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# **Habermas and the School Curriculum: an Evaluation and Case study**

by

**Keith R. B. Morrison**

**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Education**

**The University of Durham**

**1995**



**18 MAY 1995**

## **Abstract**

This thesis provides a critical analysis of the work of Jürgen Habermas and explores ways in which his theories can be used to inform an analysis of education. The study examines key elements of his Critical Theory and his Critical Social Theory. It is suggested that there are significant weaknesses with these. The nature of the testing of his theories is outlined. This entails a study of his contribution to the sociology of school knowledge and ideology critique within that field. Following this a series of outline prescriptions is made for the development of emancipatory curricula. A 'severe' test of his theories is then undertaken in a case study of the National Curriculum of England and Wales. Finally it is argued, as a result of the general analysis of education and the specific case study, that Habermas's work, though it contains several flaws and weaknesses, has some limited heuristic value in an analysis of education but that his contribution to the development of an emancipated society and of the degree to which his work stimulates education to empower students is largely an empirical matter.

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## **Declaration**

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously in candidature for any other degree or diploma.

## Acknowledgement

My warmest thanks go to Jack Gilliland, whose wisdom, insight, support and friendship have been a privilege to share. They are amongst the high points of my life.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Renaud De La Bat Smit for permission to use two extracts from his thesis *The Justice of God and Formation of Society* (1994) (pp. 203 and 213) in this thesis (pp. 312 and 372).

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Thanks are also due to Dr. Renaud De La Bat Smit for permission to use two extracts from his thesis *The Justice of God and Formation of Society* (1994) (pp. 203 and 213) in this thesis (pp. 312 and 372).

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## Chapter I

### THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Several socio-political analyses of education draw on the tradition of ideology critique whose roots can be traced to Marx and his predecessors and to recent variants of Marxism.<sup>1</sup> In this enterprise recent critiques of education have begun to turn to the work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory<sup>2</sup> to provide a theoretical basis for their discourse.<sup>3</sup>

The emergence of ideological, socio-cultural, socio-political and philosophical analyses of education leads to the coupling of the sociology of education and the philosophy of education. The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory constitutes a body of thought which synthesizes these several strands and which crystallizes the rationales for these types of analysis.

There is a developing educational literature which uses some of Habermas's work (Ewert, 1991). However the educational texts which refer to his work overwhelmingly use his early and 'middle period' works. These works deal with four main concerns: (a) a critique of society which is overtaken by instrumentalism,

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<sup>1</sup> Eg the works of Althusser, 1972; Gramsci, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Gibson, 1984; Whitty, 1985; Morrison, 1987; Smyth, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> The capitalisation of Critical Theory throughout this thesis indicates reference to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and to those fields of sociology, philosophy and politics which draw from the key writers in this school.

<sup>3</sup> For example Giroux, 1983, 1989; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Morrison, 1989a.

scientism and technicism; (b) ideology critique; (c) crises in modern society; (d) knowledge-constitutive interests. In particular, since the field of the curriculum is concerned with knowledge, authors have used Habermas's theories of knowledge-constitutive interests to gain some purchase on problematical aspects of the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> However in his later writings Habermas has turned his back on his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. There is, then, a time lag between the work of Habermas and its treatment by educationists. Further, there is only limited educational literature which takes up the later work of Habermas, ie that which Habermas has been developing in the field of communicative action (eg Young, 1992).

There are very many specific aspects of Habermas's work from the perspectives of sociology and philosophy which have not been synthesized in any up-to-date texts<sup>5</sup> nor are they addressed fully by educationists. A comprehensive and up-to-date critique and application of his work needs to be undertaken.

## 1.2 The Purpose of the Study

There are four main features which need to be examined in the work of Habermas. *Firstly* there is a need to use the full range of his work in the field of education; *secondly* there is a need to bring together the several existing critiques of his work and to add to these; *thirdly* there is a need to examine the contribution which the work of Habermas can make to an analysis of education; *fourthly* there is a need to verify and evaluate the nature, status and value of Habermas's theories.

*Firstly* the thesis will undertake a critical examination of the work of Jürgen

---

<sup>4</sup> For example Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Hargreaves, 1989; Morrison, 1987, 1989a, 1989b; Smyth, 1989a.

<sup>5</sup> McCarthy's (1978) excellent critique is dated, Held's (1980) summary is slight and dated.

Habermas. The senses in which his views constitute 'theory' will be clarified and it will be suggested that his theories stand in need of proof and testing; the nature of the proof and testing of Habermas's theories will be clarified.

*Secondly* it will be suggested that testing his theories can be undertaken by demonstrating how his work can be used in a substantive area — in this instance the field of education. This will be done in two ways: *firstly* by seeing how his work can inform an analysis of the school curriculum *generally*; *secondly* by taking a *particular* case study within the field of the curriculum. In the case study — the introduction of the *National Curriculum of England and Wales* and, more particularly, the *cross-curricular themes* within it — it will be argued that this permits the application of several of the themes contained in the work of Habermas and hence will provide fertile ground for examining whether Habermas's theories will stand scrutiny and whether they have any contribution to make to an analysis of the curriculum; it constitutes the equivalent of a Popperian 'severe test' of his theory. The thesis will offer an evaluation of Habermas's theories through a case study. This will serve the purpose of establishing whether Habermas's theories are applicable when subjected to analysis in a substantive field.

The thesis proposed is that the work of Habermas, though it contains very many flaws and cannot be tested in the style of the natural sciences, has heuristic value both *per se* and can be tested in the field of the curriculum. The nature of that heuristic value, however, is limited.

### 1.3 The Significance of the Thesis

The work of Habermas has received acclaim and critique. The critiques have been developed disparately and piecemeal, often in tandem with the appearance

of new works from Habermas. No single work yet brings together and analyses the criticisms and critiques which have accumulated of Habermas's work. This thesis attempts that task.

This thesis provides an overview of the nature and configuration of curriculum analysis which is informed by Habermasian principles and provides a specific case study of how these principles can be addressed.

Though commentaries, interpretations and guidelines for practice are available on each cross-curricular theme, skill or dimension little attention has been given to date to a comprehensive critique of the guidance booklets issued by the National Curriculum Council for the cross-curricular issues with reference to the work of Habermas. This thesis addresses this task. The National Curriculum of England and Wales has not been analysed in light of Habermasian principles. This thesis both establishes how this might be approached and undertakes such an analysis.

The testing of Habermas's theories has not been addressed in any extended form. This thesis addresses that task in two ways, *firstly* by indicating the types of testing that are possible and indicating how the nature of a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories can derive from his analysis of knowledge-constitutive interests, communicative action and the *ideal speech situation*, and *secondly* by undertaking one aspect of that testing (through non-empirical analysis).

## 1.4 The Parameters of the Study

There are six deliberate parameters to this thesis: (i) the selective reading of Habermas; (ii) the use of Habermas in translation rather than in the original German; (iii) the lack of empirical study in the thesis; (iv) the outline form of the

discussion of the curriculum in Habermasian terms; (v) the choice of the case study and the documents used in it; (vi) the use of the broader aspects of Habermas's social theory in those sections of the thesis which discuss education.

The work of Habermas is voluminous. It can be read in a host of different ways and for a variety of purposes.<sup>6</sup> Given the breadth of his work one would struggle in vain to arrive at a synoptic view of his theories; any reading of Habermas will be not only selective but will reflect the interests and purposes of the reader: 'In every philosophy there is a point at which the philosopher's 'conviction' appears on the scene' (Nietzsche, 1973, p. 20).

This thesis will focus on the *outcomes* of Habermas's analysis as they contribute to his own developing theories rather than to the *background discussions* which lead to those outcomes (except where they are necessary as part of the critique of his works). In particular this thesis will focus on: his ideology critique, his analysis of scientism, technicism and positivism, his knowledge-constitutive interests, his view of a reconstructive science, his *Theory of Communicative Action* and its sub-elements, his views on strategic and communicative action, his attempt to rework Weber's analysis of the bureaucratisation of society, his social theory, his appeal to a rational consensus. The selection of these themes is justified on the grounds that they develop a cumulative argument and permit a critique of Habermas to be undertaken; his early themes (eg ideology critique, knowledge-constitutive interests, critique of instrumentalism) are either used in his later work or else are replaced by Habermas (eg his work on knowledge-constitutive interests, his work *On The Logic of the Social Sciences*).

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<sup>6</sup> This thesis will abide by the following convention: where reference is made to Habermas's two-volume work *The Theory of Communicative Action* the start of these words will be capitalised: where reference to a theory of communicative action generally, not necessarily in his two-volume work, then capital letters will not be used.

The key texts of Habermas which are used in this thesis are all books:

(i) *Towards a Rational Society* (1971a);

(ii) *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972);

(iii) *Theory and Practice* (1974);

(iv) *Legitimation Crisis* (1976a);

(v) *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979a);

(vi) *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One — Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (1984);

(vii) *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume Two — Lifeworld and System* (1987a);

(viii) *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990a).

These key texts represent his main attempts to develop a social theory and a Critical Theory of society. Habermas's books *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) and *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1988) are used only as they contribute to Habermas's developing argument in this thesis. These two books contain much additional material which takes the reader into areas which are tangential to the developing argument of the thesis, eg post-modernism and methodology respectively. Though the reading of Habermas will be selective it is not intended to distort the messages and themes of Habermas which are explored in this thesis. This will be demonstrated in the chapters which address Habermas's work. The selection is a fair representation of these themes in Habermas's work.

Habermas's major works have all been translated into English and this thesis

uses the English translations. There is an inevitable risk of the loss of nuance and meaning in translation; translators have addressed the problem consistently in their work in three ways: (a) by including the original German in parentheses after any problematical translations, (b) by providing commentary notes on translations, (c) by adhering to the translations of words and phrases of previous translations. Exceptions to this are the work of Masschelein (1991) who replaces 'knowledge-constitutive interests' with 'knowledge-guiding interests' and Kunneman (1990) who replaces 'the colonization of the lifeworld' with 'the colonialization of the lifeworld'. In both these cases the works are themselves translations. What marks the translations is the consistency of the shared vocabulary. In some cases (see bibliography) this is because a single translator has translated more than one of Habermas's texts; in others it is because existing translations of words and phrases are adopted in later works.

The work of Habermas has attracted several criticisms, the synthesis of which is one of the purposes of this thesis. The thesis will argue for the need to subject Habermas's work to empirical test. This thesis clarifies the contribution which Habermas's work can make to the curriculum *in principle* before an empirical test of that contribution can be undertaken. This, in itself, is a large enterprise as it has not been done in any comprehensive way in the field of the curriculum.

It will be argued that one of the tests of Habermas's theories will be the extent to which their adoption might bring about emancipation and empowerment. This thesis approaches the task in two ways: (i) by mapping out the curricular territory in which empowerment and emancipation might be addressed in broad terms, (ii) by providing a specific example of how this might occur within the field of the curriculum (the case study of the introduction of the National Curriculum of

England and Wales). It will be demonstrated that emancipation and empowerment are possible even within a 'bureaucratized' curriculum.

## 1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

From a critique of Habermas will be derived a set of criteria which can be used to test and evaluate his theories. These will be established and used in a substantive field — the curriculum. The sections of the thesis which deal with the curriculum provide a new area for study which can be used to inform an evaluation of the potential and significance of the work of Habermas. Here the style of critique is analysis and argument.

Though the argument through the thesis is largely linear and cumulative the thesis falls into three main sections: section one (chapters 2 - 8) deals exclusively with Habermas's work; section two (chapters 9 - 12) moves to a discussion of the curriculum; section 3 (chapter 13) evaluates Habermas's theories in the light of the worked examples in the field of the curriculum and the case study of the National Curriculum and offers a set of prescriptions for introducing Habermas's work into the curriculum.

Within the three sections there are thirteen chapters. Chapters 2 - 8 present, analyse and critique the work of Habermas. The topics under discussion follow a chronology of their appearance in the work of Habermas. Each of these chapters follows a common format — a presentation of the issue, a critique of the issue and an analysis of the contribution of that critique to a developing, cumulative critique of the work of Habermas. Chapter 2 sets the scene for the work of Habermas, providing a brief context of the Frankfurt School and the nature of Critical Theory, indicating its Marxist roots. Chapter 3 then clarifies Habermas's critique of 'or-



*thodox*' Marxism and his attempt to rework a Marxist science of society. Chapter 4 takes forward this project in an analysis of Habermas's ideology critique and his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests.

Chapters 2 - 5 set out some elements of Habermas's developing social theory. In chapters 6 and 7, the strands traced in the preceding chapters are drawn together into a social theory as a theory of communicative action. Chapter 6 indicates the communicative turn in his theory and the sub-elements of it whilst chapter 7 sets out his two-volume work on *The Theory of Communicative Action*. This theory is seen to draw together the strands of the developing argument to date in the thesis.

Chapter 8 provides a global critique of his theories *qua* theory. The nature, status and testing of *theory* are discussed; this chapter concludes that his views may have heuristic potential. The heuristic value of Habermas's theories is indicated in chapters 9 - 12, where his principles are used in an analysis of the sociology of school knowledge (chapter 10) and of emancipatory curricula (chapter 11). Chapter 12 takes a case study — the introduction of the National Curriculum of England and Wales — and undertakes a Habermasian critique of this, in particular focussing on the cross-curricular issues of the National Curriculum as it is in these, it is argued, that emancipatory potential lies in terms of content and pedagogy.

Chapter 13 then considers the contribution which Habermas's work can make to social theory, methodology of social enquiry and the curriculum and whether this contribution can be considered to meet the criteria of testing and value of his theory which was set out in chapter 8. The chapter also summarises the criteria for undertaking a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories which derive from a fusion of the case study, his own principles for rational reflection, communicative action,

and the *ideal speech situation*, and suggests areas for future empirical research.

## 1.6 The Argument in the Thesis

The argument is advanced that the elements of Habermas's work at every stage are flawed, both singly and severally. His critique of technicism, scientism and positivism misrepresent their purposes and nature. His theory of knowledge-constitutive interests not only is a vain attempt to root social theory in epistemology but makes several untenable assumptions about the premises, structure and purposes of knowledge and knowledge-constitutive interests which are self-referentially incoherent and which conceal the ideological nature of his own tenets. The appeal to Freudian psychology as a methodology for the operation of knowledge-constitutive interests and as a methodology for the emancipation of societies is fundamentally misconceived.

That Habermas jettisons his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests and replaces it with a theory of communicative action as a paradigm for understanding social developments is not necessarily an improvement, for each element of his theory of communicative action is flawed. His notion of a *special* — separate — category of reconstructive science does not stand scrutiny and commits the naturalistic fallacy; his use of speech act theory misrepresents his sources and unjustifiably privileges communicative action over strategic action; his use of strategic and communicative action is little more than a reworking of his technical and emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interests — which themselves are problematical; his appeal to the *ideal speech situation* offers little practical assistance in serving the principles of a critical theory and collective empowerment; his use of Piaget and Kohlberg as a model for social evolution is Eurocentric; his accounts of the lifeworld and its

colonization are internally inconsistent and further misrepresent his sources; his views are given the status of argument when in fact they are axioms.

Not only are the *elements* of his theory misconceived but the status of his views as a 'grand theory' is questionable as the charge of relativism has not been refuted and as the charge of positivism (which Habermas proscribed in others' views) can be levelled; even if relativism were refuted it is questionable whether the status of his theory as a 'critical theory' can be upheld; a post-modern critique of his theory would criticise it at root for its totalising intent and hermetically sealed framework. The nature of proof of his theory is confused because his theory is flawed and it does not know its own nature — as empirical theory, grand theory, critical theory, axioms, slogan, polemic, explanation, argument, heuristic; however, as his reconstructive science differs little from an empirical science his theory can be tested empirically and in a 'severe test' in the field of education. His theories are as instrumental as those he proscribed in his early critiques of instrumentalism.

The criteria to judge and test his theories will require: (i) internal consistency; (ii) fruitfulness and fertility; (iii) informing and extending understandings in new contexts; (iv) an identification of the types of 'evidence' required; (v) successful testing in new contexts; (vi) testing in a 'severe test'.

In respect of (i) it is argued that, because his theories contain so many flaws they survive as heuristics rather than substantively whole explanations; criteria (ii) and (iii) are met by indicating how his work contributes to an understanding of the sociology of school knowledge, curriculum design and research and a study of the National Curriculum; criterion (iv) is addressed in the statement of need for empirical verification, eg the requirement that his work brings about emancipation

in practice; criterion (v) is addressed in the study of the curriculum, setting the framework for what will be an empirical verification of his theories; criterion (vi) is undertaken in a case study of the National Curriculum.

The criteria for rendering the case study a 'severe test' are: (a) it is a context which is different from Habermas's original; (b) the potential for emancipatory action is limited; (c) it is a bureaucratized curriculum; (d) it is a 'hegemonic academic curriculum' marked by strong classification and framing; (e) it is socially reproductive; (f) it is heavily prescriptive; (g) it reinforces the 'cultural capital thesis'; (h) it suppresses generalizable interests, emanating from the agenda of the New Right and sectional political interests; (i) it is ideologically loaded and perlocutionary (strategic), eg with Hayekian market models, a market mentality (competitiveness, consumerism, individualism, acquisitiveness, choice and diversity, information, privatisation, quality control, freedom from constraint); (j) it serves the technical and hermeneutic rather than the emancipatory interest; (k) it was introduced by the 'steering media' of law and power. It is argued that, whilst the major elements of the National Curriculum offer limited scope for emancipation, nevertheless the cross-curricular themes contain the scope for significant emancipation in respect of their aims, content and pedagogy.

It is argued that, though flawed, Habermas's views do meet the six criteria for successful verification. As such they do have a contribution to make to an understanding of the curriculum. However, the significance of that contribution is limited. It is argued that several of the *outcomes* of a Habermasian analysis in fact do not require Habermas's views for their educational justifications or foundations.

## Chapter II

### THE BACKGROUND TO HABERMAS'S WORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The chapter briefly sets the work of Habermas in the context of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theorists and indicates how critical theorists viewed the differences between traditional theory and critical theory. It suggests how Habermas offers a 'humanistic' interpretation of Western Marxism (Jessop, 1985) (as opposed to, for example a political or economic interpretation). This section also signals a concern which is fully addressed in chapter eight but which is a *leitmotiv* of many chapters — the meaning of the term *theory*, the criteria for — and processes of — confirming or refuting a theory, and the status of a theory.

#### 2.2 Background of the Frankfurt School

The Frankfurt School of Critical Theorists was formed in 1923 as the Institute of Social Research, nominally attached to the University of Frankfurt. Its early membership contained Horkheimer, Benjamin and Marcuse who were united in their common background of Marxism but who were anxious to develop an interpretation of Marxism which was 'humanistic', less concerned with economic and political forms of Marxism and more concerned with the social-psychological implications of Marxism in its emerging forms in western societies. It recognized that some of the principal elements of classical Marxism (eg the power of the proletariat, the significance of labour and production, the two-class analysis of society) stood

in need of revision and reworking to give them contemporary significance. Whilst they accepted the notion of critique from Marx, they attempted to rework that critique and indicate its operation in Western Europe (Held, 1980).

For the first decade the Frankfurt School's output comprised diverse research projects which, though informed by Marxism, covered a wide field of study,<sup>7</sup> eg authoritarianism, mass culture, ideology critique, humanist Marxism, aesthetics. In 1933 the Nazis secured power in Germany. At that time the School included a strong Jewish membership, had a clear affinity with Marxism, and was generally advocating a critical stance to dominatory and inegalitarian forms of authority. This being critical of Nazism the School moved from Frankfurt to Geneva (1933) and then to New York (1935) and California (1941 - 1957), under the directorship of Max Horkheimer (from 1930 - 1958). The impact of Nazism on the School is significant, it is no accident perhaps that the School had an abiding interest in authoritarianism in its social-psychological context.<sup>8</sup> Another major and enduring focus of early critical theory was Freud.<sup>9</sup> These promoted an enquiry into propaganda and the use of media.<sup>10</sup> Indeed the Marxist context of critical theory, with its notions of ideology critique, freedom, emancipation and justice, stood in direct contrast to the authoritarianism of Nazism.

In its move to New York and then to California the members of the School were faced with a materialistic 'popular culture' which trivialised, glamourised, anaesthetised and mythologised both its products and its mass consumers' (Gibson, 1986). Again it is no accident that this challenge to its existing values of culture

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<sup>7</sup> Eg Grossman. 1929; Pollock, 1929; Wittfogel, 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Eg Adorno. 1950; Horkheimer, 1936, 1949, 1973; Marcuse, 1934; Neumann. 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Eg Fromm. 1932. 1971; Horkheimer, 1940; Marcuse, 1951, 1955; Habermas, 1970a, 1971; Adorno and Horkheimer. 1946, 1972.

<sup>10</sup> Adorno. 1946; Bettelheim and Janowitz, 1970; Horkheimer, 1939.

and a tradition of rationalist intellectual and philosophical debate should spawn a wealth of literature from the School on aesthetics and the arts, principally from the musician Adorno but also from the other members of the School.<sup>11</sup>

The move to North America also brought the School face to face with the positivist tradition in the social sciences. The School subjected the positivism which it encountered in North America to a series of critiques which spanned several decades, well beyond its sojourn there.<sup>12</sup>

Taken together the effect of these critiques was to reaffirm a rationalist, humanistic view of social theory. The School's commitments to a broad and 'humanist' Marxist philosophy (Bernstein, 1983) complements the Marxisms of other schools of thought (Jessop, 1985) (eg the economic Marxism of *Capital*, the state hegemonic system of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971), the structuralism of French Marxism (eg Althusser, 1972)). This reflected one concern of the Institute's director, Max Horkheimer, to accord significance to the philosophical underpinning of social science, which has remained an important concern since then.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.3 The Nature of Critical Theory

The concept of critical as opposed to traditional social theory is an essential tenet of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, 1972a). Critical Theory is deliberately prescriptively normative (Horkheimer, 1972a), entailing a view of what behaviour

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<sup>11</sup> Adorno. 1936. 1939. 1941, 1945, 1952, 1954, 1964, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976; Benjamin, 1929, 1973; Habermas. 1987a, 1987b; Horkheimer, 1941; Lowenthal, 1967; Marcuse, 1937a, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Adorno. 1959. 1969, 1973, 1976; Horkheimer, 1972a — first published 1937. 1952, 1974; Marcuse, 1937b. 1964; Habermas 1971, 1972, 1974a, 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Cf Adorno. 1977 — first published in 1931, 1972 — first published in 1947. 1973 — first published in 1966. 1969; Horkheimer. 1972a — separate articles for the translated volume first published in 1933 and 1937. 1939, 1972 — first published in 1947; Marcuse, 1928, 1932, 1937b. 1941. 1964, 1973; Habermas. 1972. 1974a, 1976a. 1979a, 1984, 1987a, 1987b.

in a social democracy *should* entail. Its intention is not merely to give an account of social formations and systems, it purposely goes beyond that to include a desire to bring about a society based on equality and the emancipation of all sectors of society where ideological distortion of 'real interests' has been eliminated (Geuss, 1981). It describes society not only as it *is* but as it *ought* to be (Bernstein, 1976, p. 173). Critical Theory attempts to expose ideology and its operations, it seeks to replace acceptance of given interpretations of society with normative prescriptions: its purpose is not merely to understand society but to change it:

the theory never aims simply at increase in knowledge as such. Its goal is man's emancipation from slavery, (Horkheimer, 1972a, p. 246).

This includes a transformative element whereby members emerge from oppression to emancipation and existential self-realization in a society in which justice and 'generalizable interests' rather than the power of an élite hold sway (Habermas, 1976a). McLaren (1989) argues that 'critical theorists are united in their objectives: to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices' (p. 160). Alexander (1991) agrees that 'Critical Theory...is explicitly political' (p. 40). Habermas (1991) acknowledges this where he writes: 'the theory of communicative action is not a completely unpolitical project', (p. 251). It supports critique as a necessary condition for emancipation and social transformation. It is critical of the ideological functions of 'instrumental reason' which are seen to perpetuate a 'technicist', 'scientistic' understanding of the world dominated by positivism. Fay (1987), albeit post-dating many of the Frankfurt School, provides a clear fourfold schema which differentiates critical theory from traditional theory. This can be used as an entrée into Habermasian theory — or indeed the Frankfurt School in general. Fay asserts that a critical social theory will comprise:



**1. A theory of false consciousness which**

(i) demonstrates the ways in which the self-understandings of a group of people are false (in the sense of failing to account for the life experiences of the members of the group), or incoherent (because internally contradictory), or both; This is sometimes called 'ideology-critique';

(ii) explains how the members of this group came to have these self-misunderstandings, and how they are maintained;

(iii) contrasts them with an alternative self-understanding, showing how this alternative is superior.

**2. A theory of crisis which**

(iv) spells out what a social crisis is;

(v) indicates how a particular society is in such a crisis. This would require examining the felt dissatisfactions of a group of people and showing both that they threaten social cohesion and that they can not be alleviated given the basic organization of the society and the self-understandings of its members;

(vi) provides an historical account of the development of this crisis partly in terms of the false consciousness of the members of the group and partly in terms of the structural bases of the society.

**3. A theory of education which**

(vii) offers an account of the conditions necessary and sufficient for the sort of enlightenment envisioned by the theory;

(viii) shows that given the current social situation these conditions are satisfied.

**4. A theory of transformative action which**

(ix) isolates those aspects of a society which must be altered if the social crisis is to be resolved and the dissatisfactions of its members lessened;

(x) details a plan of action indicating the people who are to be the 'carriers' of the anticipated social transformation and at least some general idea of how they might do this.

(Fay. 1987. pp. 31 - 2).

It will be argued, however, (chapters 4.4 and 8) that, working within these criteria and fulfilling these criteria (as Habermas does), Critical Theory differs from traditional theory less than its proponents would maintain; whereas Critical Theory is overtly normative traditional theory is covertly normative. Habermas's Critical Theory will be evaluated throughout the thesis as appropriate.

## Chapter III

### THE EARLY WORK OF HABERMAS

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Habermas's attempt to rework a Marxian analysis of society (3.2). It presents Habermas's critique of a traditional Marxian analysis of society and then outlines his own reformulation. A critique of Habermas's reinterpretation of Marxian social analysis is then presented (3.3). Arising from the discussion will be the need to address the tension between agency and determinism in social theory (3.4); this leads into Habermas's critique of technicism, positivism and scientism (3.5). Finally a critique of Habermas's views of technicism, positivism and scientism is undertaken which indicates that his analysis, though useful, is not without its weaknesses (3.6).

#### 3.2 Habermas's Science of Society

##### 3.2.1 Natural and Social Science

Habermas (1974a) was concerned to analyse the state of society in advanced capitalism and to bring together the key social theories of Marx and Weber to explain the development of twentieth century society — eg the rise of monopoly capitalism, the bureaucratisation of society, the operation of power differentials in society, the interrelationships between economic and political analyses of society, the scientization of society, and to suggest that social theory was more appropriately based on a paradigm of communication (cf. Roderick, 1986, pp. 44 and

142). Habermas (1974b, p. 51) argues that there are inadequacies in classical Marxian social theory, principally that it has become an inadequate analysis of late capitalism and therefore needs to be reformulated. These inadequacies are:

(a) the problems of base / superstructure theory and an economy driven view of society ie a 'paradigm of production';

(b) the supposition that social class is the principle structural element of society and that the class struggle is confined to the labour process;

(c) the reductionist and determinist view of social and individual agency;

(d) the functionalist basis of social science;

(e) the primacy of the economic aspect of life as the motor of social life — the overemphasis on social change in the mode of production as the key to social change generally;

(f) the rise in general standards of living which do not spring solely from an economic cause;

(g) the dissolution of the proletariat; in advanced capitalist societies the proletariat was not revolutionary but had been successfully integrated into the system;

(h) the decline of Marxism in socialist countries;

(i) the fact that socialist revolutions occurred not in developed capitalist societies but in developing societies;

(j) the fact that class divisions still existed in socialist countries (ie that these societies were not emancipated).

Whilst Habermas accepts the importance of economic factors in determining social evolution he is concerned about the significance attached to the economic domain as the motor of society in traditional Marxism: 'it was wrong of orthodox Marxists to privilege the mode of production as the single motor of history' (Jay, 1984, p. 487).<sup>14</sup> Habermas contends that superstructural — 'lifeworld' — elements of society — religion, the law, politics, education for example — exert a major determining influence on the economic base of society.<sup>15</sup> In saying this he echoes the work of the Italian Marxist Gramsci (1971) who suggests that the state exerts hegemonic influence in enforcing the economic base of society, and the French Marxist Althusser (1972) who suggests that powerful ideological state apparatuses, not just economic apparatuses, reproduce inequality. Althusser (*ibid.*) argues that it is only 'in the last instance' that economic issues will drive social circumstances. Habermas regards as inherently flawed and outmoded the base / superstructure theory of society. Given the complexity of social forces in modern society, the rise of bureaucratization, the fragmenting of the class structure along more than economic lines (Habermas, 1984, 1987a), the failure of the social relations of production wholly to determine interpersonal relations outside production, and the recognition that it is not simply the proletariat who bring about revolutionary change, Habermas (*ibid.*) clearly identifies major elements of classical Marxism which are in need of revision.

Habermas (1971a, 1974b, 1988) argues that there is a reciprocal or dialectical informing of the base and superstructures of society — it is not a one-way, bottom-up process (cf Eagleton, 1991, pp. 81 -2). Orthodox Marxism, then, is seen to

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<sup>14</sup> Habermas's later work seeks to replace a 'paradigm of production' with a 'paradigm of communication' in revitalising Marxism.

<sup>15</sup> Habermas. 1972. p. 101; 1974b, p. 51; 1987a, p. 168.

be out of date in late capitalism (Habermas, 1974b, p. 50; 1988, p. 20). The increasing role of state intervention into the economic base of society confounds the simplicity of the base / superstructure theory:

The sphere of commodity exchange and social labour requires so much centralized organization and administration that bourgeois society, once left to private initiative operating according to the rules of the free market, is forced to resort to political mediation of its commerce for many of its branches. However, if it is no longer autonomously constituted as that sphere which serves as presupposition and basis for the state, then state and society no longer stand in the classical relationship of superstructure and base (Habermas, 1974a, p. 195).

Classical Marxism is inadequate for a contemporary analysis of the relationships between state and society, state and the economy:

the process of accumulation can indeed be switched over from economic to political mechanisms to the degree to which, in any case, state intervention is forced to regulate and stabilize the total economic cycle. Under these conditions the dependence of political actions on economic interests, as this is presupposed by Marxism, becomes problematic (Habermas, 1974a, p. 235).

Habermas continues:

Due to the introduction of elements of the superstructure into the base itself, the classical dependency relationship of politics to the economy was disrupted (ibid. p. 237).

Politics is 'no longer only a phenomenon of the superstructure' (Habermas, 1971a, p. 101). The state is not — nor ever was — ideologically neutral (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1972), nor indeed does it have an insignificant role to play in the perpetuation of inequality, it serves the interests of the 'private proprietors' rather than society as a whole, thus remaining an instrument of domination, of repression (Habermas, 1971a p. 111). It is a regulator of capital and a regulator of ideology (cf. Habermas, 1972, pp. 102- 7). The state 'has the task of sustaining the accumulation process [whilst maintaining] a certain level of 'mass loyalty' ' (Held, 1982, p. 184). It is that agent which perpetuates the private appropriation

of socially produced surplus value (cf. Habermas, 1976a, chapter 4).<sup>16</sup>

Habermas argues that 'Marxian orthodoxy has a hard time explaining government interventionism, mass democracy, and the welfare state' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 343), it neglects the significance or power of these factors. Habermas suggests that 'between capitalism and democracy there is an indissoluble tension' (ibid., p. 345), as advanced capitalism is premised on state regulated exploitation. Habermas echoes Gramsci (1971) in arguing that the welfare state 'renders the class antagonism still built into the economic system innocuous' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 350) whilst at the same time perpetuating a capitalist system.

Habermas's 'humanistic' form of Marxism recognizes that 'the emancipation of society can no longer be articulated directly in economic terms' (ibid. p. 195): 'the economistic approach breaks down in the face of the pacification of class conflict and the long-term success of reformism in European countries since World War II' (ibid., p. 343). The Marxism of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital* casts society in a class conflict model. This has the attraction of simplicity and polemics. By isolating the root causes of inequality in capitalism Marx was able to construct a polemical and easily visible attack on structural inequalities in capitalist society. Habermas extends this in his *Legitimation Crisis* (1976a), where he sees crises of legitimation, motivation and economic growth arising in the politico-administrative, sociocultural and economic domains respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Marx's analysis has several drawbacks which render it an inappropriate model

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<sup>16</sup> Habermas comments that: when I examine and consider all the flourishing republics in the world today, believe me, nothing comes to mind except the conspiracy of the rich, who seek their own advantage under the name and title of the republic (Habermas, 1974a, p. 53).

<sup>17</sup> Habermas (1979b) adds to this 'five developmental problems of the modern state: problems of identity, penetration, legitimation, participation and redistribution (Habermas, 1979b, p. 19), soluble by nation building, modernizing administration, institutionalizing basic rights in law, political democracy, and establishment of a system of social security respectively (ibid., p. 19).

of late twentieth century society. Dahrendorf (1959) argues that Marxian analysis fails to account for the emergent 'middle classes'. He argues that Marx's two great social classes have been splintered into a variety of social groups whose number depends on the authors one reads. The point is not only that there is a proliferation of classes, but that the economic criterion used to delineate a social class is no longer the sole factor in considering the structure of those groups in society.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst orthodox Marxism may have value in addressing the class position of those at the extremes of the social structure, for others it is simply irrelevant: 'the unequal distribution of social rewards reflects a structure of privilege that can no longer be traced back to class positions in any unqualified way' (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 348 - 9). Whether this is because class has become so deeply embedded in the structure of society as to become unnoticed — though nevertheless present (ie it has become submerged as society has become saturated with its ideology, it has become 'latent') — it remains an anachronism. Habermas accepts the worth of a class analysis (he writes 'in the final analysis...class structure is the source of the legitimation deficit' (Habermas, 1976a, p. 73)), he nevertheless breaks with this Marxian axiom when he argues that 'what separates us from Marx are evident historical truths, for example that in the developed capitalist societies there is no identifiable class' (Habermas, 1982, p. 221). Habermas (1974a) suggests that 'any class consciousness, especially a revolutionary class consciousness, is not to be found in the main strata of the working class today' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 196):

in the face of a class antagonism pacified by means of welfare-state measures, however, and in the face of the growing anonymity of class structures, the theory of class consciousness loses its empirical reference (ibid., p. 352).

Habermas is breaking with orthodox Marxism, which saw emancipation as

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<sup>18</sup> Cf Weber's (1972) suggestion that power and status are significant variables in social grouping.

only happening via the proletariat, to a position where everyone may be the instrument of emancipation.<sup>19</sup>

Weber's account of the importance of the role of power and its rationalization into bureaucracy makes a significant addition to Marxian social theory. 'For Weber, bureaucratization is a key to understanding modern societies' (Habermas, 1988, p. 306). By introducing these two components of social interaction Weber is able to offer an analysis of society which respects its complexity. For Weber the characteristic of advanced capitalism is its 'iron cage' of bureaucracy, wherein spheres or zones of power, authority and legitimacy are comprehensively worked out — rationalized — and carefully delineated, becoming strictures on individual powers and freedoms as well as structures of society.

The recognition in Weber that a Marxian two-class view of society can be replaced by an analysis which allows for an infinite number of groupings, where differentials of power — be they determined by income, status, or membership of institutions — can follow from a variety of criteria (Weber, 1972) is an important factor which Habermas uses in discussing notions that the realization that empowerment of individuals and social groups is a multifaceted phenomenon which takes place in a variety of spheres (cf Keat, 1981, p. 50). Social class might be one of those spheres but it is only one out of many.

The analysis of Weber is a major preoccupation of Habermas's mature writing on social theory (Habermas, 1984, 1987a — discussed in chapter 7 of this thesis), indeed Habermas devotes much of his two-volume outline of *The Theory*

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<sup>19</sup> In this respect Habermas echoes the view of other critical theorists. Horkheimer (1972a), deliberately summarizing his own and Adorno's views, writes: 'It is possible for the consciousness of every social stratum today to be limited and corrupted by ideology, however much, for its circumstances, it may be bent on truth (Horkheimer, 1972a, p. 242).



of *Communicative Action* to an analysis of the contribution of Weber and to a suggested way of breaking free of Weber's 'iron cage' of bureaucracy through ideology critique and through the development of communicative action (1987a, 1987b). Whilst Weber sees no alternative to the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy Habermas is more sanguine in his prognostications, developing, for example, the significance of cultural, communicative and affective forms of rationality as an alternative to technicism and instrumentalism.

Having suggested briefly that Habermas attempts to break free of the economic determinism and simplistic class analysis of classical Marxism this section moves to a discussion of the methodology of the social sciences. This provides not only a critique of classical Marxist methodology but an introduction to the nature and purpose of Habermas's critique of positivism, scientism and instrumentalism. It draws particularly on the early works of Habermas<sup>20</sup> though it does lay the ground for his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987a).

### 3.2.2 Marxist Positivist Social Science

Marx's conception of a science of society bears strong similarities to the natural sciences, with their striving for the generation of norms, laws (Habermas, 1974a, p. 168), the isolation and controlling of variables, and the espousal of positivism.<sup>21</sup> Habermas retains the position of the Frankfurt School outlined in the introduction to this thesis — a deep-seated suspicion of positivist social sciences (Habermas, 1972, chapters 2 and 3). He<sup>22</sup> takes issue with Marx's comments that natural science will eventually subsume the social sciences to become a sin-

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<sup>20</sup> Habermas. 1971a; 1972; 1974a; 1974b.

<sup>21</sup> 'Although he himself established the science of man in the form of critique and not as a natural science, he continually tended to classify it with the natural sciences' (Habermas, 1972, p. 45).

<sup>22</sup> Habermas. 1974a. 1984, 1987a.

gle science. For Habermas the conflation of the natural and the social sciences is problematic (Habermas, 1972, p. 162).

He is concerned about the status and future of sociology itself, fearing that it will become merely 'an applied science in the service of administration' (ibid. p. 208), where 'the power of technical control remains wholly indifferent with respect to the possible value systems, in the service of which it is to be exercised' (ibid. p. 269). The concern about the putative amorality of applied social theory sets the scene for a Habermasian reinterpretation of social processes and for a later analysis of the role of schools in this scenario.<sup>23</sup> A Marxian analysis (though not exclusively so) — and indeed neo-Marxian analysis from Althusser — suggests that we have to accept that in the overwhelming number of cases individuals' actual and projected life styles, social development and freedoms are determined or 'overdetermined' by the constraints which are external to them (Althusser, 1972; Giddens, 1979).

Habermas rejects a deterministic and functionalist view (Habermas, 1974a, p. 206), echoing the early Frankfurt School (chapter 2) whose work was set against the backdrop of emerging Nazism and Fascism and its domination of the individual (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972). Individuals make society as well as society making individuals, however conscious or not this may be (Habermas, 1972, p. 244), a truism which nevertheless rejects the economic determinism of Marx and the bureaucratic determinism of Weber. Althusser and Marx, whilst acknowledging this, place less emphasis on it in the agency / structure dialectic (Layder, 1994).

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<sup>23</sup> Habermas recognizes that 'in the social sciences we have a peculiar combination of hermeneutic and empirical analytical methods' (Habermas, 1974b, p. 48), ie an interpretive rather than solely a positivistic element.

### 3.3 A Critique of Habermas's Reinterpretation of Marx

Habermas's attempt to rework Marxism can be criticised for the elevation of theory, for his neglect of Marxism, for his remoteness from the working class and for lack of clarity over the audiences of his views. These issues are commented upon here and are features which are returned to in a much fuller way in chapters 7 and 8.

Lazarsfeld (1984) criticizes Habermas for abstract theory: 'the sociologist attracted by the atmosphere of Critical Theory could not learn how to proceed if he wanted to study a specific topic' (Lazarsfeld, 1984, p. 232). Similarly Heydebrand and Burris (1984) argue that, in separating theory and praxis so sharply, Habermas has in effect relegated praxis and partialized its power (Heydebrand and Burris, 1984, p. 411). Together they suggest that the effect of Habermas's preoccupation with theory is a political and practical paralysis.

To the view that he gives too much weight to superstructural elements Habermas (1972, 1974b, 1987a) argues that that there is a need for the base / superstructure theory to be reworked, which moves from an economic interpretation to a theory of communicative action. Also there are superstructural elements to be found in the base, and there are new modes of production that need to be brought into the base. That he neglects the class component dimension in his analysis has been suggested by Woodiwiss (1977).

The third concern is that, in contrast to the Marx of *The Communist Manifesto*, Habermas has in effect evolved a proletarian theory which is not for the proletariat. Habermas's view is problematic. He suggests that 'involvement' can take a variety of forms — from the formation of theory, through the implementation

of the theory to the mobilisation of political practice. The process of enlightenment from involvement thus operates at three levels:

Level 1. 'the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 32);

Level 2. 'the organization of the processes of enlightenment' (ibid. p. 32);

Level 3. 'the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of the political struggle' (ibid. p. 32).

Habermas is operating substantially at level one. One has to question here whether this theory above will ever have the potential to drive praxis — a feature that Habermas accepts:

the prognostic capacity of social theories was and is very limited — that could hardly be otherwise, given the high level of abstraction at which these statements concerning complex states of affairs are formulated (Habermas, 1985a, p. 89).

With reference to the fourth concern — that Habermas is unclear on the targets of his Critical Theory — Heller (1982) articulates the problem:

If all reflective theories offer an interpretation of the latent interests of one group, then either the theories have to be particularised (different interests, different theories), or else we must accept that all groups share the same interest. In the first case a theory could not claim universality; in the second case it could not claim to be interpreting interests at all (Heller, 1982, p. 30).

These assertions suggest that there is a logical and pragmatic inconsistency in Habermas's theory. Habermas's early response, that 'in a process of enlightenment there can only be participants' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 40),<sup>24</sup> whilst it reinforces the concepts of engagement and involvement, offers little practical solution to the problem posed by Heller.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf also Young's (1989) comment that 'the addressee of Critical Theory is clearly universal' (Young, 1989, p. 169).

### 3.4 The Dialectic of Agency and Determinism

That there is a tension between agency (voluntarism) and determinism has long been seen as both one of the conceptual nightmares for sociologists and, more positively, a source of purchase on the explanation of the evolution of society (Giddens, 1984, Habermas, 1984, p. 343; Layder, 1994). Habermas writes 'my point of departure then, is that the problem for theory construction of how to combine the basic concepts of systems and action theory is a genuine one' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 201). In classical Marxian analysis, indeed in an Althusserian interpretation of Marxism, human agency is negated, circumscribed or relegated in importance; human behaviour is determined. Only with difficulty can one break out of the system which is determining behaviour. In taking little account of the agency of individuals — or even of disempowered social groups — this theory fails to give a developed account of how society manages to evolve through the mould-breaking actions of individuals, ie it is an inherently conservative model (eg. Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1972; Eagleton, 1991).

Habermasian theory, on the other hand, whilst it can be seen to be cast in the mould of 'grand' macro sociological theory (cf. Giddens, 1985b), attempts to accord more importance to individuals and agency in social theory — it attempts to link macro and micro sociological theory whilst still preserving the essential conflict and critical model which was generated by Marx. To do this Habermas alludes to a central principle of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, arguing that it is social processes and institutions which cause repression in the individual psyche and produce neuroses (Habermas, 1972, p. 233). Habermas (1970a, 1972, 1974a) sets great store by the implications of Freudianism for social theory which will be taken up in detail in chapter five. Habermas is clearly unhappy about a structuralist

theory in which little account is taken of the way in which individuals make or shape society (Habermas, 1976b, p. 133). He comments:

we have to combine in a systematic manner the 'systems' approach with an approach which has so far been explicated, rather in the phenomenological tradition (Habermas, 1974b, p. 44).

Habermas attempts to do this in his *Theory of Communicative Action*. The insidious effects of the 'technical control' mentality (ibid., p. 44) of the scientific method, and the instrumentalist overtones of positivism render individuals more passive players than agents of their own future roles.<sup>25</sup> This echoes Tar's (1984) appreciation of the early Frankfurt School's concern with humanism, legitimation crisis and aesthetics (Tar, 1984, pp. 12-13). Whilst Marx was clearly aware of the idiographic as well as the nomothetic dimensions of social theory — indeed he analysed the 'lived experiences' of reification — he nevertheless took a structuralist stance on the interpretation of social formations, seeing reification, for example, as a categorial issue in social theory.

Habermas (1984, 1987a), in avoiding the determinism of Marxism, is according significance to the 'relative autonomy' of individuals to realize their existential futures; he is breaking the mould of the traditional base / superstructure view of social theory and is replacing it with a far more dialectical interpretation in which agency itself has a determining influence on social formations.

### 3.5 Technicism, Positivism and Scientism

Habermas's own developing methodology for a science of society contains several features:

- a rejection of scientism and positivism;

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<sup>25</sup> See also Horkheimer, 1972a, p. 229.

- a consideration of the ambivalent position of technicism and natural science, as they can be both emancipatory and constraining;
- the dangers of technicism and technicist mentalities.

These views derive from his early work<sup>26</sup> and his later, updated version of an earlier work on the logic of the social sciences (1988).

Habermas contends that in striving to generate laws of human social behaviour and social evolution social science has become infected with the positivism which is characteristic of Western culture and society in general, what Horkheimer (1972a) termed the ‘mathematization of nature’. Positivism emphasises systematisation, empirical evidence, the importance of the ‘scientific method’ and of adopting it in systematic investigation, the desire for precision inherent in law-like hypotheses (Habermas, 1972, p. 75).

For Habermas the desire to measure and then to control human agency, to enter the hypothetico-deductive paradigm, to systematize, ‘prove’ and construct data capable of replication (the methodology of the natural sciences) is both an indication of the strength of the positivistic rationality and the power of science and technology to provide twentieth century society with what it perceives to be the solutions to the problems of social organization and integration. Whilst the increase of technology might be appropriate for developing societies Habermas proscribes the far reaching scientific effects that the technicizing of culture exerts on developed western societies (Habermas, 1970a). He suggests that a state ideological — hegemonic — intent is present, for when one considers the huge injection of state intervention in promoting science and technology, where ‘industrial research has

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<sup>26</sup> Habermas. 1971a. 1972, 1974a, 1974b.

been linked up with research under government control' (Habermas, 1972, p. 104) then technological innovation can be the instrument of further state hegemony, it becomes another weapon in the armoury of state control (Habermas, 1974a p. 5).

Whilst science and technology join with labour power to become one of the forces of production (and in classical Marxism therefore a pathway to societal emancipation) this is problematical. Habermas realizes that technical progress is a precondition and not necessarily a realization of emancipation (Habermas, cited in Ottmann, 1982, p. 88). Science and technology can be emancipating and they can be constraining — 'there are two kinds of mastery: a repressive and a liberating one' (Habermas, 1972, pp. 86 - 7). The difference between Marx and Habermas is clear here: 'science and technology — for Marx an unambiguously emancipatory potential — themselves become the medium of social repression' for Habermas (Habermas, 1984, p. 144).<sup>27</sup> Habermas however is operating from an undifferentiated view of technology and science, assuming that it is 'dangerous or negative' for everyone, where in reality it would be very positive and emancipatory for some societies and people.

There is an unacknowledged feature in scientific rationality, that the desire to control variables, environments and organisms (however defined) is inappropriate when applied to human societies (cf Ottmann, 1982, p. 92), let alone to nature — 'the technical interest in mastery over nature encounters a nature taking revenge upon the boundlessness of the will-to-control' (Ottmann, 1982, p. 89).<sup>28</sup> Though Habermas (1974a, p. 268) acknowledges that positivism might have the advantage of exposing dogma it nevertheless risks fostering a mentality of *control* by

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<sup>27</sup> See also Habermas, 1984, pp. 367 - 8; 1987b, p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> For example the rabid use of fossil fuels to provide electricity rebounds back in the production of ozone-depleting gases and acid rain production.



ultimately restricting individual choice to a given set of alternatives — itself an ideological process:

if the division of power and responsibility between experts and leaders is carried out according to the decisionistic pattern, then the politically functioning public realm of the citizenry can serve only to legitimate the ruling group (Habermas, 1971, p. 67).

This is the spectre of ‘decisionism’ alluded to by Habermas.<sup>29</sup> Questions of value are reduced to questions of expediency amongst a selection of ‘given values, means and boundary conditions’ (Habermas, 1984, p. 170), ie pragmatism and eclecticism. For Habermas the alleged objectivity of positivism in fact conceals its own value positions and axioms, it is as much value based as Critical Theory, it is as much an ideology as the ideologies it purports to better (Habermas, 1972, 1974a). Technology assumes probability about ‘given facts’; the pursuit of such probability in constructing accounts of human behaviour misses a central element of human behaviour, that it is uncertain, open to interpretation, open to debate, mutable:

Today discussion centers on ‘what we want in order to live’ and not on ‘how we would like to live’. Technical questions are solved, practical goals are assumed as given. Technology becomes a technocratic ideology (Landmann, 1984, p. 130).

Popper (1969), Kuhn (1970) and Chambers (1982) suggest that scientific knowledge is not value-neutral but theory-saturated and that it is the espoused theory which determines how one generates laws of science and which informs how one begins to classify observational data as relevant or irrelevant.<sup>30</sup> What one sees, is informed by a set of theoretical preconceptions, as Popper (1969) says: ‘the belief that we can start with pure observation alone, without anything in the nature

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<sup>29</sup> For example Habermas, 1971a, p. 82; 1972, p. 316; 1974a, p. 266.

<sup>30</sup> Kuhn’s (1970) and Chambers’ (1982) accounts of the philosophy of science indicate the prevalence of *paradigmatic* views of science; the galactic structure in pre-Copernican times placed the earth at the centre of the universe, the Copernican revolution adopted a heliocentric model. For scientists before Galileo the downward movement of a weight attached to a piece of thread was interpreted as its fall to earth interrupted by an attached thread; for Galileo it was a pendulum.

of a theory, is absurd....Observation is always selective' (Popper, 1969, pp. 46-7). The implication of the move which is clearly seen in the espousal of a technician, objectivist mentality away from discussion and debate towards the establishing of immutable facts has the effect of separating fact from value (Horkheimer, 1972a; Habermas, 1972, p. 339), aims from processes, purposes from predictable outcomes, worth from assumed or unquestioned, unexamined worth:

they [technicism, scientism] can furnish technical recommendations for effective instrumentalities, but can no longer normatively give any orientation with respect to goals themselves...about the selection of aims, the priority of goals, the application of norms (Habermas, 1974a, p. 114).

The effects of this separation of fact from value are huge,<sup>31</sup> for it indicates a society dispossessed of moral judgements, disabled from cultural or moral advance, playing out ascribed behaviours (Habermas, 1974a, p. 180), incapable of debating values, reproducing the *status quo*, advancing a division of labour whose justice or legitimacy remains unquestioned. It is a society without conscience.

'Scientism' is neatly defined by Habermas (1972) thus: 'Scientism' means science's belief in itself: that is, the conviction that we can no longer understand science as one form of possible knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science' (Habermas, 1972, p. 4), 'knowledge becomes identical with scientific knowledge' (ibid., p. 80), other forms of knowledge — eg hermeneutic, aesthetic, critical — are accorded an inferior status whilst scientific knowledge reigns supreme. Habermas (1972, p. 67) questions the desirability of this exclusiveness.<sup>32</sup> Habermas is arguing that though individuals can exert their agency this itself will

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<sup>31</sup> Habermas argues that 'the positivistically cleansed demarcation set between knowing and evaluating...represents less a result than a problem' (Habermas, 1974a p. 265).

<sup>32</sup> An alternative to positivism was seen by the Frankfurt School to be provided in the aesthetic dimensions of life. Adorno laments the loss of the aesthetic dimension to life, Marcuse both celebrates the role of 'Eros' as a foil to the dehumanization of life and sees the progress towards science as the supreme mode of understanding as bringing about a *One Dimensional Man* who is starved of feeling and barred from engaging necessary moral debate (cf. Jay, 1973).

be conditioned by technicism and scientism. He argues that natural science is an inappropriate model to use for social science, the claimed neutrality of social science as natural science is seen to be ideology, diverting attention from its own inability to expose interests and power differentials or to foster moral debate, thus allowing social inequality to be reproduced (cf Keat, 1981, p. 2).

Positivism is unable to answer any of 'the really interesting problems' of life (Habermas, 1972, p. 300).<sup>33</sup> Habermas places a marvellously double-edged — though unsupported — comment at the end of his examination of the epistemological bases of social theory where he writes '[t]he glory of the sciences is their unswerving application of their methods without reflecting on knowledge-constitutive interests' (Habermas, 1972, p. 315). Epistemology is reduced to methodology (Habermas, 1972, p.68) — a technical interest in which the significance of the knower and the subject of the known is lost — 'the knowing subject is no longer the system of reference' (Habermas, 1972, p. 68), value is sacrificed to ideology. Again this process is ideological in that it masks fundamental social injustices that might be reproduced by such a rationality, and it diverts attention away from such a debate.<sup>34</sup>

The elevation of the scientific mentality into the religion of 'scientism' is viewed by Habermas as one of the great mistakes of the twentieth century. This is a bold assertion; one has to question his evidence both of the existence of a scientific mentality and the extent of its influence in late capitalism. Whilst his

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<sup>33</sup> This echoes clearly the early writing of Wittgenstein (1974) when he comments that 'even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched' (p. 73). See also Habermas, 1982, p. 259, and Jay's (1973) analysis of the early Frankfurt School.

<sup>34</sup> Habermas, it must be said, does pull back from an extreme view of such a separation, arguing that 'the separation between subject and object which science brings about methodologically...is never wholly suspended' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 209), that 'even if we place ourselves (fictitiously) outside the social interrelationships of life in order to confront them, we still remain part of them, even in the act of insight, as subject and object are one' (ibid. p. 210).

claim of the universality of scientism certainly has polemical power he brings little empirical evidence to light to support his case.

### 3.6 Critiquing Habermas's Critique

This section argues that Habermas

- constructs too crude an interpretation of scientism and positivism;
- misrepresents the nature of natural science;
- provides little evidence for his assertions about technicism;
- misrepresents the effects of positivism as implying the end of moral debate.

The argument concludes that Habermas's critique is as ideological as the positivism it proscribes.<sup>35</sup>

Keat (1981) suggests that the Habermasian conception of scientism is too crude and that it confuses scientism with positivism, when in fact they 'do not entail each other' (p. 19). It is possible to adopt a positivist view of science without believing that science is the only form of knowledge. Keat further argues that critical theorists have confused empiricism with scientism, scientism with value freedom, and empiricism with positivism (pp. 22-23), that in dealing with such terms their concepts are abstract and undifferentiated (p. 23). Bernstein (1983), too, argues that Habermas has mistaken the nature of the natural sciences, assuming that they abide by a unitary set of methodological principles (and which are separate from the social sciences). In doing so Habermas neglects the work of Kuhn (1970), Popper (1968; 1972) and Feyerabend (1975). Feyerabend (1975)

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<sup>35</sup> This draws on key works of Popper (1968), Jay (1973), Keat (1981), Bernstein (1983), papers in Thompson and Held (1982), Chambers (1982), Alford (1985) and Rasmussen (1990).

argues that empirical sciences are characterized by a multiplicity of theories; these theories in turn determine their own domains — what counts as relevant facts either to support or falsify them. One theory may not necessarily disprove another, it is simply that their domains of relevant facts differ, that they are incommensurable with each other.<sup>36</sup> This moves empirical sciences away from the unitary view espoused by Habermas. Indeed Bernstein (1983) cites the work of Hesse to show the similarity between natural and social sciences in their use of hermeneutic, interpretive and theory-driven investigations. Alford (1985) argues that Habermas

defines ordinary science in a more restrictive fashion than need be. This restricted definition of science itself helps to create the need for reconstructive sciences, (Alford, 1985, p. 322).

Reconstructive science is discussed more fully in chapter 6.2 and 6.3. Alford suggests that Habermas is obliged to define science narrowly in order to avoid the charge that his own 'reconstructive science' is scientific.

Habermas's contention that society has given up the moral debate does not follow from his suggestion (a) that positivism has infected society, and (b) that positivism purports to be value free. His views imply an exclusive causal relationship between positivism and moral behaviour — for which he provides no empirical evidence and which rational and logical analysis cannot sustain. Indeed it could be argued that the rise of positivism has promoted rather than impeded moral debate; society has the capability to destroy itself several times over, it has the knowledge to promote or to extinguish life. The moral debate over such issues — in the minds of scientists and positivists — has grown rather than shrunk, fact and value have come together in science.

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<sup>36</sup> This, of course, is contentious, for what is being argued is the case for relativism which, as will be seen in chapter eight, is untenable.

### 3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined Habermas's views on:

- the anxieties about positivism and scientism and the loss of other forms of rationality;
- the deleterious effects of a control mentality;
- the nature of a social science;
- the need to take from Marx his notion of ideology critique and to reformulate orthodox Marxism for contemporary sociological analysis;
- the need to recognize that agency and structure exist dialectically;
- the double-edged nature of science and technology, being both a liberating and yet constraining force on society;
- the need to develop an epistemologically sound theory of society and social evolution;
- the nature of the operation and structure of societies in late capitalism.

