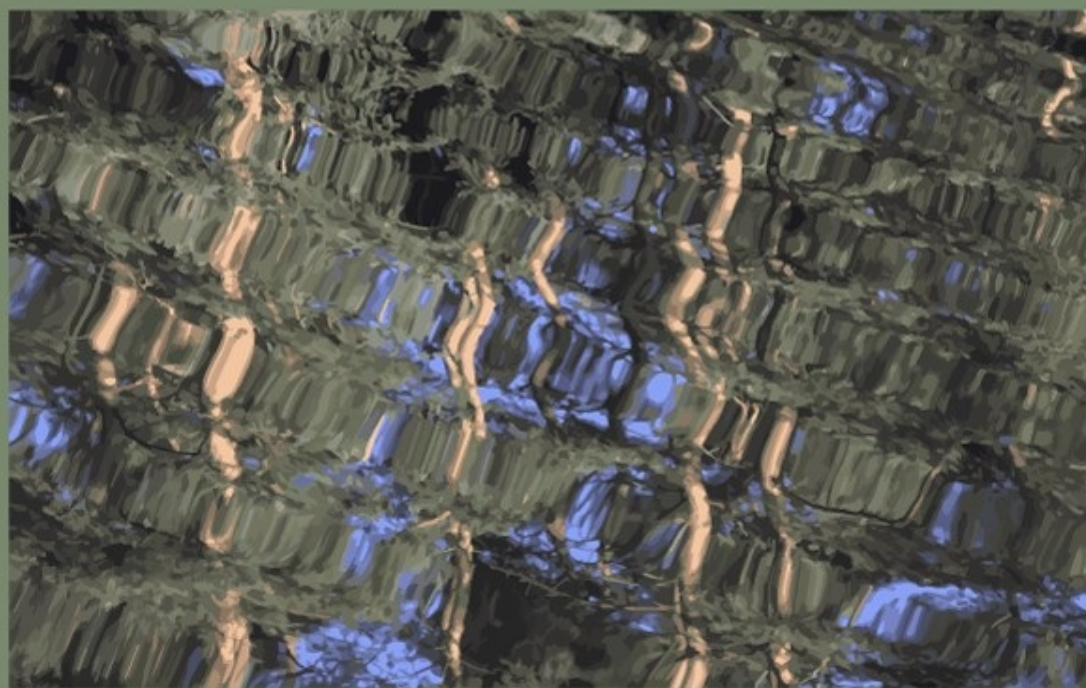# HABERMAS AND THE END OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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Table of Contents

Habermas and the End of the Individual

Jurgen Habermas, a student of Adorno, is by far the best-known successor to the Frankfurt school. Indeed, he is often credited with leading critical theory out of the cul-de-sac into which it was led by Adorno, through his fixation on the fragments and ruins of reason, and Marcuse, through his pessimistic retreat into the aesthetic dimension, by restoring its status as a rational, interdisciplinary research program. Certainly the brilliant scope of his project, coupled with his great responsiveness to criticism, renders his de facto status as the leading critical theorist of the day well deserved. Perhaps his greatest contribution has been his defense of the progressive aspects of the Enlightenment against those who would abandon its legacy altogether.

Yet, from the perspective of the theory of narcissism, Habermas's project is deeply flawed, because the concept of the self that it implies resembles the detached, ghostly self described by MacIntyre as the outcome of emotivism. This is most ironical, because Habermas's entire project is aimed at overcoming emotivism, as indeed it does. However, the way in which it overcomes emotivism gives rise to a view of the self as abstract, insubstantial, and detached. The theory of narcissism and, more generally, the

psychoanalytic theory associated therewith reveal that Habermas lacks a robust concept of the self and also suggests the direction that philosophical social theory should take. A philosophy concerned with the good for man should be concerned with the needs of the self, the way in which society influences these needs, and how the self fares under different social arrangements. While the theory of narcissism does not support the thesis of the "end of internalization" per se, it does support the concerns that Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse express in terms of this thesis. Habermas, however, rejects not only the details of this thesis, but also its thrust.

The theory of narcissism draws our attention to the quest for narcissistic perfection as perhaps the most profound human striving. It suggests that a critical philosophy should question how society acts to foster or retard progressive solutions to this quest and, in particular, how progressive narcissism can be encouraged. Of course, a philosophy adequate to this task need not use the language of narcissism. MacIntyre never mentions the term. For Marcuse, narcissism is often but a version of eros. Yet, in very different ways—the intensely conservative implications of *After Virtue* have been commented on frequently—each captures the issues with which the theory of narcissism is concerned. So does Plato. Habermas, as we shall see, abstracts excessively from these considerations.

It will not be possible to do full justice here to the breadth and depth of

Habermas's work. Instead, we will focus on his treatment of psychoanalysis, not only because this is the way in which the issues with which we are concerned are studied, but also because in Habermas's work psychoanalysis serves as a model of emancipation in almost every aspect of life. In particular, it is a model for the ideal speech situation,[342] and ideal speech, in turn, is a model for Habermas's ideal society, or at least for how the ideal society would be realized. After seeing how Habbermas goes wrong, we shall be in a position, in the next chapter, to conclude with a number of general comments on the relevance of the theory of narcissism to critical philosophy and social theory. In general these comments will implicitly contrast the abstraction from self and family seen in Habermas's project with the centrality of these issues in approaches — such as those of MacIntyre, Socrates, and the Frankfurt school — that seem to capture better the intensity of the pursuit for narcissistic fulfillment, by whatever name it is called.

