

STAGING A BETTER ARGUMENT: THE STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

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Modernity an Impossible Project

An unprecedented modernity, open to the future, anxious for novelty, can only fashion its criteria out of itself. The only source of normativity that presents itself is the principle of subjectivity from which the very time-consciousness of modernity arose. The philosophy of reflection, which issues from the basic fact of self-consciousness, conceptualizes this principle. [PDM:41]¹

According to the historiography of Jürgen Habermas, the modern age was born of an immaculate conception under the "constellation" subjectivity, time-consciousness, and rationality. From the very beginning a problem child, modernity offered only aporias and "enchanted circles" to those who tried to operate under its influence. How could it have been otherwise: a concern that takes itself as issue, a period that attempts to grasp "its own time," an epoch that "has to create its normativity out of itself" [PDM:7]? Even the critics of modernity, those who "...attempt to dissolve the internal connections between modernity, time consciousness and rationality...cannot escape the conceptual constraints of this constellation" [PDM:43]. Modernity is truly, from the outset, an impossible project; for it retains in-itself, as the condition of its own critical reflection, the tensions of an impossible synthesis: a self-reflexivity that leads to performative contradictions, temporal flux that problematizes historical

re-construction, and an absolutizing/transcendental Ratio that undermines the sovereignty of the critical subject. Thus conceived, modernity takes the form of a reflective discourse tuned/turned on itself and grounded in its own present, "...cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape" [PDM:7]. As a philosophical discourse, modernity, embodies the tensions and retentions of a fragile dis-position: a crisis in suspension.

Nevertheless, modernity is not merely a discursive formation. Material forces came into play, so to speak, to shape this moment, event, or happening that we have retrospectively baptized as "modernity." As an actualization or manifestation, it is perhaps a testimony to the motto of industrial (productive) capitalism: "Nothing is impossible." (In this expression there is a fantastic ambivalence between the literal and the figurative which I only point to in passing.) Along these lines, Habermas seems to re-mind Hegel that: "Expressing the modern world in an edifice of thought means of course only reflecting the essential features of the age as in a mirror, which is not the same as conceiving (*begreifen*) it" [PDM:19]. And yet, in the collection of essays *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas is bent on "reflecting the essential features of an age" through the discourse of those who have participated in its erection, as well as through the critique of those who have engineered the de-struction of this edifice. The expression, the "discourse of modernity," for Habermas, encompasses both reflection-writings engaged in the formation of modern thought, as well as the speculation-texts that have celebrated its demise. And while Habermas is concerned (elsewhere) with the effective performative dimension/dementia of modernity (law, morality, technology, economics, etc.), in this collection of essays he limits his focus on a reading of the philosophemes that have shaped (and/or have been shaped by) modernity.

Subjectivity in the Modern Era

In modernity, therefore, religious life, state and society as well as science, morality, and art are transformed into just so many embodiments of the principle of subjectivity. Its structure is grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes's "*cogito ergo sum*" and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image-literally in a "speculative" way. [PDM:18]

The principle of subjectivity is one of the major philosophical legacies of the modern era that continues to haunt present undertakings. Of course, the "subject" has suffered multiple displacements over the centuries, from Descartes to (post)modern genetics. The critical capacity of the self-reflective ego, which in the modern era was grounded in Reason, has been "inflated" to the hyper-critical self-reflexivity in the hyper-modern era. Yet, despite these shifts, Habermas argues, despite the apocalyptic acclamation

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of the "end of man," the fundamental structure, the "architectonics of a philosophy of subjectivity," remains latent in the philosophic discourse of modernity. Even though there is consensus among the critics of modernity "...that the authoritarian traits of a narrow-minded enlightenment are embedded in the principle of self-consciousness or of subjectivity" [PDM:55], the direct (consistent) and directed (consensus) assaults on the "subject" by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille, and Foucault have not, Habermas insists, led us "...out of the philosophy of the subject."

Habermas's reading of the critics of modernity is thus bent on identifying the strain of a philosophy of consciousness that creates a tension in the subjected texts. In what appears to be a deconstructive strategy (a performative contradiction on his part perhaps), he isolates the counter-discourse within the discourse of modernity. The "principle of self-consciousness or of subjectivity" becomes a central strain (and stress) in Habermas's formulation, dissolution of, and final solution to the philosophical discourse of modernity. By tracing this principle at play, from its formative moment to the doorsteps of the postmodern, Habermas sets the *stage* for a modern solution to the crisis of subjectivity (as a philosophical discourse): the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding [PDM:Ch. XI]. At the end (of the text and of "man"), Habermas suggests the possibility of exiting this impossible project (perhaps stage left) in "Modernity an Unfinished Project." He offers us hope of fulfilling (escaping) the dialectic of enlightenment through the dialectic of reflection (reason) and critique (negation).

