16]

Habermas contends that in analysing how social evolution takes place, Marx referred to the dialectical relation between forces of production and relations of production. However in formulating the mode of production, as the combination of forces of production and relations of production, Marx did not sufficiently clarify the significant role of relations of production; he tended to reduce the mode of production to forces of production and economy. This was evident when he equated "base" with "economic structure".[17] This idea was consolidated by

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16. David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas, (London: Hutchinson, 1980) p. 247.

17. Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, Trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1979) p. 144.

Engles, Plekhanov, Stalin and others who maintained that the concept of production relations issue from productive forces.[18]

According to Habermas, equation of base and economic structure applies only to capitalist societies. However, 'in primitive societies and civilizations the "function of regulating access to the means of production and thereby indirectly regulating the distribution of social wealth", which stems from the relations of production, "was performed by kinship systems, and ..... by systems of domination".[19]

Habermas contends that it is true that work and productive labour is peculiar to human beings and shows the distinctive feature of human beings among other animals, but "it does not capture the specifically human reproduction of life",[20] and the way of human evolution. In Habermas' view, it is intersubjectivity which emerges as the possible way, by which human beings solve social system problems. Intersubjectivity in turn occurs through language; that is, language is the crucial media for interaction. When the economy of hunt was supplemented by a familial social

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18.   Ibid, p. 145.

19.   Ibid, p. 144.

20.   Ibid, p. 135.

structure the process of the reproduction of human life took place. This process represented the replacement of animal status system " by a system of social norms that presupposed language".[21] In this fashion, Habermas set about restoring the status of relations of production by stressing the function which language performs in interaction and social organisation.

Habermas also raises objection to Marx's view that the condition for an evolutionary thrust is created by forces of production. According to historical materialism it is through social conflict that the problems of system solves and society develops into a new stage. Habermas, on the other hand, maintains that this answer is a descriptive, and not an analytic one. Consequently, he argues that "the species learns not only in the dimension of technically useful knowledge decisive for the development of productive forces but also in the dimension of moral practical consciousness decisive for structures of interaction."[22] Thus it is through the process of learning that a social formation solves system problem. In this vein, Habermas puts forward the view that the productive forces develops in conjunction with forming of social integration, not

21. Ibid, p. 136.

22. Ibid, p. 148.

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arbitrarily. Social integration in turn evolves out of the learning process, and brings about "collectively shared structures of consciousness and stores of knowledge" [23] embodied as empirical knowledge and moral-practical insight respectively. Despite orthodox marxists, Habermas concludes that structures of culture, morality, and collective identity do not simply follow economic or system imperatives. He refers to the fact that the normative structures evolve according to their own logic. "Thus for social evolution, learning processes in the domain of moral-practical consciousness function as pacemakers".[24]

Habermas delineates the history of human evolution through four stages: neolithic societies, early civilizations, developed civilizations and the modern age. Habermas illustrates that in each stage rationality develops more than the previous one and social integration depends more and more on the degree to which worldviews can effectively legitimate and rationalise social institutions.[25]

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23. Ibid, p. 160.

24. Ibid, p. 120.

25. Ibid, pp. 161-4.

Habermas analyses rationality in two directions.[26] He maintains that when we employ knowledge in teleological action to achieve a desired effect, instrumental mastery appears as the inherent telos in rationality. Habermas refers to cognitive - instrumental rationality as a concept which deeply marked the self-understanding of modern era through empiricism. While when we employ communicatively propositional knowledge in assertions to make possible an understanding among participants, communicative understanding appears as the inherent telos in rationality. According to Habermas the concept of communicative rationality is connected with ancient conceptions of logos. He espouses Weber's view that instrumental rationality has become one of the main characteristics of capitalist society. For this reason, he starts another reconstruction. Examining Weber's concluding assessment which designated rationalisation as the loss of meaning and freedom which leads us to the iron cage of capitalism, Habermas tries to reconstruct the process of rationalisation in Weberian terms.[27] In this reconstruction as well, the distinction between purposive-rational and communicative action remained

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26. Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative action, Trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1984), Vol. I, pp. 10-11.

27. Micheal Pusey, Jurgen Habermas, (London: Ellis Horwood, 1987) pp. 48-57.

centrally important. Habermas viewed the problem of the modern world as the problem of rationalisation of purposive-rational action, not rationalisation in general. To put it more precisely, Weber analysed the process of rationalisation in its earlier phase in the realm of culture and ethics, but he shifted to explain the later phase of rationalisation "in terms of social structural institutionalisation of power in the economy and the state"[28] Therefore Habermas reaches the conclusion that Weber neglected the process of rationalisation of ethics and culture in line with that of institutionalisation of power. Then Habermas appropriates the two concepts of rationality in analysing the relationship between individuals lifeworld and social system imperatives to restore the concept of communicative rationality.

Emancipatory Knowledge:

In his endeavour to designate critical theory as an alternative, Habermas tries to provide an epistemological-methodological base for a critical theory of society and make a reliable knowledge based on reason and reality. He maintains that domination, repression, and ideological framing of action have eroded the rational capability of human beings. To release this capability, it is necessary

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28. Ibid, p. 54.

to give way to the self-conscious development of life. To do so, Habermas makes a deliberate attempt to criticise positivism. He attains this ambitious aim, namely, the framing of an alternative to neo-positivistic logic of unified science, in the book - "Knowledge and Human Interests". In this work, Habermas delves into the various types of knowledge claims and their corresponding human interests, and form of social activities. He delineates three universal, quasi-transcendental cognitive interests in knowing subject, with their own distinctive method, object domain, and aim, and he indicates the corresponding dimensions of human social existence in which each of the cognitive interest is embedded.[29]

The universal interest in controlling an objectified environmental world is characterized as technical interest. According to Habermas this interest is constitutive of empirical-analytical science and within it our relationship to nature is described nomologically. The human attitude in the domain of nature is fundamentally instrumentalist as it tries to control nature technically. As such, the dimension of human social existence in which technical interest is embedded is work.

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29. Keat, op. cit., pp. 66-7.

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For Habermas the universal interest in communicative understanding, practical interest, is constitutive of historical - hermeneutic sciences. Mutual understanding of every day conduct of life, as well as understanding and interpreting society, literature, art and history are contained in the realm of practical interests. This cognitive interest is associated with intersubjectivity and communication, and in this domain access to the facts is provided by the understanding of meaning, not observation. Practical interest is embedded in symbolic interaction as its corresponding dimension of human social existence.

The universal interest in critical emancipatory self-reflection, critical interest, constitutes critical science. It is a cognitive interest in truth, freedom, justice, and autonomy. In fact emancipatory knowledge means reason, as well as fully rational knowledge. The domain of emancipatory knowledge consists of action and utterrance specified further defective or distorted. The most appropriate form of knowledge for critical interest "is self-Knowledge generated through self-reflection".[30] The social medium of critical interest is designated as authority.

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30. Held, Introduction to Critical Theory, p. 317.

The discussion with Hans-Georg Gadamer revealed that Habermas joins hermeneutics in criticizing empirical - analytical science, and in trying to provide a distinct foundation for the social sciences.[31] In addition, the main characteristics of hermeneutics, such as, understanding, communication and intersubjectivity remain the core concepts in critical social sciences[32]. However, Habermas goes beyond hermeneutics and demands some criterion in order to overcome relativism. He finds, for instance, in Gadamer's hermeneutics no independent ground for a critique of tradition. Since we are participants in hermeneutic understanding and play the role of a selective partner, there is no way for stepping outside of this role. "There is, therefore, no general criterion available to us which allows us to determine when we are subject to the false consciousness of pseudo-normal understanding and consider something as a difficulty that can be resolved by hermeneutical means who - in fact, it requires systemic explanation".[33]

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31.   Robert C. Holub, _Jurgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere_ (London: Routledge, 1991) pp. 60-4.