In this chapter, we will focus not on narcissistic themes per se, as we did in earlier chapters, but on the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism. The reason for this shift in approach is simply that Habermas ignores the narcissistic quest for wholeness and perfection almost entirely, perhaps because he disregards the earliest stages of human development from which it stems. He neither embraces this quest, as Marcuse does, nor seeks to transform it, as Socrates does; nor is he actively ambivalent toward it, like Adorno. This disregard has consequences for Habermas's

project, even if they are not immediately apparent. Indeed, it is Habermas's neglect of the power of the quest for narcissistic integrity and fulfillment that largely accounts for his pale view of the individual.

Relevance to the Postmodernism Debate

It is, to be sure, becoming less and less common to evaluate Habermas's work from this perspective, one which faults Habermas for being insufficiently concerned with the foundations of autonomous selfhood. Indeed, much of the current debate over Habermas's work seems headed in the opposite direction, being concerned with the relationship between Habermas's project and so-called postmodernism, the view that it is self-deception to see Western modernity in terms of a historical "meta-narrative" concerned with the struggle of humanistically conceived individuals to construct free institutions.[343] From the perspective of postmodernism the question is not whether Habermas is sufficiently concerned with the conditions of autonomous selfhood, but whether autonomous selfhood is a desirable ideal. Perhaps the ideal of autonomous selfhood (Miindigkeit) is itself an ideological veil, a guise for repression on the one hand and the will to power on the other. It is not possible to address this issue here, unfortunately, but it may be worthwhile to outline the relevance of my argument to this debate. The relationship is more complex than one might suspect.

Jacques Lacan might well be called a postmodern psychoanalyst, for reasons that will become apparent shortly. Habermas mentions him a number of times, almost always in association with Michel Foucault.[344] In key respects Habermas's view of psychoanalysis resembles that of Lacan. Both see it as hermeneutics. Lacan's concept of the signified "sliding" under a chain of Signifies is similar to Habermas's view of neurotic symptoms as an expression of a private language, unknown even to the individual. Although Habermas holds to the concept of an instinctual unconscious in a way that Lacan does not (for Lacan, desire is not an expression of libido), in the end this theoretical difference turns out not to be central. Both see analysis as achieving a cure by reversing the linguistic process by which symbol was split off from meaning.[345]

Yet the views of Lacan and Habermas are hardly identical. Indeed, what is so striking is how sharply they differ given their agreement regarding how analysis cures. For Habermas, the goal of analysis—and its society-wide correlate, discourse—is the reestablishment of the autonomous individual on a new basis, grounded in the mutual recognition of self and other. The goal is to reconstruct (as Habermas uses the term in Zur *Rekonstruktion* des *Historischen* Materialismus, to signify the transformation of a still valid perspective, in order to give it new life) rational individuality on a new basis. For Lacan, the goal is to show that the very idea of rational individuality is a veil, concealing repression on the one hand and the will to power on the

other. In a nutshell, Habermas seeks to recenter the subject, Lacan to decenter him.

The psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism stands in an interesting and complex relationship to this dynamic. In general, it holds to a modern view of the individual as potentially autonomous. It stresses the importance of pre-verbal modes of experience in grounding individuality, in contrast to both Habermas, who ignores this stage altogether; and

Lacan, who treats the largely pre-verbal "mirror stage" as the source of a false ego.[346] From this perspective, one could formulate the issue as the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism versus Habermas's and Lacan's hermeneutic interpretations of psychoanalysis and individuality. However, from another perspective, the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism supports Habermas against Lacan, for both Habermas and the theory of narcissism see mature, autonomous individuality as rooted in and maintained by the mutual recognition of others. One sees this especially in the work of Kohut, for whom the coherence of even the mature, adult self depends on the recognition of others—so-called selfobjects. It seems fair to conclude that the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism generates an immanent critique of Habermas. Both share the modern project of fostering mature autonomy.

Taking the theory of narcissism seriously means rejecting key aspects of Habermas's project, but not his goal. Indeed, the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism reveals an element of pathos in Habermas's project; for he seeks fervently to restore autonomous individuality on a new basis and thereby reestablish the validity of the Enlightenment project against authors such as Lacan and Foucault, and yet, as the theory of narcissism reveals, it is precisely what he shares with Lacan—a hermeneutic view of psychoanalysis and the individual generally—that prevents him from doing so.