In a strategic move (in the form of the "yes but," which is not quite "saying yes" to the text), in the very textual organization, he guarantees rhetorically that his is the single path that leads out of the philosophy of subject, and out of the aporias of modernity. Unfortunately for us, as one critic in *Critique* lamented: "...Habermas offers no argument as to why the philosophy of consciousness should be rejected if we situate ourselves at the level of the intersubjective."² Such an absence of argument is characteristic of the strategic use of communicative action, where the "better argument" is determined by a silence, by an extra-linguistic ploy/play. Although Habermas accuses the critics of modernity (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille, and Foucault) of working in the "shadows" of the philosophy of consciousness (or of subjectivity) it is unclear by what light this is revealed. What exactly falls under the critical purview of such an illumined perspective?

In order to evaluate the (claim to) validity of Habermas's solution to the aporias of modernity we must first re-construct the apparatus from which (his) judgement is made. I have decided to isolate the criticism which centers around the in-plotment of the "philosophy of consciousness," and its ties to the notion of *Ursprungsphilosophie* (ultimate grounding, superfoundationalism). On many occasions his critique of the critics of modernity exceeds any single issue (e.g., Heidegger's mysticism and obscurantism,

Derrida's messianism and performative contradiction, Foucault's cryptonormativism), and warrants reflection. I would like to contain myself, however; that is, I would like to restrict my reading to a re-construction (not a de-construction) of the elements of the "principle of self-consciousness and of subjectivity" as they operate in Habermas's critique. Like Dymo labels, these expressions do not always stick well to their intended targets. And it is interesting to observe the rhetorical glue that Habermas adheres to in order to make these labels stick; interesting since textual seduction is censured in a free speech community, a community where all reasonable men (as Popper put it) have freely chosen rationality. But in the free market (of communicative exchange) the strategic use of communicative action seems to justify (align) potential performative contradictions.

Once a mutual understanding of what constitutes "remaining in the shadows of a philosophy of consciousness" has been established can we begin to judge Habermas's better argument: "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason" [PDM:Chapter XI]. The Ursprungsphilosophie of the Postmodern (Dis)solution)

With Nietzsche, the criticism of modernity dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason's absolute other. And as a counterauthority to reason, Nietzsche appeals to experiences that are displaced back into the archaic realm - experiences of self-disclosure of a decentered subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality. A "break-up of the principle of individuation" becomes the escape route from modernity. [PDM:94]

With "The Entry into Postmodernity," critics searching "for an escape route" from the absolutizing and totalizing visions of modernity were now prepared to throw the baby out with the bath water. Jettisoning both rationality, history, and consequently hope, from the discourse of modernity, these critical philosophies significantly transformed the "outlook" of the principle of subjectivity.

Despite Habermas's opinion of a "decentered subjectivity liberated from the imperatives of morality," he recognizes in Nietzsche's discourse a break from subject-centered reason and the individuated ego. And, although the "realm of metaphysically transfigured irrationality" might not be Habermas's chosen path out of the philosophy of subject, he does acknowledge that Nietzsche relocates (what still remains recognizable as) the subject within a radically other horizon: an aesthetic will to power. But, as Habermas points out, this displacement from will to truth (the yes and no of reason) to a will to power (the yes and no of the palate), does not effectively efface the traces of a philosophy of the subject. The primordi-