Whilst these themes reflect the terms of Habermas's developing analysis this section has cast doubt on its adequacy. It has been shown that Habermas provides insufficient support — in evidence or argument — for his assertions about the extent of scientism and the deleterious effects of positivism. He misrepresents the role of science when he argues that science takes place in a moral vacuum and that scientists are either merely technologists or amoral operatives. He wrongly attributes a putative decline in moral debate to the rise of positivism, he does not provide empirical evidence for his views and does not suggest criteria for the

verification or refutation of his views.

Habermas offers little on the kinds of evidence which would render his theory tenable or untenable. His disdain of empiricism implies that his theory need have no predictive, inductive role to play. Its value would appear to be that which is accorded to it hermeneutically by its recipients. Not only does this slip into a rationalistic, individualistic philosophy of consciousness<sup>37</sup> but it also becomes a heuristic device for sensitizing readers to the possible dangers of an all-embracing positivism and scientism; his theory has instrumental value in this respect. Habermas, thereby, is guilty of the very instrumentalism which he is proscribing in the marauding army of technicians, positivists and those of a scientific disposition.

His appeal to '*generalizable* interests' (1976a) (my italics), whilst it is the appeal to the principle of universalizability in moral debate which can be seen in Kantian moral philosophy, is — by definition — guilty of the generation of law-like accounts in the positivism which he proscribes in others. It is difficult to see what — in principle rather than in substance — separates Habermas from those whom he targets, for in moving towards a normative theory himself he is simply replacing one set of values — positivism and scientism — with another. Hence we are asked to *accept* a series of axioms rather than demonstrations; these axioms might have heuristic value in clarifying Habermas's sympathies and starting position.

Though Habermas frequently engages criticisms of his work (eg Habermas, 1982, 1985, 1990b, 1991) he nevertheless does not subject his own views to the substantial reformulation or critique that he recommends in other writers (Alford, 1985). Indeed, it will be shown in chapters 4 - 8 that, when severe criticisms are

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<sup>37</sup> Habermas (1984), however, argues that it is necessary to give up a philosophy of consciousness in favour of communicative rationality (p. 390).

made of his theory, he moves on to another point or reworks the finer elements of his theory rather than radically restructures it.



## Chapter IV

### IDEOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE AND INTERESTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding argument suggested that an important area of concern for Habermas was to expose the operation of ideology in society. It was suggested that ideology entered both the substance and methodology of social science. This chapter provides an overview of ideology critique (4.2) and then indicates how ideology critique links to epistemology in Habermas's theory of *knowledge-constitutive interests* (4.3). Finally a critique is provided of Habermas's three knowledge-constitutive interests (4.4).

#### 4.2 Habermas and Ideology Critique

This section draws on the early writings of Habermas (1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1976a) and locates them in the tradition of ideology critique of the Frankfurt School which states that 'there is no theory of society...that does not contain political motivation' (Horkheimer, 1972a, p. 222). Habermas's view, in line with the Marxism that informs his work, is premised on fundamental principles of social justice, the promotion of social equality, the creation and nurture of 'generalizable interests' (Habermas, 1976a), and the commitment to the emancipation of society.

Habermas defines his notion of ideology as the *suppression of generalizable interests* (Habermas, 1976a, p. 113, cf also 1984, p. 10) in the day-to-day lives of participants, where systems and / or groups possessing power operate in rationally

indefensible ways because their power relies on the disempowering of other groups — ie that their principles of behaviour are not universalizable. His view builds on the Marxian doctrine of ideology as false consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

for ideology to be present, then two conditions which Marx laid down should be satisfied: the objective concealment of contradictions, and the interests of the dominant class. Ideology is not a simple error. It is a particular kind of distortion, dependent upon real contradictions, which demand their solution in practice before it can be overcome (Larrain, 1979, p. 272).

Eagleton (1991), however, takes issue with the notion of false consciousness, arguing that

the belief that a minority of theorists monopolize a scientifically grounded knowledge of how society is, while the rest of us blunder around in some fog of false consciousness, does not particularly endear itself to the democratic sensibility (Eagleton, 1991, p. 11).

He argues that it underestimates humans to assert that they are unaware of their manipulation and are gullible. Rather, he suggests, they are unable to upset the order which renders them powerless.<sup>39</sup> Habermas avoids the traps of false consciousness by replacing the adjective *false* consciousness with *fragmented* consciousness (Habermas, 1984, p. 522),<sup>40</sup> and recognizes that interests coupled with power can cause the social order to distort systematically people's powers and abilities to move to equality in a socialist democracy (Habermas, 1984, 1987a).

Habermas (1976a) suggests that capitalism is premised on inequality — exploitation — and that it maintains its hegemony by averting crises of *motivation* (an inadequacy of action-motivating meaning), *legitimacy* (an inadequacy of gener-

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<sup>38</sup> Cf Finn and Grant, 1981, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Further, Eagleton cites the work of Sloterdijk to indicate, using the term 'enlightened false consciousness' (ibid., pp. 39 - 40), that people in power know clearly that what they are doing is guilty of bad faith and the *suppression of generalizable interests*, but that that does not prevent them from continuing in this way.

<sup>40</sup> Habermas (1984, 1987a) argues that such fragmentation has been brought about by rationalization and the rise of expert subcultures (cf Layder, 1994, p. 197).

alized or generalizable motivations), *identity* (an inadequacy of social integration), *politics* (an inadequacy of perceived rational decisions), and *economics* (an inadequacy of consumable items to create surplus value) (Habermas, 1976a). Ideology critique identifies the spheres in which the *suppression of generalizable interests* might operate. Habermas alludes to this where he comments that his theory is 'critical of ideology, it asks what lies behind the consensus, presented as fact, that supports the dominant tradition of the time' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 12). The state has a part in this process as it secures 'the loyalty of one class whilst systematically acting to the advantage of another' (Held, 1982, p. 184).

At heart Habermas's critique of ideology is tied to a concern for equality (1972, 1974a). Herein lies both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, for whilst it demonstrates the political will necessary for a 'critical' theory (see Fay, 1987) it also confuses ideology critique with social theory; it brings together contingently rather than analytically related concepts.

Ideology critique exposes the operation of ideology in many spheres of daily life, the working out in public of vested interests under the mantle of the general good. The task of ideology critique is to uncover the vested interests at work in society which may be occurring consciously or subliminally, revealing to participants how they may be acting to perpetuate a system which keeps them either empowered or disempowered (Geuss, 1981), ie which suppresses a generalizable interest, wittingly or not, of their own volition or against their own volition.

Ideology critique will have to identify the means or channels which are used to perpetuate ideology, which could be used to resist ideology, and to understand the reasons for use or non-use of these channels.<sup>41</sup> This will entail an examination of

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<sup>41</sup> Cf Fay's outline of Critical Theory (earlier) which argues that it should identify pathways to

the notion of 'interests', the epistemological bases of 'interests', and then to show how these interests relate to the operation of ideology.

### 4.3 Habermas's Knowledge-Constitutive Interests

Habermas (1971a, 1972, 1974a) contends that action is not neutral, it serves interests; a critique of ideology will expose the non-generalizable or non-universalizable interests that perpetuate societal inequalities. By recognizing the significance of the nexus between interests, ideology and action for a theory of social formations, Habermas is attempting to root his social theory in epistemology; this is a fundamental part of his enterprise at this stage of his writing.

This section draws on the earlier writings of Habermas (1972, 1974a, 1974b), in particular his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972) and his updated study *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1988), whilst the critique of his theory at this point derives in part from Bernstein (1976, 1983) and Keat (1981). This section proceeds by:

- setting a context for a discussion of knowledge-constitutive interests (4.3.1);
- outlining the technical interest, its purposes and elements of its constitution (4.3.2);
- outlining the hermeneutic interest, its purposes and elements of its constitution (4.3.3);
- outlining the emancipatory interest, its purposes and elements of its constitution, and its relationship to the previous two interests (4.3.4).

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emancipation.

- developing a critique of the technical, hermeneutic and emancipatory interests (4.4).

#### 4.3.1 The Context of Knowledge-Constitutive Interests

The foundations of the three knowledge-constitutive interests appeared in the appendix to Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests* in 1972. Habermas, like Marx and Mannheim before him, argues that we act out of interests (Habermas, 1974b, p. 45). Epistemological enquiry is fuelled by interests; epistemological purity is overlaid by the interests of the enquirer. Certain types of knowledge will predetermine their possible applications:

you can use, for instance, nomological knowledge only in the way of technical application, whereas you can make use of, let's say, historical knowledge, only in the way of affecting the self-understanding of acting and interacting and speaking people, (Habermas, 1974b, p. 45).

Habermas argues that each knowledge-constitutive interest has its own methodology, value systems, epistemology and substantive concepts.<sup>42</sup>

Habermas defines his key concept of 'interests' carefully to bring together agency and determinism:

[Interests are] the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species (Habermas, 1972, p. 196).

Interests are 'knowledge-constitutive' because they shape and determine<sup>43</sup> what counts as the objects and types of knowledge (Habermas, 1972). 'Interests' have an ideological function, for example a 'technical interest' (discussed later)

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<sup>42</sup> As an attempt to establish a theory of cognitive interests *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972) is encyclopaedic and has been seen as an excursion through the idealistic (Kant, Hegel) and the materialistic (Marx) theory of knowledge, through the prehistory of positivism (Comte, Mach), pragmatism (Peirce), historicism (Dilthey), psychoanalysis (Freud) and perspectivism (Nietzsche) (Ottmann, 1982, p. 79).

<sup>43</sup> Masschelein (1991) refers to these as 'knowledge-guiding interests' (p. 97).

can have the effect of keeping the empowered in their empowered position and the disempowered in their disempowerment — ie reinforcing and perpetuating the *status quo*. An ‘emancipatory interest’ (discussed later) threatens the *status quo* for all parties and groups.

Knowledge is not neutral (cf Mannheim, 1936). What counts as worthwhile and important knowledge is seen to be determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge. The link here between objects of study and communities of scholars echoes Kuhn’s (1970) notions of paradigms and paradigm shifts, where the field of knowledge or paradigm is seen to be only as good as the evidence and the respect in which it is held by ‘authorities’. Knowledge and definitions of worthwhile knowledge reflect the interests of the community of scholars who operate in particular paradigms.<sup>44</sup>

Habermas constructs the definition of worthwhile knowledge and modes of understanding and participating in social life around three cognitive interests:

- (i) prediction and control;
- (ii) understanding and interpretation;
- (iii) emancipation and freedom.

He names these the ‘technical’, ‘practical’ and ‘emancipatory’ interests respectively.

### 4.3.2 The Technical Interest

Grundy (1987) neatly summarizes Habermas’s lengthy analysis of the techni-

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<sup>44</sup> This is taken up fully in chapter 10.

cal interest where she writes that 'the 'technical' interest characterises the empirical-analytic science and has a fundamental interest in controlling the environment through rule-following action based upon empirically grounded laws' (Grundy, 1987, p. 12). It is rooted in positivism and the empirical-analytical natural sciences (Pusey, 1987), seeking laws of nature which will help us to predict and control nature (defined widely). The commitment to behaviourism in this interest is clear, for positivism rests on the observable (cf Ayer, 1936, pp. 179-180).

Habermas cautions against a critical social theory which is cast in behaviourist terms: 'confronted with the objectivism of strictly behavioral sciences, critical sociology guards itself against a reduction of intentional action to behavior' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 10), the same caution as obtained in his critique of positivism. Habermas argues that the fundamental purpose of *techné* — control — which drives this interest applies to environments, however defined, for example, interpersonal and intra-personal (Habermas, 1972, p. 56): 'knowledge that makes possible the control of natural processes turns into knowledge that makes possible the control of the social life process' (ibid. p. 47).<sup>45</sup> Instrumental control in the technical interest, with its emphasis on predictability, passivity, controllability of humans, is attractive to the dominant ideology as it perpetuates its hegemony:

Technical questions are posed with a view to the rationally goal-directed organization of means and the rational selection of instrumental alternatives, once the goals (values and maxims) are given (Habermas, 1974a. p. 3).

There is a clear sympathy with instrumentalism here. In its emphasis on control of nature this interest underplays the role of nature-for-itself — *natura naturans* — that we are equal partners with nature, not its dominators.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cf Horkheimer's critique that 'domination of nature involves domination of man' (Horkheimer, 1974b. p. 93).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. McCarthy. 1982, p. 86; Habermas, 1972; Keat, 1981, p. 9.

Bowers (1991) argues that a Critical Theory must adopt an ecological not simply an anthropocentric view of the environment — human and natural.

However Habermas's interpretation of technical control is questionable. Held (1980) argues that Habermas confuses an interest in prediction with an interest in control (p. 393). Further, Keat (1981) argues that Habermas confuses prediction with explanation in his interpretation of this knowledge form (p. 69).

This interest echoes the functionalist view of society which sees individuals as having to conform to the norms of society (Parsons, 1959). As such it is an essentially conservative interest, yet one which, in an age which has seen the apotheosis of science and technology, is seen to be all-pervasive (Habermas, 1971a). The instrumentalism of this approach has close ties with the commodification of materials and workers (Braverman, 1974, Habermas, 1974a, p. 221) whose effects range from Durkheim's (1951) notions of anomie to Marx's notions of alienated labour and domination in the relations of production.

### 4.3.3 The Hermeneutic Interest

The 'historical-hermeneutic science' is an attenuation of the positivism of the empirical-analytical science (see Habermas, 1972, pp. 50 - 51), exemplified in the technical interest. Hermeneutic sciences seek to clarify, 'understand' and 'interpret' the communications of 'speaking and acting subjects' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 8). In contrast to the 'technical sphere' whose field of study lies in work — 'instrumental action' — hermeneutics takes as its sphere of action interaction and language. The hermeneutic interest — essentially a 'practical' interest (Habermas, 1972, p. 308) is summarized more neatly than Habermas himself was able to do<sup>47</sup> as 'a

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<sup>47</sup> Cf Habermas, 1984, p. 135.



fundamental interest in understanding the environment through interaction based upon a consensual interpretation of meaning' (Grundy, 1987, p. 14). Hermeneutic interests generate intersubjective accounts of events, they seek the *Verstehen* — understanding — of Weberian analysis. Cultural sciences have a goal of understanding individuals' and groups' social construction of reality. This involves not simply a re-experiencing for oneself the events of others — itself a practical and logical impossibility for which Habermas (1972, pp. 145 - 9) criticises Dilthey — but recapturing the *meaning* of the interacting other, recovering and reconstructing the *intentions* of the other actors in the situation. Such an enterprise involves the analysis of *meaning in a social context* (Held, 1980). In interpersonal situations participants engage in *action oriented to mutual understanding* (Habermas, 1972, p. 310) (developed later), they strive for mutual understanding (ibid. p. 92), a consensus of meaning.

Habermas (1988) argues that the technical interest is either ahistorical or transhistorical — where history is irrelevant in the search for immutable laws. Hermeneutics, however, cannot operate outside an historical referent (Habermas, 1972, p. 181). Habermas (1988) indicates this in his reference to Weber's assertion that 'sociology must both understand social facts in their cultural significance and explain them as culturally determined' (Habermas, 1988, p. 12). People bring their own histories, biographies, autobiographies, views, and expectations to a situation — their own horizons of understanding and possibility: 'each of the partners between whom communication must be established...lives within a horizon' (Habermas, 1988, p. 151). Habermas argues clearly that

hermeneutic knowledge is always mediated through this pre-understanding, which is derived from the interpreter's initial situation....He comprehends the substantive content of tradition by applying tradition to himself and his situation (Habermas, 1972. pp. 309 - 310).

The knowing subject is part of a cultural web (Habermas, 1988, p. 149) and is involved in self-reflection on that cultural context (ibid, p.154). Habermas (1974a) acknowledges the value of Gadamer's terminology in clarifying hermeneutics, where Gadamer (1975, p. 273) argues that hermeneutic understanding involves the 'fusion of horizons' between participants: 'understanding, rather, is always the fusion of horizons we imagine to exist by themselves' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 273). Hence in the hermeneutic science there is a deliberate dialogue between participants (Habermas, 1974a, pp. 10 - 11). Habermas, however, criticises Gadamer's views (Habermas, 1970d, pp. 123-133), arguing that he overplays the role of history, of tradition, he is too accepting of tradition (cf. Habermas, 1988, p. 172), neglecting the view that history may be little more than the playing out of distorted meanings and values — ie that it is ideological — or that history may be a distorted, selective account of practices. Gadamer's response to Habermas's criticisms argues that understanding will necessarily involve seeing all points of view and that these will have their own historical and ideological referents, and that Habermas is overstating the role of critique as the sole arbiter of truth. What is clear is Habermas's ambivalence to hermeneutics, for though he criticizes Gadamer he nevertheless gives careful and repeated coverage to, and use of, hermeneutics in his own works over twenty years.

Habermas is laying a series of epistemological building blocks in his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests; over the first foundation of the technical interest he has laid the second stone of the practical interest of hermeneutics. The hermeneutic level exceeds, but requires, the empirical level. As methodology hermeneutic 'interpretive sociology bursts the bounds of a general methodology of the empirical sciences' (Habermas, 1988, p. 108). The 'interest intentions' of

the two differ; whereas the technical cognitive interest aims at comprehension of objectified reality, the practical interest of hermeneutics is to maintain intersubjectivity of mutual understanding. Habermas suggests that

empirical-analytic knowledge can assume the form of causal explanations or conditional predictions, which also refer to the observed phenomena; hermeneutic knowledge as a rule has the form of interpretations of traditional complexes of meaning (Habermas, 1974a, p. 8).

*Meanings* rather than *phenomena* become the subject of understanding in hermeneutics. For the technical interest the knower stands in a relation of subject to object, whereas in the hermeneutic interest the relationship is more of equal partners in communication (ibid., pp. 11 and 181). For the former the aim is to generate ‘technically exploitable knowledge’ (p. 191) whilst for the latter it is to produce ‘practically effective knowledge’ — hence its ‘practical’ interest. Social science has to draw on both elements.

#### 4.3.4 The Emancipatory Interest

Habermas’s third knowledge-constitutive interest — an emancipatory interest, which is a central feature of Fay’s earlier discussion of elements of a Critical Theory — subsumes the previous two; it requires them but goes beyond them.<sup>48</sup> The emancipatory interest — a ‘critical’ interest born of critical knowledge — recognizes that history and sociology exist dialectically as they chart the playing out of repression and domination. It is an interest in ‘emancipation and empowerment to engage in autonomous action arising out of authentic, critical insights into the social construction of human society’ (Grundy, 1987, p. 19).<sup>49</sup> It is concerned for

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<sup>48</sup> Habermas writes: ‘the emancipatory interest itself is dependent on the interests in possible intersubjective action orientation and in possible technical control’ (Habermas, 1972, p. 211).

<sup>49</sup> Masschelein (1991) defines emancipation as ‘increasing self-determination’ and ‘individual autonomy within a just society’ (Masschelein, 1991, p. 97).

*praxis* — ‘action informed by reflection with an emancipatory intent’ (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 177). It *works on* these previous interests rather than *accepts* them:

A critical social science, however, will not remain satisfied with this [hermeneutics]. It is concerned with going beyond this goal to determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed (Habermas, 1974a, p. 310).

The twin intentions of this interest are to expose the operation of power and to bring about social justice. In marked contrast to empirical-analytic interests which attempt to separate knowledge from its socio-historical context, this view accepts as a premiss that ‘critique becomes conscious of its own peculiar involvement in the object of its criticism’ (Habermas, 1974a, p. 214). The epistemological significance of this interest in Habermas’s scheme is set out by Habermas himself:

It is only in the emancipatory interest that knowledge and interest are fully integrated. It is in accomplishing self-reflection that reason grasps itself as interested (Habermas, 1972, p. 212).

To avoid scientism the emancipatory interest requires scientists to become more aware of ‘the political content of their work’ (ibid. p. 47). Habermas is suggesting that scientists can no longer claim neutrality and ideological or political innocence. This requires a review of the position of science in society and the power of the scientist.<sup>50</sup>

Habermas (1974a) argues that the emancipatory interest is premised on the assumption that domination and repression act to prevent the full existential realization of individual and social freedoms: ‘the ideology-critical treatment of ideas also retains its reference to situations of interests’ (Habermas, 1979b, p. 14). It accepts that there are structural inequalities in society which need to be eradicated

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<sup>50</sup> Habermas (1990a, p. 211) argues that there are major issues in need of debate in communicative action — animal rights, torture, the arms race, hunger, poverty, unemployment, wealth.

if social justice and generalizable interests are to be attained:

This interest can only develop to the degree to which repressive force, in the form of the normative exercise of power, presents itself permanently in structures of distorted communication — that is, to the extent that domination is institutionalized (Habermas, 1974a, p. 22).

He is concerned to show that capitalism is premised on inequality — the empowering of one sector of society at the expense of another — and that social justice will therefore necessitate a move to equality. This is a familiar theme and reveals Habermas's debt to Marx, even though he has broadened the base of classical Marxist social analysis. Inequalities are systemic in the social order — ie are structural elements — and are likely to be deeply ingrained in the psyche of individuals and social groups — so deep that these participants may be unaware of them (Habermas, 1974b, p. 48).<sup>51</sup> In summary, the task of this knowledge-constitutive interest, indeed of Critical Theory itself, is to restore to consciousness those suppressed, repressed and submerged determinants of our social behaviour with a view to their dissolution (Habermas, 1984, pp. 194 - 5).

#### 4.4 Critiques of Habermas's Knowledge-Constitutive Interests

There are several criticisms of this aspect of Habermas's work:<sup>52</sup>

- there is an artificial separation of the technical and hermeneutic interest;
- his views replicate the mind / body dualism of Western philosophy which artificially separates work and interaction;
- he reduces his analysis to only three cognitive interests and they are unneces-

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<sup>51</sup> An interesting riposte to Eagleton's earlier dismissal of false consciousness.

<sup>52</sup> These criticisms focus on Habermas's works of 1972, 1974a and 1974b, with critiques stemming from, in part, Bernstein (1978b, 1983, 1985), Kolakowski (1978), Heyderbrand and Burris (1984), Jay (1984) and Alford (1985).

sarily discrete;

- the link between ideology critique and emancipation is neither clear, nor proven, nor a logical necessity;
- the criteria to evaluate the three elements of his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests are inconsistent;
- he is unclear on the universalism or relativism of his theory and the criteria for its verification;
- he is unclear on the status of his theory, rendering its verification unclear;
- the reduction of social theory to a foundational epistemological theory is untenable;
- the emancipatory and empowering potential of his theory is not demonstrated.

Habermas argues that social science is different from the natural sciences because, since it is dealing with an already interpreted world — a social world — it has a ‘doubly hermeneutic’ task (Habermas, 1984, pp. 109 - 110). However, the distinctions between hermeneutic and empirical understanding may be drawn too sharply (Hesse, 1982; Bernstein, 1983, p. 33). For example one has to bring hermeneutic understanding to bear on empirical-analytic knowledge to inform hermeneutics — they need each other in order to make meaning of themselves (Bernstein, 1983). Indeed Bernstein, in an earlier work (1976) argues for the necessity of a hermeneutic understanding of sciences, without which they would not be able to judge themselves or their own status.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See also Keat (1981) p. 79.

Habermas confines 'work' to the sphere of the empirical-analytic sciences and 'interaction' to the sphere of hermeneutic sciences; this, for Giddens (1982), Hesse (1982) and Layder (1994), is an untenable and narrowing separation. Aronowitz (1988, p. 164) suggests that the separation of work and interaction is a covert replication of the mind / body dualism which has characterized Western philosophy and social practice since the Greeks. Habermas presents us with theoretical rather than empirical evidence to support what should be at heart an empirical question. Whilst the categorization provided by Habermas has the attractions of discreteness and heuristic utility it is not unproblematic both in theory and in practice.

A justification is required of the *particular* power of Critical Theory as defined epistemologically to fulfil the task of emancipation more successfully than other types of activity. In this instance critical theorists<sup>54</sup> argue that ideology critique is essential to emancipation. Whether their case is proven is debatable, for, logically, there is no necessary or exclusive relationship between ideology critique and emancipation. The assumption that a person or society can become emancipated only by exercising or including ideology critique is an empirical matter and not a logical necessity. One can become emancipated by means other than ideology critique; emancipated societies do not necessarily demonstrate or require an awareness of ideology critique. Indeed it could be argued that the rationalistic appeal of ideology critique actually obstructs action designed to bring about emancipation. Habermas (1972) does not expand his view of emancipation in terms of how to reach it, how to recognize when it has been reached, or how to judge conflicting indications that might be offered for the achievement of emancipation.<sup>55</sup> There is no vantage point outside the social context from which to judge emancipation, emancipation

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<sup>54</sup> Horkheimer, 1972a; Habermas, 1972; 1974a; Giroux, 1983; Fay, 1987; Rasmussen, 1990.

<sup>55</sup> He does provide this later in his discussion of the *ideal speech situation*.

is an axiom in Habermas's theory rather than a demonstrated feature. Roderick (1986) asks:

How can we be certain that the emancipatory interest is not just a particular socially and historically relative interest? How can we be certain that it is not itself subject to the same distortions critical theory locates in other modes of-thought? (Roderick, 1986, p. 65).

Roderick mounts a critique of ideology critique which hints at relativism in Habermas, asking 'Why is the critique of ideology critique itself not ideological?' (ibid., p. 71). Habermas's response to this type of criticism lies in his notion of reconstructive science (chapter 6.2), indicating that communicative rationality provides the norm for justifying his own views (discussed in chapters 6 and 7).

One can detect an inconsistency in Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, for whilst his empirical-analytical and hermeneutic forms of knowledge are presented non-normatively the emancipatory interest includes a normative dimension (Alexander, 1991), arguing that society *ought* to be emancipated — it introduces a different standard against which to judge his knowledge-constitutive interests. Habermas (1972, 1974a) judges the first two knowledge-constitutive interests to be incomplete because they fail to meet the normative standard which only his third interest possesses.

Further, Habermas's (1972) interests theory suffer from the weakness of 'conceptual pigeonholing', it assumes that only emancipatory interest can bring about emancipation; the fact that a technical interest or a hermeneutic interest might also be emancipatory *in practice* is not mentioned. Just as the criticisms about the artificial separation of the first two interests was pointed out earlier, the problem is compounded here, for the emancipatory interest is neither conceptually nor empirically separate from the other interests. Whilst separation may make for



theoretical tidiness this is problematical, one needs hermeneutic understanding to become emancipated, and, at a definitional level, one needs to take control of one's life — an existential technical interest — if one is to become emancipated. Habermas's three interests are certainly not as discrete as they are presented.

Whilst the claim to there being three forms of knowledge has the epistemological attraction of simplicity, one has to question the whole notion of Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests (cf Keat, 1981, p. 67). The inconsistency between 'ontological plurality' and the reduction of interests to merely three is untenable — 'the theory would then require the identification of a multitude of different interests, one for each object-domain' (ibid. p. 91.)<sup>56</sup> Habermas recognizes the difficulty of this position (Habermas, 1985a, pp. 95 - 96), indeed his later work (1988) jettisons the theory.

At an epistemological level Bernstein (1985, p. 13) contends that Habermas is confusing *a priori* and *a posteriori* claims in his theory — transcendental and empirical claims respectively — in that he is seeking to discover transcendental aspects of theory from empirical analyses. Though Habermas accords his interests 'quasi-transcendental' status (1972) this is unhelpful in assisting the reader in deciding where Habermas stands in the debate about the objectivism, subjectivism or relativism in his work. Without this clarification we are unable to decide the grounds of supporting or refuting his theory, we are unclear on grounds of verification, refutation or usefulness. Moreover, in his linking of knowledge and society in his notion of 'interests' there is a clear allusion to the view that knowledge is socially constructed and socially motivated, a feature which implies relativism (which is addressed and critiqued in chapter 10 in connection with the sociology

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Bernstein (1978, pp. 220 - 1) and Heydebrand and Burris (1984, p. 411).

of knowledge). Bernstein (1985) argues that the three interests of *Knowledge and Human Interests* are inherently rooted in a philosophy of consciousness and, as such, one is unable to utilise them to grasp the *intersubjectivity* of communicative action (Bernstein, 1985, p. 14) (*italics mine*).

The status of Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, then, is uncertain; it is unclear whether Habermas is dealing with a conceptual model, a political analysis, an empirically grounded theory, a set of generalities, a set of transhistorical principles, a set of temporally-specific observations, or a set of loosely defined slogans whose strengths lie in their surface clarity rather than their underlying coherence. Indeed, Kolakowski (1978) argues that Habermas's theory thrives only by dint of its ambiguity, and that if its internal incoherence were exposed the theory would fall. (Whether, of course, this criticism matters, is another question; if one of the criteria of a critical theory is its ability to effect or affect practice then the strength of Critical Theory might lie in its effects rather than in its conceptual or theoretical coherence. In this respect the theory may have more heuristic than substantive value).

Given the logical, epistemological and empirical problems which have been outlined in the theory, given the generalized nature of the epistemological analysis which Habermas undertakes, and given the uncertainty of the scope or status of the theory, there are significant weaknesses and shortcomings in Habermas's attempt to develop a social theory based on epistemology. Indeed Habermas (1988) clearly took account of these and eventually turned his back on the epistemological basis of social theory. The theory has the attraction of a heuristic device rather than of closely argued logic.

If Habermas's Critical Theory is to be shown to effect emancipation, then the means to that emancipation need to be clarified, the nature of the research programme into the power of Critical Theory to effect emancipation needs to be clarified (Lakatos, 1970). This also means that Critical Theory, like traditional theory, will *have* to be *empirically* verified, even though this may not be under the strict, controlled conditions of experimentation as in the natural sciences. The separate nature of Critical Theory as opposed to traditional theory thereby is called into question. It also remains a question open to empirical investigation whether Critical Theory is any more or less likely to provoke emancipatory behaviour than any other theories or actions. As part of this programme an analysis is required of the methodology of Critical Theory as espoused in Habermas's early work discussed so far. This is the substance of the next chapter.

## Chapter V

### PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SELF-REFLECTION

#### 5.1 Introduction

It was stated in chapter 3 that Critical Theorists engaged psychoanalysis as part of their focus of study. The previous chapter indicated that the nature of methodology of Critical Theory beyond ideology critique needed to be addressed. This chapter sets out the role of psychoanalysis as a model of methodology for Habermas. It examines and evaluates his use of Freudianism. It outlines the value of reflection as a precursor to the self-knowledge needed if social repression is to be dissolved. In this respect this section deals with the substance and methodology for social emancipation. The sequence proceeds thus (5.2):

- Habermas's use of Freudian psychoanalysis and depth hermeneutics;
- the use of the psychoanalytic analogy for social theory;
- the notions of rational reconstruction and emancipation;
- the attractions of the analogy: its ascription of responsibility to participants; its sympathy to *systematically distorted communication*; its exhortatory appeal.

The analysis here draws on Habermas's work of 1972, 1974a, 1974b. In section 5.3 his views are critiqued at two main levels:

- the employment and interpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis;

- the use of a psychoanalytical model as a model for social emancipation.

In the critique Habermas is seen to confuse emancipation and evolution and to be guilty of the very positivism which he proscribes in his early works. As criticisms mount of this aspect of his theory Habermas moves away from psychoanalysis and towards the speech act elements of his *Theory of Communicative Action* — the substance of subsequent chapters.

## 5.2 Habermas and Freudian Psychoanalysis

How can individuals and groups become aware of the vested interests which act to prevent the realization of their 'real' interests of equality (Geuss, 1981)? How can they become emancipated? Habermas, in typical fashion, goes to an external and arguably unrelated source to strengthen his argument. He draws into his argument some key principles from Freudian psychoanalysis (Habermas, 1974a, pp. 25 - 32) as an analogy for the development of societal health, in particular the value he accords to the power of self-reflection as a tool of emancipation — 'depth hermeneutics' (Habermas, 1972, p. 218), knowledge of oneself which has become inaccessible to oneself through repression (ibid., p. 217).<sup>57</sup> Habermas's use of Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that a patient will engage in self-reflection and that such reflection has emancipatory power (Habermas, 1972, p. 197) as it exposes the repressive forces which have induced false consciousness and hence the neurosis (ibid., p. 208). Habermas sets great store by reflection; for him 'self-reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence' (ibid., p. 208).

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<sup>57</sup> Habermas (1974a) accords considerable power to self-reflection as a tool of critique as it can provide 'emancipation from unrecognized dependencies — that is, knowledge coincides with the fulfilment of the interest in liberation through knowledge' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 9). See also Appendix G for a comparison and evaluation of Dewey's and Habermas's views of reflective practice.

In the process of self-reflection the neurotic is facilitated by the analyst to perceive the latent, repressed experiences which have given rise to the present neurotic condition, just as a social group suffering from ideological distortion will have to see through the sources of that distortion. The analyst is cast in a therapeutic mode — a 'reflective participant' (Habermas, 1988, p. 93). This might be perfectly acceptable in psychoanalytic theory but it creates many problems in macro-sociological theory — eg the notion that society can be changed by a process akin to psychoanalysis *writ large* (discussed later). Patients, through self-reflection, will be involved in identifying the factors which have distorted their psyche and hence their functioning as fully-fledged individuals in control of their own lives. This involves:

(a) a *hermeneutic* element — where the patient comes to reconstruct (Habermas, 1972, p. 230), understand and interpret previous experiences;

(b) a *positivistic* element — where the analyst helps the patient to comprehend the significance of experiences by making nomothetic constructions of them;

(c) a *critical* element — where the patient reflects on the factors which have led to the distortion and repression (ibid. p. 231) in the psyche and which are subject to critical scrutiny in an attempt to dissolve their capacity to distort.

This process of reflexive analysis with the assistance of the analyst brings about self-awareness in patients, an understanding of the constraining elements on their lives, and the disempowering of those factors to exert any further pressure to distort (cf Habermas, 1962). The progress, then, is from neuroses to emancipation. The self-aware individual, having clarified the causes of the oppression or repression, bringing them back to consciousness and reflecting on them, achieves

the state of being able to break free of her / his oppressive ties:

through ... psychoanalysis, as interpreted in terms of communication theory, the two procedures of reconstruction and of self-critique can...be brought together within the framework of one and the same theory, (Habermas, 1987b, p. 300).

This is the process of *rational reconstruction* — the partner to self-reflection (cf Habermas, 1987b, p. 300). Habermas asserts that there is a symbiosis of self-understanding and liberation, the movement is from unfreedom to freedom.

The strengths of this analysis are twofold. *Firstly* it accords responsibility for the condition and its solution to the patient — it 'demands moral responsibility for the content of the illness' (Habermas, 1972 p. 235) — a fitting model for an analogy of society premised on participatory democracy (see also Lukes, 1982, p. 137), however illusory this may be in reality. Indeed Habermas writes that 'truth must converge with authenticity — in other words, the patient himself is the final authority' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 29). This, however, might generate difficulties if the patient rejects a construction that may be objectively true (Keat, 1981, pp. 145 and 148). Keat suggests that

there are serious problems about the validation of psychoanalytic interpretations. which basically hinge upon the extent to which patients may be said to have some ultimate epistemic 'authority' about the nature of their own unconscious states (ibid. p. 149).

The nature of this criticism is important, for one has to ask why Habermas chose to go to Freud in particular, neglecting other schools of psychoanalysis. For example a Jungian perspective, with its reference to the 'collective unconscious' might have yielded just as much insight, as indeed would Fromm's 'fear of freedom'. One conjectures that using Freud happened to suit Habermas's purposes, a feature which he employs frequently (discussed in chapters 6, 7, and 8).

*Secondly* Habermas (1974a) (and Freud) acknowledge that it is society, in-

stitutions and pressures which can cause the repression in the individual's psyche (ibid. 1974, p. 29). The role of psychoanalysis in Habermas, though largely of value as an analogy of society (critiqued later in this chapter), also identifies for us the significance of *systematically distorted communication* (Habermas, 1970a, discussed later), where external structural — system wide — societal constraints and repressions reach right into the individual psyche.

As an analogy for the projected progress of societies from ideological oppression to self-control the importation of Freudian analysis has considerable exhortatory and symbolic significance. Just as ideology distorts the realization of the 'real' interests (Geuss, 1981) of social groups, bringing to society's awareness the power of ideological oppression, so rational reconstruction sets the scene for the restoration of the health of that society which, in Habermas's terms, is founded on the principles of social justice — democracy, equality, and the generalizability of interests. In Habermas's view the progress towards societal emancipation involves self-understanding writ large.

### 5.3 A Critique of Habermas's Use of Psychoanalytic Theory

The importation of psychoanalytic theory is not unproblematic, however — a factor which Habermas accepts in the first chapter of his *Theory and Practice* (1974a). He is aware that 'critical sociology must guard against overburdening the concepts of the philosophy of reflection' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 13), and that

Marx too did not always make clear that the attributes ascribed to social classes...did not represent a simple transference from the level of individual consciousness to that of a collective (ibid. p. 13).

Criticisms of Habermas's use of the psychoanalytical model can be placed at two levels: (i) at the level of psychoanalysis and the individual, and (ii) at the level



of psychoanalysis for social theory.

### 5.3.1 Habermas's Use of Individualistic Psychoanalysis

*Firstly*, Habermas misinterprets Freud's conception of the *id* in a way which has significant ramifications for the credibility of his work. For Habermas the *id* equals 'alienated ego' (cf Keat, 1981, chapter 4), whereas for Freud the *id* was both the home of the instincts and alienated ego. Hence for Habermas the *id* is simply a distortion, a negative, pathological entity, for Freud it is a prime mover, it has its own dynamic, it is positive and non-pathological (ibid. p. 105). For Habermas the aim is to abolish the *id*, for Freud it is to harness it — Freud does not share the worries about technical control that haunt Habermas. Further, Kolakowski (1978) argues that Habermas actually misinterprets Freud:

[Habermas] has in mind that in psychoanalysis auscultation is also therapy — the patient's understanding of his own situation is at the same time a cure for it. This is not correct. However, if it suggests that the act of understanding is the whole cure, for according to Freud the essence of the therapeutic process consists in transference (Kolakowski. 1978, p. 392).

*Secondly*, one has to be certain whether it is the psychoanalytic technique which is producing the effect — the cure — or whether it is due to some other variable (cf Keat, 1981, p. 151). This exposes the danger of spurious correlation between psychoanalysis and a 'cure', and it takes no cognizance of the Hawthorne effect on patients.

*Thirdly*, Habermas has failed 'to show through his account of psychoanalysis how the relationship of theory to practice differs from that of the empirical-analytic or hermeneutic sciences' (ibid. p. 152), ie he has failed to demonstrate the special nature of an emancipatory interest or science.

*Fourthly*, the requirement that the distinctive character of a Critical Theory —

that it brings about empowerment through critique — is a contingent rather than logical necessity (ibid., pp. 154 - 159), a feature which is hinted at by Habermas himself (1974a, p. 32). As such there is a suppressed premiss of optimism in Critical Theory; Critical Theory might have to accept the reality of pessimism.

*Fifthly*, psychoanalysis is in constant danger of committing the self-fulfilling prophecy (Keat, op cit, pp. 152 - 159), ie that its empirical findings are only true if one accepts the premises as 'given'; Habermas is silent on this crucial issue.

*Sixthly*, Habermas's 'picture of self-reflection is extremely rationalistic and non-experiential by comparison with ...alternative[s]' (ibid. p. 171). Many patients do not free themselves from repression solely by a process of rationalization.

*Seventhly*, by treating patients necessarily as 'objects', psychoanalysis confirms the asymmetry of relations which Critical Theory seeks to destroy (cf. Keat, op cit, pp. 172 - 175). This resonates with McCarthy's (1978) criticism that the physician / patient model is élitist, the analyst often controls the patient.<sup>58</sup> As a model for social evolution it is inappropriate, for a social group cannot be so controlled by critical theorists.

*Eighthly*, there is a concern that, because 'the transactions between analyst and analysand are inherently confidential' (Habermas, 1985a, p. 87), the principle is not extendable to others — a charge which Habermas accepts (ibid, p. 87).

*Ninthly*, the question has to be raised of the extent to which reflection and rational reconstruction are a *sufficient* condition for emancipation, for raising a person's awareness of constraints may engender feelings of real powerlessness be-

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<sup>58</sup> This exposes the criticism that Critical Theory, by its language and concepts, attracts, in effect, an élitist coterie of readers rather than the wide spectrum of the populace to whom it is directed.

cause solutions are out of the person's control (Geuss, 1981; Nielsen, 1992).<sup>59</sup>

*Tenthly*, in 'psychologizing' social currents via the demand for authenticity it is difficult to see how Habermas's use of Freud differs from existentialism; when this is taken to the need to change society it is possible to argue that one can make one's own life authentic whilst leaving social inequality untouched — the very antithesis of Critical Theory.

*Eleventhly*, Habermas's early work inveighs against reification, however his use of Freud reifies subjectivity into certain forms of behaviour only. The analogy of the intrinsic antisocial nature of people whose instincts have to be repressed or sublimated need not be a fair picture of society.

Hence at the first level, of the use of Freudian psychology, there are major problems with his theory.

### 5.3.2 Habermas's Use of Psychoanalysis for Social Theory

At the second level — of social theory — there are several concerns about the use of a psychoanalytic theory, principally:

- the confusion between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy;
- the use of psychoanalytic theory as a social theory (Young, 1989, p. 16) — it is impossible to translate the psychoanalytical model to social and political action — social relations are not like a therapist / patient relation, and a methodology from one sphere does not comfortably map onto another sphere;

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<sup>59</sup> Ingram (1987) argues that there is a 'serious problem is Habermas's conflation of philosophical and emancipatory reflection' (p. 15). Young (1989) comments on Habermas's use of psychoanalytic theory: 'when this dimension of power is added, we may take leave to doubt whether members of elite groups in society (the ruling class) are capable of responding to 'analysis' ' (p. 38).

- its implicit view that social change is possible through ‘therapy’ (ibid. p. 16);
- that it is ‘misleading as a model for discussion between politically organized groups’ (ibid. p. 25);
- that it is unclear how self-reflection can become ‘fully practical in the form of political struggle’ (ibid. p. 27);
- that it conflates reflection and practical engagement;
- that it is unclear what is the political or social equivalent of personal emancipation through psychoanalysis; whereas in psychoanalysis the therapy restores former issues which have been repressed to the unconscious, in Critical Theory ‘to free oneself from ideology is not to recover a lost element of one’s past’ (Keat, op cit, p. 79)<sup>60</sup> — it never existed in the first place;
- that the willing submission of the patient to therapy may not find its equivalent in social theory (Larrain, 1994, p. 127), where groups will resist (a fact which Habermas acknowledges) — ‘the revolutionary struggle is by no means a psychoanalytic treatment on a large scale’ (Habermas, 1974a, p. 30). It is not psychoanalysis writ large.<sup>61</sup> The therapist / patient relationship is cooperative whereas ‘at the social level classes stand in a relationship of domination and possibly conflict’ (Larrain, 1994, p. 126). If psychoanalysis is voluntary the uneven distribution of resources is not; how does one manage to bring a class to voluntary self-analysis — to submit itself to analysis?
- that the ruling class will enter a dialogue only insofar as it serves to strengthen

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<sup>60</sup> Cf also Eagleton, 1991, p. 136.

<sup>61</sup> Held, 1980, asks ‘how can a relationship which is essentially voluntary become the methodological model for understanding and changing social situations characterized by unequal distribution of scarce resources, discrepancies in material interests and power relations?’ (p. 394).

domination (Habermas, 1974a, p. 30);

- that 'the strategic confrontation between classes and the interaction between doctor and patient are not the same thing' (ibid., p. 30);
- that it is unclear who are the societal or political equivalents of patient and therapist (ibid., p. 30);
- that understanding social repression will not cause it to disappear (ibid., p. 39), ie that it confuses aetiology with future-oriented action. Indeed the process might exacerbate feelings of powerlessness when groups become aware of overwhelming constraints which are out of their control (cf Keat, op cit, pp. 131 - 132);
- the 'individual plane of neurosis' does not translate to the 'social plane of class power and domination' (Larrain, 1994, p. 126);
- it lacks reference to 'material interests and class antagonisms' (ibid., p. 127);
- that the casting of society in a pathological model is only one view of society and that this may be miscasting other, more positive, aspects of society – 'Habermas puts institutions on a level with neurotic behaviour and the repetitious compulsion of an individual' (Ottmann, 1982, p. 92);
- with respect to Habermas's (and indeed Horkheimer's and Adorno's) concern with authority, that it adopts an inconsistent position on authority;<sup>62</sup>
- that it confuses reflection and self-reflection (Bernstein, 1985, p. 12);

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<sup>62</sup> '[T]hose aspects of consciousness where...resistance might be located — critical reason, individuation, integrity — are tied to the process of internalizing authority. As a result, the rejection of authority can only take place through its acceptance....If reason, reflection and individuation are historically tied to the process of internalizing authority, is not the result that authority is in some sense seen as necessary or even vindicated?' (Whitebrook, 1985, p. 147).

- that to believe that structural change can be effected by an emancipatory critical social theory is naive (ibid. p. 178).

The whole notion of the employment of a psychoanalytic model, then, has to be questioned. Habermas's notion of *generalizable interests* is similar to utilitarianism as the greatest good for the greatest number (Moore, 1971). Habermas's view thus becomes open to the criticisms which Moore raised (eg the tautological justification of 'good' and the commission of the naturalistic fallacy). Moreover, there is in the notion of 'generalizability' a sympathy to the law-like positivism which he had rejected earlier. This is a major problem for Habermasian theory, for if he is proscribing laws, generalities and universals (cf the discussion of positivism earlier), then his own argument is undermined for he too is propounding laws, generalities and universals.<sup>63</sup>

In the Freudian analogy one has to ask who is the therapist, who the patient? Habermas is unclear on this, his suggestions of the transformative power of practitioners of Critical Theory accords them the status of Plato's 'men of gold' or Mannheim's 'socially unattached intelligentsia' where the possibility of élitism is high. Indeed Habermas's view that 'in a process of enlightenment there can only be participants' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 40) makes unquestioned assumptions about levels of domination, submission, power and equality amongst the participants.

There are, then, several weaknesses in Habermas's use of a psychoanalytic model as a model of social transformation. It appears that Habermas's theory has largely only metaphorical power or utility as an introduction to a more developed theory of society or social formations. As an entrée into a theory of *communicative*

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<sup>63</sup> This is akin to the trap which relativists (discussed later) lay for themselves — that their views must be treated relativistically.

*competence* or to *systematically distorted communication* it has some introductory value; however either as a fully worked out analogy or as a method for social analysis it is too flawed in its finer grain to stand scrutiny.

As with his knowledge-constitutive interests, so with his use of psychoanalysis — when his theory becomes untenable he jettisons its major features. He rejected the attempt to ground social science in epistemology (Habermas, 1988); now<sup>64</sup> he moves away from Freudian psychoanalysis<sup>65</sup> into speech act theory and the work of Weber, Piaget, Kohlberg, Parsons, and Schütz. This is the subject of the next two chapters. One has to question exactly what he wants from the authors to whom he turns — a fully-fledged, eclectically-derived theory or support and the respectability of accepted authorities. This latter point remains true through his developing theory, as will be shown in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>64</sup> Habermas (1979, 1984, 1987a).

<sup>65</sup> Doelman (1990) argues for the retention of a psychoanalytic perspective in Habermas's later works.

## Chapter VI

# THE BEGINNINGS OF HABERMAS'S THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

### 6.1 Introduction

It has been argued that Habermas's attempts to found a social theory on epistemology and psychoanalytic methodology contain several flaws. It has been demonstrated that Habermas was aware of this (Habermas, 1974a, 1982, 1988; Outhwaite, 1987). Whilst still retaining his concern for emancipation and equality his attempts at social theory shift their ground from an endeavour to found social theory on epistemology and psychoanalytic methodology to a theory of communicative action. This is a major paradigm shift. Habermas is arguing that in communication are the central features of an egalitarian society and emancipation for individuals and social groups. The elements of his new paradigm are explained throughout this chapter. The development of Habermas's thoughts in this chapter principally draws on his 'early' and 'middle period' writings.<sup>66</sup> This account of Habermas's developing communicative social theory includes:

- an analysis of a theory of communicative action as a reconstructive science (6.2);
- a critique of the notion of reconstructive science (6.3);

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<sup>66</sup> Habermas (1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1974a, 1976a, 1976b, 1979a) and the criticisms of this work contained in Bernstein (1976), Thompson and Held (1982), Hohendahl (1986) and Fay (1987).



- an analysis of *systematically distorted communication* and its sympathies to Freudian concerns (6.4);
- an analysis of communication as possessing *dialogue constitutive universals* (6.5);
- an analysis of the speech act theory of Austin and Searle (as used by Habermas) and an analysis of the validity claims of speech acts (6.6);
- a critique of Habermas's use of speech act theory, particularly for its commission of the naturalistic fallacy and its understatement of the political dimension (eg power and interests) of speech acts (6.7).
- An analysis of Habermas's view of the *ideal speech situation* (6.8);
- a critique of the *ideal speech situation* (6.9);
- a consideration of *strategic* and *communicative* action (6.10);
- a critique of Habermas's concepts of strategic and communicative action (6.11);
- Habermas's attempts to bring the work of Piaget and Kohlberg to a theory of social formations (6.12);
- a critique of Habermas's use of Piaget and Kohlberg (6.13).

Habermas attempts to draw together his work on ideology critique, knowledge-constitutive interests and psychoanalysis by fusing them into a theory of society and social evolution which is essentially a theory of communication — 'societies can be viewed as networks of communicative actions' (Habermas, 1979a, p. 96).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Habermas. 1982. p. 233, see also Habermas, 1984, p. xxxix; 1987a. This major step forward in his thinking had been developing for over a decade in his work, traceable back to two seminal articles in 1970 (Habermas. 1970a, 1970b) and through his books (1972; 1979; 1984; 1987a; 1987b; 1990).

The attempt to recast social theory as a theory of communication necessitates a massive reconceptual exercise, taking the substantive concepts of social theory and setting them in a new context of communicative action. To carry out this enterprise Habermas eclectically draws on sources as varied as Freud, Wunderlich, Chomsky, Austin, Schütz, Searle, Piaget and Kohlberg.

## 6.2 Reconstructive Science

Habermas's attempts to develop a theory of communicative action fundamentally rely on his notion of a reconstructive science which is introduced thus:

Reconstructive science is to be distinguished from ordinary science by its peculiar combination of empirical understanding with philosophic generalization or universalization (Habermas, 1972, p. 310).

Habermas claims that one can observe in language and communication universal social principles and structures of rationality. He writes: 'we cannot avoid making certain universal presuppositions when using language in order to reach understanding' (Habermas, 1991, pp. 228 - 9) as they inhere inescapably in communication. Be they violated or implemented these principles nevertheless exist (ie they have to exist if they are to be violated) and are evidenced in the validity claims of rightness, truth, sincerity, legitimacy and consensus. Held (1980) argues that 'the end point of this argument [for reconstructive science] is that the structure of speech is held to involve the anticipation of a form of life in which truth, freedom and justice are possible' (Held, 1980, p. 345). Habermas suggests that there are

universal and necessary communicative presuppositions of argumentative speech and who knows what it means to justify a norm of action implicitly presupposes as valid the principle of universalization (Habermas, 1990a, p. 86).

*Communicative action and the ideal speech situation* are self-evident forms of

rationality because their existence is proven contrafactually (see 6.8).

In communicative action reside unavoidable universal principles of rationality, democracy, equality and freedom; from this he suggests that, because these universal principles are observed and observable (if contrafactually, see 6.7), rationality itself is a specific feature of humanity and abides by the moral principle of universalizability. If one is looking for a justification of universalization then it is found in the very structure of language itself (Roderick, 1986, p. 88). A reconstructive science thus is a hybrid of empiricism and 'grand' theory. To make human behaviour more 'human' one needs to further the principles of rationality evident in language and discourse, thereby taking emancipatory action,<sup>68</sup> ie the advocacy of rationality derives from the properties of communication. Habermas is saying that in involving oneself in communication one is thereby unavoidably committing oneself to the principle of rationality.<sup>69</sup>

The argument is not that communicative forms ought to be primary, the argument is that they are primary. Reason does not need to be regenerated, it is by nature regenerative in the same sense that reason as communicative reason is embedded in language (Rasmussen, 1990, p. 28).

Rasmussen argues for the elegance of Habermas's theory where he writes:

If it could be said that every great philosophy is based on a single simple (though not simplistic) idea, this [ie the notion that communication *per se* is emancipatory] would be it (ibid., p. 22).

Habermas argues that it is possible to tease out of speech act theory a 'scientific reconstruction' which is at the same time emancipatory (ibid. p. 22). He then applies this to an analysis of social development. Using the work of Piaget

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<sup>68</sup> Habermas is suggesting that one can derive an 'ought' from an 'is' (even though he indicates his awareness of this problem where he writes that in the relationship between 'rational reconstruction and empirical analysis there is a danger of the naturalistic fallacy' (Habermas, 1990a, p. 34)).

<sup>69</sup> This is what Habermas means when he undertakes his theory of *universal pragmatics*, eg Habermas. 1976b.

and Kohlberg (6.12 and 6.13) he asserts that human development follows broadly similar paths. The intention, at heart is to show that 'Western rationality is emancipatory' (Rasmussen, 1990, p. 18). By indicating that societal development has been marked by an inexorable progress towards decentring, demythologizing and an openness to rational debate Habermas is arguing that this *demonstrates* that rationality inheres in human behaviour.

By an appeal to empirically and logically demonstrated universals in language Habermas is able to override the charge of relativism; *dialogue-constitutive universals* exist not merely because Habermas believes that they do. A reconstructive science is a blend of empirics and ethics:

Reconstructive science is an ambitious attempt to create a special category of science that combines immunity from falsification by ordinary science with special access to the empirical foundations of morality (Alford, 1985, p. 321).

As such the creation of the special category of reconstructive science, if such a category were tenable, could offer his views a privileged status, avoiding the weaknesses of empiricism and yet indicating that his view of the inherent tendency towards rationality is both empirically observable and at the same time theoretically justifiable. It renders his theories immune from criticism.

The notion of a reconstructive science is one which Habermas never leaves. In his 1991 paper he reasserts the central significance of being able to derive universal principles from empirical observations, with these universal principles transcending empirical situations and thereby not requiring empirical investigation, ie he claims to have justified the normative basis of his social theory. These are rooted in communicative action and communicative rationality. Habermas (1990) cites the work of Peters (1974) on transcendental reason to provide support for his view

(Peters, 1974, pp. 153 - 156).<sup>70</sup>

### 6.3 A Critique of Reconstructive Science

The notion of a reconstructive science, however, is *not* immune from criticism. It was suggested in (6.2) that Habermas uses the notion of a reconstructive science to generate ethical norms from empirical observations. The acceptability of this view has to be questioned, for it is built on the naturalistic fallacy.<sup>71</sup> Simply observing principles of rationality in communicative action gives no prescriptions for the desirability of observed behaviours. Hohendahl (1986) extends this criticism into a major attack on the suppressed normative basis of Habermas's theory where he writes:

The weak spot in Habermas's argument is the dual function of language. By pointing to the actual operation of linguistic and social communication Habermas conceals that these empirical conditions are ultimately turned into a normative understanding of language....By insisting that linguistic communication...provides the basis for the new paradigm, Habermas distances himself from a transcendental argument. But this move has a price: the rigid equation of facts and norms (Hohendahl, 1986. p. 63).

Habermas has made a category mistake in his derivation of an 'ought' from an 'is'. Roderick (1986) accuses Habermas of misappropriating empirical evidence in pursuit of his reconstructive theory:

How can an empirical-reconstructive approach be used to prove the very assumption on which it is based without circularity? (Roderick, 1986, p. 160).

This is a significant charge, for it alludes to the way in which Habermas constructs a hermetically sealed theory by inventing his own rules, axioms and

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<sup>70</sup> Peters writes that the transcendental argument 'attempts to make explicit what a person is committed to who makes use of his reason in attempting to answer the question "What ought I to do?". If anyone asks this question seriously..he must assume that there are general principles of some sort that make reasons relevant' (Peters, 1974, p. 153).

<sup>71</sup> Cf Alford. 1985. p. 329.

truth tests (discussed later).<sup>72</sup>

Habermas (1972, 1984) suggests that reconstructive sciences differ significantly from 'ordinary' science. This has to be questioned on epistemological and methodological grounds. White (1988, pp. 129 - 131) suggests that Habermas, by his appeal to a reconstructive science, succeeds in breaking free from foundationalist philosophy in epistemology but that in so doing he is committed to having to provide the same empirical evidence for his theory as that required in non-reconstructive sciences.

The essentialism, which, in my view, attaches to reconstructions of pretheoretical knowledge of competently knowing, speaking and acting subjects is not meant to deny that we are dealing here with fallible hypotheses, just as in the objectivating sciences (Habermas, 1982; p. 277).

He confirms this where he writes: 'all rational reconstructions, like other types of knowledge, have only hypothetical status' (Habermas, 1990, p. 32). Alford (1985, p. 334) argues that, in accepting that reconstructions are fallible hypotheses as in the empirical sciences, Habermas is abandoning the epistemological and methodological distinction between the two. Indeed Alford argues that the only difference between the two lies in their focus:

what makes reconstructive science special is actually not its unique epistemological status, but simply what it is about: rational processes, understood as learned cognitive skills (Alford, 1985, p. 332).