The relationship of my critique to the debate over postmodernism would seem to be straightforward: my criticism of Habermas's view of psychoanalysis and individuality goes double for Lacan and the postmodern view of the individual generally. Yet, it is not this simple. Habermas and the theory of narcissism share the same universe of discourse. To say that the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism shows Habermas to hold a pale, insubstantial view of the individual is a genuine criticism, given that Habermas values mature individuality. But to criticize Lacan for holding a view of the individual as constituted totally by culture and society is really no criticism at all, but only a compliment, since Lacan holds such a view of the individual to be liberating. To truly criticize Lacan, one would have to show why autonomous individuality is good and not merely one more form of false consciousness.

While this issue cannot be taken up here, it might be helpful to outline what an answer to Lacan would have to include. In many respects Lacan's view of narcissism is similar to that distilled in chapter 2, since it sees narcissism not merely as a stage to be superseded by object love, but as persisting throughout a lifetime. Not unlike other theorists we have considered, Lacan sees pathological narcissism as the result of the child's failure to separate psychically from the mother. The result is an inability to submit to what Lacan calls the "Law of the Name-of-the-Father," which resembles the reality principle as enforced by the father during the oedipal conflict.[347] But for Lacan, primary narcissism is not just about fusion with the mother as world and the associated feelings of grandiosity and wholeness. Rather, it is a process by which the infant internalizes an alien ego as a result of an inherent lack of being—the mother provides the constancy and continuity that the infant lacks in itself—coupled with the infant's erotic captivation by the image of the mother. It has been noted that Lacan's account of this internalization process can be seen as an elaboration of the work of Melanie Klein.[348]

In "The Ego and the Id," Freud describes the ego as "a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes . . . [which] contains the history of those object choices."[349] Freud argues, however, that a mature ego will not be bound by these precipitates. Lacan responds that Freud is mistaken on this score, perhaps because Freud lacked our current knowledge about the role of

mimesis in animal behavior. In fact, says Lacan, narcissistic identification, the process to which the above quotation refers, is the way in which the ego is formed and maintained. Indeed, Lacan sees the ego as ultimately little more than a series of identifications, and maturity as a matter of substituting a series of more abstract identifications for the primary identification with the mother. Against mature autonomy, Lacan praises a subject with the courage to confront the ultimate vacuity of his own identity.[350]

How such a view leads Lacan to challenge the possibility of an autonomous ego—at least as this possibility has been understood in the tradition of the Enlightenment as Mündigkeit[351]—is apparent. Why such a view also leads Lacan to question the desirability of autonomy is complex and cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to note that the answer to this question depends in large part on whether Lacan's psychoanalytic account of the premirror and mirror stages is correct, on whether the ego is capable of transcending its identifications. If it is not, then the ideal of ego autonomy is a false goal. We are faced here with a situation similar to that encountered in considering MacIntyre's *After Virtue.* Lacan and MacIntyre both raise interdependent empirical and normative issues which must nonetheless be distinguished. Although it would take us too far afield to try to sort out the various issues raised by Lacan, the relevance of issues raised by postmodernism will be highlighted at several points in our discussion of Habermas.

In the next section, Habermas's view of psychoanalysis will be contrasted with the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism. In the section after that, it will be shown how Habermas's view of psychoanalysis leads him to render the individual in terms excessively abstract, in the apparent hope that individuals so conceived might be more responsive to the emancipatory power of language. In the final section, it will be concluded that in many respects the first generation of Frankfurt theorists was on the right track in focusing on the relationship between authority and the family.

Habermas and the Hermeneutic Interpretation of Psychoanalysis

The two essays on psychoanalysis in Knowledge and Human Interests remain central to Habermas's interpretation of the psychoanalytic enterprise. His observations on psychoanalysis in *Theorie* des kommunikativen Handelns suggest that his ideas on the subject have changed very little,[id=352] and his brief remarks on Freud in several pieces collected in his recent Der philo*sophische Diskurs* der Moderne confirm this impression.[353] Habermas calls psychoanalysis a "depth hermeneutics."[354] By this he means not merely that it interprets those who would deceive themselves, but also that virtually all psychopathology can be viewed as a suppression of communication. However, for psychoanalysis to be plausibly construed as depth hermeneutics, the phenomena with which it deals must be shown to be

essentially linguistic or at least pre-linguistic in character. This is what Habermas sets out to demonstrate in the two essays on Freud in Knowledge *and* Human Interests. It is a far more crucial, difficult project than simply demonstrating that Freud "scientistically" misunderstood himself. For even if Freud were mistaken about the scientific status of analysis, this by itself would not demonstrate that psychoanalysis is properly construed as depth hermeneutics. Indeed, this is precisely what the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism suggests.