32.   Jurgen Habermas, _Knowledge and Human Interests_, Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987) p. 310.

33.   Jurgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality", in _Interpreting Politics_, ed. Micheal T. Gibbons (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) p. 181.

Although Habermas criticizes empirical-analytical sciences from the view point of critical theory, he does not totally reject it. He emphasizes that empirical-analytical science generates its corresponding knowledge which is valid in the domain of nature. Also, he was of the view that hermeneuctic understanding alone could not find a way to investigate the effects of expression on existing structure of social interaction. It is through critical theory, particularly the concept of reason and reconstruction, that one can take a critical position in the face of existing forms of social organisation. Habermas maintains that to the extent the suppressive forces result in structures of distorted communication, critical interest can develop through self-reflection. He, however, mentions that self-reflection only "embraces the particulars, the specific course of self-formation of an individual subject".[34] Therefore no reasoned justification would be provided in the process of self-reflection. But rational reconstruction deals with "anonymous rule systems,"[35] and explicate the general rules of human competency. In this connection, Habermas uses Marx's critique of ideology and Freud's psychoanalysis as the paradigms of a critical science.

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34. Jurgen Habermas, <u>Theory and Practice</u>, Trans. John Viertel (Cambridge, Polity, 1973) p. 22.

35. Ibid.

Theory of Communication Action:

In the mid - 70s, Habermas gradually abandoned the cognitive models depending on human interests, and focused his attention on a theory designated later as "The Theory of Communication Action". Through the theory he offered a critical reading of modernity by suggesting a reformulation of enlightenment. In his view this theory "clarifies the normative foundation of a critical theory of society".[36]

The theory of communicative action is indicative of a momentus shift in Habermas's previous work: a shift to linguistics, or in other word, a shift from the paradigm of philosophy of consciousness to the paradigm of communicative action. Although Habermas didn't abandon his faith in Reason, his theoretical endeavour underwent a linguistic turn, and it borrowed more heavily from sociological theory. It has been said that Habermas gave up "knowledge and Human Interests" due to his failure to solve the problems that emerged from conceiving 'interest' as the basis of knowledge. He himself, however, mentions that "Knowledge and Human Interests" was not indicative of a final statement of his idea of critical theory. Infact, it may be claimed that the "Theory of Communicative Action" expresses nothing,

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36. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II, pp. 397-7.

but a continuity with the earlier attempt to reveal reason and rationality as the basis of a critical social theory. As some of his interpreters have pointed out, the distinction between purposive - rational action and communicative action is anchored in the distinction between technical, practical and emancipatory interests.[37] The core theme of the theory of communicative action emerged from the categorical distinction between two different types of rationalisation process: system rationality which is a type of purposive-rationality, and life-world rationality which is communicative rationality. In other words, in his later works rationality, social action, and social reproduction is placed within a paradigm of communication. In the course of formulating the theory of communicative action, Habermas attempts to display how rationality and irrationality manifests itself in ordinary social action and how we can arrive at or practice undistorted action.

Communicative action takes place when "the action of the agents involved are co-ordinated not through egocentric calculations of success, but through acts of reaching understanding".[38] If purposive rational action represents

37. Richard J. Bernstein, eds., Habermas and Modernity (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985) p. 17.

38. Habermas, the theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I, pp. 285-6.

actions which embody success-oriented attitude, communicative action seeks understanding. Presupposing Communicative action as the fundamental type of social action, Habermas conceives of other actions, such as strategic action, as the derivative of communicative action.[39] He maintains that language is the specific medium through which understanding takes place at the socio-cultural stage of evolution. Indeed linguistics inspired Habermas to develop the conception of communicative competence through universal pragmatics, which identified the universal rules presupposed in human communication. In this journey, Habermas appropriates speech acts theory developed by Austin and Searl, Particularly their notion of "illocutionary" act. They showed that "speaker in saying something also do something"[40] which is called illocutionary act. Considering this type of speech act, Habermas tries to show a minimum level of rationality in every society which have reached the level of linguistically mediated interaction. He argues that all speech acts presuppose validity claim, which appear as the rational foundation for communicative action. In this way Habermas presents

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39. Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, p.1.

40. Stephen K.White, The Recent Work of Jurgen Habermas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.28.

communicative action as the fundamental type of social action, by referring to communicative competence. He maintains that communicative competence is the core of our ability to communicate, for it is indicative of the fundamental rules that all subjects master in learning to speak.[41]

Habermas reveals that in a communicative interaction between at least one speaker and one hearer, the fundamental rules of competence embody four types of validity claim[42]:

a) Comprehensibility which refers to the understandable utterance of speaker; the domain of reality to which comprehensibility assumes relation is language.

b) Sincerity of speaker in offering proposition which discloses speaker's subjectivity. The mode of communication which is used to show sincerity is expressive and the attitude of speaker which prevails in this mode of communication is expressive as well. The corresponding domain of reality to sincerity is the internal world of speaker.

c) truth which refers to true proposition. It represents facts in the domain of the world of external nature.

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41. Ibid., p. 26.

42. Ibid., p. 65-8.

The mode of communication to reveal this validity claim is cognitive in which objectivating is the prevailing attitude.

d)   Rightness which refers to the right of speaker to utter proposition which establish legitimate interpersonal relations. The corresponding domain of reality to this validity claim is the world of society, the mode of communication which is used is interactive and the prevailing attitude in this mode of communication is conformative. Communicative action can exist in so far as the participant sustain the four types of validity claims. Achieving "the communicative mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another",[43] is based on recognition of the four types of validity claims.

In fact, Habermas' emphasis on language is an attempt to disclose the principles of rational redemption underpinning speech acts. In this way every assumption of the disputed claims become open to contest, criticism, defence, and revision.[44] Indeed, he tries to construct a

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43.   Ibid., p. 3.

44.   Ibid., pp. 64-5.

model in which disagreements and conflicts are rationally resolved through a mode of communication, free of compulsion. This situation in which the force of the better argument may prevail is called "ideal speech situation".

In of his concern for communicative action, Habermas tries to incorporate the sociological theories which are relevant to the theory of communication action. To do so, he sets out to reconstruct Mead and Durkheim. "The paradigm shift from purposive activity to communicative action", Habermas claims, "was prepared by Mead and Durkheim".[45] Through Mead he focuses his attention on "Communication – theoritic reformulation of social action theory". Indeed Mead considered the transition from gesture mediated to symbolically mediated interaction under the aspects of communication, and showed how the instruments for reaching understanding were transformed into signs bearing shared meanings for participants. Mead indicated the construction of norms by referring to the attitude of "generalized other" which is taken by child. At this stage Habermas feels that Mead's account of "generalized other", as the basis for normatively guided interaction suffered one inadequacy: external factors were not given enough consideration. Mead

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45. Habermas, <u>The Theory of Communicative Action</u>, Vol. II, p.1.