Reconstructive sciences are not solely a special category or variant of empirical science but are, for Alford, a *weakened* version of empirical sciences because the criteria for their falsifiability are unclear.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Laudan's (1990) comment that 'theories are generally not tested by those phenomena which they were expressly invented to explain' (Laudan, 1990, p. 24).

## 6.4 Systematically Distorted Communication

Habermas uses Freudian psychoanalysis in his developing theory of *systematically distorted communication* (Habermas, 1970a, p. 215). In this account he shows how 'Freud dealt with the occurrence of systematically deformed communication' in neurotic patients (ibid., p. 206), where the therapist restores to the consciousness of the patient (through the patient's reconstructions) the situations, experiences and constraints which have caused the *systematically distorted communication* and which render patients unable to integrate aspects of their biography into an existential whole — a 'theory of deviant socialization which includes the connection between patterns of interaction in early childhood and the formation of personality structures' (ibid. pp. 209-210, see also Habermas, 1974b, p. 48).

The treatment of *systematically distorted communication* is effected through *scenic understanding* — a hermeneutic understanding of the context and contours of actions and repression:

Scenic understanding makes it possible to 'translate' the meaning of the pathologically frozen communication pattern which had been hitherto unconscious and inaccessible to public communication (Habermas, 1970a, p. 208).

Habermas asserts the importance of understanding the context of repression:

the reconstruction of the original scene leads to an understanding of the meaning of a deformed language-game and simultaneously explains the origin of the deformation itself (Habermas, 1970a, p. 217).

Habermas (1972, 1974a) argues that this has analogical value as a theory of society in which the pursuit of equality is frustrated by the operation of ideology which is systemic, structural, ie built into the differentials of social power and asymmetrical relations of power. *Systems* distort communication (Habermas, 1974b, p. 48; 1984, p. 105) — maybe even unwittingly to participants. Habermas

argues that the processes of social integration and socialisation 'can take place only through the medium of action orientated to reaching understanding' (Habermas, 1982, p. 227) — a theory of society as a theory of communication which stems from the sociology of Mead (1934), Searle (1969) and Austin (1962). Here Habermas is borrowing ideas and concepts from others to support his developing thesis — a repetition of the practice observed in chapter 5 where he used Freud.

Heller (1982) questions whether a theory of communication or *systematically distorted communication* can embrace fully the class struggle or whether the 'class struggle as action can be replaced by rational argumentation' (Heller, 1982, p. 27) as it underemphasizes the strength of *practical* and *active* struggle and engagement. In this respect one can question the adequacy of a definition of class oppression as *systematically distorted communication*; even though it offers an alternative to the economic view of class oppression found in Marx it neglects the practical problems of class struggle and social emancipation.<sup>73</sup>

## 6.5 Dialogue Constitutive Universals

Reinforcing the notion of a reconstructive science Habermas argues that speech possesses *dialogue-constitutive universals* (a phrase which he borrows from Wunderlich (1974) to describe a feature already observed in language by Austin, Searle and Chomsky) — rules which 'establish the conditions of potential communication' (Habermas, 1970b, p. 363), and *cultural universals* — 'invariant features of contingent scopes of experience which...are common to all cultures' (ibid. p. 363), *a priori* and *a posteriori* universals respectively (ibid. pp. 363 - 4). *Universal*

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<sup>73</sup> Held (1980) argues that Habermas might have to assume that at some stages in history certain forms of 'distorted communication and hence certain levels of social repression, [are] unavoidable' (Held. 1980. p. 317). If this is true then it could weaken Habermas's case.



*pragmatics* and *dialogue-constitutive universals* begin to bring together a theory of communication and a social theory.

## 6.6 Speech Acts

In discussing 'speech situations' Habermas, echoing Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), is recognizing that speech operates in an interpersonal context. He accepts that 'utterances are never simply sentences' (Habermas, 1970b, p. 368)<sup>74</sup> disembodied from context, rather their meaning derives from the fact that they are set in intersubjective contexts — 'all speech exists in a context of actions and intentions' (ibid. p. 371). A speech situation 'both forms a context and furnishes resources for the processes of mutual understanding' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 298). Contained in any speech situation is a 'double structure' (Habermas, 1976b, 1979a, p. 42), whereby it is not only the propositional content which has meaning — the 'locutionary' aspect (Habermas, 1970b, p. 367) — but also the 'performatory' content of the speech — the 'illocutionary' aspect (ibid. p. 367, Habermas, 1979a, pp. 34 - 36). Habermas outlines this double structure which he defines as 'doing things in saying something' — this is what Austin saw as the illocutionary force of speech acts' (Habermas, 1976b, p. 156).

It is the illocutionary component which attracts Habermas, for it respects both the intersubjectivity of speech — hence casting it in a sociological frame — and the 'action-orientation' of speech situations. Habermas comments that the uncoupling of propositional and illocutionary aspects of speech acts 'is a necessary condition for the separation of the two levels of communication: (a) the level of intersubjectivity...and (b) the level of objects in the world, or states of affairs'

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<sup>74</sup> See also Habermas, 1979a, p. 26.

(Habermas, 1976b, p. 157). He indicates clearly the potential of speech to integrate micro and macro levels of social analysis where he asserts that in a speech act there is constant reference to 'four domains — external nature, society, internal nature, and speech itself' (Habermas, 1979a, pp. 66-7), he argues that 'every process of reaching understanding takes place against the background of a culturally ingrained pre-understanding' (1984, p. 100), ie speech acts are an inescapable element of a sociocultural lifeworld (ibid., p. 108).<sup>75</sup> Here, then, we can detect the elementary form of a social theory which not only embraces micro- and macro-sociological issues but necessarily links them. He writes that

the concept of society has to be linked to a concept of the lifeworld that is complementary to the concept of communicative action. Then communicative action becomes interesting primarily as a principle of sociation (Habermas, 1984, p. 337).

Habermas introduces a third feature of a speech situation — the 'expressive' aspect of the communication, wherein are manifested the speakers' intentions, wishes, feelings (Habermas, 1979a, p. 49). These three aspects of speech acts have their own criteria of validity; the locutionary aspects are premised on 'truth', the illocutionary aspects are premised on rightness or legitimacy, and the expressive aspects are premised on authenticity or sincerity (Habermas, 1970b, pp. 158-9; 1979a, p. 28). Habermas (1979a; 1982; 1984, pp. 58, 99, 308-310; 1987b, p. 313) argues that there are three 'worlds' in which we find ourselves — the objective, the social and the subjective, and that the criteria of validity of utterances in these worlds are truth, rightness (legitimacy) and sincerity respectively. He argues that there are four validity claims for communicative action inherent in speech acts:

truth for a proposition;...then legitimacy with respect to the norms and values which justify a performatively generated interpersonal relationship in a given context; further, veracity with respect to the self-presentation of the speaker's intentions; and, finally, comprehensibility with respect to the semantic content of the sentences used in an utterance (Habermas, 1970b, pp. 159 - 160).

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<sup>75</sup> See also ibid. p. 335 and 1987b, pp. 298 and 350.

In a later publication<sup>76</sup> he writes that there are

three *validity claims* (truth, rightness, truthfulness [sincerity]) that speakers raise with their utterances, three *worlds* (objective, social, subjective) to which speakers relate in their utterances, three *basic attitudes* (objectivating, norm-conformative, expressive) which they thereby adopt and among which they can establish continuous transitions in a performative attitude, and three classes of speech-acts (constative, regulative, representative) that include three *pure modes of language-use* (cognitive, interactive, expressive) (Habermas, 1982, p. 271).

Habermas constantly returns to these aspects in his developing theory of society; the truth, sincerity, comprehensibility and legitimacy claims found in speech acts (1987a, p. 26) are fundamental to rational society (cf. Habermas, 1984, pp. 15 - 16 and p. 99; Habermas, 1990, pp. 31 and 58). Habermas is not only laying out the axioms of a theory of communicative action but is reasserting the value of rationality and of the questioning of legitimacy which he outlined in his *Legitimation Crisis* (1976a). The features of Habermas's treatment of speech acts can be summarized in tabular form thus (Figure 6.1):<sup>77</sup>

The figure proceeds (from top to bottom) on a continuum from establishing the domains of the speech acts to their validity claims and requirements and their characteristics, themes and functions. Rational discourse is found in communicative action; communicative action embodies equality and the exercise of generalizable interests, essential to an egalitarian society.

Speech act theory is a fundamental building block in his attempt to recast social theory as a theory of communicative action. Habermas is attempting to construct a set of *universal pragmatics* (Habermas, 1979a), an awareness that

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<sup>76</sup> Ewert (1991, p. 360) notes that the later Habermas did not include comprehensibility as a validity claim. Ingram (1987, pp. 196, 201) argues that the later Habermas views comprehensibility as a precondition rather than a criticizable claim about objective, social and subjective worlds.

<sup>77</sup> This conflates the tables from Habermas, 1979a, pp. 58 and 68, Held, 1980, p. 338 and Pusey, 1987, p. 79. Habermas himself frequently conflates tables from his own earlier sources, using one table to build on previous tables.

Figure 6.1 — Modes of Communication in Speech Acts

MODES OF COMMUNICATION			
	Cognitive	Interactive	Expressive
	(Locutionary)	(Illocutionary)	
Domains of reality	'the' world of external nature	'our' world of society	'my' world of internal nature
Basic attitude	objectivating	norm-conforming	Expressive
Implied validity claim	truth	rightness appropriacy legitimacy	sincerity truthfulness authenticity
Speech-act immanent obligations to provide	Grounds	Justifications	Confirmations
Types of speech action	Constantives (eg assertions, descriptions, explanations)	Regulatives (eg commands, advice, recommendations)	Avowals (eg admission, revelation deception)
Theme	propositional content	intersubjectivity intersubjectivity	speaker's intentions, wishes and feelings
General functions of speech	Representation of facts	Establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations	Disclosure of speaker's subjectivity

language is both contextualized and yet abides by decontextualized rules (a notion hardly notable for its originality or profundity).

## 6.7 A Critique of Habermas's Use of Speech Act Theory

Habermas (1979a) uses ideas from the speech act theory of Austin, Searle and Hymes.<sup>78</sup> Participants in speech acts, operating within the parameters of

<sup>78</sup> Alexander (1985) argues that Habermas misrepresents Austin's work (Alexander, 1985, p. 416), oversimplifying it and making discrete some elements which Austin saw as overlapping.

'dialogue-constitutive universals', are striving to reach an 'intersubjectively held consensus'; speech 'is the medium of communication which already presupposes a tacit consensus about what it means to communicate' (Habermas, 1970b, p. 370).<sup>79</sup> Held (1980) summarizes this in his comment that 'behind all smoothly functioning communication is a background consensus based on the mutual recognition by all interlocutors of validity claims' (Held, 1980, p. 339).

However Heller (1982) refutes the strength of Habermas's assertion — 'the assumption that consensus can be achieved in a process of enlightenment is in fact no answer; the will to achieve consensus is the problem in question' (p. 25) (cf Phillips, 1986, pp. 84-5). This is a significant point, for Habermas is assuming that argument alone will, or should, achieve consensus, thereby ignoring the role of interests (discussed earlier) and the question of the political will and power which motivates moves either towards or away from consensus. Fay (1987) criticizes Habermas's use of speech act theory and its putative orientation to consensus, suggesting that 'the mistake in Habermas's argument is the unstated assumption that to understand a speech act is to agree with it' (Fay, 1987, p. 188).<sup>80</sup> This is echoed by White (1988) where he notes: '[t]he key question here is the exact source of the motivation to agree' (White, 1988, p. 42).

Within Habermas's use of speech acts there are further weaknesses. Roderick (1986) argues that Habermas overlooks the complexities of speech act theory as set out by Austin and Searle, which were problematic for them. This echoes the criticism earlier of his use of Freud — that he uses Freud (indeed psychoanalysis generally) very selectively to advance his own theory. Subtlety of treatment is lost

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<sup>79</sup> See also Habermas (1979a) p. 63.

<sup>80</sup> 'Understanding' does not presuppose 'agreement' (Roderick, 1986, p. 159).

to the all-encompassing thrust of his argument. If Habermas were really to take the notion of speech acts for what they are rather than for what he wants them to show for his argument then he would have to establish a far more developed speech act context, drawing on discourse analysis and linguistic theory. He does not do this in any detail, and thus is exposed to the charge, once again, that he takes decontextualized aphorisms which happen to suit his argument. Thompson (1982; 1984), Ingram (1987) and Krüger (1991) regard Habermas's attention solely to 'standard speech acts' as rendering his analysis incomplete and hence inadequate. Thompson (1982) makes a forceful attack on Habermas's whole notion of *universal pragmatics*, for, he argues, if Habermas confines his analysis solely to standard speech acts how can their claim to be 'universal' be substantiated (Thompson, 1982, p. 193)? Held (1982) reinforces this criticism of how 'universal' the *universal pragmatics* really are when he suggests that Habermas has ignored the importance of the dimension of internationalism, confining himself to nation states (Held, 1982, p. 193). In the absence of an international dimension we simply do not have the evidence to call *universal pragmatics* universal. They are ethnocentric (see the comments on Piaget and Kohlberg later). Habermas, in turn, admits that there are 'other forms of linguistic realization of speech acts' (Habermas, 1984, p. 330) but argues for using standard forms as these most clearly demonstrate his principle of sincerity rather than strategic speech acts.

## 6.8 The Ideal Speech Situation

Habermas argues that in *dialogue-constitutive universals* there is a *theoretical* presumption of symmetrical relations of equality between the interlocutors, even though they may be absent in practice, suggesting that in principle participants have power to enter into and influence the content of a speech situation:

no matter how the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding may be deformed, the design of the ideal speech situation is necessarily implied in the structure of potential speech, since all speech, even of intentional deception, is oriented towards the idea of truth....On the strength of communicative competence alone, however, and independent of the empirical structures of the social system to which we belong, we are quite unable to realize the ideal speech situation; we can only anticipate it (Habermas, 1970b, p. 372).

This is what he takes to be the contrafactual evidence of the rightness of his theory — if we can observe an instance where certain principles are violated then this points to the existence of the principles themselves. Habermas is arguing that to be able to understand — or indeed to employ — deception we need to know that deception is a violation of sincerity, and that sincerity is one of the hallmarks of communication. To be able to deceive or to appear to be sincere, we need to know the rules of linguistic interaction. Habermas writes that ‘in the execution of speech-acts...we *contrafactually* proceed as if the ideal speech situation...were not merely fictive but real’ (Habermas, 1982, p. 124) (italics mine).<sup>81</sup>

Habermas’s conception of the *ideal speech situation* developed over a period of nearly fifteen years.<sup>82</sup> The concept of the *ideal speech situation* builds on his theory of *communicative competence* and the value he accords to rational action. In its concern for the ‘engagement’ of participants the *ideal speech situation* also signals a later concern of Habermas — the significance of participatory democracy. He argues that ‘the speaker must engage himself, that is, indicate that in certain situations he will draw certain consequences for action’ (Habermas, 1979a, p. 61).

Habermas suggests that ‘in order to participate in normal discourse the speaker must have at his disposal ... communicative competence...[ie] the mastery of the

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Habermas 1984, p. 14.

<sup>82</sup> This is drawn from his works of 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1976a, 1976b, 1979a and 1984.

ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1970b, p. 367):<sup>83</sup>

that form of communication which is free from the constraints of the very processes of action and experience, and which allows for an exchange of arguments on hypothetical validity claims (whereby truth and legitimacy may count as discursively redeemable validity claims) (Habermas, 1976b, p. 164).

The *ideal speech situation* is *discursively redeemed* in speech acts (Habermas, 1979a, p. 2; 1984, p. 10), in principle speech is unavoidably oriented to consensus. Habermas (1979a, pp. 63-4) writes that 'since every linguistic utterance receives its actual meaning in the to and fro of dialogue, every sentence reaffirms the idea of autonomous responsibility for all participants' (Habermas, 1979a, p. 48). This is very questionable — as will be argued later in the critique (6.9); indeed the critique will suggest that the *ideal speech situation* is little more than high-sounding rhetoric. The *ideal speech situation* is characterised thus, Figure 6.2.<sup>84</sup>

One can observe that the characteristics of the *ideal speech situation* utilize higher order thinking skills (cf Bloom, 1956) — 'check', 'evaluate', 'modify', 'reflect on', 'assess', 'alter', 'select'. In its social dimension — it operates *dialogically* rather than *monologically* — the *ideal speech situation* accords with Vygotsky's (1978) view that all higher order cognitive functions are learned and communicated socially. These significant features are discussed in chapters 11 and 12 of this thesis. This figure contains key phrases which are used repeatedly in the later parts of the thesis which analyse education from Habermasian perspectives. It is a very important figure in this respect.

A rational consensus is one that approaches the conditions of the *ideal speech situation* where 'only the unforced force of the better argument comes into play'

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<sup>83</sup> See also Habermas (1979a, p. 29).

<sup>84</sup> Habermas. 1970a; 1970b; 1972; 1976b; 1979a; 1984; 1987a; 1987b, 1990; McCarthy, 1978; Held, 1980; Pusey. 1987.





Figure 6.2 — Elements of the Ideal Speech Situation

<b>THE IDEAL SPEECH SITUATION</b>
(i) Orientation to a 'common interest ascertained without deception';
(ii) Freedom to enter a discourse;
(iii) Freedom to check questionable claims;
(iv) Freedom to evaluate explanations;
(v) Freedom to modify a given conceptual framework;
(vi) Freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge;
(vii) Freedom to allow commands or prohibitions to enter discourse when they can no longer be taken for granted;
(viii) Freedom to assess justifications;
(ix) Freedom to alter norms;
(x) Freedom to reflect on the nature of political will;
(xi) Mutual understanding between participants;
(xii) Equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts;
(xiii) Recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner;
(xiv) Equal opportunity for discussion;
(xv) Discussion to be free from domination and distorting or deforming influences;
(xvi) The consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants;
(xvii) All motives except the cooperative search for truth are excluded;
(xviii) The speech-act validity claims of truth, legitimacy, sincerity and comprehensibility are all embodied;
(xix) Illocutions replace perlocutions.

(Habermas, 1987b, p. 130). In this respect 'this concept of communicative rationality carries with it connotations based on the central experience of the uncon-

strained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech' (Habermas, 1984, p. 110).<sup>85</sup> Habermas has constructed a conceptual framework for a social theory which operates from the asserted premiss that participants are actively 'engaged' (Habermas, 1979a, p. 61) in intersubjective communication which leads to their emancipation, even though he outlines only sketchedly the practicalities of that engagement and how it may happen (cf Bernstein's (1976, p. 224)). Habermas argues that in the structure and operation of language are the principles on which a just society are based:

The commitment to consider all individuals as potential participants in discourse presupposes a universalistic commitment to the potential equality, autonomy, and rationality of individuals (Habermas, 1982, p. 252).

The characteristics of the *ideal speech situation* here are no more than the characteristics of the just and free society which, according to Habermas, human activity should strive to achieve.<sup>86</sup> The disclosure of the central tenets of *universal pragmatics* is no more than the disclosure of norms on which society is based; the notion of *systematically distorted communication* serves to identify the gulf between the ideal and actual socio-cultural and socio-political worlds; the search for a *rational consensus* marks out the evolution of society towards universally acceptable norms and justice:

Rationalization means overcoming such systematically distorted communication in which the action-supporting consensus concerning the reciprocally raised validity claims...can be sustained (Habermas, 1979a, p. 120).

In this sense Habermas marks a break from Weber who saw the rationalization

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<sup>85</sup> Habermas (1984) defines rationality as that which makes action defensible against criticism.

<sup>86</sup> Habermas writes that 'ethical universalism does indeed have a utopian content' (Habermas, 1972, p. 251). Roderick (1986) indicates that Habermas subsequently moves from a view in which the *ideal speech situation* indicates an end-state of society to a view of the *ideal speech situation* as a conceptual tool only. Young (1989) argues that in *Knowledge and Human Interests* Habermas regards the *ideal speech situation* as a tool to think with (Young, 1989, p. 76).

of society into the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy as profoundly irrational — a society wherein *Wertrationalität* has been overtaken by *Zweckrationalität*. Habermas's views of communicative action attempt to break the bonds of Weber's scenario of an over-administered, emancipation-deadening bureaucracy.

Habermas sees the potential of the notion for research into the structural, ideological deformations and repressions of the *ideal speech situation* as being of major sociological import (Habermas, 1979a, p. 374). This would have to chart the repressive forces and the factors which were frustrating the realization of the *ideal speech situation*, a harking back to the ideology critique of his earlier writings. He comments that the *ideal speech situation* is 'a critical standard against which every actually realized consensus can be called into question and tested' (Habermas, 1982, p. 258). Emancipation is wrought through the attaining of communication free from domination.

## 6.9 A Critique of the Ideal Speech Situation

Criticisms of the notion of the *ideal speech situation*<sup>87</sup> are cast at many levels:

- the gulf between ideal and actual speech situations;
- the problems of a consensus theory of truth;
- its utopian and unrealistic purity;
- the presumption of resolution of ideological conflict;
- the relegation of the overtly political dimensions of social life in favour of the pursuit of rational action;

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<sup>87</sup> Bernstein, 1976; Keat 1981; Thompson and Held, 1982; Dallmayr, 1984; Giddens, 1985; Fay, 1987; Boudon, 1989.

- the assumption of the appeal of the pursuit of rationality or agreement on its constitution;
- the inability to link macro and micro social theory;
- the linguistic turn of social theory;
- the utility of the theory in effecting equality and democracy;
- the power of rationality or of theory to stimulate action.

Thompson and Held (1982) comment that

... The gulf which exists between ideal discourse and actual speech cannot ... be closed by recourse to transcendental reflection ... in attempting to ground practical critique through a quasi-Kantian reflection on language, Habermas succumbs...to the most intricate self-deception [by conflating unfairly empirics and theory] (Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 12)

This view is echoed by Keat (1981) who wonders how adequate the notion of the *ideal speech situation* is for resolving the 'kinds of normative issues that typically arise in moral and political decisions' (Keat, 1981, p. 181). One has to ask how far a rational consensus is realistic or how possible it is to separate the force of the argument from the power or force of the protagonists.

Thompson (1982) contends that 'the recourse to the conditions of ideal speech may be neither necessary nor sufficient for the attainment of a 'rational consensus' (p. 130); Lukes (1982) comments that the *ideal speech situation* could occur but leave economic and political processes a 'rationalist illusion' (p. 141). Larrain (1994) argues that 'the reconstruction of a hypothetical state of perfect rationality seems totally disconnected from historical practice' (Larrain, 1994, p. 125). Moreover, Hesse (1982) argues that even if a rational consensus were achieved this does

not avoid the charge of relativism.<sup>88</sup> Further, Thompson (1984) comments on the lack of clarity in the view that all participants in an *ideal speech situation* have equal chances to select and employ speech acts (p. 272). These are major criticisms of Habermas, indicating that he is caught up in the utopian purity of speech act theory which, in reality, is and has to be touched by the reality of everyday life.<sup>89</sup> Boudon (1989) comments on this:

the perfect-communication model seems to be literally impossible to conceptualize: firstly, because it assumes that everybody is equally competent in all areas; secondly, because it assumes that there is no time-lag at all in acquiring and circulating information; thirdly, because it assumes that within the communication group there is no question of manipulation, coalition or strategy; fourthly, because it assumes that everybody has clear and discernable opinions and wishes on all matters; fifthly, because it blithely ignores the classic problem of how individual preferences and opinions are transformed into collective preferences and opinions; and finally, because it obscures the distinction, even though it has been a classic one ever since Aristotle, between topics of debate which stem from opinions and those which are raised by proof or experiment (Boudon, 1989, p. 82).

The model *assumes* a shared consensus on rules for communication which may operate in a small group situation but more possibly not in a large group situation, ie it *asserts* that which it needs to *demonstrate*. It assumes a consensus on the nature of the 'good life', debarring alternative conceptions (Dallmayr, 1984). Indeed Dallmayr goes on to suggest that 'the study oscillates precariously between a mode of action predicated on a prior, presubjective consensus and another view treating consensus as the outcome of divergent individual designs' (Dallmayr, 1984, p. 237). We are unsure whether consensus is *achieved* or *pre-ordinate*, or whether linguistic communication is the means to, or goal which is, consensus (ibid., p. 238) — a premise, a medium or an outcome (ibid. p. 239). Habermas's view of the *ideal speech situation* offers little solace to those struggling for power, recognition,

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<sup>88</sup> Cf Strain (1984): 'The major charge against any consensus theory of truth is that it leaves truth as merely relative to a local culture' (Strain, 1984, p. 108). See also Strain (1984), ch. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Nielsen (1992) argues that Habermas's work is 'radically incomplete' because 'he gives us no account of how this transformation of society is to be achieved' (p. 283).

rights and freedoms. Boudon (1989) comments on this where he writes that

Habermas's theory of pure and perfect communication is a model which is interesting, congenial and inspired by the sincerest of motives; but it always reminds me of the story of the expert in operational research who, when asked the best way to get an elephant on to a boat, started from the assumption that the weight of the elephant was negligible (Boudon, 1989, p. 194).

Giddens (1985), in his turn, doubts the implications and applications of the concept of the *ideal speech situation*:

'Our first sentence' you once wrote, 'expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus'. Why not say that our first gesture of recognition of another person promises a universal solidarity of human beings (Giddens, 1985, pp. 116 - 7).

Giddens is arguing that Habermas is placing too much emphasis on a linguistic turn of theory (cf Hohendahl's (1986) criticisms earlier) and is, in fact, simplistic. Domination is not equivalent to distorted communication, there are economic and material conditions of oppression to be addressed (Giddens, 1977, p. 152). This is reinforced by Roderick (1986) who asks 'Why is a genuine understanding / agreement based only on the force of the better argument? Couldn't it also be based on love, compassion, solidarity or sympathy?' (Roderick, 1986, p. 160). Habermas is unclear whether a theory of communication takes sufficient account of a range of phenomena — eg culture, the distribution of material resources.

It is possible — or indeed impossible — for individual participants to observe the requirements of the *ideal speech situation* and yet to operate in a massively unequal society. Habermas fails to show how the *ideal speech situation* can effect these changes, assuming that the gulf between ideal discourse and actual speech can be bridged solely or simply by recourse to reflection and domination-free communication (Bubner, 1982). In many situations the *ideal speech situation* might be implied — or *redeemed* — contrafactually but have absolutely no effect in bringing

overall equality, emancipation or empowerment, it is simply an irrelevance. Indeed it could be argued that the *ideal speech situation* might impede the move towards equality; that moves to equality might be made more effectively by using force — or action. *Action oriented to mutual understanding* need not be communicative action — a point which is neglected by Habermas in his desire to elevate the role of communicative action. Further, the *ideal speech situation* assumes an unproven commonality of interests between individuals; whilst this is questionable (cf Keat, *op cit*, p. 195) it remains for Habermas to justify the assumption that common interests are relevant in practical discourses (*ibid.* p. 195). Fay (1987) argues that

even though they understand one another perfectly, rational people may continue to be rational though they continue indefinitely to disagree; neither their mutual understanding nor their rationality is sufficient to achieve that consensus which is a necessary condition of collective autonomy...the existence and the defensibility of rational disagreements needs to be invoked (Fay, 1987, p. 190).

Again Habermas is assuming that which he should be demonstrating — that rational argument *will* achieve consensus.<sup>90</sup> Moreover there are major substantive questions to be raised against *the ideal speech situation*, for example to ask what the indicators will be of the achievement of the *ideal speech situation*; will we know it when it is reached (Phillips, 1986, p. 85), and who has such perfect knowledge (Geuss, 1981); what kinds of knowledge would constitute the force of the better argument (which inevitably would be value based as values determine the relevance or worthwhileness of the argument). The achievement of consensus on the force of the better argument is temporally or spatially contextualized; Young (1989) suggests that this a major dilemma for Critical Theorists where he writes:

How can we postulate transcendental conditions — conditions of our human nature — if that nature is subjectively constituted? How can we transcend ourselves?

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<sup>90</sup> Phillips (1986) suggests that 'if the notion of the ideal speech situation is taken as a necessary requirement for speculation and argumentation about questions of justice and morality, then it appears to be a hindrance to articulating the demands of justice and to developing the social criticism that Habermas himself advocates' (Phillips, 1986, p. 88).

(Young, 1989, p. 38).

The *ideal speech situation* assumes that consensus will be an adequate criterion for the achievement of the better argument, neglecting the possibility of every party being collectively mistaken, ie neglecting any moral absolutes (Callinicos, 1989, p. 111). Callinicos argues that a rational consensus is not a guarantee of truth. Further, it is unclear how the force of the better argument will be judged or disputes over it settled, and how one will adjudicate between equally sound but ideologically different arguments (questioning the move towards consensus which is implicit in Habermas's view of the *ideal speech situation*). Indeed Phillips (1986) argues that a justification that a consensus itself is rational has to be established (Phillips, 1986, p. 84).<sup>91</sup> Who will be the adjudicators (with the risk that it will promote the very élitism which it sought to deny)?

Habermas does not develop the practical implications of 'the unforced force of the better argument' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 130). The problem here is that an increasingly general, all-subsuming theory is too general to inform or stimulate action, one has to ask how far a very general principle or theory will be a stimulus to action. Larrain (1994) argues that 'this regulative model is too abstract to be able to provide concrete criteria which can be used when passing judgement on specified theories and political programmes' (Larrain, 1994, p. 125). One is faced with the problem of how the concept of the *ideal speech situation* assists us in the face of powerful ideological struggles and with competing systems — eg religious, political — which all claim to be reasonable and rational (Lukes, 1977). Under these circumstances does the *ideal speech situation* become simply decisionism (see

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<sup>91</sup> Habermas is unclear on his position here; in *Legitimation Crisis* (1976a) he argues that conflicts and compromise can be overcome, then in 1982 he argues that compromises might be necessary (cf Keat, 1981).



chapter 3.5) which Habermas condemns in scientism and positivism? Habermas denies the absolutes which inhere in positivism and yet he credits the force of the better argument with 'absolute', ideal, status, thereby equating facts with norms (the same feature for which he criticised positivism and scientism). →

There remains also the problem that the force of the better argument is premissed on communicative action; this assumes its superiority over strategic action discussed in chapter 6.10. The *ideal speech situation* seeks a liberal consensus which many would find unpalatable. It does not question the acceptability of grounding a critique of ideology in a theory of language. -

A communication theory, with its emphasis on the moves to rational argument, where the force of the argument alone holds sway, is perhaps too genteel or too optimistic for the realities of oppression and suppression in society. There will be occasions where force has to be used 'on behalf of argumentation' (Young, 1989). There will be some social forces which will simply not be dissolved by the operation of reflection and reconstruction. The *ideal speech situation* neglects the potential necessity of using practical force to bring about equality:

the social system is one of domination, and the dominating party cannot be brought to listen to an argument or accept any kind of reciprocity unless it is forced to pay attention (Heller, 1982, p. 27).

The conditions of the *ideal speech situation* do not necessarily engage the lived experiences of cultural traditions, uneven distribution of material resources and power. The *ideal speech situation* is interesting but too utopian to be relevant to daily praxis and its effects might be minimal. Van der Burg (1990) comments:

[c]ven if we assume that one can arrive at satisfactory and relatively clear solutions in an *ideal* discourse situation, does it still not become impossible to reach good results in *concrete, real* situations, because of the fundamental contrafacticity of the ideal situation....Are we not therefore compelled to appeal to concrete morals' (Van der Burg. 1990. p. 109).

One is reminded of Santayana's (1971) comment on idealisations of this kind: '[n]othing will have been disproved, but everything will have been abandoned' (p. 44) and of Marx's and Engels' (1976) withering comments on German ideologists: 'they forget, however, that to these phrases they are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world' (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 30).

There is a sense in which Habermas's reworking of social evolution as the progression towards communicative action and the *ideal speech situation* is as reductionist as the Marxism which he criticised, for in moving towards the austerity of rational argument Heller accuses Habermas of losing the sensuous, tragic side of human nature. People have feelings, needs, wants (Heller, 1982, p. 31).<sup>92</sup> Human activity is much less antiseptic than Habermas would have it, there is an expressive rationality which needs recognition. Habermas overplays the rational at the expense of the practical (discussed later).

Like his psychoanalytic model, Habermas's concept of the *ideal speech situation* contains an unrealistic suppressed premiss that consensual outcomes are possible in practical discourse (ibid. p. 196); however people differ in their rational desires. This is a fundamental problem in Habermasian theory. Roderick (1986) argues that there are severe logical problems with Habermas's position here:

If understanding and agreement belong to the structure of language, if they are conditions ... of speech, then misunderstandings and disagreements must also belong to the structure of language and be conditions for the possibility of speech....Since both understanding misunderstanding, agreement and disagreement, belong to the conceptual-transcendental structure of language, no basis remains for privileging the 'positive' terms over their 'negative' counterparts (Roderick, 1986, p. 159).

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<sup>92</sup> '[C]ommitment to rational argument is not sufficient to secure the target group's readiness for enlightenment: such readiness depends on the involvement of the human being as a whole' (Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 12).

Negatives are no more simply derivatives of positives than positives are of negatives.<sup>93</sup> Given that Habermas argues that communicative *and* strategic action are both evident in language he needs to provide a justification for privileging communicative action over strategic action that is more than ideological preference.<sup>94</sup> The implication of Roderick's critique is to suggest that, even though Habermas suggests that a normative justification for his 'theory with a practical intent' can be found in communicative rationality this is, in fact, ideological because it unfairly selects those aspects of communicative theory which happen to support his case. Thus as exhortation the *ideal speech situation* may be attractive whilst as unbiased theory it is flawed — an issue which is taken up in chapter eight in the critique of Habermas's overall theory.

Hence whilst superficially the notion of the *ideal speech situation* might be attractive, when one evaluates Habermas's arguments they are found to be flawed on logical, epistemological, substantive, empirical and practical grounds.<sup>95</sup> As a contributor to Habermas's developing theory of communicative action the flawed *ideal speech situation*, then, undermines that theory.

## 6.10 Strategic and Communicative Action

From the principles outlined so far in this study chapter Habermas develops his theory of communicative action as a theory of society.<sup>96</sup> The notion of commu-

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<sup>93</sup> 'Consensus presupposes dissent and vice versa' (Van Reijen, 1990, p. 98).

<sup>94</sup> Hall (1980) writes of 'the repressive conditions in which language as such is itself constituted' (Hall et al. 1980, p. 161).

<sup>95</sup> Young (1989) notes that 'the ideal speech situation as a critical device is limited....It cannot be used to criticise large-scale communication structures, but only face-to-face ones. Thus it cannot be the sole basis of a rational form of life. It is better adapted to generating critique in some areas than others' (Young, 1989, p. 77).

<sup>96</sup> He writes that 'the concept of society has to be linked to a concept of communicative action', (Habermas, 1984, p. 337).

nicative action and strategic action are of fundamental importance in Habermas's theory of communicative action as they not only underpin his notions of lifeworld and system and not only underpin his analysis of society, but offer a way out of the 'iron cage' of rationalization envisaged by Weber. His theory at heart suggests that society is 'sustained at the level of language and governed by the rules of communicative action' (Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 10). Habermas (1982) indicates the striving for consensus in society where he speaks of 'communicative actions' as

social interactions...coordinated not through the egocentric calculations of success of every individual but through cooperative achievements of understanding among participants (Habermas, 1982, p. 264).

The development of social forms belongs to the realm of language, clearly signalled by Habermas where he writes that forms of social action are those

in which the plans of action of different actors are coordinated through an exchange of communicative acts, that is through a use of language ... orientated towards reaching understanding (Habermas, 1982, p. 234).

Habermas links his discussion of communicative and strategic action to his earlier concepts of speech acts and their illocutionary and perlocutionary effects. Communicative action is characterized by its illocutionary effects (*doing* something whilst saying something), whilst strategic action is characterized by its perlocutionary effects (*achieving* something — instrumentally — by saying something). The former is built on cooperative consensus — '*action oriented to mutual understanding* where a 'moment of unconditionality exists' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 322) — whilst the latter is premised on realizing interests (Habermas, 1982, p. 237).<sup>97</sup>

Communicative action uses the concept of the *ideal speech situation* — itself a derivative of the hermeneutic and emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interests

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<sup>97</sup> Habermas argues that ideologies dissolve when called into question, since they are maintained only by restricting communicative action (cf Holub, 1991, p. 123).

discussed in chapter four — whilst strategic action violates the *ideal speech situation* as it is concerned with controlling other people's behaviour, the technical knowledge-constitutive interest outlined in chapter four. The difference between strategic and communicative action can be illustrated diagrammatically by presenting a conflation of several of Habermas's tables<sup>98</sup> (Figure 6.3):

**Figure 6.3 — Communicative and Strategic Action**

<b>Social Interactions</b>		
<b>Communicative Action</b> (emancipatory and hermeneutic interests)	<b>Strategic Action</b> (the technical interest)	<b>Strategic Action</b> (the technical interest)
Illocutionary effects	Perlocutionary effects	Perlocutionary effects
	Covertly strategic	Overtly strategic
	unconscious deception (systematically distorted)	conscious deception (manipulation)

This model also follows 'Austin's distinctions between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts...for delimiting action oriented to reaching understanding from action oriented to success' (Habermas, 1984, p. 279). Illocutionary acts concern processes to an undecided end, perlocutionary acts already know the end which is sought. In the former 'agreement rests on common convictions' (ibid., p. 287); in the latter consensus is imposed (p. 310), the desired is already known. The former is marked by symmetrical intersubjective relations: the latter by asymmetry (cf. ibid., p. 294), ie by unequal power. *Systematically distorted communication*, in Habermas's view, is action oriented to success and control rather than to understanding and emancipation, it is perlocutionary rather than illocutionary.

<sup>98</sup> Habermas. 1982. p. 264, pp. 285 - 7, p. 333.

## 6.11 A Critique of Strategic and Communicative Action

White (1988) argues that communicative and strategic action are not as separate as Habermas would have them be:

What disturbs one usually sympathetic critic is that apparently the more you scratch the concept of communicative action, the more it begins to resemble strategic action. The link between the two arises from the fact that both are ultimately teleological or goal-oriented. In communicative action, there is simply a different goal from that in strategic action (White, 1988, p. 46).

Indeed Doeleman (1990) suggests that 'Habermas has increasingly emphasized the place of teleology as fundamental to all action, so much so that the distinction between communicative and purposive types of action is difficult to maintain' (Doeleman, 1990, p. 113) — a view which Habermas (1990b) explicitly refutes (pp. 130-1). Alexander (1985) argues that the aligning of illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts with communicative and strategic action respectively misrepresents Austin's work and overlooks Austin's own difficulties in articulating the distinction between the two. Austin intended perlocutionary acts to include understanding and illocutionary acts to include strategizing (cf Culler, 1985, p. 136). Habermas (1984) is aware of the difficulty and suggests that certain phases of communicative action may have to use strategic elements (Habermas, 1984, p. 331; 1990b). Joas (1991) argues that the use of two types of action — communicative and strategic — does not 'do justice to the diversity of kinds of action and accordingly [Habermas] has delivered only communication as such as the jam-packed residual category of non-instrumental action' (Joas, 1991, p. 101). Berger (1991) comments that:

just as communicative action contains teleological components, so, too, teleological action contains communicative elements....The two figures of action cannot be disentangled as easily as Habermas imagines. One can be interested in goal-oriented activity in order to increase the chances for communication (Berger, 1991, p. 172).

If Habermas cannot demonstrate that communicative action is either *prior* to or *superior* to strategic action then the primacy of the *ideal speech situation* becomes merely a matter of preference (cf Culler, 1985, p. 137). Roderick (1986) suggests that 'it is arguable that strategic action is more basic to communication than 'communicative action oriented to reaching understanding' (Roderick, 1986, p. 98). Habermas's theory, then, is open to the criticism that it is selective and is ideologically rather than logically justified. Habermas argues that communication is premissed, if contrafactually, on equality, freedom, democracy and justice. That is a highly selective interpretation; it is also premissed on elements of strategic action — power, persuasion, instrumentalism and strategizing. Speech acts are premissed on communicative action and strategic action, they point to the principles of strategic not simply of communicative action. To argue, as Habermas does, that one should behave in accordance with the *ideal speech situation* is not only to commit the naturalistic fallacy (discussed earlier) but is to misrepresent the notion of speech which concerns strategic as much as communicative action. Roderick (1986) argues that:

the ... point Habermas is attempting to make concerning equal access to communicating roles and constraint-free communication suggests that his own account might itself be construed as an example of strategic action (Roderick, 1986, p. 98).

This suggests that behind the appeal to communicative action as a means to avoid the challenge of relativism is a very clear political ideology at work in Habermas's Critical Theory. Critical Theory, as was argued in chapter two, has its own clear political agenda.

## 6.12 Piaget and Kohlberg: Ontogenesis and Phylogenesis

Having set out Habermas's commencement of the development of a social

theory from communicative action this section outlines his attempt to link micro- and macro-social theory, to provide an explanation of how societies develop over the centuries. Essentially his early attempt uses the development of the individual as a parallel for the development of societies — ontogenesis of the individual mapping onto phylogenesis of societies. Habermas's analysis here moves away significantly from his Marxist roots. Whereas Marx took an economic interpretation of the development of societies Habermas, whilst still keeping high a concern for the emancipation of societies, attempts to recast a theory of social evolution within a framework of the development of his theory of communicative action. Here his attempt<sup>99</sup> draws on the work of Loevinger, Piaget and Kohlberg. This section sets out his analysis and then provides a critique of his use of these sources and their utility in his attempt to link micro and macro elements of sociological analysis for a theory of social evolution. This critique draws on papers in Thompson and Held (1982) and Giddens (1985).<sup>100</sup>

Habermas makes considerable use of the writings of Loevinger, Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (Habermas, 1979a, chapters 2, 3, 4). From Loevinger he sets out the developmental stages of the ego from presocial-symbiotic, through impulse ridden-opportunistic to conformist stages, and on through conscientious and autonomous stages to the integrated stage of development. He sets out the stage theory of ontogenetic development from Piaget from the symbiotic, through the egocentric and then the sociocentric-objectivistic stages onwards to the universalistic stages of development, charting a movement from preconventional, through conventional, to postconventional stages of moral development (Habermas, 1979a, p. 100).

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<sup>99</sup> Habermas. 1979a. 1984, 1987a.

<sup>100</sup> These critiques of Habermas (1984) and (1987a) use the untranslated versions which appeared before 1984.



Habermas also sets out Piaget's theory of learning stages in a moral context — from sensori-motor, through pre-operational, concrete operational thought to formal, abstract operation thought, mapping out the relationship between these and the stages of moral growth — a development to a decentred understanding of the world, setting the ground for linking this to his notion of communicative action. He also draws on Kohlberg's six stages of moral development (ibid. pp. 77-81): stage one: punishment-obedience orientation → stage two: instrumental hedonism → stage three: 'good-boy / nice-girl' orientation → stage four: law-and-order orientation → stage five: social-contractual legalism → stage six: ethical-principles orientation (Lukes, 1982, pp. 300-1).

Habermas's intention is to use these as patterns of the evolution of societies (Habermas, 1979a, p. 121). Just as individual, ontogenetic, development is realized interactionally so it is with societies: 'communicative reason is expressed in a decentred understanding of the world' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 315). Habermas connects his analysis of Piaget's stages of cognitive development to his developing theory of communicative action.

if we employ Piaget's concept of decentration ... in order to clarify the internal connection between the structure of a worldview, the lifeworld as the context of processes of understanding, and the possibilities of a rational conduct of life, we again encounter the concept of communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984, p. 72).

The stages which Habermas sets out for individual moral development from Loevinger, Piaget and Kohlberg are also stages of the development of the human species and society (Habermas, 1979a, 1984, 1987a, 1990a). The move from pre-conventional, through conventional, to postconventional stages of development — a move from ego-centrism to decentration (Habermas, 1984, p. 69) — parallels, in Habermas's analysis, the development of societies from mythical, magical, tradi-

tional societies marked by ascription and mechanical solidarity to ‘disenchanted’<sup>101</sup> rationalized societies marked by achievement and organic solidarity. Habermas (1984) suggests four stages of social evolution — archaic, civilized, early modern and modern. Dallmayr (1984) conflates the latter two and then maps them onto Piagetian stages thus (cf Dallmayr, 1984, p. 154):

mythical archaic societies.....infant identity  
 early civilization.....pre-adolescence  
 developed civilizations.....mature ego-identity

One has to comment on the ease with which Habermas makes use of Piagetian theory to support his ideas; again Habermas appears to be employing or importing a theory from a decontextualized source elsewhere to support his own developing views just as he did earlier with Freud, Austin and Searle.

### 6.13 Critiques of Habermas on Ontogenesis and Phylogenesis

Much criticism has been levelled at Habermas’s attempt to combine ontogenesis and phylogenesis through the application of the work of Piaget and Kohlberg to a reconstructed theory of historical materialism and a theory of social evolution. There are two foci of the criticisms:

- the validity of the enterprise as a whole;
- the use of Piaget and Kohlberg, even if the enterprise were valid.

Habermas’s attempts to draw parallels between the development of the individual and the development of societies have been criticised both in *principle* and

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<sup>101</sup> Habermas uses this term extensively in his *Theory of Communicative Action*. It is a term which he takes from Weber who, in turn, had taken the phrase ‘the disenchantment of the world’ from Schiller (MacRae, 1974, p. 86).

in *practice* — in *principle* because it need not (and perhaps should not) be done, and in *practice* because Habermas has not done it successfully to date.

Schmid (1982) doubts the validity of Habermas's enterprise — the 'notion of developmental logic rests...on questionable assumptions concerning the relations between the ontogenesis of the individual and the development of world views' (cited in Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 16). Schmid writes:

can we connect the fact that different problem-solving capacities are institutionalized in structures of collective consciousness according to the organizational principle and the learning level (which is what the ascription of a developmental logic to learning levels amounts to) with the fact that the people of earlier social formations did not pass through all the stages of their possible ontogenetic development?...It seems to me much more sensible...to separate out strictly the processes of learning and maturation which guide the ontogenesis of the individual from those processes which underlie the development of world views (Schmid, 1982, p. 173).

Schmid is suggesting that nothing will be lost in the power of Habermas's analysis if this element were to be jettisoned completely. McCarthy (1982, p. 72), whilst recognizing that the attempt to link individual and social evolution in a developmental logic has heuristic value (a fact which Habermas acknowledges (Habermas, 1979a, p. 205)), nevertheless castigates him for his uncritical importation of ontogenetic theories into social theory — exacerbated by the flawed nature of the ontogenetic theories themselves (McCarthy, 1982, p. 69).<sup>102</sup> Heller (1982, p. 38) shows not only how Habermas has to assume the priority of ontogenesis over phylogenesis but questions the validity of this through cross-cultural argument. She finds the totalism of Habermas's theory both attractive in its attempt at completeness but dangerous as a philosophy of history — 'there are no loose threads' (ibid. p. 39). This is a significant criticism, for, again, it indicates that Habermas is constructing a hermetically sealed theory to define the social world in terms which are axiomatic and immune to critique.

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<sup>102</sup> See also Krüger (1991, p. 147) and Habermas's response to Krüger (Habermas, 1991, p. 261).

The notion that Piagetian views of children's development can be parcelled out into stages has been effectively disproved,<sup>103</sup> as has the notion of the restriction of 'decentring' in the young child. Piaget's studies themselves were carried out on small non-representative samples of urban, white middle-class Swiss children, whilst the cross-cultural studies that there have been have shown that generalizable notions of stages of development are untenable.<sup>104</sup> McCarthy (1982) suggests that Habermas has to address more fully the charges of ethnocentrism, of scientific and rationalistic bias in the studies of Piaget and Kohlberg if his theory is to be able to stand (McCarthy op cit, p. 69).<sup>105</sup> Habermas (1990a) however does indicate that he is aware of this, providing evidence that Kohlberg had to modify his theory in light of studies in Taiwan, Turkey and Israel (Habermas, 1990a, p. 172).

Habermas's adoption of the work of Piaget and Kohlberg attracts criticism from McCarthy (1982) who accuses him of importing into his theory a view of the 'end-state' of development of an individual and thus of a society which is 'decidedly Western in conception' (ibid. p. 70), thus bringing to his work a cultural relativism which is used to redefine 'cultural difference' as 'cultural retardation' (ibid. p. 71). Heller (1982) echoes this when she writes: 'why 'the good life' and not 'good lives'....Habermas reconstructs historical materialism around one universal value: his own' (p. 41). Rasmussen (1990), too, criticizes Habermas for this:

[H]as not Habermas indulged in the very procedure that he declared taboo for others. namely, has he not selected a particular tradition from which to argue and sustain his ethical point of view (Rasmussen, 1990, 74).

White (1988) argues that the universality of Kohlberg's forms are in fact specific to Western culture and time, and are anti-feminist (White, 1988, pp. 65

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<sup>103</sup> For example by Donaldson, 1978; White, 1988, p. 67.

<sup>104</sup> For example Ashton, 1975; Buck-Morss, 1975; Dasen, 1977; Gibbs, 1977.

<sup>105</sup> See also Giddens, 1985, p. 117; Gilligan, 1977. -

and 87). Bubner (1982, pp. 60 and 64) questions the acceptability of Habermas's views here, asking whether Habermas captures 'universals' or is operating a 'thinly disguised Eurocentrism' (p. 65) in his treatment of Piaget and Kohlberg (cf Held, 1982). He suggests that:

if ... the structures of communicative action and discourse that Habermas singles out are to be found...only in certain spheres of certain (Western) cultures at certain (modern) times, how then is it possible to defend the view that these structures are universal-pragmatic features of communication as such? (Bubner, 1982, p. 65).

Habermas (1982; 1985a, p. 104) appears to accept some of these criticisms when he responds 'to the extent that philosophy takes on the tasks of a theory of rationality, it will have to explain Occidental rationalism's decentred understanding of the world which developed in modern Europe' (Habermas, 1982, p. 240).

In using the work of Piaget and Kohlberg Habermas commits the relativistic and naturalistic fallacies in applying their conceptions to a theory of social evolution. Thus whilst it is clear that Habermas is undertaking an enterprise of grand proportion it also appears that much remains to be done in the formalization, justification and application of the theory.<sup>106</sup> Habermas again is importing the writings of others to support his own views, replacing his own argument and demonstration with the arguments of others. McCarthy (1982) writes:

Habermas's appropriation of the concepts, assumptions and results of developmental studies has been noticeably less critical than one might have expected from his treatment of other research traditions (McCarthy, 1982, p. 68).

This has problems at the level of theory, for it follows the path of 'confirmatory' theories and inductivism — 'proof' of a theory residing in the number of times or authors in which it is held to be true. O'Hear (1980), commenting on

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<sup>106</sup> He has attempted this in his two volumes (1984 and 1987a) of *The Theory of Communicative Action*. He recognizes that an overall social theory is preferable to a theory of speech action (Habermas, 1984, p. xxiv).

Popper's view that 'a good theory forbids, a better theory forbids more' (Popper, 1969, p. 36) dismisses inductivism for displaying the 'epistemological irrelevance of confirming evidence' (O'Hear, 1980, p. 8). One must remark on the questionable acceptability of importing — unchallenged and decontextualized — a set of theories from other disciplines merely because they hold a surface similarity to views expressed in a different context. Habermas accepts that his theory is inchoate (Habermas, 1979a, pp. 116-7) and in need of refinement (ibid. p. 102).<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless he is resolute that 'homologies' can be found (ibid. p. 104) in:

- the similarity of ontogenetic sequences of basic concepts and logical structures to the evolution of world views (ibid. p. 103);
- the concept of causality (things, events, motivations) (ibid. p. 103);
- the similarity between structures of ego and group identity (ibid. p. 106) where 'collective identity regulates the membership of individuals in the society' (ibid. p. 111);
- the ways in which law and morality regulate the actions of individuals and groups (ibid. p. 116);
- the ways in which rules of communicative action apply to individuals and groups (ibid. p. 116);
- the construction of personal and collective identities which are a 'necessary presupposition for taking on the general communicative roles' (ibid. p. 116).

Habermas finds such homologies to have sufficient power to draw a nexus

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<sup>107</sup> For example he is aware of the dangers of confusing individual consciousness and cultural tradition, ie of the problem of overgeneralization; of the inability of certain ontogenetic stages (the early stages in particular) to mirror the development of structures of species history (Habermas, 1979a, p. 102).

between ontogenetic development and the development of human societies (ibid. pp. 157-8).<sup>108</sup>

This section suggests, then, that, whilst one can detect Habermas's concern to link micro and macro social theory, the enterprise is problematic, for it strives to generate law-like accounts of the development of societies, which, it will be argued in chapter 8, have to be subjected to empirical testing, a form of testing which he castigates in his earlier works. Further, in generating such law-like accounts Habermas risks the accusation of seeking a positivistic conception of society for his own theory whilst proscribing the operation of positivism in others — a contradiction in his work.

The move to communicative action marks a turn in Habermas's concern to construct a grand social theory. In this he has broken free of social theory based on epistemology and engages new constructs and sources of support for his social theory. These new constructs discussed here all feed into a full social theory, which is the subject of the next chapter. This chapter has noted, however, that each of these elements contains flaws. As such his overall theory is necessarily flawed.

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<sup>108</sup> This is not a novel idea, as Coser and Rosenberg (1969) remark: 'the crux of this idea, stated in surprisingly similar terms by Comte and Piaget, was summed up by nineteenth century biologists who said that 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny' (Coser and Rosenberg, 1969, p. 4). It is interesting, if ironical, to note the reference to Comte here, one of the founding figures of that positivist sociology which Habermas is at pains to replace. -

## Chapter VII

### THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

#### 7.1 Introduction

This section outlines Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* thus:

- his perceived improvement on a social theory founded on epistemology (7.2);
- his analyses of the rationalization of society and social evolution and critique of Weber in order to suggest how his own *Theory of Communicative Action* can improve on Weberian analysis (7.3);
- his appeals to interactionism and communicative action as sources of improvement to Weber's account of the rationalization of society (7.4);
- his outline of the context of a theory of communicative action which embraces action and systems theoretical perspectives which necessitates:
  - (a) an outline of interactionist and functionalist sociological perspectives;
  - (b) an analysis of the concepts of lifeworld and system;
  - (c) an indication of how such perspectives and concepts offer an account of rationalization which improves on the *cul-de-sac* of bureaucratization outlined by Weber (7.4);
- a tracing of the *colonization of the lifeworld* by system imperatives, indicating how 'steering mechanisms' of money and power technicize the lifeworld ('un-



couple' lifeworld and system) and reduce the potential of communicative action necessary to recouple lifeworld and system (7.5);

- a critique of the *Theory of Communicative Action* (7.6);
- the development of a social theory which draws on but reworks Weberian and Parsonian accounts in a new paradigm of communicative action (7.7);
- a theory of communicative action which attempts to re-integrate or recouple lifeworld and system, interactionist and functionalist perspectives, social and system imperatives, action theory and systems theory (7.7).

The analysis will establish issues to be addressed in the subsequent chapters on education. The several elements of Habermas's work outlined so far are brought together and developed in his two-volume work — *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987a). They constitute a fully worked out attempt to develop his theory of society from a theory of communicative action (cf. Hohendahl, 1986, p. 62). The works have no single theme; they draw more on mainstream social theory than his earlier volumes.

## 7.2 The Move away from Epistemology

One can detect a move away from the quasi-epistemological justification of social theory seen in his *Knowledge and Human Interests* and towards a communicative justification: 'the communications-theoretical model of speaking and acting subjects is better suited for laying the foundations of social theory than is the epistemological model' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 254). He reinforces this in his 1985b article where he wrote 'I can no longer believe in epistemology as the via

regis' (Habermas, 1985b, p. 78).<sup>109</sup> He accepts that 'methodology and epistemology are no royal road to social theory' (Habermas, 1988, pp. ix - x). Social theory, he argues (1984, 1987a) should look to communicative action for its foundation.

Habermas preserves several elements from the themes already used:

- his concern to rework and revitalise Marxism;
- his concern to cast a theory of society as a theory of communication;
- his concern to rework and revitalise Critical Theory;
- his concern to build on and advance the inheritance of 'grand' social theorists to date;
- his concern to analyse modernity and post-modernity from a sociological stance;
- his concern to maintain a central role for rationalization and progress towards rationality.

These are clearly addressed in his *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987a) in the following sequence:

- (i) a prolegomenon on rationality;
- (ii) an apologia for the significance of argumentation;
- (iii) an exposition of the concepts of worlds of action and lifeworld;
- (iv) a discursus on Weber's account of Occidental rationalization;
- (v) an analysis of the importance of Mead and Durkheim for a theory of

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<sup>109</sup> This was in response to the critiques laid out earlier in this thesis. Habermas (1985a) writes: 'my analysis of 1969 cannot be simply extended today' (Habermas, 1985a, p. 99). —

society as a theory of communicative action;

(vi) an account of societal rationalization as the uncoupling of lifeworld and system;

(vii) an excursus into Parsonian systems theory;

(viii) a development of a Critical Theory of society.