Habermas argues that psychopathology originates when a traumatic event causes a *"deviation from the model of the language game of communicative* action, in which motives of action and linguistically expressed intentions coincide."[355] The outcome, which may not become apparent until much later, is the development of symptoms. For Habermas, symptoms are an expression of a private language unknown to the conscious self. Hence the individual is unable to communicate freely not only with others, but also with himself. "Because the symbols that interpret suppressed needs are excluded from public communication, the speaking and acting subject's *communication with himself is* interrupted. The privatized language of unconscious motives is rendered inaccessible to the ego."[356] From this perspective the goal of analysis, as well as its practice, is straightforward: to reverse the process of symptom (private symbol) formation by translating the alienated private language into public language, thereby bringing the analysand back into the

public world, in which intentions and actions coincide, and there are no secret codes and hidden meanings. As Habermas puts it: "The ego's flight from itself is an operation that is carried out in and with language. Otherwise it would not be possible to reverse the defensive process hermeneutically, via the analysis of language [that is, psychoanalysis].[357]

But this assertion, as is quite apparent, begs the question. It is hardly given that psychoanalysis is best understood as achieving its results by depth hermeneutics. Arguments along these lines have been leveled against Habermas frequently. Most point out that Habermas misinterprets Freud in suggesting that it is insight that cures the patient and that insight has the potential of being almost total. Henning Ottmann, for example, argues that Habermas overintellectualizes the process of psychoanalytic reflection.

> It seems exaggerated to elevate the patient's "self-reflection" to a means of liberation. In psychotherapy, liberation is more the result of the "emotional acting-out of the conflict," of repetition, resistance, and emotional upset. ... In Habermas' intellectualized interpretation, reflection is attributed to what is actually accomplished by the working out of the conflict.[358]

In similar fashion Russell Keat argues that Habermas is quite mistaken in equating id with alienated ego.

> Having (mis-)understood the concept of the id as the alienated ego, he [Habermas] presents in effect a literal and unqualified reading of this dictum ["Where Id was there Ego shall be"], so that the abolition of the id is seen as a possible and desirable outcome of the therapeutic process.

> Likewise, the instincts are regarded as the sources only of pathological neurotic activity; and indeed the same is true of all unconscious determinants.[359]

Ottmann exaggerates perhaps; certainly Keat does. As early as 1968, in an appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests,* Habermas suggested that emancipation—in psychoanalysis and discourse— depends on the interaction of understanding and catharsis. It is the latter that removes emotional barriers standing in the way of admitting needs to consciousness and hence to rational understanding.[360] Nevertheless, there does seem to be a certain alienation from aspects of human nature implicit in Habermas's concept of psychoanalysis, since there is little room for aspects that cannot be made transparent in discourse.[361]

Kohut argues that analysis cures not by means of increased insight and understanding, but rather by a largely unconscious process, "transmuting internalization," in which the analyst's presence and empathic responsiveness are internalized by the analysand.[362] Interestingly, one finds a hint of this idea of how analysis cures in Habermas's work, not in his discussion of psychoanalysis, to be sure, but in his reinterpretation of Horkheimer and Adorno's ideal of reconciliation with nature. Habermas quotes from Adorno's interpretation of Eichendorff's concept of "beautiful otherness" (Schonen Fremde) in order to capture the concept of reconciliation as applied strictly to human relations. "The situation of reconciliation does not annex the foreign

as a form of philosophical imperialism; its happiness stems from its protected nearness to the distant and different, on the other side of the heterogeneous as well as individual."[363] Though he did not intend to, says Habermas, Adorno described reconciliation in terms of an unimpaired intersubjectivity that is established and maintained in discourse.[364] To understand the power of discourse in this fashion—that it is based not so much on bracketing all that keeps language from its telos of truth, but rather on heightened empathy that has unconditional regard for the subjectivity of the other person—is to come close indeed to Kohut's concept of how analysis cures. It is unfortunate that Habermas did not develop this point. It remains confined to his encounter with the most utopian moments of Horkheimer and Adorno's work. We shall see that this is part of a pattern in Habermas's work, that he recognizes the importance of needs not readily expressed in language, but cannot integrate them into his system because he has no categories for them.

From the perspective of the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism, the most striking aspect of Habermas's treatment of psychoanalysis is his utter neglect of the earliest stages of life. In his "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures" (originally published in 1976), Habermas devotes three sentences to the first year of life.[365] This is in a long section on the stages of ego development according to psychoanalytic and cognitive developmental psychology. That Habermas does not consider what he calls the "symbiotic" stage theoretically

significant may be because it is prior to the full differentiation of subjects: mother and child. At this stage it is not conceptually meaningful, he suggests, to speak of intersubjective communication, intersubjective interaction, and the like. Once again, the assumption that development is to be understood in terms of language renders stages and events that cannot be so explained theoretically vapid.

One is reminded here of Rousseau's criticism of previous state-of-nature theorists: that they take as man's nature what is in reality the outcome of a long process of civilization, and that to apprehend man's true nature, it is necessary to go further back.[366] Similarly, the theory of narcissism suggests that Habermas presumes what should no longer be taken for granted: namely, that psychologically informed social theory begins— and should begin—with a fully differentiated self. That he does so is not too surprising. Object relations theorists sometimes argue that Freud took the existence of the self for granted, which may have been because the types of neuroses with which he was primarily concerned are characterized by a relatively intact, albeit generally repressed, ego.[367] Habermas's hermeneutic interpretation of Freud cannot draw out what is not there in the first place. If a robust vision of the self is not found elsewhere in Habermas's project, then it will not be found at all.