maintained that through assimilating the social world, child shapes a system of control and learns how to orient his action to normative validity claims; however, he does not answer how the "normatively integrated social organism developed out of the sociative forms of symbolically mediated interaction".[46]   To put bluntly, in Habermas's view, there seems not enough explanation to show how normative validity could emerge from symbolically mediated interaction. To fill in this gap, Habermas turns to Durkheim's idea of collective consciousness. In contrast to Mead, who analysed group identities through the development of personality, Durkheim analysed group identities and saw religious beliefs and patriotism as expression of a collective consciousness. Habermas finds in Durkhem's conception of collective consciousness what Mead did not reveal: namely, a prelinguistic root of communication and a basis for normatively guided action. Habermas puts forward Durkheim's idea that sacred is the root of moral authority of social norms and that normative consensus is based on the idea of sacred. Durkheim maintained that at first socially integrative and expressive functions are fulfilled by ritual practices. Then he showed that these functions shift to the domain of communicative action through the

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46.   Ibid., p.42.

gradual replacement of the authority of holy by the authority of achieved consensus. All these developments take place in the context of what Durkheim termed as the shift from mechanical to social solidarity. In fact, through rationalisation of world views, value generalisation, and growing individuation, mechanical solidarity shifts to organic solidarity.[47] In the stage of organic solidarity value consensus is not secured through collective consciousness, based on the idea of sacred, but it is secured through cooperative understanding. Interpreting this development, Habermas proposes the process of linguistification of sacred, through which norms are recognized as rational and intersubjective.

By means of linguistification of sacred Habermas arrives at the conception of rationalisation of lifeworld. Indeed by the conception of rationalisation of lifeworld Habermas refers to social evolution which takes place through communication action. Displaying a shift from the paradigm of purposive action to that of communicative action, Habermas gives greater empirical significance to communicative rationality by incorporating the conception of lifeworld to the theory of communicative action.

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47. Ibid., p. 83.

The concept of lifeworld in phenomenogical terms comprises of "a vast stock of taken-for-granted definitions and understanding of the world"[48] from which our everyday action and interaction take coherence and direction. This concept was elaborated by Alfred Schutz in sociological theory. Schutz maintained that there is province of reality - the attitude of commonsense which is taken for granted by conscience and normal adult. Everything we experience in this taken-for-granted province of reality appears to be unsustainable. Schutz proceeds to present the intersubjectivity of lifeworld by displaying that lifeworld is not one's private world, but is a shared space that is taken for granted by others also.[49] In his view lifeworld constitutes social actors and places limitations on their everyday conduct. Lifeworld provides social actors with a life of ease. In nonproblematic situations lifeworld is invisible and actors response to the situation as a habit, but when the situation becomes problematic, parts of the lifeworld are likely to be called into question. Meanwhile," the lifeworld to which participants in communication belong is always present", but only in a defined situation, depending on reference system for mutual

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48. Pusey, op. cit., p. 58.

49. Ronald R. Cox, Schutz's Theory of Relevance: A Phenemenological Critique (the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978) pp.2-5.

understanding about something objective, normative or subjective, does lifeworld form the background for an actual scene.[50] In this manner, Habermas shows how lifeworld relates to objective, social and subjective worlds; the worlds which are the bases of common definitions of situations for acting objects. Accepting of the validity claim in these worlds through something objective, normative, or subjective, reveal the fact that participants come to an understanding.

In this way Habermas refers to lifeworld as the "background consensus of everyday life" and as the "context-forming horizon" of social action and consciousness.[51] "Communicative actors are always moving within the horizon of their lifeworld; they cannot step outside it".[52] While appropriating the conception of lifeworld in his own theory, Habermas maintains that the lifeworld is symbolically produced and reproduced through the medium of communicative action, and communicative rationality can only arise in the lifeworld.

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50. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II
     p. 124.

51. Pusey, op. cit., p. 59

52. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. II,
     p. 126.

While communicative rationality arises in the lifeworld, the societal setting of instrumental rationality has been designated as system. In fact Habermas portrays two pictures of society. One, which emerges from the lifeworld, and the other, which emerges from the idea of system. Here he engaged in the same question many social theorists have been confronted with: namely, the relation between action and system theory. In his account lifeworld and system correspond to action and system theory in sociological theory. Habermas is of the view that Parsons tried to propose an integrated theory of action and social system. But despite this inclination, eventually action theory was subjected to that of system.[53] Of course Parsons tried to develop a concept of society in the framework of action theory, but he found this framework too narrow. For this reason, he turned to system theory, which was taken by him as complexes of action. The distinction Habermas made between lifeworld and system prevents him from being ensnared in the trap in which Parsons found himself. According to this distinction, Habermas examines the rationalisation of the two independently. In the course of social evolution "system and lifeworld are differentiated in the sense that the complexity of the one and the

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53. Ibid., p. 201.

rationality of the other grow. But it is not qua system and qua lifeworld that they are differentiated; they get differentiated from one another at the same time".[54] Historically lifeworld is at first co-extensive with social system. But through the development of society, from tribal and traditional stages to organised and modern ones, society as a system is engaged in new levels of complexity. Therefore it becomes "further and further detached from social structures through which social integration takes place".[55] It is following this uncoupling of system from lifeworld that in modern time system mechanism has been disconnected from norms and values; that is, that has become what Weber setforth as purposive rational action of economic and adminsitrative subsystems.

In fact two distinct principles of sociation are represented in society as a system and society as a lifeworld. In contrast to the fact that in lifeworld action is coordinated through consensus, in system it is functionalist interconnection between structures that coordinates action. It means action is oriented towards specific goal to meet functional requirements of system. Habermas maintains that system coordinates action through

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54. Ibid., p. 153.

55. Ibid., p. 154.

the steering media of money and power, implying utility and profitability as the standard of success. While lifeworld increasingly gets mediated through communicative action, steering media can supersede language only in certain areas such as economic and political subsystems. For this reason in these areas money and power take over co-ordinating functions. It is through the steering media of money and power that social relations in the lifeworld get moneterised and bureaucratised and adapted to the functional requirements.

Another point which Habermas raises is the rationalisation of lifeworld as the characteristic of modern societies. Rationalisation of the lifeworld is manifest when one appropriates tradition critically through communicative action. A thoroughly rationalised lifeworld entails the opening up of itself to criticism. The rationalisation of lifeworld is the precondition of and a motivation for the rational differentiation within system. Overtime, however system becomes more and more autonomous in comparison with the normative constants embodied in the life-world. Indeed, Habermas suggests that in the contemporary world the rapidity of system rationalisation has become more than that of lifeworld, and lifeworld has come to be dominated by social system. In this manner "the

mediatisation of the lifeworld turns into its colonisation".[56] Here Habermas views bear resemblance with those of Weber, Horkheimer, and Adorno in exposing the paradox of restionalisation. To overcome the proadox, Habermas lays emphasis on deconlonisation of the life-world by expanding "the areas in which action is coordinated by way of communication achieved agreement.[57]

Indeed for Habermas lifeworld is not only an historical entity, a fund of intersubjective and unquestionable norms and values, but it is a conception and a tool for the critique of society. It functions as a system of references and as a social apriori by which individuals interact communicatively and at the same time can criticize the distorted interactions.

Public Sphere:

The appropriate matrix for the restoration of lifeworld through communicative action could be the public sphere, as it is the domain where the principle of discursive will-formation can prevail. Although Habermas' formulation of the "ideal speech situation" came after his account of "Structural Transformation of Public Sphere", but many

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56. Ibid., 318.

57. Thomas McCarthy, "Translator Introduction", The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I, p. XXXVII.

writers are of the view that the ideal speech situation was already presupposed in the public sphere.[58]   Ideal speech situation refers to the conditions under which validity claims can be discursively raised and redeemed, and emperically this situation for speech has to be expressed in public sphere.