### 7.3 The Rationalization of Society

Habermas begins his *Theory of Communicative Action* by according significance to the role of rationality — defined as ‘a disposition of speaking and acting subjects that is expressed in modes of behaviour for which there are good reasons or grounds’ (Habermas, 1984, p. 22). He argues that social evolution is seen as a move towards a more rational, consensual and rationalized world (discussed later) in which centrality is given to the view that communicative action is the touchstone of social theory:

we can say that actions regulated by norms, expressive self-perservations, and also evaluative expressions, supplement constative speech acts in constituting a communicative practice which, against the background of a lifeworld, is oriented to achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus — and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims. The rationality inherent in this practice is seen in the fact that a communicatively achieved agreement must be based in the end on reasons (ibid., p. 17).

The thrust of the two volume enterprise is towards showing how communicative action, as the integration — or reintegration — of the lifeworld and system and as a form of rationality, breaks the ‘iron cage’ of Weber’s instrumental rationality. What we are witness to in modernity<sup>110</sup> is the progressive rationalization of

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<sup>110</sup> Habermas characterizes modernity as a bundle of processes: the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; the development of forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labour; the centralizing of political power; the formation of national identities; increasing rights to political participation; increasing urbanization; increasing rights to schooling; the secularization

these three worlds, the objective, the social and the subjective, ie society, culture and personality respectively. The process of rationalization is marked by the move from mythical, enchanted worlds to 'demystified' worlds (Habermas, 1984, p. 52), the 'rationalization of religious worldviews' (ibid. p. 186) and the secularization of culture (Habermas, 1987b, p. 1).<sup>111</sup>

Weber distinguishes four types of rationality — purposive-rational (*Zweckrationalität*), value rational (*Wertrationalität*), affectual and traditional (ibid., p. 281). A comparison of Habermas and Weber is presented in Figure 7.1:

Figure 7.1 — Weber and Habermas Compared

WEBER'S CONCERN		HABERMAS'S CONCERN	
Instrumental rational <i>Zweckrationalität</i>	Means-end	Teleological <i>Wertrationalität</i>	Strategic
Value rational and traditional action	Ultimate ends Ingrained habituation	Norm-regulated	Social and cultural interaction
Affectual rational	Feelings and emotions	Dramaturgical	Representation of self to others
		Communicative	Oriented to rational consensus

One can perceive that Habermas has an abiding interest in the problems of instrumentalism which reaches back through the technical interest of his earlier

of values (Habermas, 1984, p. 2).

<sup>111</sup> McCarthy (1990) terms this 'the disintegration of sacred canopies' (McCarthy, 1990, p. vii).

knowledge-constitutive interests to the critique of technicism which typifies the work of the founding figures of Critical Theory — Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. For Habermas, as for the Weberian analysis which he cites, the movement towards purposive-instrumental rationality not only characterizes modern society but is also its undoing. The move from mechanical to organic solidarity which is effected through increasing rationalization necessitates increasingly differentiated organizations. Following Weber's sociology Habermas suggests that this is managed — administered, organized, effected, worked out — by an increasing bureaucratization of society (Habermas, 1987a, p. 306), and an increasing separation and autonomy of the elements of society — culture, law, morality (cf Habermas, 1984, pp. 162 and 243). Like Weber before him, he suggests that the movement towards rationality and the rationalization of the lifeworld brings with it increasing bureaucracy (Habermas, 1984, p. 429). For Habermas the problem of instrumental rationalization is its intrusion into the lifeworld, overriding communicative rationality.<sup>112</sup>

Increasing the degree of bureaucratization reduces the capability of the individual, indeed of the social group, to make meaning of or to control that bureaucracy. It takes on a life of its own, overriding agency with system imperatives. Modern western society for Weber, whilst striving to improve freedoms and rationality, succeeds in achieving just the opposite — a loss of meaning (*Sinnverlust*) and a loss of freedom (*Freiheitsverlust*). Bureaucracy is as constraining as it is enabling (cf White, 1988, p. 144). The process of bureaucratization is as constricting as it is inevitable (Habermas, 1984, p. 248). Habermas cites Weber's analysis to

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<sup>112</sup> See Wellmer's comment that the 'rationalization of the lifeworld was the precondition and the starting point for a process of systemic rationalization and differentiation, which then has become more and more autonomous viv-a-vis the normative constraints embedded in the lifeworld, until in the end the systemic imperatives begin to instrumentalize the lifeworld and threaten to destroy it' (Wellmer, 1985, p. 56).

support his case:

The differentiation of the independent cultural value of spheres that is important for the phase of capitalism's emergence, and the growing autonomy of subsystems of purposive-rational action that is characteristic of the development of capitalist society since the late eighteenth century, are the two trends that Weber combines into an existential-individualistic critique of the present age. The first component is represented in the thesis of a loss of meaning, the second in the thesis of a loss of freedom (ibid. p. 244).

Weber argues that purposive-rational action is becoming institutionalized in the economy and the state (ibid., p. 248). For Weber, value is seen to reside in fidelity to procedures, means rather than ends, rationalization is marked by the rupture of ethics and means (cf. ibid., p. 155). Indeed Habermas sees the development of law as a 'steering medium' (discussed later) as prototypical of legitimation through procedures (Habermas, 1987a, p. 365). Habermas recognizes the fallacy here in the assumption that rationality about ends — moral principles and goals — can be derived from an analysis of the rationality of means:

how can a legal domination whose legality is based on a law that is viewed purely in decisionistic terms (that is, a law that devalues all grounding in principle) be legitimated at all? Weber's answer...runs as follows: through procedure .... It remains unclear how the belief in legality is supposed to summon up the force of legitimation if legality means only conformity with an actually existing order, and if this order ... is not in turn open to practical-moral justification (ibid. p. 265).

Procedure, argues Habermas, can never legitimize itself (ibid. p. 266), hence it only has a partial contribution to make to discussions of values.<sup>113</sup> Habermas rejects 'decisionism' (cf. 1988, p. 52) as being purely purposive-rational action. The overwhelming power of purposive-rational action negates serious debate about value rationality. We are in the grip of purposive rationality. The rationalization of society enters all spheres of life — law, morality, art, culture, society and personal-

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<sup>113</sup> Reason which concerns procedures of rational argument still needs to be defended by procedures of rational argument....once 'truth' has been made a procedural notion, a theory of truth no longer copes with questions of how one generates evidence, what counts as evidence, and in what sense propositions are testable' (Giddens, 1985a, pp. 114 - 6).

ity (Habermas, 1987a, p. 138). He (1984, 1987a) spends much time in considering Weber's analysis, if only to clear the ground for his critique of Weber.

Habermas contends that, in giving such weight to purposive-rational actions, Weber concentrates too heavily on instrumental concepts of modernity (1987a, p. 303) and that this neglects moral-practical, communicative and aesthetic-expressive forms of rationality.<sup>114</sup> Habermas suggests that Weber's 'iron cage' arises because he gives too scant attention to the emancipatory potential of communicative, moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive forms of rationality (Habermas, 1987a, p. 303).<sup>115</sup> Weber also fails to see that capitalist modernization is not the result of societal rationalization generally, but is reached through the 'selective exploitation of culturally available cognitive potentials' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 303).

Weber is unable to account for the potential of society to change itself — it appears unidirectional and uniform (cf. Wellmer, 1985, p. 57). Weber, thus, displays the 'one-sidedness' that he himself condemns in modern society (cf. Habermas, 1987a, p. 397), the supremacy of the technical cognitive interest.<sup>116</sup> To make good the perceived shortcomings of Weber's analysis Habermas turns to the work of Mead (eg Mead, 1934) for his attention to symbolic interactionism and then attempts to incorporate this into a theory which is capable of engaging both action and system — through Durkheim and Parsons (Habermas, 1984, p. 391). What is being undertaken is a move from purposive rationality to communicative ratio-

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<sup>114</sup> Cf McCarthy, 1985, p. 85.

<sup>115</sup> Giddens (1985a) takes Habermas to task for his dismissal of Weber on this score: 'you criticise Weber for confining rationalization primarily to purposive rationality, but you are forced to argue that this type of rationality does dominate modern culture' (Giddens, 1985a, p. 120).

<sup>116</sup> Rasmussen (1990) clarifies Habermas's argument, indicating that Weber was wrong in his analysis of the evolution of Western rationalization because he conceived it instrumentally rather than communicatively (p. 25).

nality, from instrumental or strategic action to communicative action as a way of breaking the 'iron cage' of bureaucratization.

The drive towards rationality as the dynamic of social evolution — an enduring feature of his analysis — now occupies Habermas's discussions of the nature of rationalization in Occidental society (*ibid.* p. 137). In terms of communicative rationality Habermas declares Occidental society to be the most emancipated and therefore to exemplify the developmental pattern of societies which have not yet reached the advanced stage of the West. This, says Habermas (1979a; 1984, p. 132), is because the degree of decentration required for communicative rationality is only to be found in societies at the postconventional level of development. This restates the ontogenesis / phylogensis issue discussed earlier.<sup>117</sup>

Social evolution is marked by the move from mechanical to organic solidarity, ascription to achievement, fixity and acceptance to interrogation of norms and behaviour. The rise of rationalism parallels the rise of decentration. Though Habermas provides scant evidence for his assertions he nevertheless contends that the move towards increasingly rational intersubjective behaviour lies at the core of western rationalization — of modernization. Such rationalization takes place in the three 'worlds' mentioned earlier (6.6): the objective world of facts, the social world of interpersonal relations, and the subjective world of consciousness and mental states (*cf. ibid.*, pp. 52 and 76). Indeed one characteristic of societal evolution is the increasing differentiation of systems, subsystems and 'worlds' of interaction (see also chapter 6.6).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Giddens (1985b) argues here that, according to Habermas, the West alone is marked by the pre-eminence of postconventional cognitive domains. Postconventional forms of institutional order are those which have not only freed themselves from the dominance of traditional codes of conduct, but have become organized according to warranted principles (Giddens, 1985b, p. 133).

<sup>118</sup> Habermas's treatment of the rise of Occidental Rationalism as being played out in the three worlds



## 7.4 Mead and Interactionist Sociology

Habermas's attraction to the work of Mead, Schütz and Husserl lies in the 'elective affinity' between them on the significance accorded to language and communication. Mead developed a theory of socialization in which the identity is formed by 'taking the attitude of the other' (Mead, 1934) — a precursor to Piagetian notions of decentration — and by interacting with 'significant' and 'generalised others' through language.<sup>119</sup> This clearly lays emphasis on the 'social character of perception' (ibid., p. 29) which opens the possibility for breaking free of a philosophy of consciousness which had trapped earlier interactionists and phenomenologists like Schütz and Luckmann.<sup>120</sup> Habermas brings the work of these symbolic interactionists into his own theory of communicative action. The development of moral awareness and rationality — essentially a social act (Habermas, 1987a, p. 48) — comes through the recognition of the generalized, universal, impersonal binding authority of norms. The process of rationalization develops universal, demystified and binding norms in capitalist society:

the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus. This means a freeing of communicative action from sacrally protected normative contexts (ibid., p. 77).

Habermas took up the concept of the *lifeworld* from Schütz and Husserl, and introduced it in his *Legitimation Crisis* of 1976. Put simply, the rationalization of society is achieved by the 'rationalization of the lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 111) (discussed later). The lifeworld can be described as the 'taken-for-granted universe of daily social activity which 'always remains in the background' (Haber-

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of culture, society and personality, is an echo from Parsons (Habermas, 1984, p. 158).

<sup>119</sup> Habermas (1987a) writes: 'identity formation takes place through the medium of linguistic communication' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 58).

<sup>120</sup> Habermas writes: 'in the frame of the philosophy of consciousness, the 'experiencing subject' remains the court of last appeal for analysis' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 130). See also ibid., p. 389 and 1988, p. xiii.

mas, 1987a, p. 131). It is the saturation of communicative action by tradition and established ways of doing things. The lifeworld is a pre-interpreted set of forms of life within which everyday conduct unfolds' (Giddens, 1985a, p. 101). Habermas (1987a) suggests that the lifeworld 'is made up from sedimentations of formerly actually present experiences that are bound to situations. Inversely, every actually present experience is inserted into the flow of lived experiences and into a biography' (ibid., p. 128); the lifeworld is 'the intuitively present, in this sense, familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful' (ibid., p. 131). It is constituted of society, culture and personality (Habermas, 1987a, p. 138; 1987b, pp. 343-6) and the subsystems which are part of these. The lifeworld is not only the repository of received wisdoms, it is also perpetually reconstituted in the *communicative* actions of participants (cf Habermas, 1984, pp. 82 and 279). Habermas (1990a) contends that:

The shared lifeworld offers a storehouse of unquestioned cultural givens from which those participating in communication draw agreed-upon patterns of interpretation for use in their interpretive efforts (Habermas, 1990a, p. 135).

Herein are clear references both to an action frame of reference and to the principles of the structuration of society.<sup>121</sup> The concept of the lifeworld is taken up with reference to the theory of communicative action and to Habermas's earlier notion of the *ideal speech situation*, where he writes that the lifeworld is

the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they reciprocally raise claims that their utterances for the world (objective, social or subjective) and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims (Habermas, 1987a, p. 126).

Communicative action has the potential to act as a medium of and expla-

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<sup>121</sup> Habermas clearly points to the principles of structuration operating in the lifeworld where he writes that 'in drawing upon a cultural tradition they [communicating actors] also continue it' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 125).

nation for social action,<sup>122</sup> it is 'the medium for the reproduction of lifeworlds' (Habermas, 1984, p. 337). It forms part of that lifeworld of which it is a medium of reproduction and production (ibid., p. 335). This is a prime example of the concept of structuration.

Habermas is able to bring to the theory of communicative action his earlier theory of *systematically distorted communication* and use it for an analysis of modernity: 'The communicative potential of reason has been simultaneously developed and distorted in the course of capitalist modernization' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 315). Rationalization is a necessary element of emancipation as it moves to a disenchanted world of achieved consensus through communication<sup>123</sup> and yet it also marks the move towards greater impersonal controls placed on spheres of human action — rationalization of society risks rationalization of the lifeworld: 'the lifeworld is gradually reduced to a satellite of the system' (Ingram, 1987, p. 127). This process is begun through the 'structural differentiation of the lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 145 - 6). Structural differentiation of the lifeworld is achieved through the differentiation of society, personality and culture thus:

(i) with regard to society, through the uncoupling of institutional views from world views (discussed later — the uncoupling of system and lifeworld); 'principles of legal order and of morality are established which are less and less tailored to concrete forms of life' (ibid., p. 146);

(ii) with regard to personality, through the extension of 'the scope of contingency for establishing interpersonal relationships' (ibid., p. 146); 'the objects in

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<sup>122</sup> 'The concept of communicative action not only provides us with a point of reference for analyzing the contributions made by culture, society, and personality to the formation of action orientations; this model also enables us to get clear about how culture, society, and personality hang together as components of a symbolically structured lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 222).

<sup>123</sup> The 'linguistification of the sacred' (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 77 - 111).

connection with which formal competencies can be exercised become increasingly variable' (ibid., p. 146).

(iii) with regard to culture, through its increasing dependence on individuals' 'readiness to criticize [traditions] and their ability to innovate' (ibid., p. 146).

The increase in differentiation and opportunity for individualization occurs at the cost of separating form and content, rationalization of choice uncouples principles of procedure from content.<sup>124</sup> The process of rationalization of the lifeworld which started out as the 'linguistification of the sacred' now turns back on itself as it brings increasing depersonalization, alienation, anomie and unfreedom. This is effected (a) by the operation of two 'steering mechanisms' outlined by Habermas (and Parsons before him) — money and power (Habermas, 1984, p. 342), and (b) by the 'uncoupling of system and lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 153 - 197). The task of communicative action is to reduce the intrusion of steering media into the lifeworld and to recouple lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1987a).

## 7.5 The Colonization of the Lifeworld

The steering mechanisms of money and power in rationalized societies override the role of language as the 'mechanism for coordinating action' (Habermas, 1984, p. 342), the effect of which is to 'technicize the lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 263) and to sacrifice consensus formation to purposive-rational instrumentalism. Any attempt to recouple lifeworld and system will involve an increase in communicative

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<sup>124</sup> Habermas argues that this is evidenced in: (i) increasing specialization and professionalization of child-rearing practices, cultural transmission and social integration; (ii) increasing systematization, professionalization and specialisation of the cultural organization of science, law and art. This echoes White's (1988) view that 'leisure, family life, sexual relationships and even one's sense of self and development as a human being, increasingly become targets of commodification' (White, 1988, p. 115).

action rather than the strategic action of the technical interest.<sup>125</sup>

Habermas suggests that the role of money as 'a special exchange mechanism' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 171) is to separate the operation of society from the normative base of that society, an echo of the separation of fact and value which so concerned his early work. Power, in its turn, could well determine normative goals and individual responses, guaranteeing a 'certain automatic quality to the continuation of interactions' (ibid., p. 268). Both money and power are 'normatively anchored in the lifeworld' (ibid. p. 270), the former in the sphere of the organization of law such as property and contract — the hierarchical organization of public office — and the latter in the sphere of public-legal organization of offices — legitimation (ibid., p. 270). As such they could have the potential to exert greater force on society — be it in systems or lifeworlds — than the role of communicative action.<sup>126</sup> The recovery of the power of participants to appropriate their own existential futures, collectively realized, is thus a function of the relative power of communicative action over the alienation and reification brought about by money and power.<sup>127</sup>

Habermas argues that the evolution of society also is marked by the uncoupling of the system and the lifeworld and the overcoming of communicative action in the lifeworld by steering mechanisms and strategic action in a system which

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<sup>125</sup> Habermas suggests that steering mechanisms have four elements — structural features, qualitative properties, structures of claim and redemption, and system-building effects (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 264 - 266. and Habermas, 1979b, pp. 38-9) which, by dint of their comprehensiveness, accord them massive power in directing — steering — social evolution and social formations.

<sup>126</sup> 'Rationalization of the life-world makes it possible to convert societal integration over to language-independent steering media and thus to separate off formally organized domains of action. As objectified realities, the latter can then work back upon contexts of communicative action and set their own imperatives against the marginalized life world' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 318).

<sup>127</sup> Habermas also defines law as a steering medium though, as Van der Burg (1990) points out, Habermas adopts an ambivalent position on the law — in the first volume of *Theory of Communicative Action* he is very positive about it; in the second volume he is much more negative (Van der Burg, 1990, p. 108).

is becoming increasingly bureaucratized. This can be put into an eight-stage sequence which derives from Habermas (1987a, pp. 153 - 197). This has strong sympathies with Weberian analysis, where the process of bureaucratization

develops the more perfectly, the more dehumanized, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business, love, hatred, and all personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation (Weber, 1968, p. 975).

The eight stage sequence can be stated thus:

*Stage One:* The lifeworld is relegated to a subsystem which takes its place alongside other subsystems (eg behaviour), all of which are subordinated to the system-integrating imperatives of bureaucratization — rationalization: ‘the more complex social systems become, the more provincial lifeworlds become’ (Habermas, 1987a, p. 177).

*Stage Two:* The operation of system imperatives render hermeneutic understanding of the system unmanageable as the system becomes too ‘hypercomplex’ an environment to comprehend or control totally (ibid., p. 225); hermeneutic understanding is replaced by differentiated technical understanding — values and norms are replaced by the norms of the organization, system or subsystem.

*Stage Three:* Increasing differentiation is seen through increasing complexity of the system and increasing rationalization of the lifeworld; there is a detachment of system mechanisms and system integration from social structures and social integration — they become uncoupled.<sup>128</sup>

*Stage Four:* The system becomes depersonalized through the rise of objec-

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<sup>128</sup> Habermas writes that ‘[to] the extent, then, that the structures of the lifeworld get differentiated, the mechanisms of systemic and social integration [coordination of action orientations] also get separated from each other’ (ibid., p. 164). ‘Action oriented to mutual understanding gains more and more independence from normative contexts’ (Habermas, 1987a, p. 155).

tive 'steering media' — money, power, law, decentred morality — and the loss of communicative rationality.<sup>129</sup>

*Stage Five:* The lifeworld, in its movement towards rationalization, becomes institutionalized, subject to systematization and bureaucratization.

*Stage Six:* Language becomes overloaded and loses its ability to create freedoms (ie its potential for communicative action) and takes on the form of a 'delinguistified' medium, ie falls into the service of an objective steering medium.

*Stage Seven:* Steering mechanisms which are strong in the system take over the operation of the lifeworld — money, power, strategic communication, law, decentred morality — rendering the operation of the lifeworld subject to the same objectifying processes as the system (characterised by value-free technicism).<sup>130</sup>

*Stage Eight:* The lifeworld becomes a subsystem of purposive-rational action. The lifeworld becomes technicized and subordinated to the system.<sup>131</sup>

Habermas sets the scene of rationalization well, painting a picture of an over-administered world that, in turn, becomes driven by the imperatives of that over-administration. Habermas argues that in the agency / structure tension of social theory (cf Layder, 1994) the power of structural elements reduces the communicative potential of agents. The significance of the sequence is great, for Habermas

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<sup>129</sup> Habermas writes that 'modern societies attain a level of system differentiation at which increasingly autonomous organizations are connected with one another via delinguistified media of communication: these systemic mechanisms — for example, money — steer a social intercourse that has been largely disconnected from norms and values' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 154).

<sup>130</sup> Habermas writes: 'the 'colonization' of the lifeworld takes place as steering mechanisms from the system colonize the lifeworld' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 173).

<sup>131</sup> Habermas comments that 'the transfer of action over to steering media appears from the lifeworld perspective both as reducing the costs and risks of communication and as conditioning decisions in expanded spheres of contingency — and thus, in this sense, as a *technicizing of the lifeworld*' (ibid., p. 183).

argues that each stage of the process can be reversed or ameliorated by communicative action.

## 7.6 A Critique of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

The *Theory of Communicative Action* as set out above is open to serious criticism:

- its use of the concepts of the lifeworld and system;
- its retreat into rationalism and intellectualism;
- Habermas's assumption of his own rectitude;
- the shift from a paradigm of production to a paradigm of communication.

These points are discussed below.

### 7.6.1 A Critique of Habermas's Lifeworld and System

Dallmayr (1984) raises questions against Habermas's interpretation and usage of the concept of the 'lifeworld' outlined earlier, suggesting that there are problems with the status of the lifeworld. He wonders whether the lifeworld is subjectivity writ large — the 'first person plural' (Dallmayr, 1984, p. 243) — in which case it fails to embrace macro-structural societal factors and becomes a reassertion of interactionism. Habermas's case for considering the lifeworld is undermined further because he is unclear on whether the lifeworld pre-exists (ie is a background context) or whether it is perpetually constructed and reconstructed in interaction.

Habermas argues that the lifeworld is not susceptible to sociological enquiry,<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The lifeworld 'cannot be subjected to empirical analysis' (Habermas, 1991, p. 245).



it is 'at no one's disposal' (Habermas, 1984, pp 337 and 449). However, Habermas then proceeds to objectify the lifeworld — into the domains of culture, society and personality. These three categories become susceptible to sociological enquiry; culture becomes investigated from the perspectives of the sociology of knowledge, society from the perspectives of institutional analysis, and personality from the perspectives of social psychology.<sup>133</sup> The problem with such an objectification of the lifeworld is that it is difficult to see how it differs from the 'systems' and 'worlds' to which it had been contrasted. It is no longer a pole in the system *versus* lifeworld polarity.<sup>134</sup>

Baxter also argues that Habermas's separation of system and lifeworld, wherein strategic action is the province of the system and communicative action is the province of the lifeworld, is unclear and untenable:

In Habermas's account of formal organizations [systems] there is a fundamental tension: on one hand, he must acknowledge that such organizations cannot function without communicative action; on the other hand, he wants both to define the lifeworld as the realm of communicative action and to distinguish sharply between system and lifeworld (Baxter, 1987, p. 64).

This breaks down because lifeworld and system inform each other:

nor can an organization be indifferent to the personal qualifications and skills that its members bring with them. To say that organizations are 'uncoupled' from 'personality structures', überhaupt, then, seems mistaken (ibid., p. 70).

Baxter is suggesting that system and lifeworld are necessarily coupled because both show concern for 'norms, values and personal motivation' (ibid., p. 72); if the concept of the lifeworld, as Baxter suggests, is tied to an action-theoretical perspective then the spheres of that action will have to include formal organiza-

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<sup>133</sup> See Dallmayr (1984, pp. 244 -5) and Habermas (1987a).

<sup>134</sup> Baxter (1987) argues that 'the distinction between system and lifeworld leads to a misconception of the nature of the economic and political/ administrative systems and...ultimately the distinction depends on equivocation in the concept of the lifeworld' (Baxter, 1987, p. 40). -

tions (ibid., p. 74).<sup>135</sup> Further, Berger (1991) comments that Habermas's Critical Theory

analyses lifeworld-system interferences only in *one* direction and does not take note of the equally significant expansion of lifeworld principles into subsystems of purposive-rational action (Berger, 1991, p. 178).

McCarthy (1991) adds to this the view that 'organizations...can be viewed in action-theoretic terms as well as in system-theoretic terms' (p. 130), a feature which Habermas acknowledges (1991):

It is obvious that commercial enterprises and government offices, indeed economic and political contexts as a whole make use of communicative action that is embedded in a normative framework (Habermas, 1991, p. 257).

Such an acknowledgement undermines his own case for the separation of lifeworld and system. Schnädelbach (1991) argues that Habermas's concept of the lifeworld rests on uncertain grounds:<sup>136</sup>

I do not see how it is supposed to be possible to reinterpret in a formal-pragmatic sense this philosophically-loaded term which originated in phenomenology, and then to insert it into social theory in such a manner as to enable me to speak of the 'colonization of the lifeworld'.... in the thought of Husserl and Schütz 'lifeworld' is a concept taken from epistemology developed in the context of a transcendental philosophy or phenomenology (Schnädelbach, 1991, p. 17).

Not only is Habermas taking a concept from epistemology — on which he had turned his back for use in social theory — but he is taking the term out of one context and putting it into another — a repeat of the practice observed earlier in relation to Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg and Austin.

Rasmussen (1990) adds to this concern the view that in fact Habermas subordinates the lifeworld to the system (p. 49), thereby adopting the very functionalism for which he critiques systems-theoretical social theory. Roderick (1986)

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<sup>135</sup> See also Secl. 1991. p. 38.

<sup>136</sup> Cf Alexander's (1991) comments that Habermas's 'definition of the lifeworld is distressingly vague' (p. 59).

argues that Habermas adopts too harmonious and consensual a view of system, underrating the degree of internal struggles which take place between participants in the system (p. 165).

The validity of Habermas's use of the concept of the lifeworld in an advocacy of rationalization as reasoned enquiry when he has stated that this concept is itself not susceptible to enquiry is open to enquiry. If the lifeworld is not susceptible to enquiry<sup>137</sup> then this violates Habermas's views of the value of criticizable validity claims as a major principle of communicative action. Either it must subject itself to rational enquiry or it must cease to be part of a theory of rational enquiry. If indeed the lifeworld does succumb to rational enquiry and the objectification to which Habermas in fact subjects it then 'the colonization of the lifeworld is not simply a deplorable but avoidable hazard, but a necessary consequence of his own premises and concept of rationalization' (Dallmayr, 1994, p. 248).<sup>138</sup>

If mythical, archaic societies do not separate system from lifeworld (as Habermas himself agrees) then, Dallmayr asserts, how can we justify the conceptual separation of lifeworld and system as part of a social theory which embraces the mythical world, it is palpably untenable (Dallmayr, 1984, p. 246).

Further, Alexander (1985) questions whether Habermas is correct to confine the 'oppressive and dangerous parts of modern society...[to] rationalized, material systems whereas the "good parts" are associated with the personal intimacy of

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<sup>137</sup> Habermas (1984) argues that the lifeworld has a 'certainty, background character, [impossible] of being gone behind' (Habermas, 1984, p. 71), and that 'it is the unquestioned ground of everything given in my experience and the unquestionable frame in which all the problems I have to deal with are located' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 131).

<sup>138</sup> 'Once modernization is seen as progressive rationalization of background assumptions through discursive thematization, the lifeworld is bound to be not only weakened but steadily eclipsed and finally absorbed by world concepts. Consistently pursued, this process would render nugatory a central pillar of the entire study, thus depriving communicative action of its social moorings,' (Dallmayr, 1984, p. 245).

moral life' (Alexander, 1985, p. 412). He argues that the problems of modern society have arisen 'as much from the lifeworlds of intimate relations — from the authoritarian family, religious sect and peer groups — as they have from administrative and economic systems' (ibid., pp. 412 - 3).

In summary, if the concept of the lifeworld is *not* available for rational enquiry then it can be criticized, and if it *is* available for rational enquiry then it can be criticized for being ultimately unnecessary. The use of the concept of the lifeworld is confused and replete with internal contradictions.

### 7.6.2 Habermas's Assumption of the Rectitude of His Own Theory

Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* is presented as the *only* theory of communicative action. This, of course, can be seen positively as the first theory of its kind, thereby lacking any rivals. Habermas judges his own social theory to be superior to those specific theories of Weber, Parsons and Mead by dint of including a communicative element, which they either did not attempt to address (eg in the cases of Weber and Parsons) or which they did not link to macro-social theory (in the case of Mead). To critique other theories for something that they did not attempt to do in the first place is perhaps unfair,<sup>139</sup> even though it may have the effect of rendering his theory an *improvement* on theirs and thereby may avoid the trap of relativism.

One has to comment on the uncharacteristic self-assurance of Habermas<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> '[W]hat we expect a progressive theory change to do is to produce a successor theory which (a) retains all the nondiscredited, lawlike statements associated with the earlier theory, (b) drops out those pseudo-laws which have already been refuted, and (c) introduces some new law-like regularities not previously encompassed within the predecessor theory' (Laudan, 1990, p. 7) — even though there is no iron-clad guarantee of the truth of the new theory, ie that it is still corrigible.

<sup>140</sup> Habermas has always been willing to rework his views in light of criticism (eg Habermas, 1982; 1985b; 1990a; 1990b; 1991).

in titling his work *The Theory of Communicative Action*.<sup>141</sup> We are not given any grounds for supposing that his theory of communicative action is any better or worse than any one else's because no other theories of communicative action are developed or presented in his work. Habermas is arguing that the elegance of Critical Theory is that there is no privileged access to truth (eg Habermas, 1974a, p. 40), however he then goes on to suggest that communicative action has a privileged position.

Moreover, one has to question the need to base a critical theory, ie a theory concerning equality, freedom and social justice, on communication theory at all. It might be equally profitable to base a critical theory on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Habermas's theory displays not only foundationalism but commits the genetic fallacy of assuming that the origins or foundations of a theory will suffice to bring about empowerment and emancipation — a political, practical enterprise. That is an empirical, not a theoretical, matter.

Heller (1982) questions the adequacy of a theory of society recast as a theory of communicative action. She argues that there are more ways to reconstruct historical materialism than in the mould of domination-free communication, eg through Marxist or Weberian analysis, a view echoed by Roderick (1986). Heller (1982) is both concerned at the form and the audience of Habermas's theory. She echoes the comment made earlier that Habermas has moved away from his Marxist roots, that the shift from the paradigm of production to the paradigm of communication implies the replacement of the theory's addressee (p. 33), ie from the proletariat to the whole of society. This creates new problems, indeed in the

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<sup>141</sup> There are real problems of translation here, for Habermas's original work is entitled *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* — ie the definite article is omitted.

same volume of essays Held asks ‘to whom is critical theory addressed? How, in any concrete situation, can critical theory be applied?’ (Held, 1982, p. 295). In moving away from a classical Marxian position wherein critique emancipates, and is the property of the working class, Habermas has estranged his theory from its possible target group. He has lost the sharp edge of social and ideology critique which characterised his earlier work<sup>142</sup> and has directed attention away from economic concerns to sociocultural spheres.<sup>143</sup> Habermas reaffirms the need for theory to expose dogma and he argues that classical Marxism needs to be reworked to give it relevance to the present day — that it should adopt a broader base. Habermas rejects the charge of deserting Marxism:

the paradigm-shift from purposive activity to communicative action does not mean, however, that I am wishing or bound to abandon the material reproduction of the life-world as the privileged point of reference for analysis (Habermas, 1985a, p. 96).

Though Habermas adheres to his own theory, nevertheless it can be seen that there are significant problems with his theory.

## 7.7 Summary of the Previous Chapters

This section summarises implications of Habermasian critical social theory at the levels of (a) *social theory construction* (7.7.1), (b) *methodology* of the social sciences (7.7.2), (c) *social praxis* and *substantive areas* of interest and focus (7.7.3). It draws together the strands of argument developed through the study so far.

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<sup>142</sup> This parallels Kunneman’s (1990) concern that Habermas’s early critique of science and technology has been lost in his later works and that ‘the incorporation of science and technology in the dynamics of capitalism’ (Kunneman, 1990, p. 117) needs greater attention, a feature which Habermas accepts without reservation (Habermas, 1990b, p. 132).

<sup>143</sup> As an account of the workings of advanced capitalism Held (1982) criticises Habermas for his neglect of international capitalism — increasingly important in an age in which, ironically perhaps for communication theory, communication networks have increased.

### 7.7.1 Social Theory Construction

At level (a) — of social theory — this thesis has suggested that a critical social theory recognizes that:

- a theory of modernity uses but transforms Weberian, Meadean, Marxian and Parsonian perspectives (eg Habermas, 1984, 1987a);
- it must draw on the dialectic between action and systems approaches — lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1987a);
- Weberian, Durkheimian and Meadean perspectives can yield accounts of 'pathologies of modernity' (ibid., p. 378);
- simple notions of base and superstructure have to be broadened for an analysis of contemporary society (Habermas, 1985a, p. 96);
- functionalism and action theory have to combine to explain complex and hypercomplex social systems (Habermas, 1987a);
- steering mechanisms from the system enter the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987a);
- rationalization and bureaucratization are inevitable processes of the movement towards modernity (Habermas, 1984);
- the move towards disenchantment is accompanied by increased bureaucratization and rationalization (Habermas, 1984, 1987a);
- communicative action can replace strategic action in indicating a way out of the negative effects of bureaucratization and the recoupling of lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1984, 1987a);

- ideology critique will have to operate on a wide variety of fronts simultaneously (Habermas, 1970a, 1972, 1974a, 1976a);
- advanced capitalism is subject to various forms of crisis, eg, legitimation, motivation, rationality (Habermas, 1976a);
- social theory is best cast as a theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984, 1987a).

### 7.7.2 Methodology of the Social Sciences

At level (b) — of methodology of the social sciences — a Habermasian critical methodology of the social sciences argues for methodological pluralism (Habermas, 1988; Strain, 1984) and recognizes that:

- social theory is deformed by recourse solely to epistemology or to methodology, the ‘logic of social enquiry can fruitfully be pursued only in connection with substantive questions’ (Habermas, 1985a, p. 78; 1988, p. x);
- no single methodology can be preordained, hence there are roles for normative-analytic, empirical-analytic, phenomenological, linguistic, hermeneutic and critical approaches (Habermas, 1984, 1987a, 1988);
- hermeneutic approaches fit well with a theory of communicative action (*Verstehen* methodologies) (Habermas, 1987a);
- value is accorded to biographical and autobiographical methodologies (1987a, 1987b, 1988);
- there is value in reconstructive methodologies and reconstructed accounts (Habermas, 1974a, 1979a, 1984);



- human and natural sciences are conceptually distinct and this must be recognised in working in these sciences (Habermas, 1988);
- positivism might contaminate sociological enquiry (Habermas, 1972, 1974a, 1988);
- whilst ethnomethodological and interactionist accounts serve a theory of communicative action they must be supplemented by recognition of macro-structural processes of society (Habermas, 1984, 1987a);
- reflexive accounts should take stock of their own potential to be criticized for relativism (Habermas, 1987a);
- interpretations of social evolution must identify the validity claims which they raise (Habermas, 1979a, 1984, 1987a).

### 7.7.3 Social Praxis

At level (c) — of substantive social praxis — a critical social praxis must:

- preserve an ideology critique which exposes the operation of the suppression of generalizable interests and questions justice and legitimacy (Habermas, 1976a, 1984, 1987a);
- expose situations in which communicative action is blocked by systemic steering mechanisms eg power, money, bureaucracy and mass media (Habermas, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1984, 1987a);
- identify the operation of rationalization as the *colonization of the lifeworld* in which communicative, aesthetic-expressive, moral-practical and affective rationality should play their part (Habermas, 1987a);

- take full account of the emancipatory potential of communicative action oriented to mutual understanding (Habermas, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1979a, 1984, 1987a);
- move towards the re-integration of system and lifeworld in participating subjects (Habermas, 1987a);
- operate a participatory democracy (cf. Habermas, 1987a, p. 292);
- accept the importance of engagement (Habermas, 1971a, 1987a, 1987b);
- undertake empirical analysis of phenomena to ascertain how they are freedom guaranteeing or freedom constraining (Habermas, 1987a, p. 364);
- accept that conflicts are no longer confined to the sphere of material reproduction (cf. *ibid.*, p. 392), but occur in domains of culture, socialization and social integration, they 'have to do with the quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights' (*ibid.*, p. 392);
- identify the mechanisms which reduce emancipation (Habermas, 1984);
- expose scientific explanations of accounts (Habermas, 1971a, 1972, 1974a);
- identify factors — both systemic and intersubjective — which frustrate communicative action (Habermas, 1979a, 1984, 1987a);
- identify and judge the validity claims raised or redeemed in communicative action (Habermas, 1979a, 1984);
- identify factors — both systemic and intersubjective — which frustrate rational consensus and emancipation, where truth is separated from and replaced by power (Habermas, 1976a, 1979a, 1984);

- identify mechanisms which promote alienation, anomie, repression and senses of losses of freedom and meaning (Habermas, 1984);
- identify instances where judgements of value are replaced by decisionism (Habermas, 1984, 1987a);
- identify and critique the legitimation claims and crises which operate in intersubjective actions (Habermas, 1976a);
- identify and judge the extent of instrumentalism operating in situations — strategic versus communicative actions, perlocutions versus illocutions (Habermas, 1971a, 1979b, 1982, 1987a);
- yield an account of the interests which are operating in a given situation (Habermas, 1971a, 1972, 1974a);
- expose hegemonic forces and movements which systematically distort communication (Habermas, 1976a, 1984);
- map out the territory of postconventional moralities in capitalist and non-capitalist societies (1987a, 1987b);
- identify factors which prevent the emergence of societal emancipation through postconventional moralities (Habermas, 1987a);
- delineate modes of behaviour which promote or subvert the development of communicative competence in individuals and groups (Habermas, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1979b, 1984, 1987a);
- suggest ways in which communication is systematically distorted (Habermas, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1970d, 1979b, 1987a);

- disclose the emancipatory potential of situations at various tiers — international, national, regional, local, institutional, interpersonal, intrapersonal (Habermas, 1987a).

Clearly the issues in levels (a), (b) and (c) above have been set out at a high level of generality; this is indicative of fidelity to the level of analysis that Habermas offers. The tasks of later chapters are to contextualize these factors and to draw them to a more precise level of specificity. In some spheres Habermas addresses substantive issues raised in (c) above and he has given some more slightly detailed references to specifics. For example he sees conflicts of interests no longer confined to more traditional domains of forces and relations of production but played out in a wide range of ‘movements’ (Habermas, 1987a, p. 393) — eg anti-nuclear, environmental, peace, youth and alternative life styles, recognition for minority groups, school protests, women’s movements and resistance to neo-fascism in Germany (Habermas, 1993), seeing movements and conflicts as an attempt to resist the *colonization of the lifeworld*. He gives examples of this in the ‘Green’ movement, the movement against military potentials, nuclear plants, atomic waste and genetic engineering (Habermas, 1987a, pp. 392 - 395). Thus he offers a Critical Theory of society which bursts through the confines of Marxian analysis but which, he claims (Habermas, 1984, 1987a), is no less critical; it is more encompassing in its conceptual apparatus.

One can detect through the chronology of Habermas’s work a progressive ‘clearing of the ground’ to allow a reconstructed social theory to be developed. An outline of this takes the following approximate sequence (a) - (i):<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Clearly his ideas do not emerge as clearly as this sequence indicates, as is evidenced from the chronology of his articles, nor is this outline anything but a paring to essentials a highly complex and recursive development.

(a) he clarifies his methodological position through an analysis of the logic of the social sciences (1988 — though the original manuscript was published in 1967), social theory cannot be approached through methodology alone;

(b) he opens the substantive debate on the grip of society by scientism and ideology (1971a) — echoing the early writers of the Frankfurt School;

(c) he attempts to root social theory in epistemology (1972), an approach which he later discards;

(d) he develops his links between social theory and praxis through psychoanalysis and rational reconstruction (1972; 1974a);

(e) he undertakes an analysis of advanced capitalism which is experiencing a plethora of crises (1976a);

(f) he articulates the means of reconstructing social theory as a theory of communication (1979a);

(g) he reconstructs social theory and analysis of advanced capitalism as a theory of communicative action (1984; 1987a);

(h) he restores his interest in Critical Theory, now reworked (1987a);

(i) he outlines his analysis of modernity and post-modernity (1987b).

Though some of the earlier material is jettisoned as his work develops, what is striking is that key elements of his earlier work are incorporated significantly into his later work. Throughout this movement this thesis has shown that he is guided by several *leitmotifs* — eg ideology critique, emancipation, engagement, reflection, rational reconstruction, the move to grand theory, and communication

as an underpinning of social theory. Having completed an overview of his *Theory of Communicative Action*, chapter eight provides a critique of this theory and then provides an overall, global critique of his work.

## Chapter VIII

### A CRITIQUE OF HABERMAS'S THEORY

#### 8.1 Introduction

The analysis so far has demonstrated that there are significant weaknesses at every stage of Habermas's argument, and that therefore the status of his views is questionable. The question to be posed, then, is whether Habermas's overall theories are greater than the sum of their flawed parts, (a requirement indicated by Durkheim, 1938, p. 102) whether synergy can survive a substantial attack on component elements of a theory.<sup>145</sup>

The argument in this chapter addresses this, suggesting:

- that Habermas's theory of communicative action belongs to 'grand theory' in sociology but that this diminishes its potential to be a Critical Theory (8.2);
- that Habermas's theory attempts to avoid the charge of relativism but that, nevertheless, this is only partially successful, and his work is undermined by the charge of relativism (8.3);
- that, despite its flawed nature, Habermas's theory might have heuristic value and that it is possible to establish criteria to test his theory (8.4).

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<sup>145</sup> Key criticisms of Habermas are found in Heller (1982), Held (1980; 1982), Geuss (1981), Keat (1981), Ottmann (1982), Thompson (1982), Lukes (1982), Giddens (1982), White (1983), Popper (1984), Lazarsfeld (1984), Heydebrand and Burris (1984), Roderick (1986), Honneth and Joas (1991). Habermas addresses some of these criticisms in his works of 1982, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987a, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1991.

It will be argued here that, in many respects, Habermas's work contains some significant weaknesses at the level of fulfilling the requirements of a theory in general. This requires an explication of the nature and purpose of theory. We need to know in what sense(s) Habermas's writings constitute a theory. The problems with his views include:

(a) questions about the *detail* of his importation and use of a diversity of sources for his own purposes — which are often different from their initiators' and their original contexts;<sup>146</sup>

(b) questions about his own theory, its construction, formulation, style, audience, purpose and effects.

What marks out *The Theory of Communicative Action* is Habermas's lack of reflexivity, he does not subject his theory to the critical scrutiny that he advocates — and indeed undertakes — for other social theorists.<sup>147</sup> It will be argued that to evaluate Habermas's theory will require empirical illumination, testing or investigation of rival theories of communicative action. Communicative action, essentially a practical activity, requires an empirical perspective. Habermas is silent on the nature, methodologies or elements of other rival theories.

## 8.2 Three Types of Theory

Different types of theory define different types of 'proof'. The following sections characterize three distinct types of theory — empirical theory (including

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<sup>146</sup> For example psychoanalysis, speech act theory, ontogenesis and phylogenesis.

<sup>147</sup> Heller (1982) contends that 'if we accept the plurality of ways of life, we have to accept the plurality of theories as well' (Heller, 1982, p. 31). Holub (1991) indicates Habermas's openness to debate and discussion on several areas of his work, eg systems theory, hermeneutics, the student movement, post-modernity, the public sphere, and with many writers, eg Popper, Gadamer, Luhmann, Lyotard, though less so on communicative action.



reconstructive theory — see chapter 6.2 and 6.3), ‘grand’ theory and Critical Theory. An empirical theory seeks empirical ‘proof’, a ‘grand’ theory requires logical coherence and explanation as ‘proof’ (Layder, 1994, p. 44), a Critical Theory — as described in chapter 2 — can be judged by the extent to which it promotes enlightenment, equality, freedom, democracy and emancipation. It will be argued that Habermas’s work requires verification as an empirical theory, even though it falls into the category of ‘grand’ theory, and that several forms of verification are required if Habermas’s views are to meet the criteria for a Critical Theory.

### 8.2.1 Empirical Theory

An empirical theory, the clear sphere of the natural sciences, ‘gathers together all the isolated pieces of empirical data into a coherent conceptual framework of wider applicability’ (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p. 15), it is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena (Kerlinger, 1970). To this Mouly (1978), Siegel (1987), Rasmussen (1990) and Laudan (1990) suggest that there are several characteristics of a ‘sound’ empirical theory:

- it should permit deductions and generate laws that can be tested empirically;
- it should have great explanatory, predictive and generalizable potential;
- it should be able to respond to observed anomalies;
- it should be parsimonious.

Lakatos (1970) adds to this the notion that a theory should spawn a research enterprise, echoing Siegel’s (1987) comment that one of the characteristics of an

effective theory is its fertility (p. 110), a fact which Habermas acknowledges.<sup>148</sup> Merton (1967) outlines several elements of a sociological theory, suggesting (p. 140) that it should possess methodology, general sociological orientations, analysis of sociological concepts, *post factum* sociological interpretations, and empirical generalizations. Clearly Habermas can be seen to be fulfilling all of these criteria (his empirical generalizations derive from his view of reconstructive science). One can add to this Ryan's (1970) view of a theory in the social sciences as having to be empirically demonstrable and Popper's (1968) view of a scientific theory which takes 'the form of a universal law applying to a particular type of phenomenon' (O'Hear, 1980, p. 23). Such a law should demonstrate precision and universality, it should set the criteria for its own falsification (Popper, 1968, p. 92) and possess explanatory and predictive power:

by the 'best' theory I mean the one of the competing and surviving theories which has the greatest explanatory power, content and simplicity and is the least ad hoc. It will also be the best testable theory (Popper, 1968, p. 419).

The notions of 'testability' and predictiveness are taken from the hypothetico-deductive paradigm of natural science and the empirical basis of truth of the logical positivists. If one accepts an alternative paradigm which is more hermeneutic and interpretive, then the notion of testability in 'severe tests' (Popper, 1969) need not stand; data are collected and evaluated rather than hypotheses confirmed or refuted. Nonetheless this does not negate the need for a theory to set the empirical criteria for its own meaning, verification or refutation or indeed to identify the types of evidence which would enable it to be considered tenable. A sound empirical theory, then, will:

(i) be operationalizable precisely;

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<sup>148</sup> Habermas (1987a, chapter 1; 1987b, p. 11). See also White (1988, pp. 4 - 5).

- (ii) state the grounds for its own empirical verification or falsification;
- (iii) clarify its methodologies (eg hypothetico-deductive, inductive, hermeneutic);
- (iv) clarify the precise terms in which it seeks to explain, predict and generalize about empirical phenomena;
- (v) clarify the conceptual framework and the paradigm in which it works;
- (vi) demonstrate internal coherence;
- (vii) be a spur to empirical research.

Points (iii), (iv) (v) and (vi) are not the exclusive preserve of empirical theory, they can fit equally well into non-empirical theory. Habermas provides little guidance on elements (i) and (ii), his methodology in (iii) — self-reflection — has been shown to be flawed, whilst (iv) - (vii) are contained in his hermetically sealed theory of communicative action, wherein he sets out his theory and then selects the evidence for his theory; the *explanandum* of his theory is part of a watertight whole, embodying a circularity of argument:<sup>149</sup>

[I]f someone challenges our hypothesis and asks us to put it to the test, she will not be impressed if we rehearse the very information which served as the initial base for generating the hypothesis to begin with....for a test, it must be drawn from samples different from those used to devise the hypothesis (Laudan, 1990 p. 62).

Laudan is arguing for the need to test Habermas's theory in contexts which were different from those which gave rise to the theory, ie to move beyond corroboration and induction. Habermas's theory, then, does not fit completely into

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<sup>149</sup> 'Theories are generally not tested by those phenomena which they were expressly invented to explain' (Laudan, 1990, p. 24). There is an interesting irony in that Habermas was aware of the dangers of circularity in positivism (Holub, 1991, p. 42) — arguing that positivism relies on criteria for experimentation yet criteria for experimentation derive from experimentation themselves — yet appears to fall into the trap of circularity himself.

the mould of empirical theory but, with its commitment to practical outcomes, requires empirical testing.

### 8.2.2 Grand Theory

Theories can be formal, conceptual, speculative and non-empirical — the ‘grand’ theory — defining areas of study, clarifying and refining their conceptual frameworks and creatively enlarging the way we consider, in the terms of this study, human and group behaviour and organization (cf Layder, 1994, pp. 28-30, 43-5). Such a theory

consists of elaborating basic ontological and epistemological postulates which serve, one way or another, to define an area of study or domain of enquiry....Empirical material is often used for illustration rather than systematically grounding the theory in any detailed work (Hughes, 1976, pp. 43-4).

Clearly Habermas’s theory is of this type. His appeal to the empirical work of Piaget and Kohlberg exemplifies Hughes’s (1976) view of the use of empirical data in grand theory. Theories of this nature are often free from empirical reference, echoing Horkheimer’s (1972a) view that ‘constructive thinking, then, plays a more important role than empirical verification in this [critical] theory as a whole’ (Horkheimer, 1972a, p. 221). Grand theories have been criticized for their aridity and inability to stand empirical scrutiny (Merton, 1949; Wright Mills, 1959; Cohen, 1968; Layder, 1994). Cohen (1968) argues that ‘they predicate something too vague to allow for any rigour in testing’ (ibid., p. 7). This charge, however, might appear unfair — attempting to judge a theory by criteria which it did not strive to meet. There remains the problem that too easily grand theory can become empty rationalization.<sup>150</sup> In this respect Wright Mills (1959) argued that

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<sup>150</sup> Cf Hughes’ comment that ‘to the positivist this form of theorizing is just so much over-elaboration of concepts almost to the wilful exclusion of any empirical import’ (Hughes, op cit, p. 45).

'grand theory [involves] seemingly arbitrary and certainly endless elaboration of distinctions which neither enlarge our understandings nor make our experience more sensible' (Wright Mills, 1959, p. 33), echoing Merton's (1949) view a decade previously: .

To concentrate entirely on the master conceptual scheme for deriving all subsidiary theories is to run the risk of producing twentieth-century equivalents of large philosophical systems of the past, with all their varied suggestiveness, all their architectonic splendor and all their scientific sterility (Merton, 1949, p. 68).

Coser and Rosenberg (1969) comment that

The speculative mind concerned only with theory in the large is likely to leave behind a system of Byzantine style, a large architectonic scheme, admirable perhaps for its logical consistency but otherwise of no relevance to the workaday development of a growing science (Coser and Rosenberg, 1969, p. 14).

The criticisms developed in the preceding chapters illustrate very well the problem voiced by Merton, Wright Mills, Coser and Rosenberg. Accepting that Habermas's theory is of this type also entails accepting the problems cited here in this type of theory. Doll (1993) adds a post-modern critique of 'grand' theory, arguing (pp. 19 - 22, 58 - 60) that such 'totalising' (sic) attempts at theory construction are marked by closure, and fixity, whereas post-modern society is characterized by openness, fluidity, heterogeneity and fragmentation. Put simply, Doll's critiques of 'grand' theories are that they are out of date and out of touch with modern society.<sup>151</sup> Reference has already been made to the way in which Habermas's theory is 'hermetically sealed' (8.2.1); Doll's critique not only seems applicable here but powerfully undermines Habermas's views.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Habermas (1987b, 1990b) clearly identifies himself as being a modernist rather than a post-modernist.

<sup>152</sup> A similar critique of Habermas directly is made by Larrain (1994, p. 105). . .

### 8.2.3 Critical Theory

The discussion of a Critical Theory in chapter 2 indicated that it possesses normative and substantive criteria. It comprises a theory of false consciousness, ideology critique, a theory of crisis, a theory of education and a theory of transformative action. These provide several criteria against which to evaluate the success of Habermas's theory. It should, therefore:

- (i) be clear in its methodology;
- (ii) set criteria for its verification and falsification (empirical and non-empirical) and should denote the type(s) of evidence which would substantiate the theory;
- (iii) possess substantive concepts which are internally coherent and logically tenable;
- (iv) fuse 'grand' and empirical theory;
- (v) demonstrate an appropriate measure of precision and universality;
- (vi) possess appropriate explanatory power and predictive validity;
- (vii) have greater validity claims than rival theories;
- (viii) possess the potential for practical empowerment, freedom, equality, social justice, democracy and emancipation.

Earlier chapters showed that Habermas's theory meets criteria (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi). He has neglected criterion (ii). His putative improvement on orthodox Marxism and on Weberian analysis indicate his attempt to meet criterion (vii); however, as has been argued earlier, it is by no means clear that he has been successful here. The absence of any analysis of any rival theories of communicative

action also render problematical his achievement of criterion (vii).

At the level of verification Habermas often accepts the veracity of his sources and, until recently, sets his face against *empirical* verification of his theory. He offers little guidance on the type of evidence which would support or refute his theories or which would count as appropriate evidence. This conflicts with Fay's (1987) requirement of a Critical Theory — that it should address the practicalities of transformative action. Though Habermas suggests a variety of forms of rationality (eg communicative, aesthetic, affective) which would break the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy which fettered Weber, he ignores the potential of affective and aesthetic rationality to emancipate, indeed he neglects to consider even the potential of non-rational or creative actions to bring empowerment. Habermas sets out what will *not* constitute verification — eg empirical testing and its sympathy to positivism — but hesitates to suggest, other than in what have been demonstrated to be flawed terms,<sup>153</sup> what devices might be used to verify his views.

Habermas's Critical Theory argues against dogmatism but neglects empirical verification; it exists, as was noted earlier in Kolakowski's (1978) remark, by dint of its own ambiguity (p. 356). Indeed Kolakowski (*ibid.*) argues that Critical Theory is unclear in which senses it claims to be true: 'because it describes reality as it is, or because it serves the interests of the liberation of humanity' (p. 355).

We do not know in practice how to judge the accuracy of self-understanding, the achievement of emancipation, the success of a theory of communicative action in empowering or emancipating its participants, the use of bureaucracy to emancipate rather than to disempower. Habermas's retreat to reason as verification offers little more perhaps than invective, 'grand' — but empty — theory or slogan. If a

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<sup>153</sup> See 3.4: 4.4; 4.5; 5.3; 6.3; 6.7; 6.9; 6.11; 6.13; 7.6....

normative theory is inescapably embedded in a practical context, being moral in intention, it appears perverse that Habermas should turn his back on the practical implications of his theory (cf Nielsen, 1992).<sup>154</sup>

Habermas is resigned, in practice, to having individuals or groups decide if they are emancipated or empowered. Such a move echoes the words of Thomas (1928) that if men (sic) define their situations as real then they are real in their consequences.<sup>155</sup> Habermas's refusal to address verification and falsification open the door to relativism (though he seeks to avoid this in his appeal to reconstructive science as a way of breaking free from relativism).

With regard to criterion (vii) — that his theory should have greater validity claims than rival theories — his theory is cast in a discourse which is forbidding to a wide readership in its language, style and argument. Whilst it is intended to be a spur to emancipatory action — theory with a practical intent — it is unclear how this type of writing could relieve societal inertia as the *ideal speech situation* is essentially utopian.<sup>156</sup> It has been shown throughout that Habermas takes a range of authors out of context and uses them to support an argument which either does not fundamentally require them to advance his own thought or which betrays the complexity of his sources and the criticisms which those sources have attracted. The encyclopaedic range of his sources for which Habermas has been praised (eg Pusey, 1987) is at the same time a source of danger. His argument is able to be

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<sup>154</sup> One can detect in Habermas's very recent work (1989, 1993) a willingness to engage practical substantive issues and less 'grand' theory.

<sup>155</sup> This also risks the charge of relativism, discussed in (8.3).

<sup>156</sup> Phillipson (1972) comments appropriately here that 'the linguistic architects of sociology have constructed vast edifices which bear unknown relationships to the social world .... Certainly these constructions provide shelter for verbose sociologists but from the point of view of men engaged in practical activities in the world, they are more likely to appear as esoteric retreats whose doors are barred except to the converted' (Phillipson, 1972, p. 77).



condensed into far less space than Habermas in fact takes. Complexity of language conceals simplicity of concept. As has been argued throughout, this demonstrates the least acceptable interpretation of the attractions of the 'simplicity' of a theory Popper (1968), being often little more than advocacy.<sup>157</sup>

It is difficult to imagine the predictive nature of Habermas's theory for it is decontextualized and disembodied. It is a striking irony that Habermas should draw on speech act theory which emphasizes the huge significance of context, and then discuss it in a decontextualized way. His *ideal speech situation* is antiseptic, pure advocacy of principle uncontaminated by a world peopled by real, sentient humans. In this respect his own putatively universalizable theory differs little from the law-like accounts which he so dislikes in positivism;<sup>158</sup> his theories replace one set of laws and generalities with his own; he is touched by the very structuralism that he proscribes.