The Seventh Stage

Why a concern with the self is so important has already been suggested in chapters 4 and 5. If one abandons Freudian drive theory, especially libido theory, then one lacks a powerful, virtually untouchable source of opposition to repressive socialization. The self is left vulnerable to manipulation. Habermas's hermeneutic interpretation of Freud in effect abandons the force of libido theory and the drives generally. In its place, as a source of opposition to totalitarian socialization by parents and state, Habermas puts language, especially discourse. However, it is most problematic whether language can fulfill this function. Even more problematic is whether it should. For language to fulfill this function, the individual must be rendered in more abstract, shadowy terms than would otherwise be necessary. In other words, Habermas's neglect of the first, least individuated stage of development leads to a certain neglect of aspects of adult individuality as well.

One sees this neglect most clearly in Habermas's reinterpretation of Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Habermas argues that Kohlberg's account of the stages of moral development, culminating in the sixth stage (the stage of universal ethical principles), while a most valuable perspective, stops short. In his reinterpretation of Kohlberg's stages in light of the general structures of communicative action, Habermas demonstrates the possibility of a seventh stage. But, as Joel Whitebook points out, this seventh stage reflects a shift in Habermas's thinking. It represents his recognition of the validity of the claim not only to justice, but also to happiness, a

recognition that has otherwise not played as important a role in Habermas's work as it has in the work of the first generation of critical theorists.[368]

Habermas argues that Kohlberg's sixth stage takes as given the conflict between reason and needs, that it expresses a Kantian view of morality, insofar as it conceives of morality as the subordination of needs to universal rational principles. Habermas's seventh stage seeks to transcend this hierarchy so that "need interpretations are no longer assumed as given, but are drawn into the discursive formation of will." At this stage, says Habermas, inner nature is no longer regarded as fixed or given. Rather, needs are "released from their paleosymbolic prelinguisticality" and themselves become subject to discourse. "But this means that internal nature is not subjected, in the cultural preformation met with at any given time, to the demands of ego autonomy; rather, through a dependent ego it obtains free access to the interpretive possibilities of the cultural tradition."[369]

More recently, Habermas has written about this process in terms of a radicalized aesthetic consciousness. He suggests that the radical decoupling of aesthetics from science and tradition characteristic of the modern world ("autonomous art") allows the possibility that an aesthetic sensibility might generate a purer insight into needs, bypassing the way in which these needs are deformed by society and culture.[370] This appears to be what Habermas has in mind when, in the otherwise puzzling quotation above, he refers to an

ego, released from the demands of autonomy, able to gain free access to the cultural tradition. How these considerations address the issues raised by postmodern critics such as Lacan and Foucault is obvious. Indeed, Habermas refers to this aesthetic experience in the language of postmodernism, using terms such as "decentered, unbound subjectivity."[371] This concern with a reality revealed by aesthetics is not entirely new to Habermas's work. In a piece originally published in 1972, Habermas expressed sympathy for Walter Benjamin's idea of a mimetic, nonpurposively rational, spontaneous attitude toward nature, especially as this attitude is expressed in "post-auratic" (that is, exoteric) art.[372] Habermas found such an attitude attractive because he recognized that it represents a genuine human need for communion with nature, a need not adequately fulfilled by either technical or practical cognitive interests (what he now calls, following Max Weber, the cultural value spheres of science and technology, and law and morality).[373]

Habermas thus recognizes the significance of experiences and needs that are not essentially linguistic.[374] The difficulty, as many critics, such as Martin Jay and Stephen White, point out, is that while Habermas insists that "autonomous art" cannot and should not become a social force by itself, he seems to have no very clear idea of how the needs and experiences it reveals might be rendered in language.[375] These needs and experiences remain at the edge of Habermas's program, recognized as significant, but not theoretically integrated into his system. This is quite unlike Habermas's earlier

"emancipatory cognitive interest," which he took great pains to derive from the practical cognitive interest in language.[376]

Yet, at points in Habermas's work where the utopian impulse is strongest, the ideal of theoretically integrating the elements that Habermas calls aesthetic is a powerful presence. Indeed, this is precisely what Habermas's stage seven is about. What Whitebook calls the "implicit linguistic idealism" of Habermas's interpretation of Freud is nothing else but the suggestion that the needs and experiences that Habermas now deals with under the rubric "aesthetics" might become totally transparent in language.[377] Jay, Whitebook, and White have shown how sketchy Habermas's conception of this ideal truly is. It may be more useful here to consider its desirability than its content. Thus we will examine, in terms of Habermas's understanding of psychoanalysis and discourse, whether the integration of pre- and non-linguistic needs and experiences into discourse would foster mature autonomy.

Why the integration of these needs and experiences into Habermas's larger project might not be desirable is suggested by the relationship of individual and society implicit in stage seven. For at this stage there is almost no difference between individual and social needs. Which individual needs are to be met seems to depend entirely on cultural consensus, such needs being evaluated solely in terms of "the interpretive possibilities of the cultural

tradition" as interpreted in discourse.[378] There seems to be no place for an understanding of individual needs as valuable precisely because they challenge, by their very privacy and intensity, even a discursively achieved cultural consensus and so emphasize the separateness and hence the potential autonomy of the individual. Needs themselves, understood strictly as an expression of primary (unconscious) psychological processes, brook no compromise and hence no consensus: there is no such thing as too much satisfaction of needs. Indeed, it is precisely this aspect of eros that the Frankfurt school found so valuable as a source of opposition to a false totality. Needless to say, the uncompromising character of individual needs is not an unalloyed value. The goal is rather to strike a balance between individual and social needs. The problem is that the balance which Habermas strikes is weighted too much to the social side. Or rather, that sometimes he seems to see no difference between the two sides.