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al forces that are called upon to replace Reason, “displaced back into the archaic realm,” constitute an *Ursprungsphilosophie*, a “superfoundationalism,” which Nietzsche must fall back on. A kind of unreflected vitalism (life affirmation) is the cost of a totalizing critique of reason. In addition, Habermas points out, the aesthetic realm, which Nietzsche offers as the other of reason, is (always) already invested with judgement—a rational and moral one. From these observations he concludes that: “The disclosures of power theory gets caught up in the dilemma of a self-enclosed critique of reason that has become total” [PDM:96]; “.that [Nietzsche] could muster no clarity about what it means to pursue a critique of ideology that attacks its own foundations” [PDM:96]; and finally, that the reinstatement of *Philosophy* as a privileged perspective was necessary, or run the risk of a performative contradiction. But the re-instatement of *Philosophy* as the *Ursprung* of Nietzsche’s perspectivism does not demonstrate the reinstatement of *any* specific philosophy—more specifically the philosophy of subjectivity. By pointing to the *Ursprungsphilosophie* in Nietzsche’s formulation of the will to power, or fingering the archaic, primordial, and perhaps vitalistic character of this “superfoundationalism,” we are merely presented with the allusion that Nietzsche’s vision is an investment in, and infested by, a philosophy of subjectivity. It is a difficult projection to maintain, given Nietzsche’s multiple (multiplicitous) diatribes on consciousness, subjectivity, and the ego, especially in *The Will to Power*. Even if we grant Habermas the claim that a totalizing critique of reason turns back on itself in the (“tenacious”) re-affirmation of an *Ursprungs-philosophie* and in the re-instatement of the exclusive perspective (and not perspectivism) of philosophical reflection, we have yet to demonstrate the necessary connection between philosophical reflection (*Philosophy*) and the philosophy of the subject. Simply identifying these as motifs and motives in the discourse and counter-discourse of modernity only posits a possible association which begs demonstration. But Habermas insists on this allusion with two other references to *Ursprungs-philosophie*. The connection between *Ursprungsphilosophie* and a philosophy of the subject, which is only implied in Habermas’s reading of Nietzsche, is (over-extended in his reading of Derrida and Heidegger. In Chapter VII Habermas carefully follows Derrida’s deconstruction of Husserl’s philosophy of consciousness, in which he recognizes the rejection of “[t]he monadological start from the transcendental ego [which] force[d] Husserl to reconstruct intersubjective relationships produced in communication from the perspective of the individual consciousness directed towards intentional objects” [PDM:169]. He acknowledges Derrida’s “central objection” to Husserl’s phenomenology that:

Husserl permitted himself to be blinded by the fundamental idea of western metaphysics: that the ideal nature of self-identical meaning is only guaranteed by the living presence of the unmediated, intuitively accessible, actual experience in the interiority of a tran-

scendental subjectivity purified of all empirical associations.
[PDM:174-5]

In Husserl's phenomenology Habermas sees one of the more problematic elements of the philosophy of subject: the subject/object opposition; problematic because it is a "tearing loose from an intersubjectively shared life world" [PDM:29]. Intersubjective relations established on the basis [*Ursprung*] of the "self-reflective [epochal] relationship of a knowing subject to itself" [PDM:29], engenders an "...alienated subjectivity that has broken with the common life" [PDM:29].³

Although sensitive to Derrida's critique of Husserl, Habermas is incensed with the intensions (and extensions) of such a critique. A deconstruction of subjectivity, Habermas objects, can only lead to the impasse of self-referencing, where an alienated ego has no recourse but to itself -solipsism-; or, it must externalize itself -the transcendental ego- in order to ground itself. In the shift from eidos to graphe, from the self-reflective ego to the self-reflexive text, although "conceived precisely as an event *without any subject*,"

Derrida by no means breaks with the **foundationalist tenacity** of the philosophy of the subject; he only makes what it had regarded as fundamental dependent on the still profounder - though now vacillating or oscillating - basis of an originative power set temporally aflow. Unabashedly, and in the style of *Ursprungs-philosophie*, Derrida falls back on this *Urschrift*, which leaves its trace anonymously, without any subject" [PDM:178-9, emphasis mine]

Can there be a philosophy of the subject without a subject? No matter, since Habermas has not (manifestly) accused Derrida's grammatology or deconstruction of falling prey to the aporias of a philosophy of the subject. He has merely stated that: "Derrida by no means breaks with the **foundationalist tenacity** of the philosophy of the subject." This can be read analogically. Habermas merely stages a comparison between the foundationalism ("vacillating or oscillating") of deconstruction/grammatology and the *Ursprung* found(ed) in the philosophy of subject. The unabashed tenacity of Derrida's deconstruction/grammatology, a question of style (Les Styles de Derrida), is what spurs Habermas on. Unless, Habermas is arguing (logically) that a foundationalist tenacity, or the stylistics of *Ursprungs-philosophie* are necessary and sufficient conditions for, and specific to, a "philosophy of subjectivity"; and that it is sufficient to locate a super-foundationalism in the "achitectonic structure" of a particular (philosophical) discourse in order to identify it unequivocally as a philosophy of subjectivity? Of course there exist *Ursprungs-philosophies* which are not philosophies of subjectivity (e.g. Group Selectionism). At this point, however, we merely have the seductive coherence of the anal-logic (tenacity and style), a retention of certain motifs which resemble each other,

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and not an adequation. The connection between *Ursprungsphilosophie* and the philosophy of subject remains in suspense.