We have, then, not so much a theory as a statement of the value of theory, an uncritical acceptance of the supremacy of rationality (Kolakowski, 1978, p. 379), a peculiarly Western preoccupation, thereby negating the universalism Habermas claims for it (White, 1988, p. 21). Whilst Habermas claims that his theory overcomes the *cul-de-sacs* of Weberian and Parsonian analysis (of bureaucracy and macro-social functionalism respectively) through the development of the alternative rationality of communicative action, and hence in that respect it is arguably an improvement on these two theoreticians, he does not provide guidelines or criteria to evaluate theories which might rival his own. We are left having to accept

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<sup>157</sup> Popper (1984) describes Habermas's views as 'trivialities in high sounding language' (Popper, 1984, p. 161).

<sup>158</sup> Van der Burg (1990) argues that Habermas has 'a too positivistic and too system-functionalistic image of law' (p. 107).

his views in the absence of presented alternatives.

The only evidence offered of how rationality will lead to action is through the notion of communicative action. We are told that intellectual activity will deliver emancipation in communicative action. Taking this further, it is paradoxical that his obscurantist and opaque language, undifferentiated for a target audience other than of like-minded sympathisers, will ever reach the mass audience who might benefit from his insights.<sup>159</sup> As an exercise in communication his theory of communicative action singularly fails to communicate to a wide audience.<sup>160</sup>

Thus whilst Habermas's theory does fulfil some of the criteria of a theory — espousing a mixture of methodologies, possessing substantive concepts, possessing explanatory potential, laying the ground for a practical Critical Theory of society, it is nevertheless incomplete. It is an amalgam of empirical, grand and critical theory. It is an admixture of axioms and slogans, an account, an explanation, an argument, a heuristic, a combination of these.<sup>161</sup> Indeed his work can be seen as a disguised or subtle form of ideology,<sup>162</sup> being both *normative* in its desire for social justice as equality and *instrumental* in its goal oriented design — the realization of communicative action free from domination. Whilst this might be an inevitable characteristic of any theories — that they 'are essentially instrumental in that they are good means for linking together statements about observations to other

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<sup>159</sup> One has to note, however, that his *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* sold ten thousand copies in Germany within the first month of publication (Alexander, 1985, p. 400) and Holub (1991) indicates that his *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie: Was leistet die Systemforschung* (1971b) sold more than 35,000 copies (Holub, 1991, p. 107).

<sup>160</sup> Berger (1991) writes about '[t]hose who have fought their way through Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*' (p. 165).

<sup>161</sup> If one accepts Popper's dictum that one criterion for defining an area of study as a science is the ability for its theories to be falsified then one could deny whether Habermas's views constitute a social science at all.

<sup>162</sup> Discussed earlier in 6.1, see also Alexander, (1985) comments on the ideological intent of communicative action.

statements about observations' (Ryan, 1970, p. 92) — Dallmayr (1984) is less kind about Habermas's instrumentalism:

Despite the stress on interaction, Habermas's arguments at various junctures still carry the overtone of instrumentalism ....it seems to me, primary preoccupation with rational action and goal-oriented human designs cannot entirely avoid instrumentalist effects; even when endorsed by a consensus of participants, such designs are liable to reduce the environment — and potentially other human beings — to the level of means (Dallmayr, op cit. p. 190).

Habermas's theories are as instrumental — teleological — as those he prescribed in his early works. This is perhaps inherent in any *normative* theory. Habermas's Critical Theory may have putative heuristic value (demonstrated in chapters 10-12 of this thesis) (cf White, 1988, p. 125), indeed his theory (a) may be disproved if the *ideal speech situation* and social structures working with communicative action in fact fail to break down bureaucratization or to emancipate societies, (b) may become redundant when the perfect state of the *ideal speech situation* is reached. Habermas is caught in a cleft stick: either his theory is guilty of instrumentalism or it is *in principle* redundant. One has to question whether his retreat from practice into system building will *in fact* be able to achieve the goals of a Critical Theory. In his thirst for system building he demonstrates the very aspects of the 'system' mentality for which he criticizes bureaucratization and rationalization as the *colonization of the lifeworld*. His neglect of engagement with the lived experiences of humans renders him as guilty of those technocracies and coarse-grained macro-sociological analyses which attract his criticisms throughout his work.

His theory is untouched by human factors and yet it seeks the betterment of humanity. His is a theory which, though it demonstrates strong internal consistency of its elements, is too watertight — it sets its own ground rules and then...

proceeds to discuss their implications *as if they were true or acceptable*; this gives it spurious legitimacy. One can suggest, then, that as a set of linked heuristics it has instrumental value — itself a realization of the dangers of Habermas’s dismissal of instrumentalism — but this value will have to be realized empirically. What we have here, then, is a need for Habermas’s theory to be tested empirically, to see if it overrides the criticisms levelled against it as a grand theory and as a critical theory.

### **8.3 The Relativism of Habermas’s Theories**

Mention has been made throughout this study of the questionable status of Habermas’s theories and the possible relativism of his views. If his views are found to be true only relativistically then, coupled with the neglect of empirical evidence, the criticism can be sustained that Habermas’s views are in essence little more than ideology. This section addresses the question of Habermas’s relativism, outlining:

- the dangers and weaknesses of relativism (8.3.1);
- the relativism of Habermas’s theories (8.3.2);
- Habermas’s attempts to avoid relativism and an evaluation of these attempts (8.3.3);

#### **8.3.1 The Dangers and Weaknesses of Relativism**

Siegel (1987) argues that relativism is self-referentially inconsistent and incoherent in two principal ways.

*Firstly* there are concerns about the denial of the existence of any external criteria higher than the individual ‘by which claims to truth and knowledge can be

adjudicated' (Siegel, 1987, p. 4). If this view is held then there is no opportunity for any thesis to fail a test of rightness or adequacy, or for rival theories to be claimed superior or inferior. Siegel demonstrates the logical inconsistency in relativism: 'relativism is incoherent because, if it is right, the very notion of rightness is undermined, in which case relativism cannot be right' (Siegel, 1987, p. 4) (see also Bernstein, 1983, p. 9). Rightness is 'intelligible only when understood non-relativistically' (ibid., p. 8).

*Secondly* Siegel argues that if all opinions are true and right for those who hold them this means that no sincerely held opinion can be considered to be false. However 'if opinions conflict then the ... relativist must acknowledge the truth that that doctrine is false. Thus, if it is true, then (as long as there is one who holds that it is false) it is false' (Siegel, 1987, p. 5). This is self-defeating and incoherent:

relativism is incoherent because it holds that all beliefs and opinions are true, yet, given conflicting beliefs, some beliefs must necessarily be false — in which case relativism cannot be true (Siegel, 1987, p. 6).

Siegel and Bernstein argue that if relativism is to be rationally justified then it can only do so by adopting non-relativistic criteria, in which case it undermines itself.<sup>163</sup> Clark (1981) contends that if relativism is accepted then disputes about validity may be decided by power rather than truth, which is Habermas's point in his repeated references to the need for the force of the argument alone to hold sway.<sup>164</sup> Clark argues that the outcome of relativism may be totalitarianism, ie an

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<sup>163</sup> Siegel argues that '[i]f relativism is only relatively true, then by its own light it is no better than its alternatives .... The very notion of rational defense is given up by the relativist, for the relativist has rejected the possibility of non-relative criteria by which rival claims or hypotheses can be evaluated' (p. 19).

<sup>164</sup> White (1983) argues that 'every type of relativist is ultimately driven to define truth in terms of majority opinion: for given that propositions have no absolute status, he has no other way of accounting for the differences between those which are true and those which are false. However,

unwarranted consensus based on strategic action (Clark, 1981, p. 152). Clark's point indicates that to accept relativism is to violate the *ideal speech situation*.

Pring (1975) challenges the relativists and argues for external, universal criteria of validity, that the way we 'know' facts is not *solely* due to our own constructs, is not solely relative to our own psyche, but has something to do with the facts themselves. That objects are different is not an individual construct but due to the properties of the objects themselves regardless of how we construe them. White (1982) argues that commonsense alone demolishes relativism:

to the question of how he [the relativist] is to decide which propositions are true and which are false, the answer is that he must decide in the same way as everybody else. That is, he must look to the evidence of his senses, to the evidence of the past, to the community's best established beliefs and theories, to its basic epistemic principles. In a word, like the non-relativist he must behave rationally (White, 1982, p. 10).

If proven, then, the relativistic nature of Habermas's work seriously undermines its value.

### 8.3.2 The Relativism of Habermas's Theories

Habermas's early theory of knowledge-constitutive interests and his later theory of communicative action can be challenged on the grounds of relativism. The social construction of knowledge and the social motivation of knowledge (in the notion of 'interests') risks relativism. By appealing to the social rather than purely the epistemic basis of knowledge his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests ac-

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such a definition quickly leads to absurd consequences. Confronted with a proposition concerning which there is as yet no majority opinion, each individual will be forced to wait and see what the majority will believe; but the majority will not be able to form a belief until the individuals constituting it have first made up their minds. Inevitably there will be a deadlock' (White, 1983, p. 10). Phillips (1986) argues that Habermas falls into this trap in his consensus theory of truth: 'any selection of the principles of justice must wait on the consensus of all 'those concerned'.... This appears to place a severe restriction on attempts by individuals to work out on their own the principles that would govern the just society' (Phillips, 1986, p. 87). -

cords with the relativistic views of Kuhn (1970) who argues that knowledge is that which is stipulated by a community of scholars. Further, the *ideal speech situation* devolves to participants alone the definition of agendas and rationality — there are no absolutes — thereby risking relativism. By seeking to generate a hermetically sealed theory of communicative action whose justification is based on the coherence of its internal elements rather than its application in practice Habermas has opened himself to the same charge of relativism as could be levelled against any personal opinion. This is exacerbated by the totalising nature of his theory — a self-contained world of theoretical self- and mutually-supporting constructs without external referents in which rationality and language reign supreme.

Habermas writes that ‘from the beginning, critical theory labored over the problem of giving an account of its own normative foundations’ (Habermas, 1984, p. 374). Thompson (1982) asks ‘what assurances have we that the interpretations offered by critical theory are any less ideological than the ideologies which they claim to expose?’ (Thompson, 1982, p. 117).<sup>165</sup> Ottmann (1982) proposes that ‘the interest shown by a critical theory in doing away with concrete power structures could itself be a child of the times and thereby merely reflect the interest of a particular period and not a theory of knowledge in general’ (Ottmann, 1982, p. 80). It has already been suggested that Habermas’s theory celebrates Western rationality. There are, then, several ways in which Habermas’s work risks relativism.

### 8.3.3 Habermas’s Attempts to Avoid Relativism

Though the danger of relativism has been specifically addressed by Habermas

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<sup>165</sup> See also Thompson, 1984, p. 257.

(if infrequently) this does not preclude the possibility of demonstrating that he fails to avoid it. There are several ways in which his work attempts to avoid the charge of relativism:

- (a) his appeal to a middle ground between absolutism and relativism;
- (b) his appeal to reconstructive science as an attempt to discern universal properties of communication from empirical evidence;
- (c) his appeal to an epistemological bases of social science;<sup>166</sup>
- (d) his appeal to commensurability;
- (e) the coherence of his theory.

These five means, however, will be shown to be either faulty or unproven, and therefore relativism can be seen in Habermas's work.

Habermas argues that there is a vast middle ground between absolutism and total relativism:

when they [philosophical questions] are sharpened into the opposition between relativism and absolutism, an unmediated confrontation emerges between pure historicism and pure transcendentalism. At that point the failures of both positions becomes clear: the one side carries the burden of self-referential, pragmatic contradictions and paradoxes that violate our need for consistency; the other side is burdened with a foundationalism that conflicts with our consciousness of the fallibility of human knowledge (Habermas, 1985b, p. 193).

It is to this middle ground that critical social theory belongs, arguing first that 'what is accepted as truth at any given time is a matter of convention (Habermas, 1984, p. 126) and later that

even basic concepts that are starkly universalist have a temporal core....with the aid of these [formal-pragmatic] operations one succeeds in steering between the

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<sup>166</sup> Siegel (1987) provides a cogent argument to suggest that epistemological coherence and absolutism are fundamental to any theory which wishes to avoid the charge of relativism.



Scylla of absolutism and the Charybdis of relativism (Habermas, 1987b, p. 300).

Between absolutism and total relativism is the view that *putative* truths may be subjected to public scrutiny and publicly verifiable tests, may be rational, and may possess truth content which is greater than rival contenders (ie that they constitute the best explanation of truths that exist). This middle ground avoids relativism by making its criteria of judgement available to evaluate publicly *rival* claims — a feature which is absent in relativism. Habermas's *ideal speech situation* is an appeal for arguments to be made public and the elements he observes in a reconstructive science are publicly demonstrable. However he does not provide clear criteria to evaluate his theories in verifiable tests nor to claim that his theory is superior to rival theories of communicative action. Furthermore he couches much of the discussion of his own theory in non-fallibilist terms. Habermas's theory of communicative action demonstrates strong internal coherence between its constituent elements. Reference has been made earlier to the way in which his theory is 'hermetically sealed', 'immune to criticism', rendering it highly resilient to refutation. However this resilience risks relativism:

epistemic relativists like Kuhn all suppose that a society...evolves a set of practices and beliefs which come to be highly integrated and interdependent....they make the beliefs and practices of a given community so tightly integrated that there could never be any compelling grounds for modifying those beliefs (Laudan, 1990, p. 115).

It is impossible, therefore, to demonstrate with any certainty that he has managed to keep to the 'middle ground' between absolutism and relativism. It remains an open question.

Habermas has attempted to avoid the charge of relativism in his appeal to reconstructive science: 'without reconstructive sciences, Habermas would have to argue either on a purely transcendental basis...or he would have to accede to the ..

contextualist' (Rasmussen, 1990, p. 97).

There is in communication theory a 'context-independent standard for the rationality of worldviews' (ibid., p. 62). This is a crucial claim; Habermas is arguing that inherent in communication is a universal principle of rationality, and that communicative rationality counters relativism (cf Rasmussen, 1990, p. 37). This constitutes a justification of its normative foundations. Habermas is claiming that rationality and emancipation are inescapable features of communication. Rasmussen (1990) goes to the heart of the issue, suggesting that 'the question is whether communication, in principle, is emancipatory' (p. 4). However, Rasmussen argues that movements to emancipation belong to the sphere of politics rather than to science — reconstructive or ordinary (ibid. p. 36). He accuses Habermas of an illegitimate practice of transforming 'what was originally a political assumption into a transcendental or reconstructive a priori' (ibid., p. 42). This constitutes a powerful questioning of Habermas's attempt to avoid relativism. Further, simply observing universal features of communication does not establish the case for using a communicative theory as an all-embracing social theory in the first place, that still remains a matter of preference.

In order to avoid relativism Habermas has to demonstrate that his view of communicative action is an *improvement* on Marx and Weber (ie he has to demonstrate that which would lead to a denial of relativism — the notion of commensurability and hence *progress* in social science (Siegel, 1987; Laudan, 1990)). Habermas argues that his theory *is* an improvement on Marx and Weber. With regard to Marx he argues that a paradigm of communicative action captures the complexity of modern society more fully than a 'paradigm of production'. Roderick contests this claim (Roderick, 1986, pp. 169 - 173), arguing that Habermas's theory of com-

municative action is best regarded as a 'supplement to the paradigm of production, and not as a replacement for it' (Roderick, 1986, p. 167).<sup>167</sup> Further, Marx provides a clearer agenda for 'radical practical activity' (ibid., p. 170) than does Habermas — without recourse to transcendental or quasi-transcendental language.<sup>168</sup> Marx replaces Habermas's 'etherealization of human practice' (Keat, 1981, p. 130) with the day-to-day lived experience of suffering, injustice and material deprivation. Theory and practice are more closely linked in Marx than in Habermas; Roderick argues that Habermas lacks the 'theoretical, critical or political power of Marx's original' (ibid., p. 171). As such Habermas's theory, though not necessarily an improvement on Marx, addresses commensurability and thereby avoids relativism.

With regard to Weber, Habermas argues that his paradigm of communicative action provides a fuller and more appropriate account of rationalization of society into bureaucracies than does Weber. The point to be made here is that Habermas, in acknowledging that there are neutral grounds for evaluating rival theories, attempts to avoid relativism which contends that in relativism:

competing paradigms ... cannot be measured against a neutral standard — because each paradigm possesses a built-in non-neutral standard of its own....[N]eutral debate between the two paradigms is impossible (Siegel, 1987, p. 52).

However, with reference to Weber, the commensurability is unclear because Habermas is providing not only an account of society *as it is* but *as it ought to be* (Rasmussen, 1990, p. 54), ie he is prescribing lines of action (ie the move to communicative action as a way of breaking Weber's 'iron cage' of bureaucratization) — a feature absent in Weber.<sup>169</sup> Indeed Habermas (1990a) argues that 'two

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<sup>167</sup> He argues that Habermas underestimates Marx's concern with language within the paradigm of production.

<sup>168</sup> See also Larrain (1994).

<sup>169</sup> This echoes Laudan's (1990) view that earlier theories generally solve problems not solved by their successors.

competing empirical theories cannot be evaluated independently of the paradigms furnishing their basic concepts' (Habermas, 1990a, p. 118). There is doubt, therefore, whether Habermas has avoided relativism in his discussions of Weber. Laudan (1990) adds to this the view that, for relativists:

testing a theory does no more than bring one set of theories...to bear against another set of theories — those utilized to generate the evidence in the first place....the subsequent judgement that the 'evidence' supports the 'theory' just reflects the logical compatability between the theories' (Laudan, 1990, p. 38).

This is an almost tailor-made description of the way in which Habermas has used the work of Freud, Austin, Searle, Mead, Piaget, Husserl, Schütz and Kohlberg. In acknowledging this there is considerable power in the view that Habermas has not escaped fully the charge of relativism. One of the purposes of chapters 10, 11 and 12 is deliberately to apply Habermas's work in a new context (education), thereby to offer some 'external evidence' for his theory.

Habermas's neglect of indicating the nature of the verification of his theory until very recently (other than by an appeal to the logic of reconstructive science) and by an appeal to a reader's *penchant* for the values and axioms which he does not demonstrate empirically, sees *agreement* rather than *demonstration* as a criterion for verification. This is verification interpreted as a matter of taste or opinion; taste and opinion are relative. His Critical Theory of society, by definition (see chapter 2), seeks to change society; it requires practice and changes to practice; it is inescapably, inherently practical — empirical — and thus requires practical, empirical evidence.

In summary, then, it is an open question whether Habermas has overcome relativism in his appeal to a middle ground between absolutism and relativism in his appeal to reconstructive science. He is more affirmatively relativist in his

theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. When he abandoned this in favour of a theory of communicative action he only partially overcame the relativism of incommensurability and did not overcome relativism by establishing internally consistent, sealed, watertight, totalising and unchallengeable social theory because the effect of creating a world marked by such closure was to render as a matter of preference the acceptability of his axioms. Moreover, the charge of occidental ethnocentrism in his use of Piaget and Kohlberg and the absence of an international dimension in his discussions of capitalism contribute to his relativism. Relativism, therefore, has not been refuted in Habermas's work.

Failing to refute relativism entirely in Habermas's work suggests that there are problems with the *status* of his theories. Given that there are also *substantive* problems in Habermas's theories their status is reduced from explanation to heuristic devices for enquiry.

#### 8.4 Testing Habermas's theories

Whilst it would be out of keeping, perhaps, to seek the type of empirical verification in the 'severe tests' in science (Popper, 1968, 1969; O'Hear, 1980) that Habermas criticizes in positivism it would not be inappropriate to expect an outcome of his theory in *practice*,<sup>170</sup> given that his is a theory with a *practical intent* and given that Habermas borrows from theorists (eg Freud) who are positivistic and falsifiable (Bernstein, 1976). Indeed a test of his theory of communicative action would be to chart the extent to which it is emancipatory or empowering, and the contexts in which its success lie.

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<sup>170</sup> Layder (1994) argues that Habermas's theory of the colonization of the lifeworld 'has an irreducibly empirical dimension to it' (p. 203), for example, to identify 'which areas of the lifeworld are more susceptible to colonization and which are more resistant' (ibid., p. 203).

Though Habermas suggests the need for a research enterprise (1988) he provides little comment on the grounds for testing of his theory. One can infer some criteria for falsification, however, eg if his views do not stand by his own principles of comprehensibility, truthfulness, sincerity and legitimacy, or if they lack internal logic and coherence, or if they fail to bring about emancipation in practice. In a departure from his previous work Habermas (1990a) does make it clear that his theory needs empirical verification: 'the validity of the normative theory is cast into doubt if the philosophical reconstructions prove to be unusable in the context of application within the empirical theory' (Habermas, 1990a, p. 39).

Indeed in this volume Habermas suggests that his work and all its sub-elements needs empirical verification and testing (p. 117). He indicates the need to find '*counter examples*' (p. 6) and for '*critical testing*' (p. 7), bringing his theory closer in line with the empirical theories which he dismissed so readily in his early work. He argues that 'all rational reconstructions, like other types of knowledge, have only hypothetical status' (ibid., p. 32), and that 'the assertion that there is no alternative to a given presupposition...has the status of an assumption. Like a lawlike hypothesis, it must be checked against individual cases' (ibid., p. 9).

From the preceding discussion it is possible to establish some general principles to enable an evaluation of Habermas's theory to be undertaken (as one of Merton's criteria for a social theory), eg the extent to which equality, freedom, democracy, emancipation and empowerment have been addressed and achieved by dint of his theory, the extent to which transformative practices have been addressed or occurred as a result of the theory, the extent to which the theory of communicative action and the *ideal speech situation* have enabled proponents to identify ways to break down the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy and to reassert their agency and the

extent to which these have occurred in practice, the extent to which an appeal to rationality defined in terms other than means-end instrumentalism might achieve or has achieved a more egalitarian participatory democracy.

Further, if circularity is to be avoided (as argued previously) then Habermas's theories will need to be tested in circumstances which are different from those which gave rise to the theories in the first place, ie his theories will have to be applied to new data. From this analysis one can summarise criteria for testing Habermas's theories; they must:

- (i) demonstrate internal consistency;
- (ii) identify the type of evidence (empirical or otherwise) which is required to confirm or refute the theories, in total or in part;
- (iii) demonstrate the extent to which they are empirically verifiable (eg their power to empower and emancipate in practice);
- (iv) be tested in new contexts and with new data, informing and extending an understanding of those new contexts;
- (v) demonstrate their fertility in spawning a research enterprise.<sup>171</sup>

Habermas's work has been undermined by the earlier critiques. However it may have utility value as a tool to think with, to examine an area of study, to assist its users to discover new insights, to shed new light on issues, ie it may have value heuristically. If indeed, in doing so, it does become empowering and emancipating then it can be seen to have been demonstrated. It is this enterprise which will be

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<sup>171</sup> Cf Roderick's (1986) view that '[t]he ultimate test of Habermas's communicative rationality is its empirical, theoretical and critical fruitfulness for social theory and research' (Roderick, 1986, p. 112).

undertaken in the subsequent chapters dealing with education.

Habermas's views can be verified in a form of 'severe test'. For example if it were possible to demonstrate that Habermas's work indicates that emancipatory potential and the potential for empowerment exist in circumstances which seem *very hostile* to the development of such empowerment and emancipation and if it were possible to demonstrate that this emancipatory potential were realizable and realized in practice then Habermasian theory might have value even though it contains flaws. Subsequent chapters identify whether this is the case.



## Chapter IX

### HABERMAS ON EDUCATION

#### 9.1 An Introduction to Habermas and Education

This brief chapter sets the ground for applying Habermas's theories in a new field from those which gave rise to them, thereby avoiding circularity. Habermas touches on the situation of schools, suggesting that they are (a) becoming increasingly marked by 'jurudification' (Habermas, 1987a, p. 368), subject to increasing administrative regulation and formalization (ibid., p. 369) and bureaucratization (p. 371) even though this might be done to protect pupils' and parents' rights, (b) tied to the reproduction of capital and employment (p. 371), (c) restrictive of teachers' rights and professional freedoms, (d) subject to depersonalising curricula, inhibiting innovation and commodifying children's and teachers' experiences, (e) bureaucratising the socialization process, (f) achieving competition through grading systems, (g) operating sanctions and threats in order to achieve normative consensus on behaviour, and (h) subordinating the communicative action of schools to purposive-rational action (ibid., pp. 368 - 373). Habermas recognizes the paradox at work here, as has been articulated throughout the discussion so far, that in order to foster social integration through values, norms and consensus formation (ibid., p. 372), in order to prevent them from being 'incorporated' by economic imperatives, in order to prevent them from being overtaken by administrative subsystems (ibid., pp. 372 - 3) schools are having to enter the juridification process. What one sees in 'steering media' (eg law, money, power, mass media,

the rationalization of complex societies into bureaucracies) is their potential for emancipation. These mechanisms might be emancipatory; equally they might be constraining. A major task, then, is to identify the mechanisms whereby emancipatory potentials are deformed into constraint.

Habermas has initiated the analysis of the relationship between his social theory and the curriculum, the task of the following sections of this study is to extend that analysis. Chapters 10 and 11 set out a range of issues deriving from the work of Habermas which can be taken forward to inform an analysis of the relationship between the curriculum and society (ie chapter 10) and the range of curriculum elements in particular (ie 'within-school' factors — chapter 11). It was suggested in the preceding discussion that Habermas's work was problematical in its several elements but that it might have instrumental, heuristic value in establishing a set of principles with which to interrogate the curriculum. It is therefore for its utility value that it is judged as well as for its substantive elements and merits. If it is able to generate and inform new insights into the curriculum and to indicate how these could be used to further the principles of communicative action, the recoupling of lifeworld and system, equality and collective, democratic freedoms (the normative basis of his theory) then its usefulness as a theoretical tool will have been established. This would lay the ground for empirical verification, ie the ability of Habermas's work to effect empowerment in practice.

Chapters 10 and 11 demonstrate the 'fruitfulness' of Habermas's theory for an understanding of curricula — as they articulate with the wider society (chapter 10) and as they operate in schools (chapter 11) — and chapter 12 provides a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories in a case study. It will be argued in chapter 10 that Habermas's theory informs an analysis of the sociology of the curriculum, ie the

relationship between the curriculum and the wider society. Chapter 11 provides an outline of how Habermasian principles inform an understanding of school curricula, whilst the 'severe test' of Habermas's theories is a case study of the introduction of the National Curriculum of England and Wales, undertaken in chapter 12.

The preceding chapters indicated Habermas's enduring concern for the evolution of social justice. It is not insignificant that the closing pages of his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987a) should signal a return, after an excursion into social theory, not only to a fully fledged Critical Theory and his analysis of 'critical' movements in society, but that in these pages he should give considerable room to an analysis of schooling and the politics of control (discussed later). Analyses of curricula in the subsequent three chapters will identify their potential for developing communicative action. By taking his theories to a new field it will be shown how Habermas's work can inform several aspects of education and how his theories can be tested. Finally chapter 13 undertakes an evaluation of the work of Habermas in the light of his utility in the field of education and suggests an agenda for the further testing of his theories.

## Chapter X

# HABERMAS AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

### 10.1 Introduction

Habermas's early work on knowledge-constitutive interests revealed that he is concerned to show that interests and the ideological processes at work in society should be subject to ideology critique. Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests echoes Mannheim (1936, p. 230) in suggesting that knowledge is socially constructed and that it articulates with the reproduction and transformation of society. This chapter relates discussions of schools and curricula to the wider society. It will be demonstrated that Habermas's notion of 'interests' inform an analysis of content selection and pedagogy in schools. It will be argued that, whilst Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests and analysis of bureaucracies are useful, the value of using his theory of communicative action to redress the inequalities exposed by a sociology of knowledge is unproven.

Habermas argues that knowledge should be subject to the critical rational interrogation of the truth claims of his *ideal speech situation* — truth, legitimacy, sincerity, comprehensibility — and its part in a macro theory of communicative action. His views suggest the need to expose the interests, purposes and agendas in and through the curriculum. This echoes Bernstein's (1971) view that

how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. (Bernstein, 1971, p. 47).

Bernstein argues that the power élites in society define what is to count as worthwhile school knowledge. The ideological function of such decisions is massive. School knowledge is used to perpetuate power élites. It will be argued that Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests suggests that school knowledge — the 'hegemonic academic curriculum' (Hargreaves, 1989) — serves the technical and hermeneutic interest rather than the emancipatory interest and that this contributes to the reproduction of the societal *status quo* — an inegalitarian society — rather than the egalitarian and openly democratic society which he sees as being the contrafactual goal of the *ideal speech situation*.

The reproduction of power élites in society through school knowledge is a clear example of strategic rather than communicative action, ie action which fulfils sectoral interests to the disadvantage of others, the *suppression of generalizable interests*. The question to be addressed is how those in power succeed in perpetuating their power through school knowledge, ie how the *suppression of generalizable interests* and the operation of strategic action occur in school curricula. Habermas's work suggests the need to subject to rational scrutiny the processes of the perpetuation of power and power groups in order to discover and evaluate their legitimacy. The defensibility of these processes and reproduction of power élites will be judged according to the extent to which generalizable interests and emancipation are promoted, realized through the appeal to the *ideal speech situation*. Implicit throughout this is the *leitmotiv* of control, social control is effected through, amongst other things, control of curricular knowledge. Habermas's call to expose, question and critique the interests which operate in the control of the curriculum suggests that the speech act validity claims of truth, sincerity, legitimacy and comprehensibility of decision making have to be scrutinised in school

knowledge, ie that conformity and decision making have to be 'warranted' (Brown, 1985) and agreed on the basis of generalizable interests.

### 10.1.1 Perpetuating Power through School Knowledge

Young (1971), Esland (1971) and Apple (1993) suggest that those in positions of power succeed in having their definitions of worthwhile knowledge given high status, and the definitions of others' knowledge given low status:

children do not simply learn maths, English, history and so on; they learn what ruling interests take as maths, English, history; and they accept as correct and worth knowing what those same interests count as correct and worth knowing (Harris, 1979, p. 74).

For example Anyon's (1981) study found that working class children were not taught their own histories — their histories were disconfirmed (Morrison, 1989a) — that middle class children were not taught the history of dissent but were taught the value of individual success in competition, and that children in the affluent professional class were given a fully fledged account of history — in particular of their own history as a success story which gave them legitimate rights to power — so that they could maintain their dominance. This reinforced her earlier study (1980) of social studies texts where she found that (a) they glossed over or ignored dissent and conflict in society, (b) they sanctioned consensus and the status quo of unequal power to non-whites and to women, (c) they confined the democratic process to political institutions, (d) they did not challenge capitalism, (e) they trivialised unemployment and poverty, (f) they paid little attention to undemocratic decision making in the economic sphere, (g) they de-legitimised alternatives to the political and economic status quo.

Young (1971) argues that knowledge becomes high status when it is:

- formally assessed — bureaucratized;
- taught to the ablest children;
- taught in homogenous ability groups of children;
- academic.

By 'academic' he means *literary* as opposed to orally presented, *individual* as opposed to *group* oriented, *abstract* (over which the learner has little control) as opposed to concrete (over which the learner has substantial control) and *un-related to everyday life* (non-vocational) as opposed to practical, commonsense, vocational knowledge which is related to non-school life. In this respect schools are the guardians of tradition (Giroux, 1989, pp. 42-4); school knowledge serves Habermas's technical interest of control by those in power. In Habermasian terms this indicates the violation of the principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2: 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'orientation to a common interest ascertained without deception'; 'freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge'; 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework' and 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants'. Positional power alone is used to take decisions on curriculum content.

A Habermasian analysis of curricula can draw on Bernstein's typologies of educational codes in relation to academic curricula, defined with reference to 'classification' and 'framing' — the 'degree of boundary maintenance between contents' (Bernstein, 1971, p. 49) and 'the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship' (*ibid.*, p. 50) respectively. Collection codes and

integrated codes, Bernstein argues, can be defined with relation not only to classification and framing but to questions of power and control in the wider society such that academic curricula, characterized by collection codes with strong classification and strong framing, reproduce existing power structures (ibid.). They can be presented thus, Figure 10.1:

Bernstein's collection codes embody Habermas's technical and hermeneutic interests whereas integrated codes, with weak classification and framing, are much more open and negotiable, enabling participants to abide by some of the principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, viz.: 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge'; 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'equal opportunity for discussion'; 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants'. Collection codes are perlocutionary, demonstrating strategic action; integrated codes are illocutionary, demonstrating communicative action. That this 'hegemonic academic curriculum' (Hargreaves, 1989) persists can be seen in the elevation of traditional subjects and the subordination of personal and social education in the National Curriculum of England and Wales. It will be argued in chapter 12 that the elevation of personal and social education would constitute a significant move towards reducing inequality and enabling active participation in society.

The move from collection codes to integrated codes displays an ideological shift; Bernstein argues that it represents a disturbance in the structure and distribution of power and control as control is no longer bureaucratized and the property of power élites.<sup>172</sup> In Habermasian terms the move from collection codes to inte-

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<sup>172</sup> Chapter 12 treats the issue of Habermas's analysis of the bureaucratization of school curricula.



Figure 10.1 — Characteristics of Collection and Integrated Codes

COLLECTION CODES	INTEGRATED CODES
Strong classification	Weak classification
Hierarchical	Democratic
Subject loyalty	Integrated and interdisciplinary
Strong social control and discipline	Weaker social control
Traditional subjects — high status	Traditional subjects — low status
Received curricula	Reflexive curricula
Core principles of subject — mysteries — revealed late in life	Core principles of subject — mysteries — revealed where relevant
Secrecy of knowledge — (content closure)	Content openness
Theoretical	Practical
Revealed truths to select few who have been 'successfully' socialized	Knowledge available to all
Limited pupil choice	Extended pupil choice
Instruction	Enquiry
Rigid timetabling	Flexible timetabling
Homogenous ability groups	Heterogenous pupil groups
Discipline through hierarchical control	Discipline through interpersonal relations

grated codes permits the movement from technical and hermeneutic interests to the emancipatory interest. Habermas's tenets suggest the need to identify the power élites, the decision makers, to question their legitimacy (Habermas, 1976a), and to examine how the differential status accorded to subjects can be rationally defended. The operation of the *ideal speech situation* requires weak classification and framing if the pursuit of rational interrogation of interests in and effects of the school curriculum is to occur. Habermas's views of the *ideal speech situation* require educationists to interrogate the degree to which a 'warranted consensus' (Brown, 1985) on the content, status and pedagogy of curricula can be identified. One has to ask how far the Habermasian speech act validity claims of truth, sincerity, comprehensibility and legitimacy are respected or violated in the ascription — by decision makers — of differential status to subjects.

### 10.1.2 Differential Access to High Status Knowledge

Having defined high and low status knowledge those in power then give differential access to high status knowledge, arguing that it should only be the preserve of the few who have accepted the discipline of the school and the subject — those who adhere to the *status quo* — thereby condemning the majority to a second class, low status education.<sup>173</sup> According differential access to high status knowledge violates Habermas's principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, viz.: 'freedom to enter a discourse'; 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge'; 'freedom to alter norms'; 'mutual understanding between participants'; 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the

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<sup>173</sup> Cf. Bantock's (1975) discussion of his 'folk' curriculum and Midwinter's (1975) 'community education' programmes of the early seventies.

dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; 'equal opportunity for discussion'; 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants'. The effect of this violation is to circumscribe the possibilities of children to break out of ascribed futures, ie it reasserts a technical interest in control. This control operates for those who are denied access to high status knowledge and, paradoxically, for those who are given access to high status knowledge as Bernstein (1971) suggests that this latter group is schooled to 'the existing order' (p. 57).

Pupils who assert their agency, who reject the school's definition of worthwhile knowledge, who present problems of control and discipline, are given low status knowledge (to 'try to keep them happy' (Giroux, 1989, p. 127) or maybe genuinely to reflect socially situated differences). This is also evident in the options available to children in different tracks of school, where 'the knowledge-power relation...finds expression in the active production and distribution of knowledge itself' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 84).<sup>174</sup> In this respect the National Curriculum of England and Wales, premised *de jure* on 'entitlement' to access by all students to all subjects of the curriculum (DES, 1988a) could be a way of breaking out of this cycle of disadvantage.

However, in perpetuating the 'hegemonic academic curriculum', equalizing access to a curriculum which is not ideologically innocent, the National Curriculum itself is ideological, Habermas's generalizable interests are suppressed. Hence, though the 'entitlement' to a National Curriculum might be illocutionary in *purpose*, such entitlement is perlocutionary in its *effects*. It is itself an ideological process. This is demonstrated in the 'cultural capital' thesis (Bourdieu, 1976;

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<sup>174</sup> See also Hargreaves, 1967, 1982; Lacey, 1970; Peak and Morrison, 1988.

Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) wherein an academic curriculum, though in principle open to all equally, in fact is taken up differentially by social groups, thereby contributing to social reproduction (see Appendix A).

Habermas's technical interest in control by the power élite is strengthening in the contexts of examinations and assessments in the National Curriculum of England and Wales. This can be seen occurring in five main ways (Burke, 1990): (i) by the reduction in the number of syllabi available to be examined by examination boards, (ii) by the need for examination boards to act *responsively* rather than proactively to government directives if they are to survive (ibid.) — no longer do they have the sway which they had prior to the National Curriculum and GCSE; (iii) by the rise of control of vocational qualifications (NVQs) and their levels of qualification; (iv) by the increasing 'surveillance' of pupils occasioned by the rise of instruments of assessment and the overall increase in assessment and Records of Achievement (ROAs) (Foucault, 1977; Gibson, 1986),<sup>175</sup> (v) by the reproductive effects of assessment (Hextall, 1976) whereby the asymmetries of power in the teacher / pupil relationship are reproduced through the teacher's control of the assessment situation — its form, content and outcomes.

What is very clear in the control of assessment is the operation of Habermas's technical interest, *conception* of assessment — eg its forms, purposes, contents, methods and reporting — is separated from its *execution*. This violates Habermas's principles for the operation of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, *viz.*: 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to alter norms'; 'equal

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<sup>175</sup> Hargreaves (1989) supports this view in his suggestion that ROAs are a sophisticated means of controlling disaffected pupils. He argues that ROAs were a response to a 'motivation crisis' (cf Habermas, 1976a) in society; they were a means of motivating pupils who otherwise would have left school with no credentials. Hargreaves, however, indicates that ROAs might be hijacked to be simply an instrument for job selection rather than pupil motivation, indeed the link between modular courses, unit accreditation and ROAs has already begun this process.

opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants'.

### 10.1.3 The Bureaucratization of Schooling

Habermas (1984, 1987a) has a clear contribution to make to an analysis of schools and curricula in the area of the bureaucratization of schooling, discussed fully in the case study in chapter 12. It was argued earlier that advanced capitalism — and indeed socialism (if we accept Weber's analysis) — is characterised by increasing bureaucratization. Given that power is hierarchically distributed in bureaucracies, if people are to gain power then they must possess the credentials that will enable them to ascend the rungs of power. The credentials that schools provide can be said to buttress the economic and social organization of advanced capitalism by being the main means of ascending hierarchies. Those without the necessary credentials do not begin to ascend the bureaucratic ladder and hence have little power to control their own futures.<sup>176</sup>

Schools are becoming bureaucratized, power is administered hierarchically with heavy reliance being placed on written forms of communication (witness the plethora of curriculum documentation given to and received from the DES / DFE). In Habermasian terms these written documents demonstrate perlocutionary rather than illocutionary purposes; their intention is to communicate strategically — to fulfil DES and DFE agendas — rather than to engage participants communica-

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<sup>176</sup> Willis's (1977) study illuminates this clearly, showing 'how working class kids get working class jobs' through their rejection — amongst other items — of credentials and that this eventually undermines the potential which the 'lads' had to upset the *status quo* — ie how they were incorporated by capital.

tively in an open discussion. Britzman (1986) supports the view of the bureaucratization of schools, writing of three important features of schools — that social control (Habermas's technical interest) is a significant dynamic of classroom life, that the curriculum is compartmentally organized (cf the National Curriculum subject documentation), and that schools are hierarchically organized (p. 444) — all features of an advanced bureaucracy.<sup>177</sup> Harris (1988) argues that questions of bureaucratic management sacrifice interpersonal aspects to issues of structures of the organization, thereby impeding discourse (p. 206) on their impact on people, personalities and the interpersonal aspects of schools — central features of communicative action.

In Habermasian terms it can be argued that bureaucracies and schools, when viewed as bureaucracies, cannot aspire to the achievement of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2 as they are imbued with constraints on power and freedom to enter discourse; different types of discourse are open to different role bearers in the hierarchy and thus the unforced force of the argument in situations in which all stakeholders have the freedom to participate is impossible. Communication is written, strategic and one-way (a 'top-down' model). Habermas's technical interest reigns supreme. Hierarchies preclude open discussion, they separate conception from execution (Apple, 1983), and this thereby negates the possibility of the operation of the *ideal speech situation*. There is limited room for challenge. Hierarchies of power, epitomized in bureaucracies, thus cannot help but *systematically* distort

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<sup>177</sup> It is interesting in this context to see how much of the literature on school organization and management of the 1970s — at a time when the sociology of knowledge was appearing in educational discourse — is heavy with the nomothetic language of role, role strain, role conflict, role distance etc (cf Grace, 1972; Hargreaves 1973) rather than on the interpersonal, personal, idiographic dimensions of management (Hoyle, 1976, for example is aware of these two dimensions — nomothetic and idiographic, but tends to focus attention on the former). This constitutes an overemphasis on bureaucratic aspects of school life.

communication and violate communicative action.<sup>178</sup>

Schools embody the form, content and process of the movement towards the uncoupling of system and lifeworld and the colonization of the lifeworld charted in chapter 7.5. For example we are witness now to Habermas's technical interest and to the rise of Habermas's steering media in the Reform Act of 1988, where: (i) *de jure* innovations are being made in organizing the financing and administration of the finances of schools — the steering medium of money; (ii) schools are becoming increasingly subject to legislation and juridification — the steering medium of law; (iii) schools are becoming increasingly organized along power criteria — the steering medium of power; (iv) schools are subject to increasingly formalized channels of communication — language becomes a steering medium where *communicative action* is lost to unquestioned *strategic action*; (v) *action oriented to mutual understanding* becomes subordinated to the technicist playing out of decisionism (cf chapter 3.5) in ascribed — and differentiated — zones of power and authority, (vi) bureaucracies thrive — the steering medium of bureaucracy.<sup>179</sup> The *status quo* remains relatively undisturbed in the asymmetrical relations of power between managers, teachers and pupils. Existing power relations become reified rather than made dialectical: 'bureaucracy rests on assumptions of scientific rationality, the generalized other which is apolitical and ideologically invisible' (Blackmore, 1989, p. 119).

In contrast to this Foster (1989) argues for a 'critical', non-bureaucratic style of leadership in which there are four major tasks (pp. 50 - 55). Leaders must be

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<sup>178</sup> Blackmore (1989) sees the paradox inherent here: 'The irony remains that the expansion of bureaucracies which increasingly regulate all aspects of social life has been accompanied by modern political theory centring on individual freedom and democracy' (Blackmore, 1989, p. 110).

<sup>179</sup> Cf Weber's (1968) characteristics of bureaucracy set out in chapter 6.5.

(a) *critical* — rather than accepting of situations, (b) *transformative* — of social conditions and individual and social consciousnesses, (c) *educative* — possessing both vision and skills of analysis of situations, and (d) *ethical* — both personally and for the community of participants. In this respect leadership is separate from management as traditionally defined — indeed leadership should be shared and reflexive, embodying action and reflection (Codd, 1989). These views embody the language and purpose of Habermas's emancipatory interest and the operation of the *ideal speech situation* in its equalization of power amongst all participants and its recognition that education is a matter of participatory debate.<sup>180</sup>

#### 10.1.4 Summary

Through three ways then — (i) according differential status to school knowledge; (ii) operating differential access to school knowledge and ensuring differential outcomes through the operation of the cultural capital thesis; (iii) bureaucratizing schooling — schools perpetuate power structures and reproduce the societal *status quo*. It has been suggested here not only that school curricula violate Habermasian principles, depending on the operation of their bureaucracy, but that, because they are part of a larger, societal and cultural process of bureaucratization, this process is difficult to resist. When the steering media of law, money, communication and bureaucracies combine and intrude overtly into education, driven by political will, then empowerment of teachers, schools and pupils is under threat. Strategic action serving Habermas's technical interest replaces communicative action.

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<sup>180</sup> Smyth (1989b) develops this view of 'critical leadership' where he sees it as *enabling* through understanding and transformation of consciousness and circumstances. Leadership, thus defined, replaces leadership-as-domination with leadership as facilitating self-transformation. This involves the rejection of the social constructs of leaders and followers with a construct of many leaders and participants. a democratized and participatory bureaucracy (Smyth, 1989b, p. 181).



## 10.2 The Sociology of School Knowledge Reconsidered

There are three criticisms which can be levelled at this analysis, the first two deal with the relationship of school and society (10.2.1 and 10.2.2), the third (10.2.3) concerns the charge of relativism in the sociology of knowledge (the criticisms of which were directed in (8.6) to Habermas's own theories).

### 10.2.1 Schools Do Not Alter the Power Elites in Society

There is an assumption in the above that school knowledge perpetuates the interests of the powerful, ie that it performs an ideological function and that social change and reduction of inequality result from change in educational knowledge, thereby overlooking the notion of overdetermined behaviour; changing school knowledge, however, may not redistribute power in society. Haes (1980a) criticises Young's premiss here:

Young makes the false and simplistic assumption that a redistribution of the present organization of knowledge would somehow lead to a parallel redistribution of property, power and prestige....such relatively minor superstructural educational modifications alone cannot, in Marxian terms, be presumed to lead to structural alterations in the relations of production....Young's excursus into epistemological issues...leads him to the curious view that the reorganization of knowledge constitutes a sufficient condition for the redistribution of power, he thus misses the simple and obvious point that if previously neglected educational areas become significant, this merely changes certain educational assumptions (Haes, 1980a, pp. 723-4).

Indeed Haes questions education's role in the reproduction of the societal *status quo* through access to bureaucracies:

being initiated into Young's 'high status knowledge' is not the best route to follow for a position of power in capitalist society; such knowledge is actually 'a passport to the vast army of proletarianized clerical and minor administrative workers or a job as a schoolteacher'. The key to membership of the ruling class is not a curriculum which culminates in certificates in literature, abstract and non-applied knowledge, but the 'process of gentrification', which involves... 'a drift towards claret and horses and away from beer and motor bikes'. This curriculum is centred not on 'high status knowledge' but on blood sports and Scouting for Boys; it is disseminated through those professions which have refused to become 'professionalized', such as the army, the church, public schools and universities (Haes, 1980a, pp. 724-5).

Haes (1980b, p. 28) suggests that Young's analysis overlooks the argument that schools have a measure of 'relative autonomy', they are not passively socially, culturally and economically reproductive (Giroux, 1983, 1984); some are sites of contestation, struggle and resistance (Willis, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Bowe *et al*, 1992) and relative autonomy (Giroux, 1984) from economic, cultural and social reproduction. Schools may be actively engaged in breaking out of cycles of reproduction through developing student voice (Giroux, 1989) and 'positive critical knowledge' (ibid., pp. 121-2) which interrogates, resists and mediates the determining pressures of economic, social and cultural hegemonies.<sup>181</sup> One cannot assume too tight or mechanistic a fit between school and society, even though, for example, representatives from the local community and industry sit on governing bodies.<sup>182</sup>

Further, one sees attempts by government now, yet again, to elevate non-academic knowledge through certification of vocational education (NVQs), perhaps reducing the significance of Young's high status being accorded solely to academic knowledge. Moreover, the weak classification and framing of flexible learning systems that have been introduced for academic knowledge with the rise of information technology perhaps reduce the significance of Bernstein's link between high status knowledge and collection codes marked by strong classification and framing.

If agency is to be restored, in Habermasian terms if lifeworld and system are

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<sup>181</sup> In this perspective schools are 'relatively autonomous institutions that not only provide spaces for oppositional behaviour and teaching but also represent a source of contradictions that sometimes makes them dysfunctional to the material and ideological interests of the dominant society....For instance, schools sometimes support a notion of liberal education that is in sharp contradiction to the dominant society's demand for forms of education that are specialized, instrumental, and geared to the logic of the marketplace' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 72).

<sup>182</sup> This forms the basis of Aronowitz's and Giroux's condemnation of theories of economic, social and cultural reproduction (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, chapter 5 and Tunnell's (1978, p. 338) and Giroux's (1983) criticism of the Bowles and Gintis correspondence principle. Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) comment on Althusser's and Bowles's and Gintis's neglect of the role of contestation, resistance and struggle that takes place in, and over, schools (pp. 75 - 79). -

to be recoupled, then such a determinist position has to be resisted. This recognizes that education is not simply the unproblematic transmission and mechanistic reproduction of the dominant ideology but that the field of schooling, like labour itself, is a contested terrain.<sup>183</sup> Rather, Habermas's principles of ideal speech suggest the need to regard schools as mediating institutions which can accept, resist, interrogate, modify or reject strategic action from external agents, and to regard teachers and pupils as involved in mediating behaviours, addressing the conditions of ideal speech and communicative action (cf Fernandes, (1988); Bowe *et al* (1992)).

Application of Habermas's argument suggests that schools and teachers should resist the strategic — perlocutionary — actions of others if they are not 'warranted' and that communicative action will interrogate the purposes and effects of curricular proposals taken by decision makers. In effect this is arguing that schools might have to act strategically, weakening Habermas's advocacy of communicative action. The operation of the *ideal speech situation* will also reject positivist accounts of determined or over-determined behaviour (Habermas, 1971a, 1972), a feature discussed in the case study of chapter 12.3 (see also Ball, 1990).

Resistance theories are not without their theoretical problems however, for example Aronowitz and Giroux (op cit., pp. 99 - 109) suggest that resistance theories to date take insufficient account of 'the historical development of the conditions that promote and reinforce contradictory modes of resistance and struggle' (p. 99),<sup>184</sup> that they fail to take seriously the notions of race and gender (p. 101), that they tend to focus on overt acts of resistance only (p. 102), that such theories

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<sup>183</sup> Eg Braverman. 1974; Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1977; MacRobbie, 1978; Apple, 1983; Bowe *et al*, 1992; Apple. 1993.

<sup>184</sup> A notable exception to this is provided by Grace (1985) in his discussions of the history of contestation in teacher evaluation. This is significant in pointing to the value of using Habermas's theories to interrogate lived experience rather than to construct a social theory.

'have not given enough attention to the issue of how domination reaches into the structure of personality itself' (p. 103), that they assume cultural and social solidarity within and between oppressed groups. Giroux (1989) provides an example of this where he shows that students' values are composed of multiple and often contradictory sets of discourses (pp. 67 - 8). What is clear is that resistance theories, taking fuller account of Habermasian principles and his insistence on the need to capture the complexity of variables in a situation, will need to recognize that lived experiences are interpenetrated by contradictions as well as consistencies. In Habermasian terms theories of resistance, contestation and struggle (eg Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986; Giroux, 1989) have to be complemented by an analysis of emancipatory and empowering curricula.

### 10.2.2 The Epistemological Rather than Social Basis of Knowledge

The insistence in the sociology of knowledge that knowledge is an individual or coincidental social construct neglects the fact that there are broad areas of shared experience and concepts which can be used as a basis for communicative action. Indeed two of the characteristics of the *ideal speech situation* outlined in figure 6.2 are that it should embody a 'cooperative search for truth' and there should be an 'orientation to a common interest'. There is a limit to the number of ways in which experience is organized and construed, and such organization does not require the edict of those in power to determine what those ways shall be, ie knowledge is an epistemological rather than political construct. The *ideal speech situation* is premised on a recognition of shared assumptions about the methodology — the procedures — of discourse and debate.

### 10.2.3 The Problem of Relativism

Young *et al* (1971) commit themselves to a relativist position in acknowledging the social construction of knowledge, by acknowledging the social origins of knowledge and by indicating that criteria for verification of knowledge are determined by society rather than epistemologically. White (1982) signals the dangers of this, arguing that in principle it could lead to an 'anything goes' policy (White, 1982, p. 8) where majority will directs educational policy, regardless of whether that majority will is correct, informed, ignorant or partisan (ie regardless of how fully Habermas's speech act validity claims of truth, comprehensibility, sincerity and appropriacy are addressed). Indeed Warnock (1977) suggests that adoption of the totalist relativists' views would mark the end of teaching as nobody would have any right over anybody else to set herself up as an expert in any field. In these circumstances two major features of Habermas's theory come to the fore: the need to interrogate (a) the dialogue claims of the proponents — their truth, sincerity, legitimacy and comprehensibility — and (b) the nature of the process of bureaucratization where limited authority of expertise is not necessarily a barrier to the exercise of substantive decision making.<sup>185</sup>

The first instance (a) is problematical, for it would be possible to be perceived as being sincere, comprehensible, legitimate and true (depending on the meaning of this latter term), and yet still to be wrong or ideological — a practice which obtains in everyday life. This suggests an important weakness in Habermasian theory — that his criteria for the *ideal speech situation* are either inadequate or only spatio-temporally referenced.

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<sup>185</sup> For example the way in which senior politicians under the regulations of the 1988 Reform Act can make substantive decisions on the content of school curricula without having expertise in the field.

The second instance (b) is typically the case in parliamentary democracy organized into bureaucracies. In these circumstances Habermas's suggestion that rational critique and justification *ought* to be the case — even if it *is not* currently the case — serves as a reminder of the need to recognize the distinction between expertise and political power.

### 10.3 Reviewing the Sociology of School Knowledge

This chapter has indicated that, whilst traditional curricula and their organization risk the technical and hermeneutic interest and thereby become socially reproductive, there are several ways in which communicative action and the emancipatory interest can be served through ideology critique and communicative action, ie that Habermas's views can be useful in illuminating an analysis of curricula and their relationship to the wider society. However, there are limitations to the utility of Habermas's views here. The work of Young and Bernstein (10.1.1) does not *rely on* Habermas's comments on strategic action and the technical interest to make its point; the comments on according differential access to high status curricula (10.1.2) do not *rely on* Habermas's views to give them meaning; Bourdieu's cultural capital thesis does not *rely on* Habermas's views to give it meaning, nor does the discussion of examinations and credentials (10.1.2) or collegiality (10.1.3). The discussion of the bureaucratization of curricula here (10.1.3) owes more perhaps to Weber's (1972) analysis of bureaucracy, Durkheim's analysis of 'social facts' (1938) and 'anomie' (1951), and Marx's (1963) concept of alienation than it does to Habermas. The notion of overdetermined behaviour (10.2.1) does not *rely on* Habermas's views to give it meaning, indeed the work of Althusser (1972) might be more applicable here. Further, resistance theories (10.2.1) do not *rely on* Habermas's work to give them meaning, indeed one could argue that the signif-

importance of resistance theories is their celebration of the success of strategic rather than communicative action. The discussion of areas of shared experience (10.2.2) does not *rely on* Habermas's views to be given meaning. Habermas's work might be seen as consonant with or an interesting *adjunct to*, rather than central feature of, the analysis of the sociology of knowledge. What, then is the particular power of Habermas's views?

Habermas's principles suggest ways in which the issues in the summary above can be addressed, *viz*:

- by exposing technicism and strategic action in schools and curricula and indicating how these can be transformed into communicative action;
- by exposing the knowledge-constitutive interests at work in curricula;
- by exposing decision making on curricula to ideology critique;
- by exposing perlocutionary purposes and effects in decision making and by indicating how these can be transformed into illocutionary purposes and effects through critique, communicative action and the search for a 'warranted consensus' and rational consensus on issues;
- by exposing the operation of technical and hermeneutic interests in decision making in schools and curricula and indicating how they can be transformed into emancipatory interests;
- by identifying areas of curricula where the *suppression of generalizable interests* and *systematically distorted communication* occur and indicating how these can be addressed through the principles and validity claims of ideal speech;

- by indicating how the principles and validity claims of the *ideal speech situation* can bear on decision-making about schools and curricula;
- by scrutinising the legitimacy claims of decision makers on curricula;
- by indicating how freedoms can be developed through communicative action;
- by indicating how the colonization of the lifeworld by the steering media of power, law, bureaucratization in schools and curricula and the uncoupling of lifeworld and system can be avoided by involvement in communicative action for decision making;
- by indicating how the rationalization of schools and curricula can develop enabling rather than constraining bureaucracies through communicative action;
- by indicating where losses of freedom and losses of meaning occur in schools and curricula and ways of overcoming these;
- by binding together conception and execution;
- by adopting collegial models of management and leadership.<sup>186</sup>

A further series of implications from Habermasian principles lies in the development of the emancipatory interest within bureaucratic settings. The analysis of schools as bureaucratic settings outlined earlier suggests that the movement towards bureaucratization, whilst being a movement towards 'disenchantment' and

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<sup>186</sup> Smyth (1985) echoes this in his list of issues which educationists can address (cf Smyth, 1985p. 119): what counts as knowledge; how is such knowledge produced and distributed; what concerns do different forms of knowledge production address; whose interests are in opposition to the dominant ideology; what knowledge would not be consistent with the dominant ideology; do certain forms of engaging knowledge help to legitimate one set of interests over and above others; how might knowledge be engaged so that alternate forms of knowledge and knowledge production might be considered: where ultimately will the teacher and the student stand regarding the interests which underlie the pursuit of knowledge; given this pursuit of knowledge, what is to be done?



hence towards freedom also risks the loss of democracy through the hierarchically controlled exercise of power which, Lakomski (1987) argues, is only soluble through the application of the emancipatory interest.