The notion of public realm, public opinion, or public sphere which refers to the shared interests of individuals within society have captured the attention of many social and political thinkers.   Several thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt maintain that the notion of public sphere has many affinities with classical Athens,   and in many ways the latter is regarded as a model for the organisation of public life.   Reconsidering the polis, Arendt dwelt on the conception of public realm as one of the critical standards for seeking the decline of a genuine politics in modern age.   In her view, public space implies action, as well as the place in which the action would be taken.   Then she linked her view on public space to the nature of urban life and portrayed the image of a plurality of citizens who form solidarity through a common world.[59]

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58.   Margarita Alario, "Environmental Destruction and public Sphere", <u>Social Theory and Practice</u>, Vol. 20, No.3 (Fall 1994), p. 331.

59.   Philip Hansen, <u>Hannah Arendt, Politics, History and Citizenship</u> (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993) pp. 50-1.

In line with Arendt, Habermas focuses his attention on public sphere and describes it as a realm between society and state. It is a realm in which public concern becomes the subject of open discussion through discursive argumentation. Therefore freedom of speech and the right to participate freely in political debates are presupposed by it. The principle of equality and accessibility are indispensable ingredients of public sphere, as also democratic control and participation.

Historically, Habermas traced the emergence of public sphere back to the early 18th century Europe. The Public sphere originates in the private realm and is constituted by deliberations of private citizens on matters of public concern. It was the emergent bourgeoisie who shaped gradually a public sphere in which the authority of state was monitored through informed and critical dialogue, and not traditional dogma. In fact, this critical dialogue, opposed the traditional and hierarchical forms of feudal authority. The development of market economy was the historical setting for the formation of a bourgeois public sphere. In the social realm, there emerged "the clubs, saloons and coffee - houses (there were 3000 of the latter in London in the early 1970s) which were supported by the

growing and increasingly free press.[60]   All these spaces

formed a critical forum in which gentlemen independent of

the court and. other political institutions could get

together on a basis of relative equality and discuss the

great events of the day.   All these events culminated in th

structural differentiation between the state, the economy

and the civil society.

In this way, Habermas designates public sphere as a

suitable arena for citizens to confer about matters of

general interest in a constraint-free fashion. According to

his account, public opinion is formed in public sphere by

debate and consensus. The debates, correspondingly, proceed

in accordance with critical reason. In fact, public sphere

emerges as a medium for permanent critique. For it creates

a body of opinion which could question the state.   Public

sphere originated in the private realm and is constituted by

private individuals, excluded from dominant politics; these

individuals deliberate on issues of public concern, and in

this way the public becomes political outside the confines

of the state.   The public sphere exerts its influence on

government through the institution of Parliament.

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60.   William Outhwait, <u>Habermas: A Critical Introduction</u>
      (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p. 8.

Habermas continues the histography of public sphere by referring to its decline in the 19th century; He points to "the growth of large scale economic organisations, the increase in state intervention to stabilise the economy, the expanding influence of science and, more generally, of instrumental reason in social life",[61] as the main elements that weaken the public sphere. Among the above mentioned elements, he lays emphasis on the interwining of state and society and the intervention of state into 'private' affairs. In 20th century, party politics and manipulation of mass media become indicative of the transformation of the free exchange of ideas among equals into less democratic and communicative form. Accordingly "the public is split apart into minorities of specialists who put their reason to use nonpublicity and the great mass of consumers whose respectiveness is public but uncritical".[62]

In the "Structural Transformation of Public Sphere" Habermas sketched the rise and decay of the bourgeois public sphere, and identified public sphere as a social structure on which public's potential to voice general interests and concerns rests.

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61. David Held, Introduction to critical Theory, (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 262.

62. Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere, Trans. Thomas Burger (Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1989), p. 175.

The notion of "public sphere" responds to Habermas' preoccupation with the relationship between theory and practice, for the notion halps him to establish the relationship between democratic principles and democratic practice. In fact the notion of public sphere is part of Habermas' reconstruction of critical theory, for it is is through this notion that he tries to reveal the potential for critique of society based on democratic principles.

CHAPTER THREE

RATIONAL SOCIETY: DEMOCRACY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The concepts that were examined in the preceding chapter have one theme in common; they constitute the basis for a conception of democracy. The product of the evolution of man is a rational society in which ideas are openly presented and defended against criticism. Also, man and society arrive at freedom and autonomy to be able to criticise self and society through emancipatary knowledge. In the same vien, in the process of rationalisation of individuals in the lifeworld public norms are reconstructed through open discussion and participation. And eventually rationality, discourse, and consensus can be arrived at in real world in the martrix of public sphere.

To reveal the relationship between the examined concepts and the notion if democracy I set about delineating discursive democracy and democratic practice, as part of a rational society, in Habermas' writings. Habermas, however, has not provided a defined or coherent theory of democracy; that is, unlike Macpherson he has not written directly about democracy. Nevertheless a democratic theory is implicit in his works and it needs to be drawn out.

Discursive Democracy and declonising lifeworld:

For exploring Habermas's version of democracy two point must be born in mind. First, Habermas does not see democracy from a political angle and his perception is societal rather than political; and second, he feels that existing democratic systems represent formal democracy and are at a considerable distance from a genuine one.

Habermas places his version of democracy within the comprehensive theory of communicative action, as a social theory. The democratic theory that stems from Habermas' views lies at the root of his well-known distinction between strategic action and communicative action. It can be inferred that prevailing democratic theories, including liberal, direct, or participatory ones, lay emphasis on instrumental and strategic action, while Habermas desired democracy is based on communicative action. His focus of attention on action leads him not to deliberate on institutions of democracy. Habermas, however, considers the roots of democracy in communicative rationality lie in discourse. The conception of discourse, being at the center of his democratic theory, is a procedural conception for a just resolution of conflicts[1]. Indeed his discursive theory

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1. J. Donald Moon, "Practical Discourse and Communicative ethics," in the Cambridge Companion to Habermas, ed. Stephen K. White (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 184-6.

of democracy mainly considers discourse, understanding and consensus, rather than the mode and organisation of participation and decisic making. For Habarmas democracy is a way of solving conflict, reaching agreement, and fulfilling self development. What is important for Habermas in democratic discourse is the development of the autonomy of participants by which they become able to subject self and others to critical examination. Moreover, Habermas holds that it is because of discursive context that "participation develops individuals capacities from practical reasoning, as well as mutual respect, that is entailed in the very possibility of discourse"[2]. It is evident that Habermas considers self-making via democracy, but in contrast to participatory democrats he is not interested in talking about providing time, opportunity and resources in order to attract people to political participation. Habermas's intention is to show a set of procedures through the conception of discourse that are available to every speaking individual in his or her every day life.

At this point, Habermas' concern is not a specific institutional locus, but what is important for him is the idea of discursive will - formation within society. Indeed,

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2.   Mark E. Warren, "the self in Discussive Democracy" in Ibid., p.172.

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discursive will-formation is indicative of ideal speech
situation, and the latter presupposes its appropriate
institutional locations. From another angle discursive
will-formation produces institutional location for
individuals, and meanwhile, is a measure for justification
of democratic institutions. Habermas maintains that one must
distinguish between "the idea of a process of will-formation
in which all those concerned participate freely and equally"
and "the organization of opinion-and will-forming discourses
and deliberations"[3]. Even when Habermas approaches
institutionalising democracy through advocating radical
democracy, he conceive of radical democracy not in respect
of the institutions of civil society, but as the only means
to restore lifeworld and solidarity[4]. In a sense, in
Habermas' societal democracy community or more specifically,
public sphere, may be regarded as the appropriate
institutional locus.