We now turn to Habermas's reading of Heidegger. Had we followed the Socratic development (the staging) of Habermas's argument, Heidegger would have been set-up (in the narrative) before Derrida. The connection between *Ursprungsphilosophie* and the philosophy of the subject would thus have already been established and Derrida would be guilty by association (if, of course, Derrida is, as Habermas is quick to point out, the "authentic disciple" of Heidegger). Derrida, through cognatic descent, would have inherited Heidegger's shortcomings despite his cognitive dissent, that is, despite his having "productively advanced it" [PDM:161].

Habermas's critique of Heidegger's investment in the philosophy of subjectivity begins by retracing the outline of the "respective contributions [of Heidegger and Bataille] to the philosophical discourse of modernity" [PDM:101]. By following "the two paths opened up by Nietzsche and traveled by Heidegger and Bataille into postmodernity" [PDM:105], Habermas proposes to show that both the high road (of authenticity) and the low road (of "sadistic satisfaction") converge upon the philosophy of subjectivity (at their limiting values). The "totalizing critique of reason," Habermas argues, forces both Heidegger and Bataille to summon "primordial forces," "images of plenitude," and appearances, in order to give life to and "to fill the abstract terms '*Being*' and '*sovereignty*'" [PDM:102]. In the case of Heidegger, the ontological twist, which defines Being as withdrawal, merely dances around the problems that a philosophy of subjectivity sets in place, without displacing them: "Heidegger tries to break out of the enchanted circle of the philosophy of the subject by setting its foundations aflow temporarily," but "ties himself to the style of thought and mode of reasoning of *Ursprungsphilosophie*" [PDM:104, emphasis mine]. (Again a question of style.) "Heidegger passes beyond the horizon of a philosophy of consciousness only to stay in the shadows" [PDM:139]. Let us follow Habermas along this path and listen for the discourse of modernity in Heidegger's thinking.

Heidegger: Temporal Flux and the Fixation of Negation

Heidegger... recognizes the inadequacies of the basic concepts of the philosophy of consciousness... He faces the problem of dissolving the concept of transcendental subjectivity dominant since Kant, but without leveling down the wealth of differentiations that the philosophy of the subject has worked out, most recently in Husserl's phenomenology. [PDM:142]

In the subterranean flows of Heidegger's thoughts, Habermas locates the "architectonic structure" [PDM:151] of the philosophy of consciousness or of the subject. The connection (coupling) of Heidegger's existential analytic and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a pivotal moment in

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Habermas's demonstration (uncovering) of this "architectonic structure." The "intuitionism" of the transcendental reduction and "Husserl's way of posing problems" link Heidegger's project to "the pregiven problematic of transcendental consciousness" [PDM:138]. And, in order to take leave of the aporias and foundationalism of the philosophy of consciousness, Heidegger must resort to "abstract negation." The two domains of "abstract negation" in Heidegger's work are: (a) the belief that only a critique of metaphysics (and the destruction of the potential energies of Reason) can generate "insights" into our (social and ontological) condition; and (b) the representation of Being as withdrawal, as the "impalpable destining of Being (*Seinsgeschick*)," as the absence which marks and makes a presence. But abstract negation, according to Habermas, fails on two accounts, it is: 1) abstract and 2) negative.