Using Habermas's principles in this chapter has suggested that schools have to be examined to expose their freedom-guaranteeing and freedom-constraining potentials, to outline the channels whereby emancipation can too easily be transformed — or deformed — into constraint, to examine the possible reasons for this potential deformation, to outline patterns of deformation and patterns of liberation, to examine the practices and principles which appear to be most constraining on emancipation to see how they can be transformed into empowerment, in short to map out the terrain of emancipation in situations which might threaten it. This addresses the aims, content, pedagogy, resourcing, assessment, evaluation, management, change, development, research into and the planning of the curriculum — significant features of which will be addressed in the next chapter. It involves questions of control, strategic and communicative action for collective interests, debates about values and their protection, freedoms and their practice.

Emancipation and constraint operate at a variety of levels — day-to-day coping in classrooms (ie interpersonal levels), departmental and school level planning (ie institutional levels), beyond schools levels (eg local, regional, sociocultural, national). This recognizes that:

school life is not conceptualized as a unitary, monolithic, and iron-clad system of rules and regulations, but as a cultural terrain characterized by the production of experiences and subjectivities amid varying degrees of accommodation, contestation, and resistance. As a form of cultural politics, literacy both illuminates and interrogates school life as a place characterized by a plurality of conflicting languages and struggles. a site where dominant and subordinate cultures collide and where teachers, students, parents, and school administrators often differ as to how school experiences and practices are to be defined and understood (Giroux, 1989, p. 162).

Habermas suggests that contestation and the formulation of administrative communication and powers have to be subjected to analysis of the validity claims which inhere in them — rightness, truthfulness, legitimacy and sincerity. Developing the emancipatory interest in the face of structural — bureaucratic — denial of this involves differentiating between bureaucratic organization and administrative organization — which need not be bureaucratic. In the face of the former organization then ‘chinks in the armour’ of bureaucracy (Giroux, 1983) have to be exposed<sup>187</sup> to enable the emancipatory interest to be exposed and acted upon communicatively. It is no mere accident of metaphor that this can be described as a ‘freeing-up’ process. In the face of the latter then there is a recognition that non-hierarchical organizations, eg collegial organizations (Bush, 1986), might be more freedom guaranteeing and democratic but that this will be bought at a price of increased communication commitment (which could all too easily tip over into bureaucratization). The emancipatory interest and communicative action are served but bounded in bureaucracies, the administrative regularities and practices of organizations have to be vigilantly interrogated for their emancipatory and empowering potentials.

The peculiar power of communicative rather than strategic action to effect empowerment and emancipation is one of Habermas’s central claims. However, whilst this chapter has argued where and how this might take place, whether communicative action is to take precedence over strategic action is a moot point, for this chapter has demonstrated the power of strategic rather than communicative action in using school knowledge to perpetuate the societal *status quo*. In the face of such powerful forces and structures in society communicative action seems

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<sup>187</sup> Cf Giroux’s (1983) analysis of the battle against hegemony.

ineffectual; rather it might become more appropriate to use strategic action to meet strategic action. In this case the communicative turn of Habermas's theories offers little; rather it is the political and strategic turn that might be more decisive in bringing emancipation and empowerment through school knowledge. The same criticisms which were levelled against the utopian optimism of the *ideal speech situation* in 6.9 surface here also. Communicative action is ineffectual in meeting powerful strategic action. In this respect, whilst Habermas's views on technicism, ideology critique, strategic action, the *suppression of generalizable interests*, legitimacy claims, bureaucracies and losses of freedom are useful, the power of *communicative action* as the prophylactic or panacea remains unproven. Indeed it might be argued that over-reliance on the power of communicative action in the *ideal speech situation* in fact might be disempowering (cf Phillips, 1986, p. 88).

## Chapter XI

### HABERMAS AND EMANCIPATORY CURRICULA

#### 11.1 Introduction

Chapter 10 identified how Habermasian principles can inform an understanding of the relationships between curricula and society. This chapter examines how Habermas's work can inform an understanding of the internal rather than external aspects of the curriculum. The chapter follows the components of a curriculum model outlined by Skilbeck (1976a) (see Appendix B):<sup>188</sup>

- curriculum design (Skilbeck's 'situational analysis' and 'goal formation') (11.2);
- curriculum aims (Skilbeck's 'goal formation') (11.3);
- developing a critical curriculum content (Skilbeck's 'programme building') (11.4);
- developing a critical pedagogy (Skilbeck's 'interpretation and implementation') (11.5);
- evaluation in emancipatory curricula (Skilbeck's 'monitoring, feedback, assessment') (11.6);
- research and curriculum development (Skilbeck's 'reconstruction') (11.7);

These are used as section headings for this chapter. Habermas's views argue

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<sup>188</sup> Skilbeck's model has been used here as it breaks free from linear, objectives driven models of curriculum design (Morrison and Ridley, 1988, pp. 39 - 40), ie strategic forms of communication, the technical interest. Skilbeck argues that his components do not necessarily have to follow a given sequence.

for a re-invigoration of the curriculum debate, ie as an exercise of communicative rationality, which not only renders problematic the curriculum but which subjects it to rational interrogation and indicates its potential for the development of several forms of rationality (Habermas, 1987a, 1987b) (cf Morrison 1989b).<sup>189</sup>

## 11.2 Curriculum Design

At the level of curriculum design one can observe a rise in interest in Habermas's views by curriculum theorists which has been reflected both in the scope and frequency with which Habermas's early theory of knowledge-constitutive interests has been used.<sup>190</sup> Grundy (1987) argues that Habermas's three knowledge-constitutive interests inform three styles of curriculum design:

(a) a rationalist / behaviourist 'curriculum as product' view of the curriculum revealing the 'technical' knowledge-constitutive interest (eg Tyler, 1949);

(b) a humanistic, interpretive, pragmatic 'curriculum as practice' view of the curriculum which is identified with Stenhouse's (1975) 'process' approach to the curriculum and with his Humanities Curriculum Project, embodying the hermeneutic knowledge-constitutive interest;

(c) an existential, empowering and ideology-critical view of the 'curriculum as praxis' which can be seen in the work of Freire (1972), Stenhouse (1975; 1983) and Apple (1979; 1993) and which embodies the emancipatory interest.

These styles provide a neat typology of educational goals and design models which enable systems of knowledge to be constructed; on the other hand they are

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<sup>189</sup> This echoes Stenhouse's (1975) definition of the curriculum as a *proposal* which is subject to debate.

<sup>190</sup> For example Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Young, 1989 .

perhaps *too* conceptually neat, they fail to see the necessary interconnections and overlaps between what appear to be discrete ideal types.<sup>191</sup>

### 11.2.1 The Technical Model of the Curriculum

Habermas's technical interest can be seen in the objectives (often behavioural) model of planning which features in literature from Tyler (1949), Taba (1962) and Wheeler (1967). In this model the evidence for learning is demonstrated in the behaviour of students, evaluation of learning thus becomes assessment of end behaviour. The curriculum is cast in an instrumentalist view, focusing on controlling the content and outcomes. In Habermasian terms the curriculum serves strategic rather than communicative action through prespecification and strong framing, arguing that the most rational way to plan a curriculum is to decide first the objectives and then find the most suitable means of achieving those ends — a means-end model which furthers the 'decisionism' noted in chapter 3.5 as an example of a technicist mentality which leaves aims unquestioned. The tenets of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2 — 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to alter norms'; 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner' — are violated.<sup>192</sup> Whilst the model is useful for training purposes and the planning and assessment of behavioural competencies (Pratt, 1994), from an emancipatory stance it is undesirable as a complete model of the design process in education for several reasons:

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<sup>191</sup> One can add to this Barrow's (1984) proscription of the whole enterprise of modelling the curriculum at all, as it reduces complex realities of lived experiences to crudely simplistic abstractions, perhaps the problem with any theory (including that of Habermas), a view contested by Morrison (1993). However, Grundy (1987) is able to use Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests to summarize a history of curriculum design.

<sup>192</sup> It is perhaps ironical in Habermasian terms that this model has been termed 'rational curriculum planning' (Socokett, 1976).

- its bureaucratic stance — devoid of human agency (producing the alienating effects of colonizing the lifeworld by system imperatives — the steering media of power and bureaucracy, and negating the importance of motivation in learning), ie failing to address possible motivational crises (Habermas, 1976a);
- its casting of students in a very passive mode, emphasizing control and understanding (Habermas's technical and hermeneutic interests) rather than empowerment (Habermas's emancipatory interest);
- its reduction of education to the observable (eg to training) (neglecting Habermas's principles of ideal speech which stress open-endedness, reflecting on the nature of knowledge (see fig. 6.2));
- its neglect of difficult areas to measure or assess, its trivializing of the curriculum to the easily measurable, ie addressing lower order behaviours and thinking rather than the higher order thinking which, it was indicated in chapter 6.8, characterise the *ideal speech situation*, and indicating a sympathy with the scientism and positivism criticised by Habermas (1971a, 1972, 1974a);<sup>193</sup>
- its epistemological incoherence (assuming that learning and behaviour can be described discretely and taxonomically in a way that separates process and product), ie demonstrating a sympathy with the scientism and positivism which Habermas criticised (1971a, 1972, 1974a);
- its neglect of processes of learning and of process epistemology (demonstrating strategic rather than communicative action, perlocutionary rather than illocutionary teaching, neglecting the need for discussions which figure 6.2 outlined as

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<sup>193</sup> This also smacks of the efficiency, quality control model of the industrial metaphors of teaching suggested by Morrison, 1989b.

the principles of the *ideal speech situation*, viz.: ‘freedom to check questionable claims’; ‘freedom to evaluate explanations’; ‘freedom to assess justifications’; ‘equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts’; ‘recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue’; ‘equal opportunity for discussion’; ‘the consensus resulting from the discussion’);

- its uniformity and lack of individuality in prescribing programmes (a confusion of the logical and psychological approaches to learning (Hirst, 1967), addressing strategic rather than communicative action and elevating rationality factors over personality factors in education (cf Habermas, 1984));
- its inapplicability to aesthetics (Eisner, 1985), humanities and arts education (where open-ended forms of experience (Habermas, 1984, 1987a) are essential if the deleterious effects of rationalization, bureaucratization, scientism and strategic action are to be avoided);
- its reduction of the complexity of the curriculum to simplistic statements (cf Barrow, 1984) (echoing Habermas’s (1984, 1987a) fear that loss of meaning leads to loss of freedom and violating the principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, viz.: ‘freedom to evaluate explanations’; ‘freedom to modify a given conceptual framework’; ‘equal opportunity for discussion’);
- its silence on values and justification (violating the principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, viz.: ‘freedom to check questionable claims’; ‘freedom to evaluate explanations’; ‘freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge’; ‘freedom to assess justifications’; ‘freedom to reflect on the nature of political will’; ‘all motives except the cooperative search for truth are excluded’);
- its constraining potential on individual empowerment, emancipation and free-



dom (emphasizing Habermas's technical rather than emancipatory interest and violating the principle of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, *viz.*: discussion to be free from domination);

It is thus the prototypical bureaucratized curriculum. Habermas's views of communicative action suggest that the task for emancipatory curriculum planners and teachers using this model would be to suggest how participatory democracy<sup>194</sup> could be developed in, and through, this style of curriculum design — by teachers, planners and pupils.

### 11.2.2 The Hermeneutic Model of the Curriculum

Habermas's hermeneutic interest is exemplified by Stenhouse's (1975) process curriculum, premised on deriving processes from content, emphasizing the importance of pedagogical processes and understanding over outcomes. Stenhouse's example of the Humanities Curriculum Project shows how learning about controversial issues eg war, poverty, race, is best achieved through the appropriate teaching styles of discussion, debate and the neutral chairperson — ie to embody the principle that if an issue is in principle debatable then it should be explored through debate rather than through, for example, transmission teaching. A process approach describes an 'encounter' which leaves open the outcomes of the encounter. This is not to deny an objectives approach — indeed Skilbeck (1984a) sees in Stenhouse's model a veiled objectives model — it is to replace behavioural objectives with process and expressive objectives (Eisner, 1985) in which understanding is developed through involvement and through practice.

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<sup>194</sup> McCarthy (1991) questions the extent to which Habermas's views of a participatory democracy are, in fact, practicable in large scale administration in advanced capitalism. A measure of representative democracy, he suggests, is unavoidable.

A process curriculum is based on Habermas's hermeneutic understanding and abides by the principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2. Because the outcomes are uncertain a process curriculum is illocutionary rather than perlocutionary, it serves communicative rather than strategic action. Indeed the example of Stenhouse's Humanities Curriculum Project specifically identifies the need for discussion, thereby addressing Habermas's principles of the *ideal speech situation* set out in figure 6.2, *viz.*: 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; 'equal opportunity for discussion'; 'discussion to be free from domination and distorting or deforming influences'; 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the positional or political power of the participants'. The move to understanding — making meaning of situations — is a counter to the 'loss of meaning' and thence to 'loss of freedom' which Habermas saw in the rationalization of society into technicist bureaucracies (Habermas, 1984).

### 11.2.3 The Emancipatory Model of the Curriculum

Habermas's emancipatory interest is served by rendering the curriculum problematical — for example through action research (discussed later), through taking 'type three objectives' (Eisner, 1985) — those objectives which deal with problems and problem-solving approaches — and through establishing emancipatory issues in the curriculum (eg cultural literacy programmes as developed by Freire (1972)) and social studies programmes (eg Anyon, 1981) and emancipatory pedagogies (discussed later). As in the hermeneutic interest social issues are explored illocutionarily rather than perlocutionarily; further, these issues are subjected to ideology critique to evaluate the legitimacy of the situations which they describe

and to establish an agenda for change for generalizable interests to be furthered. This is exemplified in the case study in chapter 12.

Emancipatory curricula serve student empowerment both in content and process, developing participatory democracies, engagement, student voice (Giroux and McLaren, 1986) and the realization of individual and collective existential futures in situations approaching an *ideal speech situation* as set out in figure 6.2, viz.: 'orientation to a common interest ascertained without deception'; 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to reflect on the nature of knowledge'; 'mutual understanding between participants'. Habermas's hermeneutic interest is a necessary though not sufficient condition for a curriculum which serves the emancipatory interest. Critique and practice combine to articulate a curriculum which *interrogates* cultures, lived experiences of power, domination and oppression, ie which subjects curriculum aims, contents and purposes to communicative enquiry (eg Habermas's claims of truth, rightness, comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy) and which sets an agenda to promote empowerment (cf Ashcroft, 1987, p. 150).

Hence curriculum planning must take account of agency and structure, life-world and system. What is being argued for here is the need for curriculum planning to be a collegial activity in which different interests, values, purposes, contents are exposed and, true to the *ideal speech situation*, a 'warranted consensus' reached which results from discussions in which the force of the better argument takes precedence over the positional or political power of the participants and where discussion is free from domination (cf figure 6.2). Hence participants will have the freedom to: 'enter a discourse'; 'check questionable claims'; 'evaluate explanations'; 'reflect on the nature of knowledge'; 'assess justifications and alter norms' (fig. 6.2).

However, how realistic or practicable is this suggested openness is an open question. Habermas is advocating rather than demonstrating the use of communicative action. Whilst his views articulate with types of curriculum plan the viability of his suggested method for planning — through communicative action — is unproven. The tenets of the *ideal speech situation* provide a useful set of criteria for the methodology of reaching agreement on curriculum practices. Aims, contents and pedagogy are all exposed to ideology critique and a consensus which is morally defensible in terms of the promotion of generalizable interests is sought on their outcomes in practice.

### 11.3 Curriculum Aims

The second element of Skilbeck's model is curriculum aims. Habermas's work contains several implications for curriculum aims and objectives. His early critiques of technicism (1971a) and of the technical and hermeneutic knowledge-constitutive interests (1972, 1974a) argue for the development of the emancipatory interest and freedoms — individual and collective — through education and the recognition of the intrinsic rather than instrumental (technical) worth of education.

The proscription of a narrow instrumentalism is reinforced in Habermas's later work (1979a, 1984, 1987a) where he argues for the elevation of communicative, illocutionary action over strategic, perlocutionary action. Habermas sees in the development of freedoms the need for education to maximise generalizable interests and to serve the furtherance of equality in society. Figure 6.2 clarified the nature of the freedoms which were rooted — contrafactually — in the *ideal speech situation* — eg. *freedom from* domination, distorting influences, political will and strategic action; *freedom for* the opportunity to enter a discourse, evaluate claims,

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justifications and explanations, reflect on the nature of knowledge, alter norms, enter discussion, use speech acts. Chapters 6 and 7 outlined how, through the notion of reconstructive science, Habermas was able to suggest that equality and democracy should be central aims; these are central purposes of education. Indeed figure 6.2 implies that education should develop in students the ability to become part of a participatory democracy. The rejection of a narrowly instrumentalist education coupled with the need for education to serve democracy, liberty and equality reinforces the need for citizenship education.<sup>195</sup>

Habermas's tenets suggest that if freedoms and the emancipatory interest (individual and collective), equality, democracy (participatory and representative) and emancipation are to be served then education should aim to develop *communicative competence* in pupils, *viz.*: the ability to distinguish defensible and indefensible arguments, to undertake ideology critique,<sup>196</sup> to assess validity claims, to distinguish between strategic and communicative action, to distinguish between perlocutions and illocutions, to develop the ability for rational discourse, to distinguish between rational and irrational claims and discourses, to clarify 'interests' and subject these to the arguments of legitimacy, to expose the interests in pluralist societies and subject these to ideology critique, to participate in rational discourse and enquiry, to develop critical awareness, to develop informed autonomous thought and action. At the level of aims an empowering curriculum has been seen to be premised on a socially critical progressivism (Morrison, 1989a) which builds on the work of Dewey and student-centredness but which additionally interrogates the socio-cultural context in which it is set.

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<sup>195</sup> Education's role in developing citizenship will be discussed more fully in the case study of cross-curricular issues in the National Curriculum of England and Wales in chapter 12.

<sup>196</sup> This is echoed by Young (1990) in his comment that 'if children do not engage in critique as they learn, they may not have the courage for critique later' (Young, 1990, p. 481). -

Habermas's principles of ideal speech argue for a need to develop in pupils not only a measure of autonomy<sup>197</sup> but the ability to think and act flexibly and creatively if the 'fusion of horizons' of Habermas's hermeneutic interest are to be served and if the principle of ideal speech is to be addressed which mentions: 'recognition of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner' (figure 6.2 sic).<sup>198</sup> Indeed Habermas (1979a, 1984, 1987a) regards this ability to decentre as a significant feature of 'disenchanted' societies,<sup>199</sup> evidenced in his discussion of Piaget and Kohlberg. Developing the child's ability to accept the *force of the better argument alone*, a characteristic of the *ideal speech situation*, recognizes the need for the child both to be able to decentre and to separate the argument from its proponents.

It was argued in chapter 4 that Habermas's hermeneutic interest was insufficient to guarantee emancipation — it concerned understanding and acceptance rather than social and individual transformation. The implications of this for curriculum aims are to suggest that pupils will need to think flexibly and to put this to some emancipatory purpose, hence will have to develop the abilities to identify, articulate, suggest solutions to problems and, where possible, put those solutions into practice. Hence ideology critique sets an agenda for emancipation.<sup>200</sup> This

<sup>197</sup> Young (1990) supports 'the self-directed exploratory freedoms Dewey enjoyed. .... The failure to connect with the child's schemata may be called "framework failure". When learning emerges from the *child's* problematic, this form of failure is far less likely' (Young, 1990, p. 480).

<sup>198</sup> 'Calling for openness to experience and pointing to the importance of personal choice and free expression progressive education negate[s] the traditional emphasis on achieving inner control by inhibition and competence by adult modelling...The progressive educator [views] the school as a potentiator of creative thinking, self-awareness, and inner strength far in excess of what was envisaged in the past' (Zimiles, 1987, p. 204). Zimiles argues that 'classrooms in progressive schools are seen more as vehicles for supporting complex initiatives than as shops for the production of particular outputs' (p. 206).

<sup>199</sup> This is echoed by Cagan (1978) where he suggests that a decent and just social order, one allowing each individual to achieve self-determination and self-actualization, can be built only if individualistic models of social relationships are replaced by more communal or collective ones, (Cagan, 1978, p. 228).

<sup>200</sup> Smyth (1989d) suggests that this can be done through a four stage process — *describe* (what

accords significance to the addressing of social issues in the curriculum — the development of the ‘socially critical school’ (Kemmis, 1982b; Morrison, 1989a). It will involve a critical reading of immediate, local, regional, national, and international environments and related issues — their power structures, organizations, dynamics and participant communities.<sup>201</sup>

Habermas’s views suggest the need to keep together an individually and socially negotiated and socially focussed curriculum, the school and society have to be kept together as Dewey suggests, although there needs to be a more sharply critical reading of the society and the relationships of the school, pupils, teachers and society than Dewey gave in his somewhat bland call for democracy.<sup>202</sup>

Morrison (1989a) argues that these requisites provide only a necessary rather than a sufficient set of emancipatory criteria as one could follow all of these principles and still not have an emancipated curriculum or an emancipated child at the end of it (see also Gleeson, 1978). What is needed is to address not only the content but the *pedagogical* aspects of that content (ibid., p. 47), the child’s relationship to that content (Morrison, 1989c), in Giroux’s words (1983) to make the political more pedagogical and the pedagogical more political. In Habermasian terms there is a need to interrogate and demythologize curriculum content (Fitzclarence and Giroux, 1984),<sup>203</sup> with teachers working with, and on, the experiences

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do I do?): *inform* — (what does this mean?); *confront* — (how did I come to be like this?); *reconstruct* — (how might I do things differently?) (pp. 5 - 6). These derive directly from Habermas’s (1972, pp. 230-1) use of psychoanalysis discussed in chapter 5.2 above — Habermas’s hermeneutic, positivistic and critical elements (sic).

<sup>201</sup> This resonates with Giroux’s (1985) comment that the discourse of lived cultures needs to interrogate how people create stories, memories, and narratives that posit a sense of determination and agency. which, itself, echoes Counts (1932, pp. 9-10).

<sup>202</sup> Cf Greene’s (1986) discussion of the ‘small-town paradigm in Dewey’s treatment of community’ (Greene, 1986, p. 434).

<sup>203</sup> These will be introduced in the case study of the National Curriculum in chapter 12.



which children bring to school (Hall, 1983, p. 8).

Habermas (1984, 1987a) is concerned to expose the deleterious effects of bureaucratization:

- its colonization of the lifeworld;
- its technicist view of rationality;
- its neglect of agency;
- its separation of conception from execution;
- its neglect of other forms of rationality (eg expressive, artistic, communicative).

This suggests that the curriculum should aim to develop in pupils an understanding and critique of steering media in society (eg power, law, money, bureaucratization — discussed in education for citizenship in chapter 12). Further, the curriculum should enable teachers and children to negotiate learning, ie embody the weak classification and framing (Bernstein, 1971, 1977a) which facilitated the operation of the *ideal speech situation*. The development of other forms of rationality as a counter to the positivistic, technicist, instrumental rationalities for which Habermas criticises society and bureaucracies can be addressed through aesthetic-affective and communicative education (Habermas, 1971a, 1984, 1987a); Habermas's principles argue for a wide core of curriculum 'basics', moving from conformity and uniformity to a celebration of diversity (cf Greene, 1986, p. 440). If we take from chapter 7 a main characteristic of bureaucracies being a reliance on written forms of communication then, whilst this can be seen as a move to demythologizing education — a 'linguistification of the sacred' (Habermas, 1987a) it can also be seen as a constraining force in packaged, deskilling curricula (cf

Carlson, 1982; Apple, 1983) which separate conception from execution and which reduce teachers to technicians and which further Habermas's technical interest.

A multiplicity of styles of education, curricula and pedagogy is required to meet different children's needs, backgrounds and interests. For some a child-centred approach is needed, for others a subject-centred, traditional approach is more appropriate. This directs attention to an issue raised several times, that the same curriculum (however construed and whatever its philosophy) can be empowering or it can be disempowering depending on its relationship to the lived experiences of the pupils and the pedagogical relationships between teacher, pupil and curricula.<sup>204</sup> Whichever approaches are chosen several curriculum aims can be identified:

- the need to develop students' empowerment and freedoms;
- the need to avoid narrowly instrumental curricula;
- the need to develop communicative competence;
- the need to develop the ability for ideology-critique;
- the need for education to promote equality and democracy;
- the need to develop pupil autonomy and cultural power;
- the need for collaborative learning;
- the need to develop aesthetic education and non-instrumental forms of rationality;

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<sup>204</sup> This is analogous to the discussion of bureaucratization in chapter seven, where it was argued that bureaucracies could both empower and disempower their members. 2

- the need to develop flexibility and problem-solving abilities in children;
- the critical interrogation of steering media and bureaucracies in society and the proposals of agendas for change;
- the critical interrogation of cultural and environmental contexts in which personal and community cultural biographies are embedded;
- the need to develop negotiated learning;
- the need to address issues of equal opportunities;
- the development of the socially critical school;
- the need to develop citizenship in participatory democracies;
- the need for political education and the study of politically sensitive issues;
- the development of a wide view of the 'basics' in curricula.<sup>205</sup>

On the face of it, then, it appears that Habermas's views are fruitful in suggesting curriculum aims. However, the same difficulties that were suggested to exist with his contribution to a study of the sociology of knowledge apply in this context also, *viz.* that the aims which Habermas's views support do not *rely on* his views for their educational strength, they are free-standing. Indeed these aims can be found in curriculum statements from agencies and political parties of all hues and espousing a diversity of doctrines (eg the National Curriculum, discussed in chapter 12, which issued from a conservative government with a narrowly instrumental agenda). Habermas's views advocate the development of open and enquiring minds in egalitarian societies; that message is neither exclusively his

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<sup>205</sup> It will be argued in chapter 12 that all of these are addressed in the cross-curricular themes of the National Curriculum.

own nor one which is marked by novelty. The peculiar — distinct — contribution of Habermas's views to a delineation of curriculum aims is not proven.

## **11.4 Developing Critical Curriculum Content**

The third element of Skilbeck's model is curriculum content. This section outlines the content which a Habermasian emancipatory curriculum might possess.

### **11.4.1 Areas of Critical Curriculum Content**

From the preceding discussion of curriculum aims a range of substantive themes emerge which can become the subject of ideology critique in curricula:

- media studies (communications and steering media);
- political education;
- citizenship education;
- equal opportunities;
- power and authority;
- education and the community;
- education for industrial and economic awareness (eg the relationship of education and labour markets);
- personal and social education;
- aesthetic education.

Applying Habermasian principles (1971a, 1972, 1974a, 1976a) will involve an

ideology critique of contents in these curriculum areas.<sup>206</sup>

#### 11.4.2 Literacy and Emancipation

Habermasian tenets of communicative action argue powerfully for literacy. Coupled with the observed higher order cognitive levels of the *ideal speech situation* (6.8) they argue for the need for higher order thinking in developing literacy for emancipation and in developing communicative action. Habermas's *ideal speech situation*, the attainment of which was seen in the preceding section to be an aim of education, requires a high level of literacy and communication to be developed in children. It is a central and major implication of his communication theory.

Schools are predicated on language and communication in a variety of media, through talk, memoranda and documentation, notices, record systems, film, video and cassette recording, information technology systems, reports and letters etc.<sup>207</sup> We require children to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on writing (but not speaking) — far more than most of them will ever experience beyond school. In an age of accountability we accord high status to a written product as 'proof' of work. In Habermasian terms children who do not possess *communicative competence* — 'functional literacy' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986) — will have their lifeworlds heavily determined by the system, ie their agency will be reduced. Habermas (1987a) suggests that, through the steering mechanism of communication, system and lifeworld can be recoupled to enable bureaucracies — of which schools are one — to empower their members. Hence people who are dispossessed

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<sup>206</sup> It will be argued in chapter 12 that these are addressed in the cross-curricular themes of the National Curriculum.

<sup>207</sup> Indeed Sallis (1990) argues that communication between participants in education — parents, teachers, children — is necessary for the future development of schooling, recovering public knowledge of the curriculum — mutual understanding made practical.

of functional literacy will sever the connection between lifeworld and system and thus will have little opportunity to realize their existential futures.<sup>208</sup>

Habermasian tenets suggest that an analysis of the combination of power and language should be undertaken. This has a twofold aspect: the 'silencing' (Fine, 1987) and the 'naming' (ibid.) of experience. It refers to the 'structuration' (Giddens, 1980) of asymmetries of power which operates in silencing<sup>209</sup> and naming. Fine (1987, pp. 146-7) argues that silence has to be seen both as the disconfirmation of cultures in school and the unspoken operation of the dominant ideology; in Habermasian terms silence is used perlocutionarily by the empowered.<sup>210</sup>

An ideology critique of the issues of *silencing* and *naming* generates questions such as: 'why are some values, issues, cultures, people silenced and others named and used in schooling? Whose interests and powers are served or disserved by silencing and naming (ie which knowledge-constitutive interests are served by silencing and naming) (echoing the issues discussed in chapter 10 on the sociology of knowledge)? Whom does silencing and naming protect (Fine, 1987, p. 157)? Whose cultures are affirmed or disconfirmed in schooling (cf Giroux, 1986, p. 57)? What are the causes and effects of silencing and naming — structurally and interpersonally? What does the silence indicate, eg is it a form of domination or of resistance (or neither of these)? Who decides on the silencing and naming? How does silencing and naming serve strategic — perlocutionary — or communicative — illocutionary — purposes? How does schooling function to silence and to name?<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Even Willis's (1977) 'lads' found this ultimately to be their life experience.

<sup>209</sup> Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) discuss the 'structured silences that permeate all levels of school and classroom relations' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 75).

<sup>210</sup> Young (1990) writes that 'many classrooms are characterized by communicative relationships which suppress differences and exclude the lifeworld of resources of learners' (Young, 1990, p. 476).

<sup>211</sup> Young (1990) suggests that '[m]any classrooms are characterized by communicative relationships which suppress differences in ontological presuppositions and exclude the life world resources of

If we deny Habermas's communicative action and illocutionary speech acts we deprive participants of the opportunity for *action oriented to mutual understanding*. This reinforces cultural hegemony.

The obverse of silencing is the issue of *naming*. A Habermasian analysis argues that an ideology critique of naming is just as important as of silencing if empowerment is to be developed (cf Fine, 1987, p. 157): 'naming gives license to critical conversation about social and economic arrangements, by which students and their kin suffer disproportionately' (Fine, 1987, p. 160). It is not accidental, perhaps, that a low ability child is named 'dumb'; it may be indicative of ideological domination and silencing. If a participatory pedagogy is to be encouraged then dialogue and dialogical relationships are vital. Habermas's *ideal speech situation* (figure 6.2) makes clear reference to dialogue, discourse and discussion.

Habermas's views suggest that through an analysis of schools as communicative settings, silencing and naming, questions of cultural representation and disconfirmation should be raised and subject to ideology critique.<sup>212</sup> If schools and curricula are to promote a 'fusion of horizons' in Habermas's hermeneutic interest then they must examine their silencing and naming practices for their potential to empower or disempower communicative action (ie their perlocutionary effects) and the cultural contexts in which such action is embedded (see also Giroux and McLaren, 1989, p. 199). This will have to examine how power and meaning is sustained, produced, reproduced and legitimated in classroom relations, and to locate the barriers to the transformative potential of language which operate in

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learners' (Young, 1990, p. 476).

<sup>212</sup> Young (1990) suggests that 'Habermas's position here is of obvious relevance for education in a time of an unprecedented need for intercultural cooperation....It may also be directly related to teaching situations where cultural or subcultural differences exist between teachers and learners. Not so obviously, this position is simply a restatement of the communication situations that should obtain wherever critical teaching and learning take place' (Young, 1990, p. 478)-

classrooms (even though their origins may lie outside classrooms, eg pupil / teacher ratios, resource allocation etc). Discourses have to be interrogated and critiqued for their ideological properties. This then becomes the substance of 'critical literacy' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 133).<sup>213</sup>

Clarifying Habermas's view of critical literacy using the tenets of the *ideal speech situation* in figure 6.2 (sic) will involve the interrogation of 'the cultural capital of the oppressed in order to learn from it; [how] it functions to confirm rather than disconfirm the presence and voices of the oppressed institutions that are generally alienating and hostile to them' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 133). Language becomes a site of contestation<sup>214</sup> as content and medium of struggle for meaning, representation and 'readings of the world' (Giroux, 1989, p. 131):

Language intersects with power in the way particular linguistic forms structure and legitimate the ideologies of specific groups. Language is intimately related to power, and it constitutes the way in which teachers and students define, mediate, and understand their relations to each other and the larger society (ibid., p. 135).

Hence, using Habermasian tenets suggests that curriculum content must examine the school voice(s), student voice(s) and teacher voice(s) to see their agreements, commonalities of interest, histories and biographies, defences, contestations, struggles for power, meaning and emancipatory potentials. The work of Freire in developing a critical cultural literacy amongst oppressed Brazilian groups is a clear example of this, for he sees emancipation as not only requiring 'functional literacy' (Aronowitz, 1988) but utilizing that literacy to develop empowerment; critique and emancipation, content and process go together as in the psychoanalytic analogy

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<sup>213</sup> 'As a narrative for agency and as a referent for critique, literacy provides an essential precondition for organizing and understanding the socially constructed nature of subjectivity and experience and for assessing how knowledge, power, and social practice can be collectively forged in the service of making decisions instrumental to a democratic society rather than merely consenting to the wishes of the rich and powerful' (Giroux, 1989, p. 155).

<sup>214</sup> Taylor (1993), commenting on the work of Freire, argues that writing is fundamentally iconoclastic (Taylor, 1993, p. 146).



outlined by Habermas. Indeed Freire's *Método Paulo Freire* (see Appendix C) articulates with the terminology of Habermas's *ideal speech situation* in its frequent references to *dialogue* (cf fig. 6.2).

A further example of Habermasian ideology critique in school curricula is in textual analysis (cf Giroux, 1989, pp. 138 - 9). Here the ideological messages of texts are deconstructed, both in looking at the structured silences and the namings in the text. Hence school texts are rendered problematical<sup>215</sup> as non-neutral constructions of meaning and value. Giroux (1987) argues that analysis of texts and curriculum materials is important because it provides the basis for students to analyze critically the forms of intelligibility, interests, and moral and political considerations that different voices embody (Giroux, 1987, p. 179), echoing the validity claims of comprehensibility, sincerity, truth and legitimacy respectively required in Habermas's communicative speech acts.

The problematical aspects of school texts can be extended to Records of Achievement (ROAs) as an exercise in communication. ROAs have emancipatory potential in that they putatively accord power to students and student voice, ie they have the potential to develop communicative action:

in the moves towards negotiated ROAs where power should pass evenly between pupils and teachers, where ownership of the record and its release resides with pupils, where 'bottom-up innovation' is seen to begin with the child rather than the teacher, and where achievements other than in the academic sphere are recorded, the 'hegemonic academic curriculum' can be broken through the equalising or neutralizing of power differentials (Morrison, 1990b, p. 199).

The references to the equalization of power relations articulates clearly with those tenets of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2) which stress the need for: 'freedom to modify a given conceptual framework'; 'freedom to alter norms'; 'equal

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<sup>215</sup> Cf the texts which Anyon's (1980) study found to be in use in social studies curricula.

opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; 'equal opportunity for discussion'; 'discussion to be free from domination' (sic). The credibility of this claim is questionable (Pole, 1993), however, for Hargreaves' (1989) belief in ROAs as 'freeing' the curriculum from its academic hegemony is perhaps optimistic in an era of a nationally prescribed curriculum in England and Wales. Rather, ROAs can become the instruments of 'panoptics' and 'constant surveillance' — 'interrogation without end' (ibid., p. 137) — of increasing assessment and measurement — the disciplinary procedures of society (Foucault, 1977; Gibson, 1986), ie of covert strategic action.<sup>216</sup> Hence whilst an ROA has considerable emancipatory potential it can also be the bearer of yet more bureaucracy as the written companion to teaching, ie it can be constraining rather than liberating, it can be 'incorporated' and 'accommodated' by the dominant ideology (Shapiro, 1984) and become yet another form of ideological domination — the technical interest and strategic action — rather than become an instrument of freedom — the emancipatory interest and communicative action.

### 11.4.3 A Summary of Critical Curriculum Content

The position set out so far is that, far from being a merely technical exercise, education has to be recast as an emancipatory activity in which active democratic principles are utilized to develop an egalitarian society. The end point of this argument is a redefinition of citizenship which sees it not as the reproduction of ascribed roles in mechanical solidarity but as the ongoing dialectical debate be-

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<sup>216</sup> Hargreaves neglects the possibility or significance of resistance in his treatment of ROAs, giving it only cursory coverage where he discusses their potential to secure the conformity of potential deviants to a system which remains unchanged or unchallenged and as a way out of the legitimation and motivation crises to which Habermas (1976a) alludes.

tween agency and structure in which the voices of participants are heard, listened to and acted upon by all groups in society (cf Giroux, 1989, p. 5). Citizenship recognizes plurality with equal rights and freedoms for all which moves towards the *ideal speech situation*. Citizenship then has a necessary creative rather than reproductive dimension to it (cf Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 20). It becomes a 'voicing' rather than 'silencing' experience both in form and content (Fine, 1987). Citizenship is a communicative enterprise which builds solidarity through dialogue and discourse (cf Giroux, 1989, p. 6). Citizenship is developed through argument and critique — be it ideology critique, political critique, economic critique or sociocultural critique. The citizenship-developing functions of education, then, address systemic inequality with a view to replacing it with empowered pupils and communities (cf Giroux, 1989, ch. 1).<sup>217</sup>

The achievement of a critical democracy engages a struggle for meaning, voice, rights, freedoms and emancipation. This entails three factors (cf Giroux, 1989): (a) the acceptance of the rights of all groups to participate in educational discourse, redolent of Habermas's *ideal speech situation*, (b) the need to link pedagogical practices in school to the wider society — eg encouraging democratic behaviours in school as a preparation for democratic behaviour in the wider society, (c) the need for educators to link to other progressive social groups outside school and in the wider community in order to create alliances and solidarity for radical reform and radical democracy (Giroux, 1989, pp. 109 - 110).<sup>218</sup> Thus schools become sites

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<sup>217</sup> Giroux (1989, pp. 28 - 33) sets out four criteria for a reworked view of citizenship: a rejection of the ahistorical, transcendent notion of truth or authority — struggle is here and now; a politicization of interpersonal relations where appropriate to increase solidarity in a radical pluralism; a casting of citizenship in a language of critique and possibility; a redefinition of schools as public spheres where engagement and democracy can be cultivated in a struggle for 'radical democratic society' (p. 32). Ethics, democracy, politics and schooling conjoin to resist the view of citizenship held by the New Right. See also Giroux, 1989, p. 177.

<sup>218</sup> It will be seen in chapter 12 how this is approached in the cross-curricular themes of the National

where democratic principles can be built (cf Giroux, 1989, p. 185), eg through the analysis of validity claims, through the pursuit of the *ideal speech situation*, and through the recoupling of lifeworld and system in a bureaucracy.

When one reviews the discussion of curriculum content the same issue that was raised in the discussions of the sociology of knowledge and curriculum aims earlier re-appears here, *viz.* that these items are free-standing, they do not *rely on* Habermas's views to give them significance in discussions of curriculum content. Indeed that it would be difficult to argue against the inclusion of these items is attested by the attention given to them by parties across the political spectrum. Habermas's views, however, do suggest that greater status should be given to hitherto low status areas of the curriculum, eg citizenship education, personal and social education, media studies, aesthetic education. In this latter respect it could be argued that Habermas is advocating areas of content that, strategically rather than communicatively, will serve freedoms, empowerment and equality, ie that he is acting ideologically. As was observed in the discussion of the sociology of knowledge, it appears that strategic action might, in fact, be more fruitful than communicative action in achieving the normative agenda of Critical Theory set out in chapter 2.3.

## 11.5 Critical Pedagogy

The fourth element of Skilbeck's model is pedagogy. The need to address the contextualization of curriculum content points to the role of pedagogy. Considerable significance is accorded to pedagogy as this is both premised on the importance of interactionism (echoing Habermas's middle and later works (eg 1979

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Curriculum of England and Wales.

onwards)) and on its role in the critical mediation of curriculum content (prescribed or negotiated) with pupils.<sup>219</sup> Pedagogy *requires* communication, it is inoperable without it; that locates it firmly within Habermas's concerns for communicative action. Pedagogy situates and contextualizes content. A critical pedagogy is that which renders problematical and which develops an ideology critique of the selection and decision making on curriculum aims, design, content, teaching style, learning style, evaluation and development, with the intention of moving from the *suppression of generalizable interests* and inequality to liberty, equality, social justice and fraternity, in short to individual and collective emancipation through communicative action. Clearly these features are not confined to Habermas (discussed later). Eight principles of pedagogy from a Habermasian perspective can be outlined which flow from his views of knowledge-constitutive interests, the *ideal speech situation* and his view that communicative action can recouple lifeworld and system and break down the negative aspects of bureaucratization.

**Principle 1:** *the need for cooperative and collaborative work*, deriving from the elements of the *ideal speech situation* which mention 'a common interest'; 'mutual understanding between participants'; 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts'; 'participation in the dialogue as equal partners' (fig. 6.2 q.v.). This echoes the need identified in chapter 6.8 for the higher order requirements of the *ideal speech situation* to be socially transmitted:

every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child's logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher order functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

The reach of cooperative work extends to teachers, children, mixed ability

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<sup>219</sup> Gore (1993) argues that it is in pedagogy primarily that emancipatory curricula and emancipatory moments lie.

teaching, team teaching and flexible learning arrangements. Children learn about democracy by engaging in democratic processes (Harwood, 1985; Palansky, 1987). This has educational support from a line of educationists from Neill to Zimiles (1987) who comments that

the enhanced empowerment of children from progressive schools in the previous generation seemed to be derived from their greater sense of competence, from their autonomous learning experiences and from the reassurance they gained from a nurturant and supportive learning environment (Zimiles, 1987, p. 215).

In this context Zimiles shows how children brought up on progressive education were able to engage far weightier moral issues — punishment, goodness, wrongdoing — than children brought up in more traditional surroundings; they appeared able to decentre (echoing Habermas's (1979a, 1984) appeal to the work of Piaget and Kohlberg) and articulate their perceptions from a much earlier age than their peers.

**Principle 2:** *the need for discussion based work*, which, again, enables the higher order elements of the *ideal speech situation* to be experienced in a social context, deriving from the elements of the *ideal speech situation* which mention: (i) freedom to enter a discourse; freedom to check questionable claims, evaluate explanations, modify a given conceptual framework, assess justifications, alter norms, select and employ speech acts, participate in a dialogue and discussion; (ii) the need to establish a 'warranted consensus' (Brown, 1985) for truth claims, to address the validity claims of truth, appropriacy, sincerity and comprehensibility; to develop the ability for ideology critique; (iii) naming, reflection and action to further the notion of ideal speech as *action oriented to mutual understanding* and 'the cooperative search for truth' (see fig. 6.2);

**Principle 3:** *the need for autonomous, experiential and flexible learning in*

order to be able to: (i) decentre and to abide by the 'force of the better argument alone' in the 'cooperative search for truth' — principles of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2 sic); (ii) develop hermeneutic understanding of others' views (the 'fusion of horizons' in Habermas's hermeneutic interest); (iii) develop higher order thinking — required for the operation of the *ideal speech situation*; (iv) break free of Habermas's technical interest; (v) develop *communicative action* rather than *strategic action* (ie illocutionary rather than perlocutionary abilities); (vi) recognise complex realities and the pupils' own interpretation of these; (vii) defend a 'warranted consensus'; (viii) abide by the principles of weak 'classification' and 'framing' from chapter 10; (ix) learn about democracies by behaving democratically (cf Dewey, 1916, 1943); (x) recognise the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner (fig. 6.2 q.v.);

**Principle 4:** *the need for negotiated learning* to facilitate the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which indicate freedom to: enter a discourse; check claims; evaluate explanations; modify frameworks; reflect on the nature of knowledge; allow commands and prohibitions to enter discourse; assess justifications; alter norms; select and employ speech acts (fig. 6.2 q.v.); learn democratic principles; develop communicative competence; overcome the technical interest and strategic action by communicative action;<sup>220</sup> overcome possible motivational crises (Habermas, 1976a) through cooperative planning; address the weak classification and framing deemed important in chapter 10;

**Principle 5:** *the need for community-related learning* in order that children

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<sup>220</sup> Young (1989) criticizes curricula which are based on the technical interest in his comment that 'the constitution of the curriculum in this [technicist] way blocks the development of creative learning, confining the classroom to a technocratically managed recapitulation of predecided content. It also supports a manipulative pedagogy in which children are treated as educational objects rather than subjects' (Young, 1989, p. 57).

can understand and interrogate a range of environments (cf Dewey, 1916; Counts, 1932) so that the relationships of agency, lifeworld and system can be explored; to render learning meaningful so that the loss of meaning leading to loss of freedom (Habermas, 1984, 1987a) can be avoided; to examine critically the political, social and cultural determinants of their own life situations (echoing Habermas's (1972, 1974a) argument in his psychoanalytic analogy that participants — patients — need to understand their situations and the causes of their situations before they can begin to alter and improve them):

a critical educator can demonstrate his / her moral courage through a content that gives real meaning to ethical action while allowing students to read, debate, and align themselves with moral discourses brought to bear on the issues that become a legitimate object of discussion. Although a teacher cannot demand a student not to be a racist, he / she can certainly subject such a position to a critique that reveals it as an act of political and moral irresponsibility related to wider social and historical social practices. This can be done in the spirit of debate and analysis, one that provides the pedagogical conditions for students to learn how to theorize, while affirming and interrogating the voices through which students speak, learn, and struggle (Giroux, 1989, p. 67).

This lengthy quotation shows clear links between Habermasian principles and critical pedagogy — the notions of ideology critique, legitimation, agency and structure, reconstructed meanings as a grounding for emancipatory action, methodology as critique, and the politics of participation. This resonates with Simon's (1987) view that pedagogy is about content, form, process, teaching and learning style and 'the cultural politics such practices support' (Simon, 1987, p. 371) and with Aronowitz's and Giroux's (1986) argument for relevance to 'students' lives by curricula becoming more practical without succumbing to the anti-intellectualism of vocational education' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 58).

McLaren (1989) suggests the need to encourage students to 'to try to identify those forms of power and control that operate in their own lives' (McLaren, (1989)



p. 133) (see Appendix D for an example of Smyth's approach to this issue).<sup>221</sup> Simon (1987) argues that 'a pedagogy of empowerment' (p. 372) should be cast in the language of possibility, equality, fairness, equal opportunity, differentiation and transformation (pp. 372 - 4), several features of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2 q.v.). To do this, he suggests, entails (a) engaging the cultural resources of students and developing beyond these, and (b) preserving a clear view of a just and desired society (p. 375), again embracing the features of the *ideal speech situation*.

**Principle 6:** *the need for problem-solving activities* (if, as discussed in the preceding section, the emancipatory interest — application of knowledge and setting agendas for change — is to build on hermeneutic knowledge, if *communicative competence* is to be developed (cf Habermas's (1972, 1974a) psychoanalytic analogy discussed in chapter 5), and if empowerment is to be developed) (cf Dewey, 1933). This develops the higher order elements of the *ideal speech situation* mentioned in figure 6.2. Giroux (1989) provides a lengthy but important definition of empowerment as:

the process whereby students acquire the means to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live .... In this sense, empowerment is gained from knowledge and social relations that dignify one's own history, language, and cultural traditions. But empowerment means more than self-confirmation. It also refers to the process by which students are able to interrogate and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and reinforcing, rather than merely serving, the wider social order (Giroux. 1989. p. 189).

**Principle 7:** *the need to increase pupils' rights to employ talk, not only because the social aspects of communicative action enable the higher order thinking*

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<sup>221</sup> Bowers (1991) criticizes McLaren here for his 'highly charged and ideologically laden language' (Bowers. 1991. p. 242) which results in a 'messianic rhetorical style that lacks specificity and a sensitivity to the limitations of the political process' (Bowers, 1991 p. 24). Context specificity, as was argued at the start of the chapter, is not only crucial for interrogating content but for engaging critical pedagogy.

of the *ideal speech situation* to be developed (cf Vygotsky's view that all higher order cognitive functions are socially transmitted (Vygotsky, 1978)) but because this develops *communicative competence* and equality (Habermas, 1970b, 1979a).

Within classrooms issues of power are played out routinely. Edwards (1980) shows that talk in classrooms reinforces asymmetries of power: '[t]he teacher tells the child when to talk, what to talk about, when to stop talking, and how well they have talked' (Edwards, 1980, p. 241). Classroom talk here is essentially a closing rather than an opening, enquiring activity. Young (1989) reinforces this in his comment that the question-answer-question-answer pattern of teaching is substantially perlocutionary rather than illocutionary — strategic and instrumental rather than communicative.<sup>222</sup>

Only those speech acts which are illocutionary but not perlocutionary...can characterize the form of action we would want to call 'educational' rather than 'indoctrinatory' (Young, 1989, p. 107).

Young (1992) also comments on the high incidence of closed and pseudo questions which teachers use to maintain their control of the classroom talk, and the dearth of higher order questions, ie those questions which promote the higher order capacities of the *ideal speech situation*, (fig. 6.2 q.v.). He indicates that teachers not only build in student silences but, when silences occur, teachers answer their own questions (Young, 1992, p. 113). Kincheloe (1991) suggests that teachers 'must avoid monopolization of classroom conversations in order to encourage student talk — talk which reveals their idiom and their consciousness' (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 22). Critical pedagogy here, then, is the medium by which curriculum

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<sup>222</sup> See also Young's (1992) comments that 'what is at stake is the ownership of the direction of the lesson' (Young, 1992, p. 121). Young (1990), however, makes the point that indoctrination concerns intentions, and that strategic action may not necessarily be unjustifiable 'in the overall process of education of the young provided that views acquired in this way may eventually be subject to rational enquiry' (Young, 1990, p. 480). See also Young (1992, p. 59).

content is contextualized and the means by which student voice can be developed;

**Principle 8:** *the need for teachers to act as 'transformative intellectuals', promoting ideology critique, addressing the need for the emancipatory interest to transform constraint into empowerment, individual and collective (cf Habermas's analogy of psychoanalysis (1972, 1974a) in chapter 5), to enable agency and the life-world to be recoupled, to enable communicative action to override strategic action, addressing the principles of the ideal speech situation which argue for freedom to: modify frameworks; alter norms; select and employ speech acts; to enable validity claims of truth, sincerity, appropriacy and comprehensibility to be addressed (fig. 6.2 q.v.). In this respect teachers are akin to the psychoanalysts of Habermas's earlier writings (1972, 1974a).*

The teacher has to transform the everyday experiences which pupils bring to school into a dynamic critique of their life situations. Teachers act as 'transformative intellectuals' which Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) define as:

intellectuals who are part of a specific class and / or movement and who serve to give it an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields (ibid., p. 135).

Teachers become both scholars and activists in the community (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p. 160).<sup>223</sup> Transformative intellectuals work on the experiences that children bring to school, interrogate them critically, interrogate curricula so that

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<sup>223</sup> Giroux (1989) gives his definition a contestual strain where he states that transformative intellectuals are those who exercise 'forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice that attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations...articulating emancipatory practices and working towards their realization. Teachers who assume the role of transformative intellectuals treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory' (Giroux, 1989, p. 174 - 5). One can see that transformative intellectuals, engaged in critique, are the antithesis of Mannheim's (1936) 'socially unattached intelligentsia' in their involvement with struggle and in the recognition that the intellectual life is not merely contemplative but political and dynamic, and that there is no single élite of intellectuals; intellectuals exist in all walks of life...

children's life experiences are transformed into critical awareness and empowerment, a parallel to Habermas's analogy of Freudian psychoanalysis. Teachers will interrogate dominant cultures and engage pupils in developing forms of ideology critique and participatory democracy. In this respect teachers are both bearers and developers of the expressive phrase 'dangerous memory' (Giroux, 1989, p. 99).

The operation of the transformative intellectual dictates not only a content but a pedagogical form and process which is reminiscent of the weak classification and framing of Bernstein (1971). It represents the shifting of responsibility away from solely the teacher-as-transmitter to a negotiated and interrogative curriculum shared between teachers, pupils and community.

These eight features of a Habermasian critical pedagogy are utilised in the case study in chapter 12. Pedagogy, as the means of working on critical curriculum content, parallels the high order thinking set out in the *ideal speech situation* — checking claims, evaluating explanations and legitimacy, reflecting on proposals and powers, modifying frameworks, assessing justifications and altering norms. These point to the need to develop critical faculties in children and for teachers to cultivate these faculties whilst working on critical curriculum content.<sup>224</sup> The eight pedagogical principles which are derived from Habermas's *ideal speech situation* are not exclusive to Habermas. As with the aims and content which one can derive from his work, they do not *rely on* Habermas for their educational support. Indeed, as with the discussion of aims and content, nor are they exclusive to one political faction but find general support.

It is becoming clear that Habermas's principles of communicative action,

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<sup>224</sup> Much of the preceding discussion has drawn on the work of Giroux. A critique of Giroux's work can be found in Appendix E.

premised on the *ideal speech situation*, are becoming redundant in suggesting new prescriptions for the curriculum. They are contributing nothing new. This echoes the criticism levelled against the *ideal speech situation* in 6.9, that it is redundant in bringing about emancipation, being too removed from everyday life to be of value and, in reality, being platitudinous. It appears, then, that though Habermas's work can support certain curriculum aims, content and pedagogical principles the significance of his contribution is not great. It is interesting, if unremarkable for its novelty or exclusive contribution.

## 11.6 Evaluation in Emancipatory Curricula

The fifth element of Skilbeck's model is evaluation. Habermas's work on ideology critique (1971a, 1972, 1974a), speech act theory (1979a, 1984, 1987a) and communicative action which embodies the *ideal speech situation* (1979a, 1984, 1987a) suggest five principles for evaluation methodology:

**Principle 1:** *it should be a participatory and collective activity, serving those principles of the ideal speech situation which mention:* (i) 'a common interest'; (ii) 'freedom to: enter a discourse, check questionable claims, evaluate explanations, assess justifications, select and employ speech acts'; (iii) 'recognise the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue'; (iv) 'equal opportunity for discussion'; (v) 'the cooperative search for truth' (fig. 6.2 q.v.);

**Principle 2:** *it should be democratic, serving the principles of the ideal speech situation which mention:* (i) 'orientation to a common interest'; (ii) 'freedom to enter a discourse, engage in discussion, reflect on the nature of political will, employ speech acts'; (iii) 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; (iv) discussion to be free from

domination; (v) 'the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone, and not from the the positional or political power of the participants' (fig. 6.2 q.v.); (vi) exposing interests and engaging in ideology critique of legitimacy of interests;

**Principle 3:** *it should be a debate rather than be closed*, serving the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which mention: (i) freedom to: evaluate explanations, assess justifications, check questionable claims, enter a discourse; (ii) the motivation to the cooperative search for truth; (iii) the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone (fig. 6.2 q.v.); (iv) validity claims should be checked for their truth, sincerity, appropriacy, comprehensibility; (v) a rational, warranted consensus should be sought; process is as important as outcome (employing the principles of ideal speech);

**Principle 4:** *it should be formative*, serving the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which mention: (i) freedom to: modify a given conceptual framework, alter norms; (ii) the cooperative search for truth (fig. 6.2 q.v.);

**Principle 5:** *it should be emancipatory and demonstrate communicative action*, enabling collective egalitarian interests to be served (Habermas's emancipatory interest and arguments against instrumentalism (strategic action));

These five principles find voice in Kemmis's (1982a) definition of curriculum evaluation as

the process of marshalling information and arguments which enable interested individuals and groups to participate in the critical debate about a specific programme (Kemmis. 1982a. p. 118).

His references to *process*, *arguments*, '*enable interested individuals and groups*' and *participate* echo the Habermasian principles outlined above. Habermas's work

suggests an approach to evaluation and meta-evaluation which bears several hallmarks. Its declared concern for accepting the interpretive categories of participants (cf Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 129) in communicative action suggests a case study approach to evaluation which captures the idiography, reflexive biography and autobiography of schools and teachers. Such an approach will draw on qualitative data, rejecting the 'positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth' (ibid., p. 129) which Habermas criticised in his work (1971a, 1972, 1974a, 1988) and explore multiple perspectives and multiple ideologies, giving equal concern to all participants in the enterprise. Principles (i) to (iv) above are methodological whilst principle (v) is substantive and will be discussed separately (11.6.2).

### 11.6.1 Methodological issues

Habermasian principles 1 - 3 above suggest that evaluation has to be democratic (MacDonald, 1976). A stakeholder approach to evaluation enables Habermas's communicative action to take place (cf Weiss, 1986, p. 284),<sup>225</sup> as it argues that those who make decisions about a program and all whose lives are affected by the program and its evaluation should be party to that evaluation.