The implicit goal of stage seven is to restore happiness as the goal of the good society. However, in "On Hedonism," Marcuse reminds us that happiness has rarely been a principle of social organization, both because its unfettered pursuit is socially disruptive and because happiness is such an individual, private matter.[379] By contrast, Habermas writes of happiness as though it were almost solely a matter of groups discursively determining which needs are to be met. Happiness, traditionally such a private matter, becomes primarily a public affair. It becomes strictly a matter for discourse. For

Habermas, group discourse is psychoanalysis writ large. Both seek to make the private public and thereby overcome the individual's alienation from himself. The result, however, is the totally socialized man, for whom social integration (nonalienation from society) is identical with personal integration (nonalienation from self).

One might respond that Habermas's stage seven characterizes utopia. For only in utopia is it acceptable to eliminate the tension between individual and group. As a theoretical observation about the role of negative—that is, nonaffirmative— thinking in critical social theory, such a response may be correct. However, we have seen the origins of this loss of tension between individual and group in Habermas's view of psychoanalysis, in which the therapeutic goal is to render the private totally public. From this perspective Habermas's utopian stage seven is continuous with his reinterpretation of contemporary psychoanalytic practice. In both, the thesis of the linguistic mediation of needs becomes a thesis of the linguistically mediated character of individuality. Such a thesis is partially correct, of course. However, in Habermas's system, and especially within stage seven, individuality becomes so thoroughly mediated by language that the individual's access to himself is —ideally— identical with the access of others to him in discourse. The unique, substantial individual is lost to the group.

In "A Reply to my Critics" (1982), Habermas writes: "I do not regard the

fully transparent society as an ideal, nor do I wish to suggest any other ideal."[380] However, in "Moral Development and Ego Identity" (originally published in 1974), Habermas stated that in the seventh stage, "internal nature is thereby moved into a utopian perspective. . . . Inner nature is rendered communicatively fluid and transparent to the extent that needs can ... be kept articulable (sprachfähig)."[381] How is this difference in tone regarding the ideal of transparency to be explained? Has Habermas changed his mind? He now appears to make a distinction between transparency as means and transparency as end. It is through maximal individual and social transparency that we are assured that a discursively achieved consensus is, *ceteris* paribus, legitimate: that it does not repress or deny needs and experiences that would otherwise be addressed in discourse. As Habermas suggests in a recent article, transparency is a formal condition of utopia, but the content of utopia remains open, to be determined by communication communities themselves.[382] But Habermas's distinction—which seems correct as far as it goes — does not really address the problem raised here. Maximal transparency, as Habermas understands it, is a problem whether seen as means or end. It is the tendency to equate individual and social needs that is the problem, regardless of whether this equation is seen as the means to a content-less utopia or the utopia itself. Indeed, the equation may be even more problematic when seen as a means. For the discrepancy between means and ends reveals that Habermas questions as an ideal the process on which

he relies so heavily as a means to its realization.

The "End of the Individual"?

Habermas explicitly rejects what he calls the "thesis of the end of the individual" promoted by Adorno and Marcuse.[383] Though stated in different ways at different times by each, the core of this thesis, as we saw in chapter 4, is the assertion that the subjection of hitherto private sectors of existence (such as child rearing, family planning, and education) to administrative direction and control has led to a generation of individuals no longer able to resist authority. This is because the development of an independent ego is a long, slow process that requires that the child be sheltered for some time from the outside world; but this is precisely what the administrative state's intrusion into family life does not allow. Habermas states that Adorno and Marcuse have been seduced by "an overly sensitive perception and an overly simplified interpretation of certain tendencies, into developing a left counterpart to the once popular theory of totalitarian domination. I mention these utterances only to draw attention to the fact that critical social theory still holds fast to the concept of the autonomous ego, even when it makes the gloomy prognosis that this ego is losing its basis."[384] This is one of Habermas's sharpest criticisms of the first generation of critical theorists. It is also not entirely clear. Are Adorno and Marcuse stating anything more than Habermas admits in the last sentence?

Elsewhere Habermas says that what would constitute the real end of the individual would be the separation of socialization from justification.[385] This would be tantamount to the total administration of meaning; for individuals would no longer demand that norms be discursively justified. Habermas's is a trenchant reconceptualization of the character of total administration. However, he goes too far in the other direction; for there is a sense in which Habermas's stage seven also threatens the individual. Culture is equated with the self to such a degree that the unique, concrete individual is diminished. In stage seven the individual is only the mirror of culture. One sees this most clearly in Habermas's treatment of happiness, as though its content were best determined by groups deciding which cultural values to realize. In another respect, though, culture is located too much outside the individual, as though it had no intrapsychic persistence. By treating culture in stage seven as though it were a catalog of alternatives to be sifted through in discourse, Habermas downplays the ways in which family and society may circumscribe these choices. His likely response that in stage seven such constraints are removed by adherence to the principles of free and open communication— the general symmetry conditions of discourse[386]—would not be compelling, in view of our consideration in chapter 4 of how such constraints may become part of the self.