Ad 1:

'Essential thinking' renounces all empirical and normative questions that can be treated by social-scientific or historical means, or can be at all handled in argumentative form. Abstract insights into essences thus range all the more freely within an unreflected horizon of prejudices of bourgeois culture critique. [PDM:139-40]

Ad 2.1:

The philosophy of the subject is by no means an absolutely reifying power that imprisons all discursive thought and leaves open nothing but a flight into the immediacy of mystical ecstasy. There are *other* paths leading out of the philosophy of the subject. [PDM:137]

Ad 2.2:

Because Heidegger does not gainsay the hierachical orderings of a philosophy bent on self-grounding, he can only counter foundationalism by excavating a still more deeply laid (and henceforth unstable) ground. The idea of the destining of Being remains chained to its abstractly negated antithesis in this respect. [PDM:138-9]

Abstract negation (in its dual form) merely re-affirms the connection of Heidegger's (dis)solution (of) to, and his investment in, Husserl's philosophy of consciousness. Heidegger "remains attached, in a negative way, to the *foundationalism* of the philosophy of consciousness" [PDM:138]. But this demonstrated failure, which Habermas senses (and is incensed with) in Heidegger's attempt to dissolve the modern subject, is founded on a weak link (compared to the missing link for Nietzsche and Derrida). Habermas, to this point, has merely affirmed that: "His whole life long, Heidegger held on to the *intuitionism*" of the transcendental reduction and to "Husserl's way of posing problems" [PDM:138]; and thus "ties himself to the

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style of thought and mode of reasoning of *Ursprungsphilosophie*" [PDM:104].

The differences between an existential analytic and a transcendental phenomenology, which Habermas later acknowledges, are inconsequential to the above conclusions. The difference is a mere radicalization (and here Habermas means intensification) of Husserl's in-sights. That, 1) Heidegger translates Husserl's epistemological questions into ontological ones, and that 2) Heidegger's phenomenological model is no longer contingent on intuition, "as it was for Husserl, but [on] the interpretation of a text -not the intuitive making-present of ideal essences that brings phenomena to self-givenness, but the hermeneutical understanding of complex meaning contexts that discloses Being" [PDM:144], are factors that are epiphenomenal to the "architectonic structure" that links (and sinks) the two projects: 1) intuitionism (not to be confused with intuition), 2) the way of posing questions, and 3) a "transcendental fashion" [PDM:143].

Once Habermas has established that "difference is [really] identity" (Descombes), he can begin to read in Heidegger's existential analytic and in the de-struction of metaphysics the two-step that undermines the "Undermining of Western Rationalism": "Although Heidegger in his *first* step de-structs the philosophy of the subject in favor of a frame of reference that first makes possible subject-object relationships, in his *second* step he falls back into the conceptual constraints of the philosophy of the subject" [PDM:150].

The fact that Habermas only sees, in Heidegger's project(s), a re-play, a re-petition of Husserlian phenomenology is not at all surprising given the way Heidegger is set up. Guilty by association, the existential analytic of Dasein can only be seen as "tinged with the solipsism of Husserlian phenomenology" [PDM:149]. For the alternatives (in Habermas's eyes) are subjectivity *or* intersubjectivity. An exclusionary logic, dependent on the law of the excluded middle, cannot avoid lumping all that is not shared into the domain of private property; that which is not outside the subject must necessarily be inside it, must be proper to it; that which un-covers an occurrence/event/happening must be understood as a source or cause. Such a logic frames Heidegger's existential analytic (and his critique of metaphysics) to such an extent that the structures of being-in-the-world, the processes of world-disclosure, and the constitutive characteristics of Dasein, can only be read in terms of Pragmatism, Epistemology, and Subjectivity. The conclusion is ineluctable: temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie*, even "stood on its head," cannot avoid the unavoidable, cannot avoid the void (as Habermas put it).

The "change in position" in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, the displacements to which Being (from "self-affirmation" to "self-donation" [PDM:152]), Truth (from the "metaphysics of self-grounding and ultimate grounding" to a "temporalized philosophy of origins"), and Reason (from logic to a "hypostatized language of world-disclosure") are subject is not

a (good) dis-position in respect to the philosophy of consciousness or of subjectivity, Habermas insists. In Heidegger's reflections he merely sees the "shadows of a philosophy of subject," a reversal but not a de-struction of the architectonic structure of the philosophy of consciousness. "Inasmuch as he propagates a mere inversion of the thought patterns of the philosophy of the subject, Heidegger remains caught up in the problematic of that kind of philosophy" [PDM:160].