The elements of the stakeholder approach are clearly defined by Weiss (1986) in terms of five criteria. *Firstly* there is a recognition that a program will affect many groups who may have divergent and maybe incompatible concerns (echoing the need to seek Habermas's rational consensus in communicative rather than strategic action). The *second* feature suggests that an evaluation realizes, and

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<sup>225</sup> The stakeholder approach is an attempt to counter the criticisms made of many evaluations for being: narrow (focusing on what is easy to evaluate or measure rather than what may be educationally significant) (ibid., pp. 145-6); unrealistic (holding 'programs to standards of success impossible to attain') (House, 1986, p. 143); irrelevant (not meeting the needs of the people involved in the program) (Weiss, 1986, pp. 146-7); unfair (wherein the powerless are held accountable to the powerful) (House, 1986, p. 143); unused (that they rarely achieve any impact on the future development or implementation of a program) (Weiss, 1986, p. 147).

maybe legitimates, a diversity of interests at play in the program world (echoing Habermas's principle of ideal speech which recognises the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner (cf fig. 6.2)). The evaluation, *thirdly*, will thus have to recognize the multiple perspectives that these interests bring to judgement and understanding, seeking a rational 'common interest' and serving *action oriented to mutual understanding* (fig. 6.2 q.v.). The *fourth* and *fifth* features are necessary implications of the preceding points — that evaluations will have to be part of everyday life rather than being a remote and largely useless activity, and that they will have to be context-specific. One major implication of this is that power and control is no longer the monopoly of program sponsors who can operate strategically. The stakeholder concept:

enfranchises a diverse array of groups, each of which is to have a voice in the planning and conduct of studies. Local as well as national concerns are to be addressed. Issues specific to individual sites and generic issues common across sites receive attention (Weiss, 1986, p. 154).

Moving to a stakeholder approach sets the ground for Habermas's notion of ideology critique, it provides the platform on which critical evaluation can be built. The equalizing of participation by stakeholders (in Habermas's terms, those involved in a speech situation), serving the principles of the *ideal speech situation*, however, can be problematical.<sup>226</sup>

Democratic evaluation as described so far has been criticized for being politically conservative. Lakomski (1983), for example, argues that in treating all participants as equals democratic evaluation ignores differences of power in decision making about a program, and hence serves to reproduce rather than alter the societal *status quo*. This violates the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which

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<sup>226</sup> Witness MacDonald's five year arguments with the sponsors of the National Development program in Computer Assisted Learning, see Appendix F.



emphasize: the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner, discussion to be free from domination, the consensus resulting from discussion derives from the force of the better argument alone and not from the positional or political power of the participants (fig. 6.2 q.v.). Rather the voices of the socially less advantaged or the disempowered must be presented as it were unequally if power differentials are to be minimised (Lakomski, 1983). This involves addressing the question of what impact the distribution of power will have on an evaluation (Simons, 1987). Indeed Simons cogently puts the case for recasting democratic evaluation 'as a moral activity based on a critique of domination' (ibid., p. 83). The introduction of democratic evaluation into the service of 'critical evaluation' sharpens the political impact of democratic evaluation and its commitment to equalizing power relations, echoing Habermas's *ideal speech situation*. Addressing Habermasian notions of ideology critique exposes the interests, vested interests and conflicting interests of stakeholders, to ask 'whose interests is this program serving?'<sup>227</sup>

With regard to principle 4 above — evaluation should be formative — Habermasian tenets suggest that an objectives-based, summative evaluation serves the technical interest — strategic action — as participants have limited or no powers to control the agenda. Rather, a formative evaluation enables participants to have a 'voice' (see the preceding section on pedagogy) and to serve the participatory models of evaluation for which the *ideal speech situation* argues. Formative evaluation enables communicative action to be addressed; the next stage of a program being open to debate, rather than being pre-determined, demonstrates how a formative evaluation is illocutionary rather than perlocutionary.

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<sup>227</sup> Weiss (1989) argues that evaluation is 'a means of unpacking latent commitments' (p. 128).

The implications of Habermas's principles suggest additional roles for the evaluator — to actually awaken issues (eg of legitimation, participation, strategic action), to sow seeds in participants' minds which may not have been identified automatically by those participants. This could be seen as running counter to the accepted role of evaluators as disinterested individuals (Kemmis, 1982a, p. 135) who are impartially performing a service both to the sponsors and participants neutrally; evaluators' own views and agendas should not enter the evaluation for fear of introducing strategic action into the evaluation.

However, one can suggest that the call for neutrality in the evaluator is itself ideologically saturated with *laissez-faire* values which allow the *status quo* to be reproduced or altered. The call for neutrality and disinterestedness is just as value laden as is a call for evaluators to intrude their own perspectives and to kindle awareness in participants' minds of distortion, manipulation, oppression and frustration which hitherto had been assigned to the unconscious or subconscious (cf Habermas, 1974a). In practice this role of the evaluator as an awakener of issues need not threaten traditional impartiality, for if the evaluator's is but one perspective in a field of multiple perspectives, if the intention of evaluation is to judge value and to prescribe as well as to diagnose, assess and appraise, then perhaps one of the tasks of the evaluator is to expose concerns which might otherwise go unvoiced, just as the therapist helps to expose issues in Habermas's analogy of psychoanalysis (1974a). The rights of the evaluator to move beyond disinterestedness are clearly contentious, raising the question of the legitimacy and the expertise of the evaluator in the areas under discussion, requiring the evaluator to become a critical connoisseur — a connoisseur (Eisner, 1985) who serves ideology critique.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> In this sense Eisnerian notions of connoisseurship support the hermeneutic interest whilst 'critical connoisseurship' can support emancipation.

The safeguard for stakeholders against the intrusion of the agenda of the evaluator is that in the end the 'community of self interest' (Kemmis (1982a, p. 125) may override the interpretation which that evaluation puts on a program. This echoes Habermas's principles of the *ideal speech situation* which emphasize a 'common interest', 'the cooperative search for truth' and the rights of all stakeholders to be treated as equal participants (fig. 6.2 sic.). This might become a nightmare for critical evaluators who see a program operating against a community's self interests, ie that the community is saturated with false consciousness:

it is the spectre of a society where social control is so total and so effective that members can be prevented from even forming desires which cannot be easily satisfied, a society of happy slaves, genuinely content with their chains (Geuss, 1981, p. 84).

### 11.6.2 Substantive issues

With reference to principle 5 above Habermas's views argue for the need to reveal to participants in a program the constraints — ideological, managerial, structural, institutional or psychological — which are operating on them, in the belief that such enlightenment can become emancipatory (Habermas, 1972; Gibson, 1986). It seeks to reveal structures over which participants have limited or no control and which can frustrate intentions — hence it places Habermas's steering medium of power at its heart. This harks back to Habermas's use of the psychoanalytic analogy in chapter 5, where emancipation proceeds from an understanding of the *suppression of generalizable interests*. Individuals who are aware of constraints on them are better able to exercise their own agency, to identify the means by which to exercise agency.<sup>229</sup> However this has to be taken with Geuss's (1981)

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<sup>229</sup> Carr and Kemmis (1986) allude to this clearly in their comment that evaluation 'is aimed at revealing to individuals how their beliefs and attitudes may be ideological illusions that help to preserve a social order which is alien to their collective experience and needs (pp. 138 - 9). This is also the essence of Adorno's (1973) 'negative dialectics', where evaluation reveals people's possibilities, potentials, existential futures and the distance of these from present life situations. It also un-

caution that simply seeing ideological processes at work will not necessarily lead to their dissolution:

repressive social institutions will be kept in existence not merely by a kind of social inertia but because they foster and promote the real and perceived interests of some particular social group; that group will have every reason to resist the abolition of the institution (Geuss, 1981, p. 73).

The effect of evaluation here then might be to promote frustration rather than to reduce it.

Habermas's views suggest a considerable substantive agenda for evaluations:

- to evaluate both facts and values, ie to redress the shortcomings of scientism, technicism and positivism which Habermas outlined in 1971a, 1972 and 1974a (see chapter 3 of this thesis);
- to articulate power differentials in program selection and pedagogy, ie to address Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests at work in programs, to identify ways in which the *ideal speech situation* is being supported or violated in programs, to identify the operation of the steering medium of power in programs (and its furtherance of strategic action), to identify how bureaucratization (and the separation of conception from execution) support or violate communicative action and colonize the lifeworld of participants;
- to expose ideological distortion in individuals and groups over the aims, content, pedagogy and evaluation of programs, ie to identify Habermas's *suppression of generalizable interests* and the operation of *systematically distorted communication*, the violation of the principle of ideal speech which mentions 'orientation to a common interest ascertained without deception' (fig. 6.2 q.v.) and the

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derlies Habermas's view that self-understanding and understanding of constraints and ideological distortions of social life lead to their overcoming (Habermas, 1974a).

extent to which the validity claims of truth, sincerity, appropriacy and comprehensibility have been met in curriculum content;

- to expose areas of the planning process over which individuals and groups have limited or no control, and to identify the nature and legitimacy of the control, to identify strategic — perlocutionary — action which is serving the technical interest, and to suggest how agency can be asserted and emancipation developed, addressing the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which include freedom to: enter a discourse, check questionable claims; modify a given conceptual framework, alter norms, allow commands or prohibitions to enter discourse when they can no longer be taken for granted, select and employ speech acts (fig. 6.2 q.v.);
- to expose inequalities in program planning, content and implementation, be they of race, gender, class, age, size or other factors, ie to expose the *suppression of generalizable interests*;
- to chart the potential in programs for participants' development of autonomy, responsibility, creativity, social and moral development, and interaction oriented to mutual understanding, ie to identify how a program addresses the *ideal speech situation*, aesthetic-expressive rationality (Habermas, 1984, 1987a, 1987b) and the agency of participants;
- to identify issues and areas of conflict, resistance, opposition over program content, organization, pedagogy and evaluation, ie to indicate areas where communicative enquiry (and its implications for *communicative competence*) are required, where a rational consensus has to be reached and where the participatory aspects of the *ideal speech situation* need to be addressed;

- to demonstrate in whose interests the program content and pedagogy is operating and how this links to society at large, ie to subject the program to ideology critique and examination for the operation of the technical interest and the *suppression of generalizable interests*;
- to examine the potential of the program to promote reflection, self-reflection and critical thinking, ie to identify the potential for communicative action and the espousal of the principle of ideal speech which mentions freedom to: reflect on the nature of knowledge and political will, evaluate explanations and assess justifications, search for truth cooperatively;
- to chart the potential of the program for participatory, experiential and active learning, addressing the aspects of the *ideal speech situation* which emphasise freedom to: enter a discourse, check and evaluate claims, justifications and norms, reflect on the nature of knowledge, select and employ speech acts, participate in dialogue (fig. 6.2 q.v.);
- to chart the extent to which teachers act as 'transformative intellectuals' and the nature of that operation, addressing Habermas's emancipatory interest, using his analogy (1972, 1974a) of the therapist psychoanalytically empowering the patient to overcome suppressed possibilities and constraints, enabling communicative action to take precedence over strategic action;
- to chart how teachers work on, as well as work with, the experiences that children bring to their schools (Hall, 1983, p. 8).

The setting of substantive issues in critical evaluation does not preclude the possibility for democratic evaluation and democratically derived issues and foci for evaluation raised by participants as defined earlier, indeed it requires it. It opens

up possibilities for lines of evaluative enquiry rather than forecloses them. It has a revealing rather than a limiting function. That evaluation should be a liberating, emancipating exercise is a major claim which derives from Habermasian principles, empowering participants to articulate and move towards the realization, in practice, of their existential futures. Whether the notion of a critical evaluation is acceptable to those who advocate objectivity and disinterestedness in an evaluation is a major point of contention. Whether evaluators should have their own agendas lies at the heart of this issue. Habermas's work runs into difficulties in setting a substantive agenda for, by so doing, this appears to support strategic rather than communicative action. This repeats the concerns raised in the discussion earlier of the sociology of knowledge and of curriculum aims and content, that, in fact, strategic action to bring about empowerment might be more effective than communicative action.

It is in the substantive areas of recommendation that Habermas's views have a novel contribution to make. However in the remainder of the issues suggested, or supported, by Habermas's views — the stakeholder approach, democratic evaluation, formative evaluations, the need to evaluate values, the need for debate, the need to empower participants — a familiar picture is rehearsed wherein Habermas's views support and give rise to important issues but these issues do not *rely on* his work for their existence, they have an existence which is independent of him. Hence the power of the *ideal speech situation* to effect emancipation is not proven; emancipatory methodologies can look to Habermas's work for support but not for sole justification. His contribution is unoriginal.

## 11.7 Research and Curriculum Development

Implicit in the curriculum model (Skilbeck, 1976a) which has been used to structure the analysis in this chapter is the view that curricula may have to change if they are to become empowering and emancipatory. The argument has indicated how this change might be effected. Habermasian tenets suggest five principles to underpin research and curriculum change and development:

**Principle 1:** *it should be cooperative and collaborative*, deriving from the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which include: 'orientation to a common interest'; *action oriented to mutual understanding*; 'the cooperative search for truth'; 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and equal partner'; 'equal opportunity to select and employ speech acts' (fig. 6.2 q.v.);

**Principle 2:** *it should adopt a problem-solving approach*, addressing Habermas's emancipatory interest which transforms hermeneutic understanding into communicative action and building on Habermas's (1972, 1974a) psychoanalytic analogy discussed in chapter 5, ie *applying* knowledge and setting agendas for action; addressing the principle of the *ideal speech situation* which states that 'all motives except the cooperative search for truth are excluded' (fig. 6.2 q.v.);

**Principle 3:** *it should be non-bureaucratic, conception and execution should be kept together*, ie control should be in the hands of all stakeholders, it should enable individual and group agency to be exercised, addressing the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which emphasize freedom to: enter a discourse, check claims, evaluate explanations and justifications, alter norms, modify frameworks, select and employ speech acts, cooperatively search for truth, not be swayed by



the positional or political power of participants. It also enables the *colonization of the lifeworld* to be avoided — where the steering medium of power intrudes illegitimately into the lifeworld of participants — and enables agency, lifeworld and system to be recoupled through communicative action rather than strategic — perlocutionary, ‘top-down’ — action;

**Principle 4:** *it should be emancipatory*, empowering all the stakeholders to participate in an egalitarian society, realising their own existential futures, serving *freedom from*: unwarranted constraint or strategic action, the illegitimate exercise of power, the *suppression of generalizable interests, systematically distorted communication*; and *freedom to*: enter a discourse, modify frameworks, select and employ speech acts, reach a ‘common interest’ through a warranted consensus, which serve the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2 q.v.), and serving ideology critique (Habermas, 1972, 1974a);

**Principle 5:** *it should avoid exclusive reliance on positivist methodologies*, echoing Habermas’s critique of scientism, positivism and technicism (1971a, 1972, 1974a) — see chapter 3<sup>230</sup> — and arguing for action research as reflective and transformative enquiry.

These five principles are all served in action research and reflective practice (cf Kemmis, 1982b; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Kincheloe, 1991; Prawat, 1991) and the notion of the ‘reflective practitioner’. Action research and reflective practice are participatory and democratic. They are rooted in the problems identified by practitioners (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1983; Hopkins, 1985, 1989)

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<sup>230</sup> Cf Carr’s and Kemmis’s (1986) comment that ‘educational theory must reject positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth’ (p. 129) and Kincheloe’s (1991) argument against the neo-positivism of traditional research: ‘Such a perspective has attempted to measure ambiguous educational processes by focussing only on quantified educational outcomes. The resulting ideological innocence supports the power relation of the status quo’ (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 95).

and adopt a problem-solving, 'bottom-up' (ie non-hierarchical) model of change (Havelock, 1973). Grundy argues that action research and reflective practice are unavoidable features of a critical pedagogy because they (a) confront the real problems of experience, (b) involve processes of conscientization, (c) confront ideological distortion, and (d) incorporate action as part of knowing (Grundy, 1987, pp. 156 - 7). They aim to improve practice, understanding of practice and the situation in which practice occurs and to do this through involving participants at all stages. Action research and reflective practice move beyond traditional industrial research-and-development (Havelock, 1973) models of the curriculum change and development process which, in Habermas's terms (1971a, 1972, 1974a) are technicianist.<sup>231</sup>

By building in reflection and development based on reconstruction, action research and reflective practice are analogous to the psychoanalytic emancipatory process outlined by Habermas (1972, 1974a), and echoes his concern that research in the social sciences should be interpretive and interactional (Habermas, 1988, p. 95) and that action research and reflective practice are legitimate forms of research (1972; 1984; 1987a).

Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests are paralleled in Gore's (1993) typology of action research which she takes from Van Manan (1977): the technical, the practical and the critical (Gore, 1993, p. 141). Kincheloe (1991), too, indicates a three-level view of action research by the critically constructivist teacher: 'level 1, puzzle-solving research; level 2, self-monitoring reflective research; level 3, critical constructivist research' (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 122). He indicates that level 3 is

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<sup>231</sup> Cf Giroux's (1989) discussion of the separation of conception and execution in curriculum design (pp. 180 - 1) and Apple's (1983) castigation of pre-packaged curricula.

the highest level.<sup>232</sup> Kincheloe, echoing Habermas's views of ideology critique, indicates that the critical, constructivist action researcher will identify oppression, suppression, power relations, ideological forces and domination.<sup>233</sup>

One has to guard against overstating the case for action research and reflective practice as political and emancipatory action as they tend to limit the analysis to single teachers or small groups. Instead of interpreting 'political praxis' in a wider sphere there is an optimism in action research and reflective practice that macro political emancipation will follow from the micro political emancipation of teachers (and perhaps children). Whether this reflects the reality of the limited powers of teachers is an open question. One can be as emancipatory as one likes in classrooms but this can leave the wider society untouched by emancipation; wider society, characterized by a movement towards bureaucratization, is not easily affected by small scale changes, it can incorporate them. Hence whilst action research and reflective practice can inject meaning into situations which have moved towards a loss of meaning (*Sinnverlust*) through bureaucratization, a feature identified by Habermas (1984, 1987a), and whilst they can be immensely motivating and meaningful to participants, their potential to upset the total order is limited. That is a matter of knowledge utilization and its links to the political agendas of decision makers (Anderson and Biddle, 1991).

Similarly one has to guard against too optimistic a Habermasian view of reflective practice. Appendix (G) contrasts Habermas's and Dewey's approach to re-

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<sup>232</sup> He is unequivocal in his view that 'no emancipatory system can be contemplated outside of the Frankfurt School's formulation of critical theory' (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 35).

<sup>233</sup> He argues that '[t]o become critical constructivist action researchers we must take at least one step beyond phenomenology; we must question the power relations, the ideological forces which shape that framework' (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 148). He suggests that 'research...must be subjected to ideological analysis' (ibid., p. 171) and that in this enterprise 'no aspect of schooling is ideologically innocent' (ibid., p. 172).

flective practice, arguing that, in many respects, Dewey's approach might be more empowering than Habermas's as Habermas's agenda is too narrow and his methodology — of ideology critique — too limiting and utopian (q.v.). The same is true for the other forms of research leading to curriculum change which Habermasian principles inform — the use of biographical and autobiographical reconstructions of experience (cf Pinar, 1975), again operating in the psychoanalytically analogous mode from Habermas.<sup>234</sup> The question to be asked is about the extent to which *individual* emancipation can serve *social* emancipation. It can be argued that these methods constitute necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of empowering curricula.

If qualitative action research and reflective practice are to take place which are to link to macro-policy making then these concern not the style of research but the links between researchers and policy makers (Norris, 1990; Anderson and Biddle, 1991). That is another question which Habermasian theory does not explore in detail (*pace* Habermas, 1971a).

Though Habermas's work can be seen to support specific types of research, as before, these areas do not *rely on* Habermas's work for their justification or derivation. In the case of principle 4 above — research should be emancipatory — this can be seen as setting a new agenda, though, by so doing, it meets the problem which was set out for Habermas's contribution to the sociology of knowledge, curriculum content and evaluation, *viz.* that it supports strategic rather than communicative action, it is perlocutionary rather than illocutionary.

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<sup>234</sup> For example, Britzman (1986) argues that 'in the case of student teachers, uncovering biography can empower students through a greater participation in their own process of becoming a teacher' (p. 452). Grundy (1987) cites several examples of empowerment through critical autobiography. Similarly Greene (1986) sees the value of biography and autobiography as essential in recovering humanity in a dehumanized and dehumanizing world (p. 440).

## 11.8 Summary and Conclusion

One of the overwhelming problems of curriculum theory is that it embraces a very wide field of vision and that it therefore has an eclectic view of relevant concepts and issues. Putting some structure into such eclecticism is difficult, indeed modelling the curriculum may be too simplistic (Barrow, 1984). The discussion in this chapter has brought structure to the analysis by using the elements of Skilbeck's (1976a) model of the curriculum. Habermas's work is summarized in relation to these elements in figures 11.1 to 11.6. Figure 11.1 sets out the organization for the remainder of the figures, laying out Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests from chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis and then indicating how these can be used to inform the curriculum elements discussed in this chapter. As has been shown through this chapter these three interests are touchstones of the analysis of the curriculum components; the chapter has also established links between the technical interest and strategic action and between the emancipatory interest and communicative action. The sequence of figures (11.1 to 11.6) deliberately follows the sequence of this thesis: figure 11.1 draws on chapters 2 and 3, figure 11.2 draws on chapters 4 to 7 in order, figures 11.3 to 11.6 follow the sequence of chapter 11. This sequence also parallels the development of Habermas's work: figure 11.1 draws on his earliest work (1971a, 1972, 1974a), figure 11.2 adds to this his use of psychoanalysis (1972, 1974a), figures 11.3 to 11.5 apply this work to the curriculum, figure 11.6 applies his later work on methodology (1988). The tables follow the sequence in which curriculum elements have been addressed through this chapter, *viz.*:

(a) knowledge-constitutive bases of the curriculum (and their views of science, their foci of enquiry, their views of the role of values in discussion), taken from

chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis (fig. 11.1);

(b) contexts of the curriculum debate (epistemological, psychological, sociological and political), drawing together chapter 4 (epistemology), chapter 5 (psychology), chapter 6 and chapter 7 (sociological and political) (fig. 11.2);

(c) curriculum aims, design, development and organization (chapter 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4) (fig. 11.3);

(d) pedagogical aspects of the curriculum (chapter 11.5) (fig. 11.4);

(e) evaluation in the curriculum (chapter 11.6) (fig. 11.5);

(f) methodologies for researching and developing the curriculum (chapter 11.7) (fig. 11.6).

The tables draw together the very many theoretical debates which occupy curriculum theory and which have been raised in this chapter. Boundaries overlap and are permeable, the terms used are generalized and capable of interpretations which might locate them in another column. The categories should be regarded as *emphases* rather than as discrete, for to do this latter would be to misrepresent the complexity of the reality they are attempting to model. The tables have to be seen as setting out the terms for an enquiry into and critique of curricula. They set an agenda rather than describe an outcome. The tables are deliberately silent on specific curriculum content, as the argument earlier has suggested that whilst some examples of curriculum context (eg PSE, literacy, Environmental Education, Media Education, Political Education, Citizenship Education, Education about Economic Issues) may have more emancipatory potential than others because of the issues they treat, nevertheless the curriculum is not of an 'either / or' type,

Figure 11.1 — Knowledge-constitutive Bases of the Curriculum

<b>KNOWLEDGE-CONSTITUTIVE INTERESTS</b>			
	<b>Empirical-analytical</b>	<b>Hermeneutic</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<b>Knowledge-constitutive Interest</b>	Technical	Practical	Ideology critique
<b>Interest</b>	Prediction	Understanding and control	Critique
<b>Purpose / Outcome</b>	Control	Consensus	Emancipation
<b>Scientific Basis of Knowledge</b>	Natural Science	Hermeneutic Science	Reconstructive Science
<b>View of Natural Science</b>	Total (scientism)	One of many sciences	Reconstructive sciences
<b>Focus of Enquiry</b>	Work and instrumental action	Language and interaction	Power and domination communicative action
<b>View of the Role of Value</b>	Value-free (separation of fact and value)  Acceptance	Linking of fact and value: understanding and interpretation of facts and values  Judgement	Critique of values: whose values and interests are being served  Critical judgement

where it either will or will not guarantee emancipation.

The argument has been advanced that whether a curriculum is emancipatory depends on how the context and content are approached, taught and learned. In an emancipatory curriculum the pedagogy is as important as the content, just as

Figure 11.2 — Contexts of the Curriculum Debate

<b>CONTEXTS OF THE CURRICULUM</b>			
	<b>Empirical-analytical</b>	<b>Hermeneutic</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<b>Epistemological Contexts</b>	Positivistic and instrumental accounts	Hermeneutic accounts	Critically reconstructed accounts
	Objective	Interpersonal	Dialectical
	Technical knowledge and rationality	Technical and hermeneutic knowledge and rationality	Communicative, Aesthetic-expressive and emancipatory knowledge
<b>Psychological Contexts</b>	Behaviourist (eg Skinner)	Cognitivist (eg Piaget, Gestaltists)	Constructivist (eg Kelly, Freud, Piaget)
<b>Political Contexts – Curriculum Control</b>	Bureaucratic, hierarchical and centrally administered	All stakeholders through consensus  Status achieved in a meritocracy	Collective, Participatory  Shared responsibility
<b>Sociocultural Contexts</b>	Ahistorical  Social reproduction	Historical and biographical  Social reproduction and production	Historical, sociological ideological  Social production and transformation

in the psychoanalytic analogy the process of reconstruction and auscultation is as important as the outcome. In an emancipatory curriculum all the significant aspects are debatable, contestable and open to scrutiny. The danger of the tabulation in figures 11.1 - 11.6 is that, by its pigeon-holing of the items of debate it too succumbs to the bureaucratization which, to serve Habermasian interests, it should resist. Hence the figures should not only be subject to critique by cur-



Figure 11.3 — Curriculum Design, Development and Organization

<b>CURRICULUM DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT &amp; ORGANIZATION</b>			
	<b>Empirical-analytical</b>	<b>Hermeneutic</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<b>Aims of the Curriculum</b>	Reproductive	Productive and Reproductive	Reconstructive, revolutionary, emancipatory
	Subject based	Integrated	Flexible and authentic
	Knowledge-centred	Person-centred	Person and society centred
	Product	Process	Praxis
	Transmission	Interpretation	Change
	Separation of subject and object	Integration of subject and object	Integration of subject and object
<b>Objectives for Curriculum Design</b>	Behavioural objectives	Expressive objectives	Problem-solving objectives
<b>View of Curriculum Content</b>	Prespecified packages and kits (teacher-proof)	Hermeneutically generated understandings	Personally and collectively developed

riculum planners but could be used to identify touchstones or key emphases of the curriculum. For example, using the tables to analyze curricula might indicate that they were more 'hermeneutic' than 'emancipatory', more deterministic than interactive, more strategic than communicative, more perlocutionary than

Figure 11.4 — Pedagogical Aspects of the Curriculum

<b>VIEWS OF PEDAGOGY</b>			
	<b>Empirical-analytical</b>	<b>Hermeneutic</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<b>View of Interactions</b>	Determined and behaviourist	Phenomenological and interpretive	Existential, critical
	Formal	Heterogenous	Heterogenous
<b>View of People</b>	Emotion-free	Sentient and imaginative	Repressed
<b>View of the Teacher</b>	Technician, expert, instructor, trainer, transmitter	Facilitator Instructor	Catalyst, therapist transformative intellectual
<b>View of Teaching</b>	Didactic, controlled	Engagement, controlled	Negotiated rationally, open-ended student-centred
<b>View of Learning</b>	Obedience, passivity, conformity, uniformity	Application, experiential	Autonomous action for individual and collective good
	Acceptance	Understanding	Critique
<b>View of Action and Communication in Pedagogy</b>	Strategic, perlocutionary	Strategic and communicative, perlocutionary and illocutionary	Communicative illocutionary
<b>View of Teaching Time and Space</b>	Rigid, differentiated	Integrated and flexible	Negotiated and open
<b>View of Assessment</b>	Tests of outcomes	Process and product oriented	Self-assessments
	Standardized	Descriptive	Negotiated

illocutionary, more bureaucratized and hierarchical than collegially run, more bu-

Figure 11.5 — Evaluation in the Curriculum

EVALUATIVE CONTEXTS			
	Empirical-analytical	Hermeneutic	Critical
View of Evaluation	Industrial model Bureaucratic	Connoisseurship Bureaucratic and Democratic	Stakeholder Democratic and autocratic
Style of Evaluation	Objectives-driven	Process-driven	Problem-driven
Social / Personal Effects of Evaluation	Reproductive	Existential	Critical
Who Evaluates	Outsider evaluation	Participants' self-evaluations	Self- reflection
Style of Evaluation as Assessment	Norm-referenced	Criterion- referenced	Criterion- developing
Type of Evaluation	Summative	Formative and summative	Emancipatory and formative
Validity Claims in Evaluation	Truth of assertion	Sincerity and comprehensibility of the subject	Authenticity and legit- imacy of the subject
View of Action and Communication in Evaluation	Strategic, perlocutionary	Strategic and communicative, perlocutionary and illocutionary	Communicative, illocutionary

reaucratic than democratic etc.. The key terms of the tables could be used as criteria for discussion by teachers, learners and curriculum planners. The tables are a mixture of description, prescription and contention.

The recasting of schools as communication settings which strive for the *ideal*

Figure 11.6 — Researching and Developing the Curriculum

METHODOLOGY FOR RESEARCHING AND DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM			
	Empirical-analytical	Hermeneutic	Critical
Methodology for Researching the Curriculum	Positivistic and assessment driven	Phenomenological, deliberative, interactive, biographical, autobiographical	Critical and dialogical self-reflection on domination and unfree existence; Collective and participatory; Ideology critique and action research
Model of Curriculum Development	R, D and D Reflecting the <i>status quo</i>	Social interaction Understanding the <i>status quo</i>	Problem-solving Transforming the <i>status quo</i>
	Top-down	Involved	Negotiated
Some Key Curriculum Documents	Tyler (1949) Taba (1962) Wheeler (1967) NCC (1987)	Eisner (1985) Reid (1978)	Giroux (1983) Freire (1970) Carr and Kemmis (1986) Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) Apple (1993) Gore (1993)

*speech situation* becomes a matter for the organization of curricula and pedagogical relationships of participants. It involves vigilant attention to *systematically*

*distorted communication* in the school. Hence the form, content and process of schooling and of the curriculum are all capable of being subjected to Habermasian ideology critique.

However, the individual and collective freedom of egalitarianism is complex, subtle and involves an examination of potentially contradictory issues. For example Ellsworth (1989) shows that when:

participants in our class attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, we produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism and 'banking' education (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298).

This was due to the perceived oppressive need to force critical discourses to be implemented and thereby to silence diversity 'in the name of 'liberatory' pedagogy' (p. 299), to disempower some students' voices in the interests of democracy and empowerment, to support the rationalistic premises of critical pedagogy when it was seen to perpetuate domination, and to confine critical pedagogy to student empowerment which left intact 'the authoritarian nature of the teacher / student relationship' (p. 306). In this respect Ellsworth provokes a significant attack on empowerment of students as traditionally and simplistically perceived:

'Empowerment' is a key concept in this approach, which treats the symptoms but leaves the disease unnamed and untouched...in a classroom in which 'empowerment' is made dependent on rationalism, those perspectives that would question the political interests (sexism, racism, colonialism, for example) expressed and guaranteed by rationalism would be rejected as 'irrational' (biased, partial) (Ellsworth, 1989. p.306).

Commitment to rational discussion is not enough to ensure the eradication of classism, racism, sexism etc.; other forms of action might be necessary. Similarly making the teacher more like the student by 'redefining' the teacher as learner of the students' reality and knowledge (ibid., p. 306) (Habermas's 'fusion of hori-

zons') leaves the superiority of the teacher's understanding unproblematicized and untheorized (p. 307). Further, 'emancipatory authority' implies that teachers know better than students about the objectives of study (p. 308), which in many cases is patently untrue. A white, middle class male may have less knowledge or understanding of certain aspects of racism, sexism and classism than a black, working class woman. Ellworth's paper is unsettling for it moves beyond the *slogans* of critical pedagogy to an examination of the multilayered complexity of developing student voice, participation and empowerment.

This chapter has complemented the preceding chapter by focussing on the curricular rather than societal implications of a Habermasian account of schooling. Both chapters have provided support for the suggestion articulated in chapter 9 — that Habermasian tenets, although flawed (as evidenced in the earlier parts of this thesis), do have a contribution to make to a commentary on curricula. However this chapter has argued that the significance of that contribution is unclear. Though Habermas's views can provide a commentary on curriculum matters it is uncertain whether that commentary extends our understanding of the issues. His views are necessarily though trivially true. The issues which derived from Habermas's views were seen not to *rely on* them for their substance or justification; they existed independently of his work, ie correlating these issues with Habermas's work did not ascribe the power of causality to his work. Where it was clear that Habermas's views did make an original contribution (eg in a substantive principle of evaluation) it was argued that the principle was problematical and that it demonstrated an affinity with strategic rather than communicative action. Indeed this latter point has been observed throughout these preceding two chapters, that Habermas's views in practice appear to support strategic rather than communicative action. This is

unsurprising, perhaps, as it was argued in 2.3 that Critical Theory as a whole is prescriptive, it has a definite agenda of equality, autonomy, collective freedoms and social democracy. The analysis in these two chapters leads to the view, then, that Critical Theory is itself ideological and thereby cannot help but support strategic action.

It is overwhelmingly the case that it cannot be demonstrated that Habermas's views have an *exclusive* contribution to make to the spheres outlined in the preceding two chapters. Indeed it was argued that the work of (a) Young, Bernstein, Bourdieu and Weber in the field of the sociology of school knowledge, (b) Grundy and Stenhouse in the field of curriculum modelling, (c) Morrison in the field of curriculum aims, (d) Aronowitz, Giroux, Freire and Fine in the field of curriculum content, (e) Zimiles, Palansky, Bloom, Giroux, Freire, Dewey, Young, Vygotsky and Bernstein in the field of pedagogy, (f) Weiss, House, MacDonald, Lakomski and Kemmis in the field of curriculum evaluation, (g) Carr and Kemmis, Kincheloe, Pravat and Dewey in the field of curriculum research and development, may have more to offer than Habermas in these various fields. However, one should not be too hasty in dismissing his views, for it may be that inappropriate fields have been chosen or unrealistic expectations held of the power of his work. What might be his peculiar contribution to the curriculum field? Habermas is concerned to set an agenda for emancipation in which ideology critique, the *ideal speech situation* and communicative action are the processes and the outcomes. These focus on (a) *dynamics* of situations and (b) suggested areas for communicative action to work upon (curriculum aims, content, pedagogy, evaluation and research). The discussion in the preceding two chapters has not focussed on (a) apart from stating the need for rational enquiry which addresses the procedural principles of the

*ideal speech situation*. Here it has been argued that strategic action might be more empowering than communicative action as strategic action engages lived reality. Whether this is the case is an empirical matter. With reference to (b) the two chapters have indicated where and how communicative emancipatory potential might be realized; again whether this is effected in practice is an empirical matter. Both (a) and (b) are premised on the need to investigate the use of language in context, speech acts and their effects as they are actually transacted and the need to investigate strategic and communicative action in practice; this study has not done this so far. The next chapter — the case study — provides an example and test case of how these might be approached.

Despite the observed shortcomings in Habermas's contributions to the field of education nevertheless this chapter has demonstrated, to some extent, the requirements of a tenable theory set out in chapter 8 — that it should be fruitful and fertile in generating research and being applicable in situations which differ from those which gave rise to the theory. This chapter has shown, however, that the results of that fruitfulness and fertility were largely unoriginal. There remain major questions against the contribution that Habermas's work can make to the study of the curriculum. A 'severe test' of his theories might vindicate the claims made for them by Habermas. That is the substance of the next chapter.



## Chapter XII

### A CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

#### 12.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a case study which investigates how Habermas's principles can inform a piece of curriculum analysis. The case study comprises elements of a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories to ascertain whether they can be demonstrated to indicate areas of emancipatory potential in curricula which seem far from emancipatory. The case study focuses on the introduction of the National Curriculum of England and Wales and on an analysis of its emancipatory potential, using perspectives established in chapters 10 and 11.

The criteria for rendering the National Curriculum a 'severe test' are that it: (a) is a context which is different from Habermas's original; (b) possesses limited potential for emancipatory action (c) is a bureaucratized curriculum; (d) is a 'hegemonic academic curriculum' marked by strong classification and framing; (e) is socially reproductive; (f) is heavily prescriptive; (g) reinforces the 'cultural capital thesis'; (h) suppresses generalizable interests, emanating from the agenda of the New Right and sectional political interests; (i) is ideologically loaded and perlocutionary (strategic), eg with market models derived from the writer Hayek, a market mentality (competitiveness, consumerism, individualism, acquisitiveness, choice and diversity, information, privatisation, quality control, freedom from constraint); (j) serves the technical and hermeneutic rather than the emancipatory interest; (k) was introduced by the 'steering media' of law and power. It is argued

that, whilst the major elements of the National Curriculum offer limited scope for emancipation, the cross-curricular issues in general and the themes in particular contain the scope for significant emancipation. The case study is undertaken in two stages.

*Firstly* the National Curriculum is subjected to ideology critique. The context of the National Curriculum and the Education Reform Act of 1988 are set out (12.2, 12.3), then a Habermasian critique of them is provided (12.4). *Secondly* the government documentation of the *cross-curricular themes* of the National Curriculum is given extended analysis (12.5).

## 12.2 The Context of the National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is located in the context of a broader political ideology of the prime minister of the time when the National Curriculum was introduced — Margaret Thatcher. This section sets out this broader context of ‘Thatcherism’, arguing that Thatcherism suppresses generalizable interests, and then provides a Habermasian critique of it.

The underpinning for Thatcherite political ideology are the writings of Hayek (Hayek, 1960; 1973; 1976; 1979) on the value of free market principles and individual freedoms in the public sphere as the engine of social and technological change (see also Barry, 1979, p. 4).<sup>235</sup> The market is neutral, it makes no moral claims, it is free from moral principles and prescription. The Secretary of State for Education in the 1980s, Keith Joseph — a long-time mentor of Thatcher — espoused this view very clearly in an unusual construction of ‘wisdom’: ‘The blind, unplanned, unco-

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<sup>235</sup> Hayek (1976) argues that ‘through the pursuit of selfish aims the individual will usually lead himself to save the general interest’ (p. 138).

ordinated wisdom of the market is overwhelmingly superior to the well-researched, rational, systematic, well-meaning, cooperative, science based, forward-looking, statistically respectable plans of Governments, bureaucracies and international organizations' (Joseph, 1976, p. 57). The market allows individual freedoms to be exercised without constraint, indeed Joseph (1976) argued that

the market system is the greatest generator of national wealth known to mankind; coordinating and fulfilling the diverse needs of countless individuals in a way which no human mind could even comprehend, without coercion, without direction, without bureaucratic interference. But the market order does not only more effectively than any other system, serve our interests as producers and consumers. It also sustains our freedoms (Joseph, 1976, p. 62).

Hayek (1976) argues that

it will often be the most effective method to leave the organization and management of such [public] services to competitive enterprise and rely on appropriate methods of opportuning the funds raised by compulsion in accordance with some expressed preference of the users (Hayek, 1976, p. 46).

Indeed, in a Habermasian vein, Hayek (ibid.) appeals to rationality<sup>236</sup> in his comment that competition

will make it necessary for people to act rationally in order to maintain themselves....In a society in which rational behaviour confers an advantage on the individual, rational methods will progressively be developed and be spread by imitation....Competition is as much a method for breeding certain types of mind as anything else: the very cast of thinking of the great entrepreneurs would not exist but for the environment in which they developed their gifts (Hayek, 1979, pp. 75 - 6).

For Hayek (1979) freedom is interpreted as 'freedom from' (Hoy, 1984, p. 9)<sup>237</sup> — 'freedom is an artefact that released man from the trammels of the small group' (Hayek, 1979, p. 163), freedom from coercion (Hayek, 1960, p. 11) — and 'freedom for' — freedom 'enables each individual to build for himself a protected domain

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<sup>236</sup> Joseph (1976) comments on the 'declining rationality both in our society's workings and in policy making' and discussion' (p. 20).

<sup>237</sup> Indeed Hayek's insistence on the need for the absence of constraint echoes the tenets of the ideal speech situation. That Hayek's views could be pressed so easily into the service of the strategic action of a right-wing government perhaps undermines its parallel in Habermas's work; communicative action may not be a particularly powerful tool.

with which nobody else is allowed to interfere and within which he can use his own knowledge for his own purposes' (ibid., p. 163) (see also ibid., p. 130).<sup>238</sup> Joseph (1976) argues that the market benefits everybody: 'profit is not what is called zero-sum. My profit is not your loss. Everyone gains from the extra efficiency that competition brings' (p. 61). Ball (1990, p. 37) and Blackstone *et al* (1992), however, contest this, arguing that the 'market thrives by-creating winners and losers' (Blackstone *et al*, 1992, p. 18).<sup>239</sup>

Presaging the arguments of the New Right in education (though the New Right eventually overtook Hayek's principles) Hayek argues: (i) for voucher schemes in education to enable parents to exercise choice (Hayek, 1979, pp. 46 - 61); (ii) for greater information to be made available (ibid., p. 60) and for student loans to be developed (Hayek, 1960, p. 383). He attacks: (i) the advocates of 'permissive education' (ibid., p. 174); (ii) trade unionism — which he sees as a threat to the 'whole market order' (ibid., p. 144); (iii) socialism — 'nobody with open eyes can any longer doubt that the danger to personal freedom comes chiefly from the left' (ibid., p. 129) — which he sees as the 'road to serfdom' (Hayek, 1986) (see also Hayek, 1960, p. 385) and which Thatcher echoed in her endeavour to 'roll back' socialism, a view reinforced by one of the architects of Thatcherism, Joseph (1976, p. 69).

The key terms of a Hayekian market mentality are: *competition, consumerism, individualism, choice, diversity* (if choice is to be realistic), *individual freedom from*

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<sup>238</sup> It is interesting to note that Hayek moved from Vienna to the UK (from 1931-50) and thence to the US (1950-62) (Hoy, 1984), leaving Vienna at a time when his freedom was threatened, when fascism and Hitler's authoritarianism was rising, a move which paralleled the move of the Frankfurt School away from Germany in 1933.

<sup>239</sup> See also Bowe *et al* (1992) who argue that 'greater budgetary flexibility in one school will mean additional constraints and a reduction in service in another' (p. 29) because the total school population is fixed. Education, thus, is not a market but a quasi-market. Bowe *et al* (1992) demonstrate that markets are premised on a zero-sum principle (p. 55).

*restraint, privatisation, quality and efficiency* (cf Joseph, 1976) (without which market forces will drive out those dispossessed of these characteristics) and *information* (in order that consumers are able to make informed choices). Though Hayek (1960, 1979) was arguing for limited state intervention in the operations of the free market, the Education Reform Act of 1988 and subsequent legislation in education has witnessed an increasingly interventionist role of the state in an attempt to further the operation of a free market beyond Hayek's original vision (cf Joseph, 1976, pp. 70-1). In educational terms the Hayekian principles set out are interpreted thus (clearly there are overlaps between these elements):

(i) *competition, consumerism, individualism, choice, diversity and freedom from constraint* through: open enrolment; the introduction of Local Management of School; the reduction of the power of Local Education Authorities (see Appendix H); funding of schools through a *per capitem* basis; voucher schemes; privatisation of services through the Assisted Places scheme and the move to have services put out to competitive tendering; the rise of City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools; the undermining of comprehensive education and the call for a return to a selective system; the strengthening of the links between education, the economy and industry (eg in the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Manpower Services Commission — thereby sidelining the accepted channels of curriculum reform: the DES); the advocacy of education for enterprise and entrepreneurship (Jackson, 1982); the moves to make schools more accountable through the orchestration of the debate about 'standards', the rise of inspections and accountability and the publication of national tables of examination results of schools; the espousal of the concepts of 'magnet' schools and 'sink' schools; the rise of parental choice; the

reduction in the powers of teachers and teacher unions through the impositions of Pay and Conditions of Service for teachers; the rise of the statutory National Curriculum; the disdain of 'expert' educational opinion in the proposals for education (see Appendix I);<sup>240</sup>

(ii) *privatisation* through: the Assisted Places Scheme; the rise of payments for extra-curricular and 'special' additional activities (eg music tuition, educational visits); the use of competitive tendering (eg for cleaning schools, for the provision of meals); industrial sponsorships (eg the City Technology Colleges); grant-maintained ('opted-out') schools.

(iii) *quality control* through: inspections, accountability and answerability of governing bodies to parents; the monitoring and development of 'standards' in schools and the publication of results of children's examinations, assessments (DES, 1987) and of school inspections; the castigation of 'progressive education' that had been taking place for a decade since the publication of the Black Papers on education (Cox and Boyson, 1975, 1977; Cox and Dyson, 1968, 1969); the rise of managerialism in schools; the imposition of a standard National Curriculum and its associated assessments; the control of teacher education; the centralization of control to the Secretary of State.

(iv) *information* through: the publication of school prospectuses; the publica-

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<sup>240</sup> Not only were the Central Advisory Councils for Education abolished in 1986, but increased lay representation on governing bodies was introduced in the same year. As is evidenced below, the National Curriculum was brought in after the many thousands of dissenting voices from the spheres of education had been 'consulted' but in fact ignored. Further the National Curriculum was devised with no clear rationale (Bennett, 1990), the arrangements for in-service education for the National Curriculum were heavily circumscribed by the Department of Education and, for example in TVEI-related In-service Education (TRIST), then Grant-related In-service Education (GRIST), then the LEA Training Grants Scheme (LEATGS) and the GEST financing of in-service education, and there was a move away from higher degree education as in-service education and towards a more narrowly instrumental short-course view of in-service education (Acker, 1991).

tion of schools' results in public examinations and formal assessments of children at certain ages.

This vast agenda was premised on Hayek's notion of the free market. Indeed Jackson (1982) reports the then Secretary of State for Education, Joseph, as suggesting that 'schools should preach the moral virtues of free enterprise and pursuit of profit' (Jackson, 1982, p. 8); Joseph, in his own words, argued that 'the child's imagination has to be seized by explaining the role of business in the modern world....You can't have freedom without free enterprise, and that is the case that has to be put into schools' (ibid., p. 8).

The agenda was further informed and swayed by the political ideology of the New Right.<sup>241</sup> Ball (1990) quotes one civil servant in the DES as saying 'He [Joseph] was heavily got at by the Centre for Policy Studies'. Ball quotes a second civil servant thus: 'these policies came from the radical right' and a third who remarked 'it [the proposal for a National Curriculum] wasn't just within the DES, it was within the DES and the Centre for Policy Studies, No. 10 Policy Unit, and Cabinet' (Ball, 1990, p. 183). Indeed one of the members of the Centre for Policy Studies — Letwin — was a member of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit, a Special Adviser in the DES, and an adviser on privatisation (Letwin, 1988, p. 2).

The policies from the New Right match almost identically the policies voiced in the Education Reform Act of 1988<sup>242</sup> and are based on the principles of the free market outlined above and Thatcherite policies of 'possessive individualism

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<sup>241</sup> Joseph's (1976) sympathy to the New Right can be seen in his support for the Centre for Policy Studies and his view that government needed to move to the political right to avoid being 'stranded on the middle ground' (the title of his book published by the Centre for Policy Studies in 1976).

<sup>242</sup> See also the Department for Education's (1992b) paper 'Choice and Diversity' which summarizes 'five great themes' (p. 2) of the 1980s — quality, diversity, parental choice, greater school autonomy, greater accountability (pp. 2-5) — and includes in its agenda for the 1990s 'better testing', 'selection' and 'higher standards' (p. 9).

and personal initiative' (Ball, *ibid.*, p. 33, see also *Bowe et al*, 1992, p. 25). These can be seen in four New Right organizations which gave themselves self-styled national legitimacy: the Centre for Policy Studies, the National Council for Educational Standards, the Adam Smith Institute, the Hillgate Group. There was a *common membership* of these organizations, (eg Caroline Cox, Marks, Scruton, Flew, Lawlor, Marenbon, Norcross, Anderson, Naylor, Letwin) and a *common style* of publications — short, polemical pamphlets marked by a surety of voice, frequency of reference to 'policy' and written in sentences whose tone signalled a 'moral panic' (eg '[m]any of Britain's schools are in a state of crisis' (Cox *et al*, 1986)), echoing the style of the 'Black Papers in Education' of the 1960s and 1970s.

### 12.2.1 The Centre for Policy Studies

One can see in the publications of this group the themes outlined above and their premises in the principles of the free market. This can be traced through a chronology of their publications. Echoing Hayek, Joseph (1976) argued for 'enlightened self-interest' (p. 57), the need for privatisation to break down 'producer capture' of nationalization (p. 22) (a theme echoed by the Adam Smith Institute (1984) discussed later), the need for competition (p. 60), the need for 'active government to ensure competition' (p. 60), the need for entrepreneurship (p. 61), and the need to develop market principles (p. 62). Cox and Marks (1982a) edited a volume which reiterated the themes outlines earlier, *viz.* 'three central commitments — more information, more diversity and more choice' (p. 6). The editors argue that:

there should be more freedom and more choice in the education system....freedom is spurious if there are no alternatives from which to choose, and 'blind' if parents and pupils do not have adequate knowledge with which to make an informed choice (*ibid.*, p. 5).



Hence they advocate 'the establishment within the state system of a number of schools in our major cities as 'centres of excellence' specializing in particular subject areas' (ibid., p. 7), presaging City Technology Colleges and 'magnet' schools. Echoing Hayek (1979), Marks and Cox (1982b) argue for the use of education vouchers (p. 9), a view echoed in a later article in the volume by Seldon (1982). Several authors in the volume support the increase of the accountability of schools as a way of improving standards, coupling this with parental choice, and Seldon (1982) argues that 'a school in the market is certain to perform better and cost less than one without the spur of competition' (p. 107).

Accountability and its relationship to school and teacher improvement is also linked to (i) the content and quality of initial teacher education and (ii) the rise in managerialism in education. With regard to (i) Cox and Marks (1982b), echoing their comments in 1979 (Cox and Marks, 1979, p. 6), single out the study of sociology and the sociology of education as unnecessary, disingenuous and 'vacuous' for student teachers (Cox and Marks, 1982a, p. 8; 1982c), a view which is reiterated later by Lawlor (1990). Rather, they suggest (Marks and Cox, 1982a, p. 11; Lawlor, 1990, p. 7) that student teachers should increase their knowledge of their chosen subject and how it should be taught, itself a feature which was addressed in the additional time allowances for subject study by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. With regard to (ii) Anderson (1982) argues, with reference to teacher appraisal, that 'to review staff's performance every few years, reward the good and eject the bad, is simply servicing' (p. 142). This volume also includes an argument for increasing the attention to the teaching of Christianity in the school curriculum (Cottrell, 1982), a feature which finds voice in the subsequent National Curriculum of England and Wales.

The reduction of the power of local education authorities (LEAs) and the need for increased information and choice to be made available to parents was reiterated by Flew (1984) and Letwin (1988, p. 15). Further, the market principle of freedom from constraint from LEAs in order to allow greater competition was suggested by Naylor (1985) where he argued that 'new attitudes to open elites and healthy competition are urgently needed in our education system' (Naylor, 1985, p. 6), that 'the recent moves towards greater parental freedom of choice and control have been half-hearted and hesitant. The movement needs quickening' (ibid., p. 6). He suggests that 'there should be an immediate moratorium on any further comprehensivisation' (ibid., p. 6) and that 'such schools of a specialised character as still exist (including technical schools) should be supported' (ibid., p. 6).

Naylor takes up the theme of 'magnet' schools set out by Cox and Marks, (1982a), indicating their peculiar character: (i) they possess a distinctive school curriculum based on a special theme or method of instruction; (ii) they assist desegregation; (iii) they involve voluntary choice by students and parents; (iv) they allow open access (Naylor, 1985, p. 44). Regan (1990) sees the attraction of City Technology Colleges lying in: (i) their autonomous status; (ii) their potential for innovation and its effects on LEAs to innovate; (iii) their links with industry, commerce and the economy; (iv) their accessibility to parents (pp. 38-41); (v) their potential to raise 'standards' (p. 6); (vi) their ability to act as magnet schools (p. 19).

Letwin (1988) advocates a market principle by fuelling the attack on teachers and the disdain of 'professionals' in his comment that 'many teachers are not themselves educated people; they may know something or other, but lack any sense of discrimination, intellectual refinement or scepticism' (Letwin, 1988, p. 9).

Echoing Marks and Cox (1982a, 1982b) Letwin, neglecting evidence, asserts that standards of education are falling and that schools are failing their students.

Furthering the free-market principles set out above Lawlor (1988a) adds to the advocacy from the Centre for Policy Studies of the reduction of the powers of LEAs. She suggests that:

Grant-maintained schools will break the LEA monopoly of state schools. Freed from the frustrations of local authority interference, heads and governors will be able to shape their schools as they think fit....For parents who want a good education for their children, grant-maintained schools will make for better quality and greater choice within the state system (Lawlor, 1988a, p. 5).

She argues that, by so doing, 'an unnecessary layer of local authority bureaucracy will be lifted away so that most decisions can be taken on the spot' (ibid., p. 12), a view reiterated in another document by Lawlor (1988c, p. 5). Lawlor (1988c) emphasizes the need to reduce the power of LEAs in the interests of 'high standards, diversity and choice' (p. 4) where parental choice is served by an LEA Information Unit (p. 16). Further, she advocates increased competition (p. 17) and the introduction of competitive tendering for the inspectorate, careers, psychology and welfare consultancy services and for transport, meals, support services and resource services.

Lawlor (1988b) was to further the call for a National Curriculum, albeit not in the breadth which followed the Reform Act, in the interests of protecting and promoting 'standards' (Lawlor, 1988b, pp. 17-18); this was echoed by Letwin (1988). Her attention turned to initial teacher education in her publication of 1990. Echoing the need for subject study (p. 7) and the disdain for sociology (p. 14) and theory in general (pp. 9 - 32) she also advocates the move towards on-the-job training through an apprenticeship model (pp. 7, 32, 38). That this has been heeded can be seen in the moves towards school-based teacher education

in PGCE courses in England and Wales (DFE, 1992a).

Hence the reports by the Centre for Policy Studies resonate with many parts of the government agenda and Hayekian principles.

### 12.2.2 The National Council for Educational Standards

This organisation furthered the agenda of freedom of information for parents so that they could make informed choices and brought forward evidence which, they suggested, argued for a return to a selective tradition in schooling at secondary level. Cox and Marks (1979) argue for greater amounts of information to be made available to the public: 'if choice is to be genuine, the choosers must have access to relevant knowledge which enables their choice to be well-informed' (p. 30).<sup>243</sup>

In the interests of a democracy and for diversity to accompany choice they argue that 'the best way forward would be to encourage as many different educational initiatives as possible and to enable parents to choose between them' (p. 26). This would be given impetus by the introduction of education vouchers (*ibid.*, p. 31) and 'alternative methods of financing schools — which encourage diversity and choice' (*ibid.*, p. 33), presaging City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools, ie those schools who had opted out of local authority control (*ibid.*, p. 31). Indeed the title of their publication — *Education and Freedom: the Roots of Diversity* — echoes Hayek's market principles outlined above. Greater choice and diversity involves 'the abolition of the allocation of children by Local Authorities, according to rigid 'zoning' or 'feeder school' policies' (*ibid.*, p. 29).

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<sup>243</sup> Cox and Marks (1980) argue thus: 'In a free and democratic society we need to develop the diverse talents of all our children. But before we can do this we need more information — locally so that choice may be better informed, and nationally so that policies may be soundly based' (Cox and Marks, 1980, p. 8).

Two subsequent reports on 'standards' in state secondary schools make similar points to each other and advance the projects of free markets and access to information, publishing examination results and an analysis of these. Marks, Cox and Pomian-Srzednicki (1983) suggest that 'diversity in our school system may be more desirable than homogeneity' (p. 116) and that '[e]xisting specialised schools of all kinds — grammar, secondary modern, technical or bilateral — should be retained. And new specialist schools should be encouraged' (p. 117). This argument for a selective system is made clear where the authors write: 'examination results per pupil are substantially higher for a system of selective schools ... than for a system of comprehensive schools' (p. 114).

Further, having found gross discrepancies between children's examination performance within and between LEAs (eg pp. 112, 114), the authors argue that 'individual schools and LEAs need to be more accountable to parents and that our data on examination results should help to increase that accountability' (p. 117). This, they suggest, will further enable and inform parents' freedom of choice (p. 119) to be exercised.

The findings of the first report were reinforced by their second report (Marks and Pomian-Srzednecki, 1985). Here data were presented to indicate higher examination results in selective schools (pp. 14, 196), to show that some LEAs were profligate with money (p. 106) (eg the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA)) — an echo of Flew (1984, p. 20) — and to reaffirm the need for diversity (differentiation):

differentiation and diversity in our school system may be more desirable and conducive to higher standards than homogeneity .... There is no case whatever for the abolition of existing specialised schools of any kind — grammar, secondary modern, technical or bilateral. Such schools should be retained and new specialist schools of various kinds should be encouraged. That is one reason why the recent initiative for the creation of new technical schools is so welcome (ibid.; p. 107).

Hence the reports from the National Council for Educational Standards demonstrate a clear affinity with the Hayekian principles outlined earlier and the government's agenda. One can see that the National Council for Educational Standards reaffirms the agenda of the Centre for Policy Studies.