The preceding discussion suggests that in Habermas's work the individual and his culture hover too freely above the real world. The

individual is not bound by the developmental conditions that constitute the self, and culture becomes a catalog of opportunities, rather than a virtual extension of the self. Why Habermas sees the relationship between individual and culture in this fashion stems not only from his hermeneutic interpretation of Freud. There is another, albeit related, reason. Unlike Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, who see the end of the individual as an entirely negative affair, Habermas sees in it a potentially progressive development. For the transformation of a culturally given background into a politically administered foreground, while threatening individuality in new ways, also raises questions of justification and legitimation regarding practices previously taken for granted. Discourse over these practices thus becomes possible for the first time, as they are raised out of their apparent naturalness.

But such an argument assumes what can no longer be taken for granted: that individuals who can and will demand convincing justification and legitimation will continue to exist. Though Habermas recognizes the possibility that this questioning may not occur, at least as long as a legitimation deficit does not coincide with an economic crisis, he regards the emergence of demands for legitimation as likely.[387] Why? We have already seethe outline of the answer. From his view of psychoanalysis to his stage seven to his confidence in the potentially emancipatory aspects of the intrusion of politics into private life, Habermas sees individual autonomy as

ultimately a reflection of the free use of language in groups. The thesis of the potential utter linguistic transparency of the psyche simply does not allow for the end of the individual, because in a certain sense there is no beginning of the individual. The source of the quest for freedom and autonomy rests far more in the transcendent structure of language than in the psyches of human beings. As Habermas put it in his inaugural lecture at the University of Frankfurt in 1965, "the human interest in autonomy and responsibility (Mündigkeit) is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: language. Though *its* structure, autonomy *and responsibility are posited for* us."[388]

We can now see why the concerns of an earlier generation of critical theorists regarding the end of the individual do not weigh so heavily on Habermas, even if they have come due with interest. Habermas holds to what is really a quite different view of the individual, as one whose search for freedom and autonomy is in a certain sense derived not from assumptions about human nature, but from assumptions about the emancipatory character of language. It is for this reason that the private realms of individual and family are not central. This is not solely because Habermas's theory is abstract or merely because he emphasizes the public sphere. It is rather because in Habermas's model of the individual there is really no place for the private. Strivings that an earlier generation of critical theorists saw as emerging from man's innermost nature, as well as his most intimate relations,

in Habermas's system reach down to him from the public sphere, and ultimately from the structure of language.

Conclusion

Our considerations suggest that Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse were on the right track, that the critical study of society cannot ignore the way in which families reproduce the types of individuals that society requires. If families do not foster the growth of individuals with coherent selves, capable of utilizing culture while at the same time maintaining a critical distance from it, nothing else will. For the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism, there is no instinctual deus ex machina, in the form of an eros that longs to be free of social constraint and can substitute for the autonomy of the self. Nor is the discursive use of language capable of overcoming the effects of unresponsive and repressive socialization—at least, not without conceptualizing the individual in excessively abstract terms.

Were the critical study of society to focus on the family, it would be dealing with the conditions that produce or fail to produce those public individuals with whom political philosophy has traditionally been concerned. Political philosophy, of course, has not been concerned with the family for the most part. To the contrary, much Western political thought has sought to elevate the public realm, in the manner of ancient Greece, as against the

modern world's fascination with another facet of the private: the realm of getting and spending. This is especially true of Habermas. Since the publication of his Strukturwandel der *Offentlichkeit* (1962), he has sought to restore the realm of free public discussion to the center of political philosophy. Further, many feminists, otherwise so critical of much Western political thought, have directed their attention to expanding the public realm by opening it to women. However, the more acute insight would seem to be that of Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinner-stein: that it is of equal importance to bring men into the private sphere, into the world of family and child rearing.[389] Were such a program successful, the private realm of child rearing and family would presumably come to be regarded as fundamental, important, and worthy of serious men's and women's attention as the public. It would seem to be an appropriate task for critical social philosophy to begin to weave this insight into its accounts, much as an earlier generation of critical theorists brought the insights of Freud to bear on its critique.

The first generation of critical theorists turned to Freud because he added depth to the concept of false consciousness so useful in explaining the failure of proletarian revolution. Freud also helped to explain the vast aggression that, while always a feature of world history, had recently become vastly more mechanized and rationalized. More important, perhaps, Freud's libido theory promised that a facet of human nature that loved freedom might survive the coming dark ages of fascism, as well as the totally administered

state in both its Eastern and Western versions. Habermas also turns to Freud, but not the same Freud. Habermas turns to what he regards as the hermeneutic power of psychoanalysis, in order to explain and justify the emancipatory power of discourse. The psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism presents a picture of the world without these trans-individual — indeed, transcendent — sources of autonomy and freedom. Yet, this does not lead the theory to reject these values as merely a chimera. Indeed, their mundane and fragile character makes these values even more precious, precisely because they are so rare. Such a perspective suggests new possibilities for good and evil that critical social philosophy would do well to come to terms with.