Although Habermas version of democracy has societal
flavour, it would eventually find expression in polity; for
in his view discursive will-formation is a means to restore
and justify authority as well. It is inferred from his point
of views that while discursive will-formation produces

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3.   Jurgen Habermas, <u>Autonomy and Solidarity</u>, ed. Peter
      Dews (Cambridge, Verso, 1986), p.186.

4.   Warren, op.cit. p.169.

institutional locations it also generates political authority[5]. For authority is justified by validity claims within discursive process. In this way, political power is justified by discourse.

Regarding communicative rationality, discourse, and discursive will-formation in public sphere, as the criteria for a democratic system, Habermas views the existing democracies as a new form of domination over citizens; that is, they represent the domination of technology. In fact this kind of domination represents the prevalence of instrumental rationality, or in other words, the unbalanced expansion of technical interest in modern societies where science, morality and art get divided into autonomous domains[6]. In such circumstances science attains a dominant position, for the "human drive to dominate nature becomes a drive to dominate other human beings"[7]. The consequence of this domination, Habermas maintains, is the erosion of genuine democracy and the establishment of a formal democracy. In a formal democracy the institutional system "renders possible the emergence and growth of antidemocratic

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5.   Ibid. pl.170.

6.   Harace L. Fairlamb, <u>Critical Conditions</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.205.

7.   White, ed. The cambridge companion, p.6.

institutions within the same democratic system"[8]. In this process, society becomes subjected to economic and political systems which are regulated respectively by money and administrative power. Indeed money and power, which imply profitability and utility as the standard of success, are the realisation of instrumental rationality.

Habermars holds that the enhancement of technological domination over citizens leads to their marginalisation from practical and effective participation in the issues of their own society, and undermines their critical capacity and control of decision-making process. In Habermas's view, formal democracy of late capitalism, which lacks mass participation, needs to propagate a new form of ideology that elicit mass loyality. Habermas terms this new form of ideology as "technocratic consciousness" which is commensurate to the technological domination. According to him, in the earlier period of capitalism ideologies portrayed an ethical image of the good life, for instance, by trying to rationalise free market society as locus of true freedom. In late capitalism, however, all practical substance and collective ethical projections disolve, and the combination of science and technology conducts a new

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8. Agnes Heller, "On Formal Democracy" in <u>Civil Society and the State</u> ed. John Kean (London Verso, 1988).

production force not to be subjected to human purpose, but to emerge as a depedent variable through which state manages economic development. Technical efficiency and economic stability which emanate from technological consciousness obscure inequality and repression prevailing in society. In this way Habermas tries to reveal the new positivistic ideology of the technological consciousness which represses reason and communicative rationality.

Emancipation from technological domination and the establishment of genuine democracy require that we understand ideologically distorted subjective situation of society, and unmask the ideological obfuscation. Meanwhile there is the need to explore the forces which have brought about this situation.

In his earlier works, Habermas focussed on psychoanalysis to prevent the expansion of technical interest and to remove the barriers and restrictions imposed on the individual. He conceived of psychoanalysis as the prototype of critical science, and transposed it to the realm of society. In fac Habermas "suggests that historical materialism can and must be reformulated as a critical theory of society which incorporate the insights of the psychoanalitic model, particularly its insight into the

significance of self-reflection"[9]. In this way historical materialism attains the capacity to critize ideology with a practical intent.   Through incorporating Freud's psychoanalitic method into public self reflection, Habermas tries " to show how the relations of power embodied in systematically distarted communication can be attached directly by the process of critique"[10]. Habermas refers to Freud's account of the process and method of the therapeutic relations and argues that the therapist minimizes all external pressures in a controlled situation, and through reflection makes the patient perceive the cause of his or her distorted communication. In a similar manner, Habermas felt that reflection can be used in the social process to dislodge irrationality and redeem rationality.

However, in his later works, particularly in the theory of communication action, Habermas interprets the existing situation under the rubric of systematic distortion of communication. He shows how in such situation " the organisation of knowledge and practical deliberation in contemporary society systematically undermine the potential

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9.   David Held, <u>Introduction to Critical Theory</u> (London: Hutchinson, 1980) p.323.

10. Jurgen Habermas, <u>Theory and Practice</u>, Trans, John Viertel (Cambridge: Polity, 1973) p.9.

of a rationalised lifeworld"[11]. For this reason he suggests the restoration of communicative competence and with it, ideal speech situation and discurssive will formation. In social reality lifeworld is the core of this process. In fact he delineates the way to overcome technological domination and ideologcially distorted subjective situation of society through decolonisation of lifeworld. He maintains that only through the expansion of areas in which communicative action prevails we become able to push back the colonising inrusion of system into lifeworld. Accordingly, establishment of communicative competence which gives rise to the redemption of validity claims depends on dismantling the existing economic structures of exploitation and administrative power as the institutions of steering media of money and power. Habermas suggests that through discussion on fundamental issues of economy and politics, we must challenge the system. The system seeks to patronise citizens and we must deny that only experts can decide on matters of economic and politics. The prevalence of the demands of lifeworld over the exercice of economic and administrative power bring about the process of decolonisation of lifeworld.

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11.   Stephen K. White, <u>the Recent Work of Jurgen Habermas</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). p.118.

In Habermas' view, today, new social movements are able to pave the way for decolonising lifeworld in a practical manner. He sees in these movements the thread of rationality which he found in bourgeois emancipation movement, in workers movements, and in national liberation movements. In fact by advocating new social movements, Habermas considers the revitalisation of public sphere, where the ideal speech situation can be approached.

Revitalisation of the public sphere:

The concept of public sphere, in Habermas' writings elaborated in early 60s, still has retained its importance in revealing the social structures relevant to a democratic theory. It is a space for a communicative action through public discussion, as well as for equality, rationality, and mutual understanding. Public sphere indicates the principles of reciprocity, plurality, and uttered critical discussion. Discursive argumentation in the public sphere is the critical means through which public concern is discussed.

In his historical account of structural transformation of bourgeois public sphere, Habermas reached the conclusion that interwining of state and society and intervention of state in the private affairs in 19th Century paved the way

for the decay of the public sphere[12]. However, "the critical principle of publicity retains some relevance as a normative ideal and could be used to guide institutional change"[13]. It may be appropriate to claim that Habermas' recent effort to pursue the question of democracy in the public sphere was directed towards elaborating a philosophical model of practical discourse rather than the historical one. This model presupposed an ideal speech situation which implies the process of reasoned debate. In the process equal participants are in dialogue with one another in a face-to-face conversation through which discursive will-formation emerges. In the public spheres the practical question of general interest may be submitted to public discussion and consensus would be achieved discursively. Habermas account of rise and fall of bourgeois public sphere indicates that the public sphere was restricted to the male and propertied individuals of society, and peasant, workers, and women were excluded from participating. But later when Habermas connected the revitalisation of the public sphere to the theory of communicative action, the participation of every speaking

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12. Jurgen Habermas, <u>the Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</u>, Trans. Thomas Burger (Massachusetts : Polity Press, 1989), pp.222-35.