Heidegger's project is presented as a failed pragmatism [PDM:148], "tinged with the solipsism of Husserlian phenomenology" [PDM:149]. This is quite a vision, perhaps an illusion (based on allusion), for it is contingent on rather tenuous connections (guilt by association, stylistics, fashion, textual seduction). Habermas, the master hyper-connection machine, establishes contacts at vertiginous speeds, opening lines of communication (between thoughts) and effecting the illusion of a dialogic, of an argument. Actually there is an embarrassing silence on this line (of thought). The negations, reversals, and de-structions of Heidegger, the (unwilling) interlocutor, are framed as the (not quite) other voice in an exchange that will lead us out of the "philosophical discourse of modernity." As a partner in this dialogic, the radically other voice of Heidegger is muted in the name of mutual understanding.

"There are *other* paths leading out of the philosophy of the subject," Habermas points out [PDM:137];

[t]he fact that Heidegger sees in the history of philosophy and the sciences after Hegel nothing but a monotonous spelling out of the ontological pre-judgements [*Vor-Urteile*] of the philosophy of the subject can only be explained by the fact that, even in rejecting it, he still remains caught in the problems that the philosophy of the subject in the form of Husserlian phenomenology had presented him. [PDM:137]

The foreclosure of the "can only be" is the seductive and strategic consequence of the vertiginous hyper-connections in the dialogic of mutual understanding, reaching its point of irreversibility when disagreement (the differend) itself becomes evidence to the possibility (and theoretical necessity) of mutual understanding.

Habermas's (Dis-solution (of) to the Philosophy of Subject

We followed Habermas along *one* of the paths (to thinking) opened up by Nietzsche not to uncover or finger the strategic (and rhetorical) dimension of Habermas's better argument, but rather to discover the constitutive elements of this argument, for better or for worse. In the philosophic discourse of modernity Habermas sees the paradigmatic structure that will continue to haunt those who attempt to break out of its field of attraction. In so far as the critiques of modernity are invested in modernity's

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project(ion)s (temporal and ontological self-grounding and self-consciousness), they cannot escape the “enchanted circle,” nor escape the “aporetic tangles of contradictory self-thematization” [PDM:294].

Habermas’s critique/concern, whether articulated/voiced in the form of “a self-enclosed critique of reason” (Nietzsche), or a “performative contradiction” (Derrida), or “cryptonormativism”(Foucault), isolates the aporias, dilemmas, limitations, and contradictions that the modern frame establishes. When the totalitarianism of Reason is confronted with the totalizing self-critique of reason out comes a performative contradiction. When the philosophy of subjectivity of a “narrow-minded enlightenment” is confronted with the mindless (irrational, messianic, and Dionysian) decentering of subjectivity out comes a more deeply entrenched (tenacious) *Ursprungsphilosophie*.

The solution to this ineluctable circularity (and the effective dis-solution of the subject) is not to be found(ed) in(on) a disillusionment with Reason and Subjectivity, Habermas contends, but rather by exceeding their limits of irreversibility, where they will become un-re-cognizable as such: in the hyper-realization of Reason (into communicative rationality) and subjectivity (into intersubjectivity). Breaking out of the herme(neu)tic circularity of the discourse of modernity requires the identification of the “crucial junctures in the philosophical discourse of modernity” [McCarthy, PDM:x] (Hegel and intersubjectivity, Heidegger and pragmatism [PDM:295]), where enough lateral exhilaration will offer a potential line of escape. The only (“other”) way out of the discourse of modernity is not to jettison Reason and the Subject but to push it beyond the point of re-cognition. Beyond the paradigm of subjectivity lies “the through-and-through intersubjectivist paradigm of “communicative action”” [McCarthy, PDM:x]: more real-than-real.

The Hyperextension of Reason and Subjectivity in Communicative Action

Rather than reproduce the “dead ends,” “contradictions,” and “paradoxes” of the “new critique of reason,” Habermas chooses to pursue the “counter-discourse inherent in modernity,” “.to resume once again the counter-discourse that accompanied modernity from the beginning” [PDM:299]. But the follow-through of modernity (as an unfinished project) requires a “change of paradigm” [ibid] and a change of attitude [PDM:296]: in short, a shift from subject-centered reason to communicative rationality (oriented towards mutual understanding). Rather than privilege “the objectifying attitude in which the knowing subject regards itself as it would entities in the external world” [ibid], Habermas proposes as “[f]undamental to the paradigm of mutual understanding... the performative attitude of participants in interaction” [ibid]. Rather than focus on the “world dis-closing” aspect of language, Habermas proposes a “pragmatically expand-

ed theory of meaning” that highlights intramundane interactions. A shift of focus *within* (not outside) the counter-discourse of modernity (at the origin of modernity - *Ursprung*) will avoid the “.concepts of subject-centered reason and its impressively illustrated topography” [PDM:309]. On the horizon of this topography are two inter-related topics where a correction is to take place. The first is the subject’s relation to language about which Habermas writes:

As long as Occidental self-understanding views human beings as distinguished in their relationship to the world by their monopoly on encountering entities, knowing and dealing with objects, making true statements, and implementing plans, reason remains confined ontologically, epistemologically, or in terms of linguistic analysis only on one of its dimensions. [PDM:311]

By focusing on the “performative attitude of participants,” emphasizing the “*communicative use* of propositionally differentiated language” [PDM:312], and shifting registers to the “establishment” of mutual understanding, Habermas intends to go beyond the paradigm of subjectivity. On the second topic, the transcendental/empirical doubling, Habermas writes:

Now this attitude of participants in linguistically mediated interactions makes possible a *different* relationship of the subject to itself from the sort of objectifying attitude that an observer assumes towards entities in the external world. The transcendental-empirical doubling of the relationship to self is only unavoidable so long as there is no alternative to this observer-perspective. [PDM:297]

With a change of attitude, the human double retreats into the realm of the “non-coercive intersubjectivity of mutual understanding,” into the “unforced intersubjectivity of rational agreement” [McCarthy, PDM:xvi]. The transcendental-empirical tension is translated (in the language of mutual understanding) into the hectic to-and-fro of the dialogic, a dialogue that exceeds the here and now (as an *instance* of the life-world) as it confirms it in action. The “subject” (or rather its instantiation in the working through of the “factual processes of mutual understanding”) re-cognizes itself in the exchange value of communication, in the response-ability of alter. “Then ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter” [PDM:297]. The communicative construction of an intersubjective lifeworld is the paradigm shift (within the counter-discourse of modernity) that Habermas claims will reach beyond the (world disclosing) imaginations of a philosophy of consciousness and subjectivity. The shift from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, however, does not decenter the subject, nor dis-place the topoi of a philosophy of consciousness. At best it re-locates these (by shifting the scenery) within the altered intellectual landscape of

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the "lifeworld" and "intention," creating new contexts in which to articulate (architectonically) old questions that are now un-recognizable. The shadow of the philosophy of consciousness dims in the twilight of subjectivity, but this is merely an enlightening effect and a play of mirrors.

In order to overcome the "fixation on the fact mirroring function of language" [PDM:312] Habermas proposes a "theory of meaning" that "pragmatically expands" the linguistics which simply accounted for constative utterances (and their truth conditions). Following Austin and Searle, Habermas recognizes that "we can do things with words" in addition to remarking (on) the existing state of affairs. While utterances cannot always be judged by the truth condition of their propositional content, they can, nevertheless, be judged to be felicitous: they can be appropriate to a situation (or not), and they can be sincere (or not).

Elementary speech acts display a structure in which three components are mutually combined: the propositional component for representing (or mentioning) states of affairs; the illocutionary component for taking up interpersonal relationships; and finally, the linguistic components that bring the intention of the speaker to expression. [PDM:312]

These "three fundamental functions of language" [PDM:313] must be accounted for in a formulation of communicative action, since each of these functions is open to contention. An utterance can be approached (reproached) from the perspective of its adequate representation (truth) of things (states of affairs); or from its adequacy (rightness) to the situation; or again from the point of view of the "truthfulness of the intention expressed by the speaker" [PDM:313]. Communicative action (in the service of mutual understanding) is said to expand the power of language (and of action) by including its illocutionary (and perlocutionary) force. With this expansion Habermas claims to have exploded the philosophy of consciousness and subjectivity and short-circuited the subject:

We can find in language used communicatively the structures that explain how the lifeworld is reproduced even without subjects, so to speak, through the subject and their activities oriented towards mutual understanding. [PDM:149]