Notes

342 Jurgen Habermas, "A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests," pp. 166-72, 182-85. Actually, the parallel between ideal speech and psychoanalysis is not perfect; Habermas characterizes the latter as an educative or therapeutic discourse. However, with regard to the issues with which we are concerned here, the parallel is most exact, as we shall see.

343 Stephen K. White, "Foucault's Challenge to Critical Theory," pp. 420-21.

344 Habermas, Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, pp. 70, 120, 311, 314, 359.

345 Jacques Lacan, Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, idem, Ecrits: A Selection, chap. 3. On Habermas's view of the instinctual unconscious, see B. Frankel, "Habermas Talking: An Interview," p. 53.

346 Lacan, Ecrits, pp. 5-6. See also Martha Evans, "Introduction to Jacques Lacan's Lecture: The

Neurotic's Individual Myth," pp. 394-400. The "mirror stage" runs from about 6 to 18 months.

347 Lacan, Ecrits, pp. 67, 199, 217, 310, 314, and p. xi (Translators Note). See also Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis, pp. 30-37.

348 Lacan, Ecrits, pp. 20-21; Ragland-Sullivan, Lacan and Philosophy, pp. 34-35.

349 Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," p. 29; quoted by Ragland-Sullivan, Lacan and Philosophy, p. 35.

350 Lacan, Ecrits, pp. 15, 80-88, 171. See also Ragland-Sullivan, Lacan and Philosophy, pp. 37-39; Evans, "Introduction to Lacan's Lecture," pp. 395 96, 398-99.

351 See Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

352 Habermas, Theorié des kommunikativen Handelns, vol. 1, pp. 42-43; see also the translation. Theory of Communicative Action, pp. 20-22.

353 Habermas, Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, pp. 255, 309.

354 Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 218.

355 Ibid., p. 226; emphasis original.

356 Ibid.. p. 227; emphasis original.

357 Ibid., p. 241.

358 Henning Ottmann, "Cognitive Interests and Self-Reflection," p. 86.

359 Russell Keat, The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud, and the Critique of Positivism, pp. 96, 107.

360 Habermas, Knowledge, pp. 309-11, 314-17. See also idem, "A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests," pp. 182-85.

361 Christopher Nichols, "Science or Reflection: Habermas on Freud"; Joel Whitebook, "Reason and Happiness: Some Psychoanalytic Themes in Critical Theory," esp. pp. 23-30.

362 Heinz Kohut, The Restoration of the Self, pp. 30-32; idem. How Does Analysis Cure?, pp. 70-71.

363 Habermas, Theorie, vol. 1, p. 523; my translation. See also McCarthy's translation. Theory, p. 390.

364 Habermas, Theorie, pp. 522-24.

365 Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," pp. 100-01.

366 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men," pp. 102-04.

367 Although they are different concepts, the ego and the self are frequently used interchangeably by object relations theorists. This is somewhat confusing, but it is done primarily to preserve continuity with Freud.

368 Whitebook, "Reason and Happiness," p. 25.

369 Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," p. 93.

370 Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," pp. 199-203. See also White, "Foucault's Challenge," pp. 426-27.

371 Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," p. 200.

372 Habermas, "Bewusstmachende oder rettende Kritik-Die Aktualität Walter Benjamins," pp. 322-32. See also idem, Legitimation Crisis, p. 78; Martin jay, "Habermas and Modernism," pp. 126-27.

373 Habermas, Theorie, vol. 1, pp. 226-29.

374 Actually, to write of needs and experiences as "essentially linguistic" is not so much an explanation as a definition. One sees this, for example, in Habermas's earlier (1970) "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik." Here Habermas argues roughly in the form:

that which is prelinguistic can later be integrated into language; that which is not cannot (pp. 270-76). How this could lead to a tautological explanation is apparent. The phrase "essentially linguistic" is used here only as a shorthand way of referring to Habermas's treatment of the issue. No ontological claim is at stake.

375 Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," pp. 136-39; White, "Foucault's Challenge," pp. 427-29.

376 Habermas. Knowledge, p. 310-17.

377 Whitebook, "Reason and Happiness," p. 26.

378 Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," pp. 93-94.

379 Herbert Marcuse, "On Hedonism," pp. 159-64.

380 Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics," p. 235; quoted by Jay, "Habermas and Modernism," p. 137.

381 Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," p. 93.

382 Habermas. "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," pp. 16-17.

383 Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," p. 72.

384 Ibid.

385 Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, pp. 117-30.

386 For a succinct discussion of these conditions, see Thomas McCarthy, "A Theory of Communicative Competence," pp. 145-46.

387 Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, pp. 117-30.

388 Habermas, Knowledge, p. 314; my emphasis.

389 Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering; Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender;

Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur; Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise.

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