13. John Thompon, from 'Ideology and Modern Culture", in <u>the Polity Reader in Cultural Theory</u> (London, polity Press, 1993) p.95.

subject emerges as the basic principle. For every speaking subject is capable of engaging communicative action. It is appropriate to mention that the revival of the public sphere must be kept distinct from political system, for in the public sphere the principle of technological legitimation, which dominates political system, is challenged. Moreover, although public sphere implies democratic politics and rights, such as, holding state responsible and accountible, it is politics of democracy that takes place in public sphere. The politics of democracy does not only reside in institutions and constitutions, but is part at social fabric. Public sphere in fact operates as a mechanism to bring together individuals and groups to continue their private discourse in public space; a space free of state interference which is accessible to all.

Habermas path to revitalisation of the public sphere represents a different path from that of historical emergence bourgeois public sphere, particularly, in the realm of mass media. Hobermas conceives of print media, as a constituent part of expanding bourgeois public sphere. He also regards "technologies of communication - such as book publishing and the press, first of all, and radio and television - make utterances available for practically any context, and make possible a highly differentiated network

of public spheres"[14]. But he interpretes the function of the media in recent Western societies as engineering of opionion. In his view, media, such as, radio and television, has been commercialised, and hence it acts in favour of particular interests. This media does not generate a dialogical exchange which occures among the participants in a public sphere, and it is distanced from critical - rational debate.

It is in this context that Habermas views extra-parliamentary form of protest, new social movements, or the alternative democratic strategies, as the actual base for revitalisation of the public sphere. For the movements, such as environmental, peace, women, or anit-nuclear, are indicative of the reaction to the intrusion of system imperatives into the lifeworld,[15] and "represent a break from the old politics of parties and representational democracy, and revolve instead around problems of quality of life, individual self-realisation, norms and values, participation and human rights".[16] These movements, free

14. Jurgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Trans. Frederich Lawrence (Cambridge : Polity, 1987), p.360.

15. Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge : Polity, 1987), vol. II, p.392.

16. Douglas Kellner, Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity (Oxford : Polity Press, 1989), p.219.

from being manipulated by money and power, would achieve concensus through direct participation of all citizens. I fact new social movements react against the encroachment of the state and economy an society, and against the deformation of a rationalised lifeworld. In other words, these movements in Habermas' view, are regarded as the reaction against the increasing colonisation of lifeworld and cultural impoverishment that restricts the condition of a rational society.

Rational Society:

Discursive will-formation and public sphere, indeed, are the preconditions for a rational society; the latter being the culmination of the progress of social evolution. In other words, social evolution culminates in rational society through the development of normative structures of culture, morality, and collective identity.[17]

Rational society, as Habermas illustrates, is an emancipated society which is dominated by reason. In his view, reason cannot be "reducible to the technical or strategic calculation of an essentially monadic individual subject."[18] Reason is embeded in communicative action and

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17. Jurgen Habernas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, Trans. Tomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1979), p.120.

18. White ed., The Cambridge companion, p.6.

brings about achievements, such as, rationalisation of lifeworld, and generalisation of norms and values. He maintains that in a rational society ideas are openly presented and defended against criticism and all barriers that restrict communicative action are removed so that unconstrained agreement develops by way of argumentation.[19] It would happen because at the presence of the normative content of the idea of understanding in communication. Indeed, in addition to understanding the meaning of speech acts, there is a mutual understanding "between participants in communication regarding facts, norms, and also experiences".[20] These validity claims form the rational basis underlying every act of communication. In a rational society, thus, the validity claims which are redeemed constitute the background of consensus.

To become clear about Habermas account of rationality, it is useful to mention that he analyses the process of rationalisation of society in two distinct directions. The direction towards achieving a desired effect and the direction towards communicative understanding. In this respect, Habermas follows Weber's equation of rationality and modernity, culminating in differentiation of spheres

19.   Habermas, Communication and the Evolution, pp.119-20.

20.   Habermas, Autonomy and Solidarity, p.108.

such as law, ethics, religion, politics, and science. Habermas hold that modernity has in itself the possibility of two rationalities that is; communicative nationality and instrumental rationality. The former form society in the context of lifeworld characterised by solidarity and cooperation, and the later forms society in the context of system characterised by efficiency and egotistical goals.

Although Habermas conceives Weber's conceptualisation of instrumental rationality as the main characteristics of contemporary capitalist societies, he attempts to reconstruct the process of rationalisation within Weber's account. In fact, by delineating the process of the evolution of society, Habermas tried to "establish an intelligible link between negative dynamic of progress in contemporary capitalism and an emancipatory historical project in the marxian sense."[21] Bridging the gap between historical progress of Marx and Weber's modern rationalisation, Habermas legitimates rationality as the most progressive achievement in modern societies. In Habermas' view, historical materialism is the progression of ethics or social norms, rather than the progression of technology. And it is in the modern age that the normative structres of culture, morality, and collective identity

21. Albercht Wellmer, "Reason, Utapia, and Enlightement", in <u>Habermas and Modernity</u>, ed. Richard J. Bernstein (Oxford: Polity, 1985) p.58.

become rationalised, as society evolves and reaches its highest level. While Habermas indicates that the process of rationalisation and differentiation characterizes the historical evolution, he refers also to the psychological and congnitive development of individuals by incorporating the views of Piaget and Kolberg. In fact Habermas establishes an analogy between historical evolution and individual development in the context of rationalisation.[22] In this respect and regarding the intermingling of norms and rationality, an intimate interconnection emerges between communicative rationality and morality. Infact, whereby Habermas imparts a universal morality to communicative rationality.

Relying on these normative and moral basis of communicative rationality that Habermas diagnoses the pathological forms of contemparary lifeworld, such as anomie, violence, loss of meaning and loss of identity. In this context Habermas dwells upon the crisis of rationality in modern world and illustrates the crisis in terms of domination of technology, technocratic consciouness and colonisation of lifeworld. Then he focuses on decolonisation of lifeworld through revitalisation of public sphere, and through involvement in discourse, to clear a path towards genuine democracy and a rational society.

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22. France Crespi, <u>Social Action and Power</u> (Oxford: Blackswell, 1989), p.37.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY: A CRITIQUE

In this chapter I discuss some of the main problems that emerge from Habermas' understanding and conception of democracy. I will identify three key idea in this regard; namely, the notion of an "autonomous Reason", the emphasis on linguistic ability, and consensus. It is through these conceptions that an attempt will be made to critically examine the ideas of Habermas.

The notion of democracy relevant to Habermas' ideas relies on three main assumptions; that is, Reason, linguistic ability, and consensus. Reason, Habermas maintains, is characterised by autonomy and universality which is independent of situations and contexts, and comprehensible to individuals in different circumstances. Reason is mediated through linguistic ability of individuals, and in this form, it brings about mutual understanding on the base of its autonomous and universalised characteristics.

To reveal the practical aspect of Reason in a societal democracy, Habermas' suggestion is the revitalisation of public sphere through activating new social movements. Revitalising public sphere entails unmasking ideology and

distorted communication through a critical knowledge, and achieving mutual understanding through linguistically mediated communication. But once again in all such communication and dialogue the force of the rational argument would prevail and consensus would be arrived at. Therefore revitalisation of public sphere with all its requirements depends on the assumption that Reason is an inherent human faculty. More importantly, Reason has the potential of unmasking the illusions of power and ideology which make our communication systematically distorted.

According to Habermas, reaching mutual, intersubjective understanding requires overcoming our preunderstandings which distorts our communication. This preunderstandings, in Habermas' view, emerge from domination, repression, and ideological framing of actions which prevent Reason to come to the domain of communication. For this purpose, Habermas sets forth the idea of critical knowledge embedded in emancipatory interest. Here again, the capacity of human beings to act rationally through self-consciously Reason is the root of critical knowledge. It is through critical knowledge that the condition of distorted communication can be abolished. Critical knowledge brings to consciousness the determinants of self-formation process and the structures of distortion. In this connection, Habermas tries to show the existence of systematically

distorted communication by drawing upon psychoanalysis for a critique of ideology.