In effect, it is "so to speak," or rather in order to speak, that mutual understanding requires a subject that appropriates its *own* (proper) activities, a subject that orients-itself-towards. While self appropriation may no longer proceed via the channels of reflection (as in the philosophy of consciousness), its essence is nevertheless recaptured in (the notion of) intention. The archi-tectonic structure of speech act theory re-instates the proper place of the subject within the processes of mutual understanding. The claim that intention and orientation are found(ed) at the level of the (performed) communicative act (a necessary claim in order to short-circuit the subject's

own intention/will as originary) is contingent on a primal repression or exclusion of a founding intentionality. The intention of the speech act can be located in and extracted from its (expanded) linguistic structure (illocutionary and perlocutionary force, and normative context) only upon an initial de-cision to define these expressions in terms of a subject's intent (Grice's cooperative principles, Schutz's principles of interpretation). Communicative action must first be de-limited as an "orientation towards" (mutual understanding) *by* a speaker before it operates *through* them. The transparency of the subject is achieved in a play of mirrors. Speech acts are defined in their reflection of intention (filtering out from the start all simulacra, all play), and intention is reflected in the speech act (as a formal character of the utterance): an immanent circularity founded on a primal de-cision. And in order to be taken seriously (as a viable alternative) communicative action (in the service of mutual understanding) must repress the speculum of an originary subject or intention. Only then can mutual understanding be seen as a "factual process" harmonizing with human (inter-action without appealing to some primal intent or orientation to consensus, agreement, or understanding. And those who would or could object are written off in this original repression:

..as soon as we conceive of knowledge as communicatively mediated, rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of *responsible* participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition. Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentative procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic harmony [PDM:314]⁴

The expanded theory of meaning is contingent on a restriction: the argumentative procedures of responsible participants. If we were to ask "Who are these responsible participants?" (or as Lyotard asks "Comment Juger?") we would most likely be offered Popper's tautology: All reasonable men would choose rationality! But there is something self-serving (in the service of the subject) about an assessment of communicative rationality that can only be judged by responsible participants. Habermas's real reasons are divulged in the Real Reason of communicative action. The primal repression of an exclusionary logic underlies his expanded theory of meaning.

Given this architectonic structure, Habermas ineluctably re-produced the primacy of the ego's relation to self, but in a new garb (in terms of an orientation or inclination towards), and consequently he re-doubles the tension between the transcendental and the empirical (or in Habermas's terms between the transcendental and the obligatory—we are condemned to mutual understanding). Validity claims (saying yes/no to the lifeworld), Habermas points out, ".are Janus faced: ...at the same time, they have to be raised

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here and now and be de facto recognized if they are going to bear the agreement of interaction participants that is needed for effective cooperation" [PDM:322]. But a duality is not a solution to a dualism. The duality of mutual understanding (*simultaneously* contextual [concrete] and transcendental [universal]) re-doubles the philosophical stakes in the language game of modernity: universal-particular, abstract-concrete, objectivism-subjectivism, idealism-materialism; and perhaps a reminder that you can't have modernity and escape it too!

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Notes

1. [PDM:#] indexes Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence, (MIT Press, 1987).
2. Jean Grondin, "Rationalité et Agir Communicationnel Chez Habermas," *Critique*, 62/464-5, 1986. Grondin refers to T. Rockmore's essay "Recesion de THK [Theory of Communicative Action: Vol. 1] (*Archive de Philosophie*, 46, 1983), where Habermas "claims but does not demonstrate that nineteenth century German philosophy, understood reductively through only one of its aspects, namely the philosophy of consciousness, merely leads to a theoretical dead end" (p. 671).
3. Since we are discussing the *philosophical discourse* of modernity (and trying to construct a better argument) I refer only in passing to the normative-political dimension of Habermas's objections. There can be no simple separation of perlocutionary effect (convincing) and propositional content when the utterance is simultaneously normative and descriptive. Habermas likes to think that his conclusions, in the form of metaphysical or epistemological redresses, necessarily follow from the morally and politically weighted (burdened) content (and effect) of his arguments. He presupposes a moral consensus that values reform (vs. revolt), tradition (vs. immorality), reasonableness (vs. irrationality) and hope (vs. despair and cynicism). But we can ask with Nietzsche: Why value truth rather than falsity?
4. This fourth criteria "aesthetic harmony" is introduced here for the first time (deferred to Wellmer in the margin); and referred only once again in arguing that: "(the procedural concept of rationality) is richer than that of purposive rationality, which is tailored to the cognitive-instrumental dimension, because it integrates the moral-practical as well as the aesthetic-expressive domains" [PDM:314-5]. Habermas does elaborate on the moral-practical in his expanded theory of meaning but says very little regarding the aesthetic-expressive. Why introduce a fourth criteria at this point of the argument? Unless something was previously excluded from his formal (expanded) analysis?