In this framework, Habermas again emphasises the role of Reason, reflection and reconstruction. He conceives of the role of reflection as awaring individuals of forces which exert influence over them, the forces which have not been acknowledged. But reflection on oneself, Habermas continues, does not provide reasoned justification. Here Habermas refers to reconstruction which undertakes the task of providing reasoned justification. In his view rational reconstruction, generated within a reflexive attitude, lays bare general rules of human competency.[1]

In placing this weight on the faculty of Reason, Habermas postulates a distinction between Reason and tradition. He assumes that tradition is the source of authority and blind obedience while Reason allows one to transcend the barriers of inherited beliefs and offers a critique of tradition. Considering this point of view, Gadamer questions both the supposed dichotomy between Reason and tradition and the ability of Reason to transcend its historical context.

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1. Jurgen, Habermas, theory and Practice, Trans. John Viertel (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1971) pp.22-24.

Ruling out the possibility of autonomous Reason, Gadamer emphasises ubiquity of tradition and its authority. Gadamer rejects any challenge to tradition from without. Like Habermas, Gadamer appropriates psychoanalysis in his argumentation and argues that "the new understanding provided by psychoanalysis, though it may methodologically examine in detail very specific distortions in everyday understanding, none the less taken place against a background of shared understanding and meaning."[2]

Habermas argue that Gadmer accepts tradition by ignoring the importance of coericion, farce and power. Consequently he obscue the demacrating line between Reason and authority. Habermas tries to show that subjection to authority of tradition culminstes in subjection to coercion, force, and power, which consolidates the structures of distortion. For this reason, he conceives analysis of power and ideology as the main task of critical science. According the him, Frued's psychoanalysis and Marx's critique of ideology are the paradigms of a critical science which is able to recall autonomous, universalised Reason. Habermas perceives that emphasis on the concept of social labour prevented Max from displaying adequately the role of

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2.   Micheal T. Gibbons, ed., <u>Interpreting Politics</u> (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) p.17.

reflection, this makes Habermas turn to Freud's psychoanalysis to make up far that deficiency. Accordingly through critical science, Habermas tries the understand initially the ideologically distorted subjective situation of individual; then he set about finding out the causes of this situation; and eventually he proceeds to show that the distortion caused by these factors is the way to change the situation. For Habermas this kind of practice is an emancipatory one which gives way to mutual understanding and discourse, and is completed by establishing equal relationship between individuals. In this manner Habermas proceeds to transplant self-reflection into social milieu to further discourse, a continuous and free dialogue, on the basis of autonomous, universalised Reason.

Since Habermas placed a great deal of emphasis on overcoming the distortion of ideology, one needs to consider this aspect a little seriously. In psychoanalysis, neurosis is viewed as a case of distorted communication which can be restored by therapy. But when this method is transplanted to society it becomes quite problematic. Although therapy may be complementary to discourse, but they are not analogous.[3] The successful transcendence of analysand from

3. Mark E. Warren, "The Self in Discursive Democracy" in The Cambridge companion to Habermas, ed. Stephen K. White (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp.184-6.

his/her distorted self-understanding and neurotic behaviour depends on the recurrence of the experience that caused neurosis. But the question is "what political or social experience can be taken as analogous, on the level of social englightenment, to transfer within the psychoanalytic situation"?[4] Moreover, in politics there exists a convergence of interest, but therapy, as Gadamer perceives, is amount to a system in which elites claim a privileged insight into truth. In psychoanalysis the voluntary relationship between analyst and analysand cannot become a model for understanding and changing social situation. For the real situation of society are characterised by a number of inequality and discrepancies, as well as power relations. Another question that arises when psychoanalysis is transplanted to society concerns the situation of the analyst. How can we assume that the analyst can step outside his/her context and achieve critical knowledge? Most often the analyst is situated in the same context as the analyand is, and both are constrained by their historical situatedness. In addition in the social arena, where all individuals are in the same situation, what is the criteria of being an analyst; and who can decide it? Through all this, what needs to be considered is that reason is

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4. David Held, <u>Introduction to Critical theory</u> (London: Hutchinson, 1980) p.391.

historically specific; it is located in time and space. Then the problem which still remains is that how do we critique our inheritances and distance ourselves from tradition?

In Habermas' perspective, even linguistic mediated communication is permeated by autonomous and universalised Reason. The latter allows the force of rational argument, inherent in communicative nationality, to prevail. Although Habermas discusses two concept of rationality, instrumental and communicative, he favours the latter, and here he provides an important role for Reason.[5] Accordingly Habermas' vision of a rational society depends on

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5. In fact the main concern in Habermas' varied range of theoretical enterprise, from the reconstruction of historical materialism to the construction of the theory of communistive action, has been the distinction between two different routes of rationality. One is marked by successive oriented attitude, which is realised through labour, purposive rational action, or instrumental rationality. The other is oriented to reaching understanding which is realised through interaction, communicative action, or communicative rationality. It is the latter route that can be regarded as the basis for a rational consensual discourse. Some theorists however, refer to the notion of contextual rationality as a third route. This notion of rationality constitutes a basic theme in social anthropology. This notion conceives of action as a norm-guided behaviour. To the extent that action conforms to the beliefs and social norms in the context of which it occurs, it can be evaluated as rational. For an overview of the notion of contextual rationality, See Stephen K. White, the Recent Work of Jugen Habermas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp.13-22.

generalisation of values and norms by which ideas are presented and defended against criticism. In so far as communicative rationalisty provides for this condition, rational society is brought to its existence.

In the context of the theory of communicative action, habermas elaborates the conception of communicative rationality as the embodiment of Reason. To do so, he set out to show the minimum level of rationality in the level of linguistically mediated interaction. Therefore, he sets forth that four types of validity claim, comprehensibility, sicerity, truth, and rightness which are indicative of communicative rationality are presupposed in all speech acts. The immediate problem that emerges is that not all these truth claim are invoked by every speech act.[6]

Habermas argues that in constraint-free communication, when a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and

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6. This postulation however, is faced with the view that validity claim are only the functional rules of discourse, and not absolute criterion of rationality. When the actors interact as if they were saying the truth and were sincere, mutual communication becomes possible. Therefore it can be the choice of the actors to presume communicative validity claims as the ideal ground of ethics and justice. Moreover, utterance does not always presupposes the truth of the one who utters. "In what sense does reading a poem, telling a joke or greeting a friend presuppose the truth of what he said? (See John Thompson, "Universal Progmatics", in Habermas Critical Debates. ed. Thompson and Held (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p.126.

employ speech acts exists, the force of better argument would prevail. This is what Habermas calls discursive will-formation, which legitimise the achieved consensus. However the question that may be raised is if discursive will-formation, as Habermas claim, is a set of procedures, then how can a consensus with a universalistic base of values and ethics be arrived at?[7] Moreover will the force of better argument always prevail? What if the final decision in an argumentation is merely an expression of the prevailing status one. Indeed "the constraints which effects social life may operate in modes rather than the restriction of access the speech acts."[8] In this connection Habermas does not pay enough attention to different situations of individuals with different class ethnicity, and life experience, who enter in different degrees of agreement with the prevailing symbolic normative forms of society. It seem Habermas does not consider the plurality of groups and interests which is the characteristic of late capitalist society. On the contrary what is important for him is both the socially intergrative function of normative structures, and the generalised interests which lead the solidarity and consensus. However, the interest of individuals in reality may not be the same. In this case, they may find the agreed

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7. White, Recent Work, pp.69-71.

8. John Thompson, op.cit., p.129.

proposals inadequate and undesirable.[9] This is what Leyotard put forward against Habermas in an extreme sense. Since language for Lyotard is not homogeneous, it has more than one interest or one overriding standard of rationality. Lyatard reaches the conclusion that "heterogeneity makes consensus impossible".[10] Because at the difference of interests and standards of rationality, consensual dialogue may bear latent and implicit force imposed on individuals, specially minorities. Moreover politics is the location of differences and is characterised with recognition of differences.

The search for consensus may try to surpass - through force or hegemoney - the actual differences among individuals and groups. Under the circumstances, it may be more appropriate for democracy to be rooted in existence of differences rather than consensus. Moreover, although Habermas favours dialogue at all levels, it is not clear who the interlocutors are on a constant and regular basis, nor are the form and geographical location specified. These questions are prertinent because it is not feasible to have dialogue with everybody in every place, an every issue, and

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9. Micheal, Pusey, <u>Jurgen Habermas</u> (Sussex: Ellis Harwood, 1987) pp. 103-4.

10. Honi Ferm Haber, Beyond Postmodern Politics (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.22.

for an unlimited time? Naturally here it seems dialogue has its own limitations. In the real world dialogue takes place in different situations: diverse cultural traditions and class position are of moementus importance in starting a dialogue. However, while the diverse positions need to enter into dialogue, we are also aware that the existence of differences is frequently an impediment to dialogue. Consequently, one needs to analyse the condition within which dialogue between contending points of view is posited. One may also ask whether dialogue is the base of all form of interaction.

Habermas postulation of the privilege of speech in interaction between individuals, make him ignore other means of interactions, particularly, ones in which meaning is expressed through non-linguistic symbols. Even if we agree to privilege speech, question is whether we can always understand the exact meaning of what is said. The problem may arise when individuals express their meaning indirectly and/or through metaphor, proverb and the like. As such, Habermas' belief in the transparency of meaning in speech remains problematic.

Another problem that arises due to the privileging of speech is that it introduces a new form of inequality in participation. Since different individuals have different

ability to articulate and express themselves verbally, it is likely that those who excel in public speaking and use the skills of rhetoric better, will dominate the proceedings.

The parallel problem that may be posed about privileging language, as the means of communication and consensual democracy, is the narrowness of this claim. It seems this conception of language and truth is more applicable to western societies as opposed to non-western societies. In a broader sense this question attracts our attention to what Lyotard terms as "The metanarrative of the West"; that is, the narrative of western civilisation designated as the only true and rational one, and the prevalence of Reason yield a unique legitimacy to the narrative at western civilisation. Disputing with this view, Lyotard set forth that Reason is the defining feature in terms of which western societies are distinct from non-western societies. Against Habermas claim, Lyotard in this connection reminds that this conception of Reason and rationality is being questioned even in western societies. In postmodern condition, Lyatard maintains, the proliferation of small narratives, for instance, challenges the legitimacy of traditional metanrratives of the West.[11]

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11. Ibid., p.25.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The conception of democracy in Habermas' works emerges from his magnificent enterprise to construct a critical social theory. In this enterprise Habermas ties together different lines of thought in different fields of study, including epistimology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and sociology. The main motif of Hobermas' vast projects, such as "Knowledge and Human Interests" or "The Theory of Communicative Action" is to restore the place of Reason to social theory, and to lay the foundation for a rational and emancipated society. Reason, for Habermas, is not reducible to instrumental-technical or strategic calculations; it implies communicative rationality. Indeed communicative rationality is the point of departure of Habermas' conception of democracy. Habermas sees democracy as part of collective life; hence its viability is reflected in the public sphere. In the whole, when social relations are organised in a way that all individuals participate in dialogue and in every dialogue the four validity claims are redeemed, then the rational base for collective life is achieved.

Before designating democracy as part of collective life in rational society, Habermas addressed the question of

democracy in his earlier work - "The Structual Transformation of the Public Sphere". Consequently in his recent work - "The Theory of Communicative Action", he links the conception of communicative rationality with that of public sphere through the process of decolonisation of lifeworld. At one hand, Habermas' conception of democracy appears to fit in with the model of participatory democracy as it emphasises participation of all and equal opportunity for all the participants to engage and influence decisions. However, there is at least one important difference between Habermas and other advocates of participatory democracy. The latter identify insufficient avenues for participation of the people as the basic weakness of existing democracy. Hence they emphasis the need for local and grass-root institution which enable members of the community to come together and on matters of everyday existence. Habermas, on the other hand, does not focus on the institutional structures necessary for enhancing participation of the people. Rather he is concerned with the existing de-legitimation of institutions and increasing apathy. As such, he is concerned more with the revitalisation of the public sphere. Accordingly, new social movements and non-institutional forms of participation find an important place in his writings. The contribution that these movements can make to the development of communicative rationally is thus

central to his analysis. Certainly, Habermas is aware of the fact that new social movements do not constitute an alternative to western liberal democratic framework. For this reason, he emphasises the negative aspect of the movements. This is, they represent a reaction to the intrusion of system imperatives into lifeworld. Further, Habermas unlike the advocates of participatory democracy, sees democracy as an embodiment of communicative rationality. It reflects consensus that is arrived at through free and unrestrained dialogue. At least, implictly, Habermas is concerned with the dismantling of structures of exploitation and inequality that constrain free and equal participation. In a broader sense, in challenging the system the existing economic structures of exploitation and administration, regulated by money and power, would be dismantled.

As such, democracy, for Hobermas, is concerned not merely with political institutions of participation and governance but with the construction of a rational society. In this regard the centrality accorded to the revitalisation of public sphere and decolonisation of lifeworld is particularly significant. Indeed they are the means by which the frontiers of communicative rationality can be enhanced.

The thrust of the conception of democracy in the context of communicative rationality is the dialogical resolution of conflict through dialogue. By dialogue Habermas refers the the language, learned and sustained intersubjectively, by which individuals are motivated to come to an understanding with others about the validity of their claims. Therefore speech bears a motivating force towards resolution of conflicts. Habermas' conception of democracy focuses on dialogue and discourse rather than institutional arrangements, such as right of voting, election, representation, or balance of power. In fact Habermas detaches the conception of democracy from state institutional locus. For this reason the postulated goals can be questioned freely. For Habermas, the freedom to criticise political authority, within discursive processes is more important than commitment the any presumed values.

It may be claimed, as has been done by several critics, that in the conception of democracy Habermas presents an ideal form. Against such criticism, Habermas emphasises that like Rawls and Nozick he does not incline to sketch a normative political theory for an ideal society.[1] His conception is neither embedded in a just society, nor is it

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1. Jurgen Habermas, the Past as Future. Trans & ed. Max Pensky (Cambridge: Polity, 1994) p.101.

founded on specific norms and principles. The emphasis instead is on procedure by which collective norms can be arrived at. However, the procedure that he puts forward raises serious questions about the nature of the norms that might be vidicated in the course of dialogue.

Despite these critiques the conception of democracy in the works of Habermas, particularly his idea of mutual understanding, discursive will-formation, and revitalisation of public sphere, has inspired many theorists of democracy. In so far as "dialogical resolution of conflict" is regarded as the central principle of democratic existence, Habermas' ideas have redefined the very idea of democracy.

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