### 12.2.3 The Adam Smith Institute

The Adam Smith Institute (1984) (which cites Anderson, Cox, Flew and Norcross in its acknowledgements) published *Education Policy: The Omega File*, whose tone is redolent of other publications from the New Right, opening with the words 'Concern about the state education system is growing' (p. 1). Echoing Joseph (1976) and Hayekian economics (Bowe *et al*, 1992, p. 32) it advocates the need for 'producer capture' to be unseated in favour of consumer interests as, at the time of writing, 'parents are actually denied the information on which to make their judgement' (p. 2) (in Habermasian terms, parents are denied the opportunity to participate in the move to an *ideal speech situation*). 'Producer capture' is evidenced, the report's authors suggest, in *giantism* (the move to large institutions and monopolies), *resistance to change*, *employment laxity*, *lack of interest in the product*, *social engineering*, *career structures versus consumers*. These can be redressed by the introduction of market models of a service (for example the report suggests that '[i]n a market structure, the entry of new services and the exit of old ones is an essential feature that keeps innovation on the march' (p. 13)). One can observe in this document an overt market mentality and vocabulary and references to industrial models of education. For example, the first page of the report states:

A commercial firm which failed to satisfy its customers would quickly lose them to its competitors. But this competitive pressure does not exist in the state sector ... yet without this source of consumer pressure it is impossible for a service to be run in the interests of customers (ibid., p. 1).

To serve consumer interests the report states that there should be greater choice between schools, with no fixed catchment areas (p. 12), schools should retain more independence (p. 5), indeed it suggests that 'LEAs are part of the problem, not the solution' (p. 12). The role of LEAs should be confined to giving a block grant to each school and taking responsibility for 'new building works and major capital expenditure' (p. 7). The report suggests that '[t]he transfer of responsibility for education from local authorities to parents, and of the funding decisions to the national government would enable large changes to be made in the methods of funding and operating state schools' (p. 11). It argues that:

[a]s more schools came to be run by elected boards and more policy decisions are devolved down to each school, however, the role of local bodies would be very limited. and it may be best to replace them by ministerial bureaux with the power to allocate funds (ibid., p. 15).

Further, parents should be given more power and involvement in the running of schools (p. 5), teachers and schools should be more accountable (p. 5) and there should be greater diversity in the education system (p. 5). Education voucher systems should be developed (p. 16). School boards should be established and should meet annually with parents (this latter being a move which became law in the 1988 Education Act). Services should be put out to competitive tender (pp. 7, 26) and premises hired out for community use (p. 8); employers should be approached to fund the building of new schools (p. 20) (anticipating the City Technology Colleges programme), coupled with the rise of specialised schools and 'centres of excellence' ('magnet' schools) (p. 23). Anticipating Lawlor (1990) the report argues for an apprenticeship model of initial teacher education: '[w]ith 'on the job' training being such a popular concept in other industries, it is difficult to resist its greater extension to teaching' (p. 24).

One can see the same features appearing in this report as in the reports from the previous two organisations mentioned above. It is clear, then, that there is an identifiable common set of principles which provide a context for the educational developments of the Thatcherite period.

#### 12.2.4 The Hillgate Group

This group (including Caroline Cox, Marks, Norcross and Scruton in its membership) published *Whose Schools* in 1986 (Cox *et al*, 1986). Its themes echo those outlined through the publications of the three other groups already mentioned. It argues that 'there is a need for a national curriculum' (p. 1) and that this should include very clear religious instruction (p. 2) — echoing Cottrell (1982) (mentioned earlier). A national curriculum should be cast in traditional subject form, including English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, History and Foreign Languages (p. 7). Responsibility for the curriculum must be removed from the LEAs (p. 10). The report reasserts the need for teachers to have clear subject knowledge (p. 2) and to be bound by very clear terms and contracts of employment — evidence of a new managerialism in education (p. 8). In initial teacher education students should be prepared on an apprenticeship model (p. 15).

The report questions the powers of LEAs, asking '[s]hould schools be owned, as at present, by LEAs?' (p. 7) and arguing that 'schools should be self-governing' (p. 10), seeking funding from outside agencies where appropriate (p. 15). The 1986 report suggests that an initial major reform of state education 'is to give more power to the parents' (Cox *et al* p. 10). It argues that schools:

must be released from the control of local government and financed by direct grant from central funds .... The state grant to schools will be provided on a per capita basis, according to the number of pupils admitted (ibid., p. 13).



Coupling parental choice with diversity the report argues for the extension of City Technology Colleges (p. 13) and of the concept and practice of 'magnet schools': '[e]xisting schools of proven merit should also be singled out for special aid and encouragement. Such schools could serve as 'magnets', on the American model' (ibid., p. 13). Further, parental choice requires greater freedom of information, including publishing examination results (p. 14). This latter point is developed further by the group where they suggest that '[e]xamination results should not in general depend on course work or on the opinion of individual teachers' (p. 15). That this latter point found sympathy with Thatcherist policy is evidenced by a letter from Thatcher's office to a private secretary in the DES:

the method of assessment places a heavy responsibility on teachers' judgements and general impressions. She [Thatcher] is also concerned to note the major role envisaged for the LEAs in implementation of the system (Ball, 1990, p. 191).

These views are echoed in the group's report of 1987 (Hillgate Group, 1987) where its authors write 'why assume that Local Authority advisers and in-service training are necessarily blessings?' (p. 30). Indeed the 1987 report comments on the ILEA as an example of excessive costs and low standards (ibid., p. 26).

Hence, the Hillgate group's documents articulate with the messages from the previous three groups mentioned above.

### **12.2.5 A Summary of the Four Right Wing Organizations**

The documents from all four groups voice many parts of the agenda for government set out earlier. The four groups are mutually reinforcing and combine to establish a collective voice that influenced the content of education, itself operating from Hayekian market principles. These are summarized in figure 12.1.

In Habermasian terms sectional interests of one group of the political spectrum

Figure 12.1 — Summary Issues from Four Right-Wing Groups

SUMMARY ISSUES FROM THE FOUR GROUPS				
Issue	Competition, Consumerism, Individualism, Choice, Diversity, Freedom from Constraint	Privatisation	Quality Control	Information
LMS	CPS, ADS, HG			
Reduced power of LEAs	CPS, NCES, ADI			
Open enrolment	CPS, ADI, HG			
Voucher schemes	CPS, ADI			
Privatisation of services	CPS, ADI	CPS, ADI, HG		
CTCs	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG			
GM/opted out schools	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG			
Education/industry links		ADI, HG		
The 'Standards' debate	CPS, NCES, HG		NCES, ADI, HG	
Inspections/accountability	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG		CPS, NCES, ADI, HG	
Publication of results of assessment / examinations inspections	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG		CPS, NCES, HG	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG
'Magnet' and 'sink' schools	CPS, ADI, HG			
Parental choice	CPS, NCES, ADI, HG			
National Curriculum	CPS, HG		CPS, HG	
Control of teacher education			CPS, ADI, HG	
School prospectuses				CPS, ADI, HG
Rise of managerialism in schools			CPS, NCES, ADI, HG	
<p><b>Key:</b> CPS = Centre for Policy Studies; NCES = National Council for Educational Standards; ADI = Adam Smith Institute; HG = Hillgate Group</p>				

(the New Right) disproportionately influenced policy — Habermas's *systematically distorted communication* and the violation of the *ideal speech situation* (discussed

later) — rather than promoting a generalizable interest.

### 12.3 An Ideology Critique of the Thatcherite Agenda

One effect of the Thatcherite agenda is the disempowering of those with a professional voice in education — teachers, LEAs, educationists and academics — and the increased control of education by lay professionals (eg the state, governors of schools and parents) (Ball, 1990). This is an example of Habermasian ‘strategic action’. (Ball (1990) argues that the Education Reform Act ‘brings a massively overdetermined system of education’ (p. 214)). The effects of this are not just to disempower teachers and other educationists, but, by ‘blaming’ them for the problems of education, to legitimise opening up the control of education to other — more ‘reasonable’ — parties. Ball (1990), for example, writes: ‘the concerned parent is cast as a figure of reason and sanity<sup>244</sup> naturally opposed to and set over against the wild experimentation and unorthodoxies of the uncaring teachers (like those of William Tyndale and ‘loony left’ authorities like ILEA)’ (p. 33) (the abolition of the latter having been advocated by Lawlor, 1988c).

That this drives a wedge between teachers and parents which furthers a competitive, market, ethic has been articulated by Tomlinson (1991):

Conservative policy during the 1980s has cast parents in the role of consumers, managers and agents of competition rather than as partners in the education process....parents have been encouraged to become the ‘vigilantes’ of education — to chide, and to complain rather than cooperate with schools (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 4).

Reducing, or circumscribing, the powers of teachers opens the doors to a strongly interventionist policy in education by the state, separating conception from execution and furthering the bureaucratisation of education and, in Haber-

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<sup>244</sup> Cf Bowne et al (1992, p. 17) who also show that such a move unrealistically treats ‘the ideal parent as the average parent’ p. 27).

masian terms, the violation of the *ideal speech situation*: 'the culpable teacher, the implicated educational establishment, are excluded from valid participation in the debates which affect them directly and within which they are spoken of' (Ball, 1990, p. 58). Ball (*ibid.*, p. 197) argues that the rise of managerialism in education furthers the separation of conception from execution:

should they [teachers] be regarded as autonomous partners, making key curriculum decisions in the staffroom or classroom, or must they be reduced to agents of policies which are decided elsewhere? (Ball, 1990, p. 171).

Apple (1993) sees the metaphors of the curriculum as imparting a significant message in this respect: 'it [the national curriculum] sees people as either stomachs or furnaces. We use and use up. We do not create. Some one else does that' (Apple, 1993, p. 238). Such a separation of conception from execution legitimises the increased power of administrators and the operation of free market principles. Goldstein (1991), for example, argues that:

the National Curriculum and National Assessment constitute a powerful infrastructure for central control....Along with this structure for control there is the intention to force as much as possible of a 'free market' economy onto education. (Goldstein, 1991, p. 5).

Ross and Tomlinson (1991) see the sundering of conception and execution in the establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) as a controlling body for teacher education, whose membership is not democratically elected: 'CATE consists of government nominees and has no members appointed by the profession, yet it controls entry to the profession' (Ross and Tomlinson, 1991, p. 35). This is paralleled in the appointments to the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examinations and Assessment Committee.

It was argued earlier that the free market was seen by the New Right groups as a way of increasing the standards of education, giving rise to 'magnet' schools

and the rise of 'sink' schools (leading, it is hoped, to the latter's ultimate closure). However, this has been criticised on two important counts. *Firstly* because it will involve parents in complicity in giving unequal educational opportunities to children (ie a moral question) and, *secondly*, because it does not guarantee that poor schools in fact will close (ie an empirical question). With regard to the former, Brighouse and Tomlinson (1991) argue that:

market principles require... 'winners' and 'losers'. To accept such a state of affairs in the design of provision and management of schools is to accept that some of our future citizens, through no fault of their own, are doomed to receive education in schools known to be failing (Brighouse and Tomlinson, 1991, p. 3).

With regard to the latter, Tomlinson (1991) argues that 'schools ... lost pupils and became less effective but did not close .... In effect parents were contributing to lowering standards at some schools by their choices' (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 8).

The reasons for a pupil's 'entitlement' to a National Curriculum may be differentiated according to the political interests at work. For the political Left a common curriculum was seen to serve equality and equality of opportunity — the furtherance of the comprehensive ideal. For the political Right a common curriculum was seen both as an economic necessity, preparing pupils to take their place as producers of capital, and to act as a force for social control: 'people must be educated to know their place' (Ranson, 1984, p. 241). However the National Curriculum did not apply to all spheres of education, children in schools which were not publicly maintained were not obliged to follow the National Curriculum. This is interesting, for the National Curriculum, it will be argued below, is an outstanding example of a bureaucratized curriculum. Lieberman (1990) argues that whilst bureaucracies have the effect of raising the standard of the lowest areas of performance they nevertheless suppress excellence. One could speculate that the

bureaucratized curriculum, required only of public sector schools, acts as a form of social control and social reproduction.

In the decade before the National Curriculum the call for a common curriculum had been a call for outline guidance only, giving control of decision making to teachers. The National Curriculum, however, in its level of detail in Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study, gave teachers very little room for professional decision making, indeed significant decision making did not involve the teaching profession. Teachers' decision making was confined to organization of the 'delivery' of the National Curriculum. Teachers could become mere technicians, in Habermas's terms the denial of their interests is evidence of the *suppression of generalizable interests* in favour of strategic rather than communicative action. However, even at the point of the furtherance of the 'technical' interest of government control of curricula there was more than a glimmer of emancipatory potential in three ways: (a) the recognition that pedagogy should remain the province of teachers (DES, 1987) (which, as was argued in chapter 11, is a major means of developing emancipation); (b) by giving a common entitlement to all children to receive a wide curriculum; (c) by introducing cross-curricular issues into the National Curriculum which, as will be argued later in this chapter, have very significant emancipatory potential. By limiting teachers' decision making it would hardly have been surprising, therefore, if the National Curriculum had not produced a teaching profession characterized by alienation and anomie.

The National Curriculum of England and Wales was made law in the Education Reform Bill in 1988 (DES, 1988a). That Reform Bill contains several sections and educational innovations:

- its proposals for a common curriculum for children in state education, coupled with the testing of those children at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 (paras. 1 - 16);
- its lifting of restrictions on ceiling numbers which schools are allowed to take and 'open enrolment' (paras. 17 - 22);
- its delegation of financial control of school budgets to school governing bodies (paras. 23 - 36);
- its establishment of 'opted out schools' — schools with grant maintained status who have separated themselves from local authority control (paras. 37 - 78);
- its establishment of city technology colleges — schools whose initial funding should be from industry with government support (para. 80);
- its establishment of the independence from local authority control of polytechnics and institutions of higher education (paras. 82 - 95);
- its establishment of the University Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (paras. 90 - 94);
- its delegation of financial control of budgets of colleges of further education to college governing bodies (paras. 96 - 109);
- its proposal for the demise of the Inner London Education Authority (paras. 114 - 125);
- its provision for the ending of tenure in universities (paras. 131 - 136).

There are several implications which flow from the proposals of the Education Reform Bill:

- its devolution of unprecedented powers to the Secretary of State for education — (some 250 powers at the time) to dictate directly the nature of education — its content, organization, management and administration (Tomlinson, 1993);
- its breaking of the powers of local authorities to manage schooling (ibid.);
- its support for the independent sector and non-local authority schooling (through the Assisted Places scheme, through opted-out schools seeking grant maintained status, through its establishment of city technology colleges);
- its radical break with the tradition of devolved responsibility and relative curricular autonomy of teachers (Acker, 1991; Hargreaves, 1991);
- its reduction of the status of teachers to technicians whose task it is to 'deliver' the National Curriculum (Simon, 1988);
- its importation of monetarism and market models of organization from industry into education, with their language of competition, narrow notions of accountability, a behaviourist mentality,<sup>245</sup> support for perceived excellence in schools<sup>246</sup> at the cost of supporting more deprived schools in other areas (Ball, 1990);
- its suppression of local initiatives and grassroots curriculum development (Tomlinson, 1993);

The effects of the Education Reform Bill, in their disempowering of local education authorities and teachers, at the same time as expanding enormously — as

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<sup>245</sup> This was to occur through the prescription of the National Curriculum and its associated published results of assessments of children, performance indicators, the improvement of 'standards' through assessment led curricula (DES, 1987) and the introduction of LMS (cf Bowe et al (1992): 'LMS has implications for the curriculum, management is closely related to the market' (p. 4).

<sup>246</sup> To be achieved through open enrolment and 'opting out' of local authority control.



never before — the powers of the Secretary of State, were to establish a centralist, interventionist, *dirigiste* regime from a conservative political party (Coffield and Edwards, 1989).<sup>247</sup> This party not only did not represent the majority of voters, but drove policies in to the field of education that had received wholesale rejection and condemnation — *the suppression of generalizable interests* to which Habermas alludes (Habermas, 1976a).

Society is marked by cultural diversity; flexibility and adaptability of the workforce are seen to be the keynotes of the economy. The imposition of a uniform and largely academic curriculum (cf Hargreaves' (1989) views of the National Curriculum as a 'hegemonic academic curriculum'), which, from the arguments in the sociology of knowledge outlined in chapter ten (cf the discussion of Bourdieu) advantages those sectors of society possessed of a particular cultural capital and habitus in its stress on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understandings in a narrow academic sphere and is socially reproductive rather than emancipatory. Indeed Bowe *et al* (1992) argue that LMS leads to schools attempting to attract 'additional cultural capital into the school' (p. 53). Bourdieu argues that such a curriculum affords the middle classes the opportunity to secure advantage and privilege at the expense of the subordinate classes, ie is a device for social and cultural reproduction (see Appendix A).

Ball (1990) suggests that '[i]n terms of curriculum policy the key question that is addressed here is not which curriculum prevailed but rather whose curriculum prevailed' (Ball, 1990, p. 160). The effects of this decision-making are outlined by Apple (1993) where he sees that the 'official knowledge' of a national curriculum

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<sup>247</sup> Cf Ball's (1990) comment that education was 'to be made more disciplined (greater state intervention and monitoring and more centralized control)' (p. 19) with a clear shift of operation by the DES 'from one articulated in terms of influence to one articulated in terms of intervention and the need for legislation' (ibid., p. 146).

'embodies conflict over what some regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups whilst disempowering others' (Apple, 1993, p. 222) (see Appendix A).

Apple argues that the operation of free market principles will have the effect, regardless of its intentions, of educational segregation, with the New Right preferring 'to decenter ... power altogether and redistribute it according to market forces and thus tacitly disempower those who already have less power while using a rhetoric of empowering the 'consumer' ' (ibid., p. 230). This echoes Bernstein's (1990) view that 'the explicit commitment to greater choice by parents ... is not a celebration of participatory democracy, but a thin cover for the old stratification of schools and curricula' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 87). Those possessed of economic and cultural capital will profit from market forces whilst those dispossessed of them will lose.<sup>248</sup> Indeed Apple (ibid.) suggests that 'freedom' and 'choice' in the new educational market will be for those who can afford them. 'Diversity' in schooling will simply be a more polite word for the condition of educational apartheid' (p. 236),<sup>249</sup> ie the *suppression of generalizable interests*.

## 12.4 A Habermasian Critique of the National Curriculum

This critique will use Habermas's concepts of the *ideal speech situation*, the *suppression of generalizable interests*, *strategic and communicative action*, the *colonization of the lifeworld* and *systematically distorted communication*. Simon (1988) demonstrates how the proposals for the National Curriculum were drawn up in the face of massive hostility from all sectors of education — the traditional partners

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<sup>248</sup> Apple (1993) argues that the process of covert stratification is furthered the publication of 'league tables' of schools examination results; under the guise of providing 'objective' data about schools the *agenda* of the decision makers of the curriculum is not questioned (Apple, 1993, p. 231).

<sup>249</sup> Barry. 1979. commentating on Hayek, argues that '[c]onservative governments have been as persistent as their rivals in assiduously protecting favoured groups from the full effect of market forces, while at the same time proclaiming the virtues of free enterprise' (Barry. 1979, p. 52).

and parties in education,<sup>250</sup> ie a warranted consensus was systematically distorted into the silencing of opposition. Hence the participatory democracy of the *ideal speech situation* (Habermas, 1987a, p. 292) was not applied, nor was the 'warranted consensus' alluded to earlier applied; as demonstrated in the previous section, consensus politics was replaced with minority political will. In Habermasian terms communicative action was overridden by strategic action, general interests were suppressed, the education system distorted communicative action for a politically vocal and powerful minority. Simon (1988) indicates how consultation on the proposals in the Education Reform Bill was a sham, being telescoped into an unrealistically short time scale and then ignored.<sup>251</sup> He also indicates that the claimed dissatisfaction with the current provision for education was largely a media myth. As an exercise in decision making the consultation process and the Education Reform Bill itself was a singularly outstanding example of strategic action replacing communicative action. The force of the better argument was quite simply ignored, a clear example of *systematically distorted communication* which violated central principles of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2 q.v.).

The *suppression of generalizable interests* and the advance of *strategic action* is an instance of Habermasian *systematically distorted communication* whereby the politico-economic system distorts the socio-educational system; it is an example of how the *steering media* of power, the law, and the economy can enter the lifeworld of those involved in education and colonize it. The evidence of *strategic action* through *systematically distorted communication* rather than *communicative action*

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<sup>250</sup> For example local authorities and local education authorities, churches, teachers, parents, educationists, politicians across the political spectrum, the Trades Union Congress, a plethora of professional associations and organizations representing all walks of life and educational interests, and the media.

<sup>251</sup> See also Bowe et al. (1992), pp. 7, 101-2.

in the establishing of the Reform Bill and the National Curriculum is strong, *viz.*:

- the government's neglect of hostile comments;
- the government's intervention to advance a partisan political ideology (informed powerfully by the New Right);
- the reduction of powers of teachers and LEAs, enabling central policy to be put into schools without overt practical opposition;
- the control of the introduction of the National Curriculum by statute;
- the control of teacher education.

These measures violate the conditions of the *ideal speech situation* (cf fig. 6.2 q.v.).<sup>252</sup> *Strategic action* is evidenced in the government's intervention — by statute — to advance the market principles into education, outlined earlier. Indeed one of the stated intentions of the National Curriculum was to enhance Britain's competitive edge in international markets (Ball, 1990). A subtler form of Habermasian *strategic action* can be evidenced in the Reform Act and the introduction of the National Curriculum, where the call for more information to be made available to parents, eg in examination results and school prospectuses, can be seen as serving Habermas's hermeneutic interest; however, when one sees that this action in fact served the perlocutionary — strategic — purposes of a government wishing to advance market principles into schools, coupled with the reduction of teachers' and LEAs' powers, the hermeneutic interest is incorporated into the wider strategic action of government.

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<sup>252</sup> Ewert (1991) argues that 'the instrumental spiral that leads to increasing control over social and economic life creates two problems: (a) increasing dependency on the State and thus a demand for its services and (b) the need for the State to claim a rational consensus in order to justify increasing administrative control' (Ewert, 1991, p. 367).

Market principles are a clear example of Habermas's *suppression of generalizable interests* and the advance of his technical interest in control; there are winners and losers in a competitive market. Indeed it was outlined at the start of this chapter that a market mentality emphasises selfish, strategic, individual (echoed by Joseph, 1976), acquisitive action. The advocacy of voucher schemes, of competitive tendering, of a return to selective schools (emanating from the New Right), of 'magnet' and 'sink' schools, all are premised on the notions of 'winners' and 'losers'; clearly generalizable interests cannot be served in such a zero-sum model of society (Thurow, 1977, 1980), despite Joseph's (1976) assertion to the contrary.

The intrusion of market principles into education is a clear example of Habermas's views of the *colonization of the lifeworld* by steering media (in this case the steering media of the market economy and the force of law), where systems (political and economic) combine to impinge on the lifeworld and agency of participants (cf Layder, 1994, p. 197). A clear example of this is the reduction of power coupled with increased workload of teachers in implementing the National Curriculum.

One can see also in the rise in managerialism and bureaucracy in schools evidence of the rationalization and *colonization of the lifeworld* by the steering medium of bureaucracy (and its associated concepts of differentials of power — a violation of the principles of the *ideal speech situation* which mention equal opportunities and powers) (fig. 6.2 q.v.). The effects of managerialism are to further Habermas's technical interest in controlling schools by government and, in turn, senior managers in schools controlling other staff in schools. A clear example of the former can be seen in the introduction of vastly greater numbers of inspections of schools. Here inspectors are not required to reach a 'warranted consensus' on reports, there is not freedom for teachers to: enter a discourse, check question-

able claims, evaluate explanations, modify a given conceptual framework, allow commands or prohibitions to enter discourse, assess justifications, alter norms, select and employ speech acts, reach consensus<sup>253</sup> — all elements of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2 q.v.).<sup>254</sup>

A curriculum which advantaged and disadvantaged middle and working classes respectively (see the discussion in chapter 10 of the reproductive effects of an academic curriculum), was an instance of the *suppression of generalizable interests*. Because the emancipatory potential of the National Curriculum was confined to a particular sector of society it did not embody the generalizable interests which the universalizability principle of emancipation should address.

In Habermasian terms the National Curriculum is an example of *systematically distorted communication* and indicates how the dialectic between action and structural perspectives could be negated; the action perspectives of many of those involved in education were eroded by the decision making of the representatives of the systems perspectives — the politicians and their supporting bureaucracies (Lawton, 1984). The treatment of society as an amalgam of hypercomplex social systems (Habermas, 1984, 1987a) was simplified enormously by the political will of a single party in political power which simply rode over contestation and opposition (cf Bowe *et al*, 1992). As Simon (1988) has argued above, a series of unfounded generalizations about an alleged parlous state of education which happened to capture the crest of a political wave enabled a wide-ranging and partisan political ideology to surface, the effects of which were as socially divisive as they were socially reproductive.

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<sup>253</sup> Cf Bowring-Carr (1993).

<sup>254</sup> This furthers the separation of conception and execution in the bureaucratic organization of education.

This section has indicated how Habermas's principles are *exemplified* — instanced — in a critique of the National Curriculum. However, *exemplification* of his principles alone does not necessarily imply that they add to a critique of the National Curriculum, a critique of the National Curriculum might exemplify a variety of different principles and perspectives without necessarily enriching the analysis. Coincidental exemplification cannot replace justification. The same issue as was observed in chapter 11 might apply here too — that the critique of the National Curriculum does not *rely on* Habermas's principles for meaning. For example the politics of a sham consultation process, of the use of law and political power, of the advance of market principles into education, of the bureaucratization of education, and of the curriculum as an agent of the reproduction of social inequality (discussed in this section) does not *rely on* Habermas's principles for justification. Habermas's views, then, might be trivially rather than necessarily apposite here; whether they *add to* the critique is a moot point.

#### 12.4.1 The National Curriculum as a Bureaucratized Curriculum

In many respects the organizational arrangements and the content of the National Curriculum represent a fully worked out example of a bureaucratized curriculum, a major instance of the technical interest, the *colonization of the lifeworld* and the neglect of communicative action. Habermas (1984, p. 429) characterises a bureaucracy thus:

- official business is conducted on a continuous basis;
- it is conducted in accordance with stipulated rules;
- impersonal criteria delimit workers' type of work;

- there are official zones or authority to carry out work;
- there are clear definitions of zones of legitimate power;
- there is a hierarchy of power;
- workers do not own the resources needed for their work;
- there are no property rights on offices held;
- official business is conducted through written documents.

This echoes clearly not only the authoritarianism (or ‘authoritarian populism’ (Dale, 1989) of a conservative government) (cf Giroux, 1989) but, in Habermasian terms, the replacement of *communicative action* with *strategic action* and decisionism. The National Curriculum was brought in with the legitimacy and power of the ‘steering medium’ (Habermas, 1987a) of the law. Not only did it stratify powers of decision making differentially to different participants, whereby the Secretary of State made the decisions on a wide array of matters and curricula (except some aspects of pedagogy), but it prescribed — or circumscribed — the powers of teachers so that they became ‘deliverers’ of the National Curriculum.

The powers of the Secretary of State were laid out in written documentation that was to be subject to ongoing reformulation by the appointees of the Secretary of State (in the membership of the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council). Members of the subject working groups were not *elected* but *appointed* by the Secretary of State. Indeed the Secretary of State intervened in the subject matter as well as the appointment of the curriculum working groups (Elliott, 1991).



The 'impersonal criteria' suggested by Habermas above are indicated in the National Curriculum not only by the blanket application of the curriculum but in the 'objective' testing that accompanied it, whereby the move to norm-referenced use of what were purported to be criterion-referenced tests marked an appeal to the scientific (or scientistic) respectability of quantitative analysis, itself the working out of a narrowly conservative political ideology (Morrison, 1990a). The publication of 'league tables' of results that were designed to enable comparison of schools to be made, furthering the competitiveness envisaged in the government's principles for improvement, neglected a central tenet of education — that it concerns interpersonal relationships as well as the simple accumulation of knowledge.

The 'official business' was carried out not only through the overwhelming amount of written directives, statutory orders and circulars which accompanied the National Curriculum, but through the emphasis which was placed on written plans and policies, written reports, and written assessments by children in pen-and-paper tests. A *post hoc* analysis of the curriculum model implicit in the National Curriculum reveals it to be Tylerian (see chapter 11), itself a curriculum model which, as was argued in chapter 11, reinforces Habermas's technical interest rather than the emancipatory interest. The technical interest in control is evidenced in the National Curriculum through the Secretary of State's control of its scope, content and availability. Education becomes an instrumentally rather than an intrinsically worthwhile activity (Elliott, 1991).<sup>255</sup>

Moreover, the actual content of the curriculum and its accompanying assessment has been bureaucratized. This has been done at one level by the ascription of

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<sup>255</sup> Elliott, ironically, adds that the National Curriculum proposals do not even fulfil a full instrumentalism, in that they neglect knowledge utilization at the expense of knowledge acquisition.

differential status to different areas of the curriculum — into core, foundation and cross-curriculum issues with decreasing status respectively. One can observe the haste with which the content of the core subjects was decided — the status of the subject was reflected in the degree of concentration and time scales for production of aspects of the National Curriculum and the sequence of their appearance. The interim reports of the groups working on the core areas had to be furnished within three months of their initial meetings (Simon, 1988, p. 111). The contents of the core subjects — English, Mathematics and Science — were the first to appear, emphasizing a concern with the traditional ‘basics’ of education, with the lower status subjects appearing later. One can observe in this the perpetuation of the differential status afforded to the ostensibly cognitive over the affective aspects of the curriculum.

The framing of the National Curriculum indicates a sympathy with a subject based classical humanist ideology,<sup>256</sup> which, it has been argued, is socially reproductive rather than emancipatory.<sup>257</sup> Indeed the National Curriculum exhibits Bernstein’s strong classification and framing, themselves indicating a strong sympathy with the *status quo* of traditionalism in society, his ‘collection code’ (discussed in chapter 10). The integrative potential of the curriculum, an indicator of weakened social control (chapter 10), is confined to the low status cross-curricular issues.<sup>258</sup> The curriculum is set out in traditionalist subject terms,<sup>259</sup> where teachers and pupils are cast more as passive recipients of decisions than as creators of those decisions.

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<sup>256</sup> This is discussed in Lawton, 1973; Skilbeck, 1976b.

<sup>257</sup> For example Bernstein, 1971; Young, 1971; Bourdieu, 1976.

<sup>258</sup> The National Curriculum Council (1990a) suggests that cross-curricular themes can ‘permeate’ other curriculum subjects.

<sup>259</sup> The National Curriculum specifies mathematics, English, science, technology, geography, history, art, physical education, music, a modern foreign language, religious education. —

An analysis of key verbs in the 'attainment targets' of the National Curriculum, for example, shows the low incidence of higher order verbs — 'interrogate', 'evaluate', 'judge', 'critique', 'produce', 'explore', 'propose' 'make' (Bloom, 1956); higher order activities such as 'evaluate', 'assess justifications', 'reflect on', 'discuss', 'search for truth', 'check questionable claims', 'evaluate explanations', using 'the force of the better argument alone' resonate with the phrases used to typify the *ideal speech situation* in figure 6.2 (q.v.).

The DES document on Mathematics (DES, 1991a) emphasizes 'select', 'identify', 'follow', 'coordinate', 'respond', 'demonstrate', 'understand', 'find', 'manipulate', 'use', 'recognise', 'handle', 'organize' in its ten levels. Higher order verbs — 'interpret', 'examine critically', 'justify', 'explore' — are heavily weighted to the upper levels (6 - 10).

The DES document on Science (DES, 1991b) emphasizes 'use', 'manipulate', 'choose', 'recognize', 'name', 'know', 'understand', 'describe', 'know how', 'know that', 'explain', 'be able to' in all of its levels. Higher order verbs — 'interpret', 'evaluate', 'justify' — are underrepresented and only appear in levels 8 - 10.

The DES document on History (DES, 1991c) emphasizes 'identify', 'describe', 'recognize', 'explain', 'show an awareness', 'show an understanding' at all levels. High order verbs and situation — 'complex historical situations', 'interpretations ... may differ', 'comment on the usefulness of a source', 'explain the problematic nature of' — are confined to the higher levels (5 - 10).

The DES document on Geography (DES, 1991d) emphasizes 'use', 'follow', 'identify', 'state', 'name', 'describe', 'compare', 'give evidence of' in all of its levels. Higher order verbs — 'interpret', 'synthesise', 'evaluate', 'evaluate alternative

explanations', 'examine critically' — are confined to levels 7 - 10.

The DES document on English (DES, 1990b) emphasizes 'respond', 'listen', 'recognize', 'use', 'convey', 'show', 'describe', 'demonstrate', 'select', 'assemble' in all of its levels. Higher order verbs — 'take an active part in', 'evaluate', 'combine information independently', 'organize complex...subject matter', 'assess' — are confined to levels 8 - 10.

The confinement of higher order verbs to later levels of the National Curriculum echoes Bernstein's (1971) comments that

any collection code involves an hierarchical organization of knowledge, such that the ultimate mystery of the subject is revealed very late in the educational life. By the ultimate mystery of the subject, I mean its potential for creating new realities. It is also the case...that the ultimate mystery of the subject is not coherence, but incoherence; not order, but disorder .... this mystery, under collection codes, is revealed very late in the educational life — and then only to a select few who have shown the signs of successful socialization .... For the many, socialization into knowledge is socialization into order, the existing order, into the experience that the world's educational knowledge is impermeable (Bernstein, 1971, p. 57).

The language and framing of the National Curriculum, however, is cast in such a way that it renders it almost immune to challenge, resistant to communicative action. The NCC casts its prescriptions in a form which suggests that it has anticipated and met social and educational *needs* and *problems*, eg 'much of the future is uncertain; what is beyond dispute is that in the next century these ... together with flexibility and adaptability, will be at a premium' (NCC, 1990a, p. 3), 'inter-departmental planning can lead to ... the reduction of wasted time' (ibid., p. 1) respectively. It discusses the need for policies, aims and management (ibid.), to respect the 'professional responsibility of teachers' (ibid., p. 8) coupled with the provision of in-service support, to make the curriculum responsive to parents, and for schools to develop plans for the whole curriculum. Habermas's notion that language is inescapably empowering has much force here; the language of these

documents empowers its writers by defusing objection and critique by dint of their wide embrace and eminently appealing phraseology.

Further, the curriculum is framed widely to include: ten subjects, Religious Education, 'additional subjects', 'extra-curricular activities', 'teaching methods', 'cross-curricular elements' (dimensions, skills, themes) and Personal and Social Education (NCC, 1990a). A wide view of pedagogy is mentioned in the core and foundation subjects, eg the references to problem-solving in Science and Mathematics and collaborative methods in cross-curricular themes (discussed later) such as to incorporate a variety of interests and pedagogical preferences. It refers to equal opportunities, to special educational needs, to every child's entitlement to education, to the need for careful assessment, monitoring, differentiation and progression (NCC, 1990a). It is a catch-all set of documents, enabling the government to argue that it is meeting a variety of demands from a wide audience. It would be difficult to argue against the inclusion of any of these items in the curriculum. However, given the emphases, differential status, extent of inclusion of items in the document, the effects of the documents — perlocutionarily — are to reinforce the *status quo*. A subtle process of incorporation and accommodation to the dominant ideology can be observed<sup>260</sup> and which a Habermasian ideology critique can expose.

One can observe the further bureaucratization of the curriculum in its articulation of subjects into ten levels of progression, each level building on the former. Not only does this establish a hierarchy of increasing importance of each level but it sets the 'stipulated rules' of progression in learning, making the massive assumption that the order in which the curriculum is laid out reflects the psychological pathways of learning for all children — confusing logical and psychological aspects

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<sup>260</sup> 'The dominant class gives a little in order to retain a lot' (Cormack, 1992, p. 15)

of learning (Hirst, 1967).<sup>261</sup> The construction of a curriculum packaged into subjects and levels within subjects embodies the commodification of curricula which Apple (1983) criticizes for its materialist conception of education, its reduction of teachers and learners to consumers in a market mentality, and its neglect of the realities of children's learning.

## 12.5 Conclusion

This case study so far has demonstrated how Habermasian principles can inform a commentary on the National Curriculum and its implementation. However, it has been suggested that such informing does not necessarily enrich the analysis; whilst Habermas's work provides a very convenient set of labels to analyse the introduction of the National Curriculum, whether the absence of those labels would weaken the overall analysis has been questioned. The labels are a form of conceptual shorthand. In this spirit the National Curriculum suppressed generalizable interests, it did not abide by the principles of the *ideal speech situation*, it neglected embodiment of all of Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests, it neglected the action theoretical perspectives of social theory, it exemplified the negative aspects of bureaucratization as the *colonization of the lifeworld*, it did not manage to break free of the instrumentalism which characterized Weber's analysis of the rationalization of society into bureaucracies, it displayed a narrow functionalism in the serving of a minority political will and an existing economic order, it *systematically distorted communication* in its implementation by strategic action and the silencing of debate. It displayed very fully the technical interest in control, for the 1988 Education Act increased the powers of the Secretary of State for Education

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<sup>261</sup> That this belies the complex and recursive nature of learning has been attested by Morrison (1990a), Moon (1991) and Doll (1993).

to control the curriculum, assessment and teachers, operating from an industrial model (including standardisation, uniformity, measurement, outcome foci). Moreover, by eroding the powers of LEAs, together with the rhetoric of parental choice, the 1988 Education Act gave the Secretary of State for Education a direct line into schools, with no strong middle party — the LEAs, the representatives of local democracy — to challenge this. It appears that its emancipatory potential — as serving generalizable interests — was highly circumscribed. In what respects, in which of its elements, then, could the National Curriculum be said to be emancipatory? The case is made here that it is in the ‘cross-curriculum issues’ that the emancipatory potential of the National Curriculum can be realized.

## 12.6 The Cross-curricular Issues of the National Curriculum

During 1989 and 1990 the NCC issued a series of eight Curriculum Guidance documents, principally to cover the cross-curriculum areas of the National Curriculum:

- *A Framework for the Primary Curriculum* (NCC, 1989a);
- *A Curriculum for All* (NCC, 1989b);
- *The Whole Curriculum* (NCC, 1990a);
- *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding* (NCC, 1990b);
- *Health Education* (NCC, 1990c);
- *Careers Education and Guidance* (NCC, 1990d);
- *Environmental Education* (NCC, 1990e);

- *Education for Citizenship* (NCC, 1990f).

The titles alone cover the themes outlined in chapter 11 as including the contents of emancipatory curricula. At the same time they can be seen to exemplify the intrusion of Habermas's steering medium of the economy into school curricula — eg in *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding and Careers Education*. Their management accords with Habermasian principles of ideal speech (fig. 6.2 q.v.) in their references to collegiality in the use of phrases such as 'the principle of sharing responsibility' (NCC, 1990a, p. 3), 'co-operation and teamwork' (ibid., p. 11) and 'teachers need to share expertise and experience, discuss progress, resolve problems and initiate further development' (ibid., p. 11), 'the school community' working together (ibid., p. 10). Indeed cross-curricularity can be seen as a form of co-operation which inherently addresses Habermasian principles of participatory democracy, equality, empowerment and communicative action. It will not work without these principles.

The contents of the cross-curricular issues are *potentially* emancipatory in that they *require* reference to social issues — politics, citizenship, equal opportunities, power, education for economic and industrial understanding, personal and social education, environmental education — and to the society out of school (ie the referents focus on the wider community — which accords with the principles outlined in 11.3). In Habermasian terms the cross-curricular themes address the objective, social and subjective worlds of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987a, chapter 6), thereby furthering their integration. Further, the pedagogical principles advocated by the NCC for their study accord with pedagogical principles derived from Habermas in chapter 11 which advocated: cooperative and collaborative work; discussion based work; autonomous, experiential and flexible learning; negotiated learning; com-



munity related learning; problem-solving activities; increased pupil talk; the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals. The *Curriculum Guidance* documents state very clearly that the cross-curricular themes should be taught and learnt in ways which possess the following characteristics:

- a reliance on practical activities and students' decision making;
- active learning and exploratory activities (illocutionary activities);
- learning by first hand experience and participatory approaches;
- the use of problem-solving approaches;
- the flexible use of a wide range of teaching methods and resources;
- the matching of content with pedagogy;
- the development of collaborative team work — teams of students as well as teams of adults;
- the development of students' abilities to take responsibility for their own learning and control of time (ie autonomous learning);
- the development of small-scale projects within and outside the school;
- the establishment of links between the school and the wider community, defined widely to include industry, different types of environment, community groups, the infrastructures of communities;
- the development of partnerships between the school and the community (echoing Habermas's *ideal speech situation* in its call for the 'recognition of the legitimacy of each subject to participate in the dialogue as an autonomous and

equal partner' (fig. 6.2 q.v.).

Further, Habermas's views have been seen to inform an understanding of the significance of the status of areas of school knowledge (chapter 10). This is problematical for the cross-curricular issues as they are accorded low status in three main ways:

(a) they do not have the *de jure* status which is accorded to the core or foundation subjects, indeed whilst 'Orders [would] prescribe attainment targets and programmes of study for each of the core and other foundation subjects' (DES, 1989, para. 29) the DES merely indicated that 'there will be scope for the teaching of other subjects, and of cross-curricular issues' (*ibid.*, para. 29). Hence raising their status could be achieved in part by making them a legal requirement of the school curriculum.

(b) The NCC (1990a) envisaged that the cross-curricular issues would become part of a programme of personal and social education, itself a low status area of the curriculum, being taught by non-specialists, not being formally examined, being under-developed in terms of content and pedagogy, receiving scant timetabling in school curricula and being viewed by many students as non-essential. Echoing the issues earlier in the sociology of knowledge Morrison (1987) argues that the relegation of politically sensitive issues to a low status was quite deliberate because the themes could not be ignored but had to be reinterpreted or incorporated because of their politically deleterious or challenging effects on the political *status quo*. By including them on a National Curriculum lip-service was being done to their importance, but it was so heavily circumscribed as to be ineffectual and thus unable to challenge the ideological *status quo*. Echoing Habermas, one

wonders what the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects or purposes — politically — would have been of elevating them to ‘core’ or ‘foundation’ subjects in the prescribed National Curriculum, for example: they would become ‘dangerous knowledge’ (Giroux, 1989), ie that knowledge which challenges the ideological *status quo*; their contents and organization would break down traditional subject barriers and loyalties (which, according to Bernstein (1990), would be immensely challenging to society and social hierarchies); their pedagogy would upset traditional teaching styles; they would constitute a threat to the power of the New Right to influence educational policy (cf Quicke, 1988). Instead the challenge was diluted, the cross-curricular issues became potentially marginalised.

(c) The cross-curricular issues do not feature in the formal examination system — they do not contribute to ‘credentials’. From the discussion in chapter 10 it is clear that their status could be raised by awarding credentials for students’ achievements in these areas — credentials which were part of the formal examination system to match academic qualifications.

Hence if cross-curricular themes are to achieve their considerable emancipatory potential (discussed below) then they would need to be accorded much higher status, a central feature which emerged in chapter 10. This could be addressed by (i) making them a legal requirement; (ii) making them identifiable elements in the curriculum either through separate timetabling (ie possessing strong classification), eg through a modular approach, or through permeation of other subjects which was made visible to students (though this latter might risk losing their visibility, being ‘buried’ in other subjects); (iii) having them taught by specialists; (iv) by according them greater time allowances in the curriculum; (v) by making them part of the compulsory formal examination; (vi) by removing them from the

PSE curriculum; (vii) by placing a named senior manager or promoted teacher in charge of their implementation, ie giving them an identity which is attached to a senior position in the institution; (viii) by ensuring that they are developed through teams of teachers (together with the necessary in-service support).

The cross curriculum elements have been ordered into three components by the NCC (1990a):

- cross-curricular dimensions;
- cross-curricular skills;
- cross-curricular themes.

This study will focus on the *dimensions* and *skills* only briefly — to set the scene for the *themes*, where it will be shown how a Habermasian analysis is particularly pertinent.

### 12.6.1 Cross-curricular Dimensions

Whilst the dimensions (Education for a Multicultural Society, Equal Opportunities, and Special Educational Needs) clearly have the potential for empowerment outlined above<sup>262</sup> — equal opportunities to realize individual and collective existential futures — the question has to be raised whether *outlining* only the dimensions is enough to effect any real changes or any real empowerment. Simply recognizing and injecting these components into the core and foundation subjects and cross-curricular themes is no guarantee of empowerment if they are accorded low status. They need to become touchstones of curriculum decision making.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> 'Equal opportunities is about helping all children to fulfil their potential' (NCC, 1990a, p. 2).

<sup>263</sup> It is notable that whilst Special Educational Needs are given separate attention by the publication

The notion of equal opportunities in the National Curriculum is taken to be the equal opportunity to study the National Curriculum, which, if we take the arguments of Bourdieu (1976), Bernstein (1971) and Apple (1993) adduced earlier, would be socially reproductive in its effects, being in many ways an academic and traditional curriculum. Bowe *et al* (1992) comment on the 'mismatch of purposes' between the academic / cognitive National Curriculum and issues of equal opportunities in schools (p. 91). Hence, whilst cross-curricular dimensions have great potential for the realization of the *ideal speech situation*, attempts need to be made to ensure that they receive their full attention, that they do not become marginalised. Fully implemented they could constitute a major challenge to accepted societal norms; it is no accident perhaps that they receive less status than less system-upsetting and more socially reproductive forms of curricula.

### 12.6.2 Cross-curricular Skills

The cross-curricular skills identified by the NCC (communication, numeracy, study, problem-solving, personal and social, information technology) have considerable emancipatory potential in that they accord with the Habermasian pedagogical principles outlined earlier. Indeed the references to 'communication', 'problem-solving' and 'social' skills go to the heart of Habermas's conditions for ideal speech. The list of skills is an identical copy of the list provided by Her

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of a separate Curriculum Guidance booklet (NCC, 1989b) the same particular attention is not given to Education for a Multicultural Society or Equal Opportunities. The issues of 'silencing' and 'naming' mentioned earlier, are important here; by naming a particular group in more detail than others one is isolating them as a special case (Shapiro, 1984) and delegitimizing the rights of other groups to be represented equally. However, the case of special educational needs is interesting as it appears that here Habermas's principles of rationality may be inappropriate. De La Bat Smit (1994) argues that 'a more serious objection is the general one that Habermas's theory presupposes an immense capacity for rationality among people in society. It could be argued that Habermas's theory militates against the educationally and mentally disadvantaged in society, who may not have the degree of articulacy or education or natural ability necessary to engage in radical argumentation' (De La Bat Smit, 1994, p. 213).

Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) (DES, 1985b) and, in that document, is full of the emancipatory potential of the *ideal speech situation*: 'to weigh and interpret evidence', 'to ask pertinent questions', 'to propose alternative hypotheses', 'to apply knowledge and concepts to the solution of real-life problems', 'to make informed choices', 'to imagine life as it may appear to other people', 'to adjust to different social contexts', 'to consider others' views', 'to contribute, cooperate and take the lead as appropriate within groups', 'to accept responsibility' (ibid., pp. 39 - 40). The pedagogical principles for the learning of the skills, too, have a Habermasian flavour: 'to discuss and explore ideas among themselves...in groups', 'to talk at some length', 'opportunities for pupils to put questions', 'personal and social skills need to be practised in a variety of situations', 'schools need to provide many opportunities for social interaction' (ibid., pp. 40 - 1).

That said, there is silence on the need for developing critique and critical skills; taking the guidance of HMI (DES, 1985b) for the central Habermasian skill — communication — one finds that it is defined very generally and in low-order terms: 'the ability to listen, speak, read and write effectively', 'the ability to use and interpret non-verbal and graphical means of communication' (ibid., p. 39).

The NCC (1990a), however, does not provide the same level of detail as HMI. It only lists the skill headings in summary form and does not devote any space to analysis of these at all. As with the cross-curricular dimensions, though there is considerable affinity between Habermasian principles and the cross-curricular skills, simply outlining — 'naming' — these skills and then, additionally, according them low status, does not guarantee that they will be addressed fully in the curriculum. Like the cross-curricular dimensions, implemented fully the skills outlined could constitute a major source of empowerment.

### 12.6.3 Cross-curricular Themes

The anxieties raised about the limiting effects of the low status afforded to cross-curricular dimensions and skills applies similarly to cross-curricular themes:

- economic and industrial understanding;
- health education;
- careers education and guidance;
- environmental education;
- education for citizenship.

At first blush the five themes possess the emancipatory potential alluded to in chapter 11.5, they pose a threat to the established order which the power of knowledge and information about the steering mechanisms of that society (Habermas, 1987a) can bring. They touch children's everyday realities (cf Bernstein's (1971) comments earlier) and the steering media of society. If ignorance — cultural illiteracy (according to Freire earlier) — is disempowering then not only is any knowledge dangerous and threatening to the *status quo*, but particularly so if Marxian analysis of the centrality of the economic base of society is correct, for the cross-curricular themes concern knowledge of the economic motors of society and their effects on the democratic process, of how political and economic decisions affect the quality of life — environmentally, personally and interpersonally, and the powers which an understanding of citizenship can bring.

If these cross-curricular themes possess 'dangerous knowledge' which can challenge the legitimacy and value of social, ideological and cultural hegemony, then,

for their full potential to be realized, they have to be accorded high status in the curriculum as outlined earlier. The balance between the emancipatory and constraining effects of the content prescription and pedagogy will be discussed for each of the themes below. Before evaluating each theme in particular an analysis will be undertaken to identify the extent to which the Habermasian principles of pedagogy and status are addressed in the modes of delivery of the cross-curricular themes prescribed by the National Curriculum Council.

#### 12.6.4 Pedagogy, Status and the Cross-curricular Themes

The principles of pedagogy for the cross-curricular themes outlined in 12.6 resonate clearly with the Habermasian principles for pedagogy outlined in the previous chapter and clearly develop the objective, social and subjective worlds of the lifeworld to which Habermas alludes (Habermas, 1987a, chapter 6). Though the *Curriculum Guidance* documents accord a place to formal and didactic methods it is quite clear in the documents that the types of experiences being advocated for students should be active and collaborative rather than passive. The National Curriculum Council provides some suggestions for how schools might address these features. It suggests five approaches to 'delivery' which schools might adopt (cf *Curriculum Guidance (3)*):

- (i) permeating the whole curriculum;
- (ii) whole curriculum planning leading to blocks of activities;
- (iii) separately timetabled themes;
- (iv) taught through separately timetabled PSE;
- (v) long block timetabling.



The *permeation approach* can elevate the status of the themes by attaching them to existing high status subjects and by requiring all staff to take cognizance of them in their curriculum planning. On the other hand permeation can result in loss of visibility in the curriculum, thereby lowering their status; all teachers may not possess the subject expertise to handle the themes or the willingness to abandon their subject loyalty (cf Bernstein, 1971, discussed in chapter 10). Attaching the themes to an existing timetable which typically deals in short blocks of time might prevent some of the active teaching approaches from taking place as these require longer blocks of time.

Using the approach of *whole curriculum planning leading to blocks of activities* addresses the range of practical experiential learning situations advocated for the cross-curricular themes (it is no accident that the title of this approach uses the word 'activities'). In doing so it ensures that a very clear set of focuses is established for the activities, enabling large and small scale projects to be developed which can link to the wider community and which develop collaborative team work. Allocating blocks of time to the themes may also be a means of enhancing their status, as is the corollary of whole curriculum planning — the need for wide involvement and ownership (though, as with the permeation approach, this latter point does not guarantee the elevation of their status).

Of all five approaches set out in the *Curriculum Guidance* documents planning by *separately timetabled themes* can accord considerable significance and status to the cross-curricular themes. This is finely balanced, however; it can elevate the status of the themes, alternatively it can marginalise them because this approach separates them from other curricular areas. This approach might also enable the experiential and community based pedagogical principles outlined earlier to be ad-

dressed, though how realistic this is in an overcrowded curriculum is questionable.

Locating the themes in *separately timetabled PSE* sessions sets cross-curricular themes in an area of the curriculum with which they are sympathetic — Personal and Social Education. This enables direct involvement of students' own experiences to be developed and an interrogation of values and beliefs to be undertaken. However, locating them in PSE programmes might be the most problematical aspect of their delivery as PSE is often viewed by teachers and students as a low status area of the curriculum. Further, locating cross-curricular themes in PSE time is no guarantee that the practical, experiential and project based approaches advocated will be able to be addressed.

What is emerging so far is a picture of the cross-curricular themes which suggests that by confining them regularly to short blocks of timetabled time risks losing the experiential, community-focussed and project-based aspects of the themes. *Long block timetabling* avoids these difficulties. This method of delivering the cross-curricular themes has very many attractions as it enables the practical, experiential aspects of the themes to be addressed fully. Freeing large blocks of time enables community-focused projects to be developed in a fully-fledged way (eg the example of a project on 'shops' for primary children in the document *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding* and work placements in secondary schools). Clearly this approach can elevate the status of the cross-curricular themes, making them very visible in the curriculum; in the long term, however, this might reduce their status, for giving short term, discontinuous high status to the themes in this approach might afford them a 'special' but marginalized place in the curriculum.

Having outlined the issues of pedagogy and status in the cross-curricular

themes the case study moves on to an examination of the contents of each of the cross-curricular themes to indicate their emancipatory potential and to perform an ideology critique of them. This will involve a measure of analysis and prescription for each theme, analysing its emancipatory potential and suggesting what is needed for that emancipatory potential to be realized.

## **12.6.5 An Analysis of Each Cross-curricular Theme**

### **12.6.5.1 Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding**

There is a recognition by the NCC that this theme ‘involves controversial issues such as government economic policy and the impact of economic activity on the environment’ (NCC, 1990b, p. 4), ie the Habermasian steering medium of the economy. However in the same paragraph the message is given unequivocally that young minds should be educated to enable pupils to be embryonic capitalists in a free market, materialist economy:

Education for economic and industrial understanding aims to help pupils make decisions such as how to organise their finances and how to spend their money...It prepares pupils for their future roles and producers, consumers and citizens in a democracy. Pupils need to understand enterprise and wealth creation and develop entrepreneurial skills (ibid, p. 4).

This echoes the market principles established earlier as an important context of the National Curriculum as a whole. Indeed the tone of the NCC carries all the optimism of a wealthy populace whose only contribution to the economy is through work:

They will face choices about how they contribute to the economy through their work. They will decide how to organise their finances and which goods and services to spend money on (NCC, 1990b, p. 1).

Through ‘silencing’ — the absence of reference (cf chapter 11) — it thus renders unproblematic the reality of unemployment amongst individuals and whole

communities which the demands of capital — corporate and international — exact in their drive for surplus value. It links the notion of citizenship very firmly with the economy, as though one cannot be a true citizen if one is not producing or consuming products: '[i]t prepares them for future economic rôles: as producers, consumers and citizens in a democracy' (ibid., p. 1). In doing so it links democracy with the economy, a potentially narrow view of the complexity of democracy.

Further, whilst it acknowledges the need for an understanding of an industrialised and highly technological society this document regards as unchallengeable and legitimate the view that that society is premised on competitiveness (ibid. p. 1), ie strategic action rather than communicative action and the *suppression of generalizable interests*, indeed it sees the solution to such competitiveness in increased rather than decreased competitiveness, ie that one abides by the same 'rules of the game' and becomes better at playing the game, where pupils 'meet this challenge' by understanding wealth creation and developing entrepreneurial skills (ibid. p 1) rather than by challenging the legitimacy of the game at all, ie there is an absence of ideology critique in the document. It commits the naturalistic and ideological fallacy of trying to derive an *ought* from an *is* — just because one can observe this occurring in society gives little justification for its desirability. One wonders if the hard-nosed, challenging, combative tone of the NCC document would have found such an insistent voice if equal opportunity for a more caring, compassionate, collaborative style were to have been afforded, ie if strategic action had given way to communicative action and the operation of the *ideal speech situation*.

The title of this document and the tone throughout is also met in the other *Curriculum Guidance* documents from the National Curriculum Council — that

they deal with *understanding* rather than *critique*, perhaps not surprising given that they are documents of guidance only. In Habermasian terms they deal with *hermeneutic* rather than *critical* knowledge-constitutive interests. The effects of this are to delegitimize alternatives to and to legitimize the *status quo*, ie to risk incorporation by the dominant ideology, ie the *suppression of generalizable interests*. Equal opportunities becomes redefined as equal opportunity to play the same game regardless of the desirability of the game or its rules:

All pupils, regardless of culture, gender, or social background, should have equal access to a curriculum which promotes economic and industrial understanding (NCC, 1990b, p. 6).

No space here is given to the consideration that not everyone might wish to — or be able to — play the same game, though the latter is advocated in *Curriculum Guidance 7* (NCC, 1989b) and *Curriculum Guidance 9* (NCC, 1992). Economic and Industrial understanding is seen, therefore, to be a passionless activity, where choice is rationalized out of existence. It emphasizes the ‘decisionism’ of the technical interest outlined in chapter 3.5.

Perhaps it is not idle to note that whilst art, dance and drama — those aspects of the curriculum which could redeem the dehumanizing of economic and industrial education through an appeal to aesthetic rationality, an important alternative to technical rationality which is supported by Habermas (1984, 1987a) — all have their part to play in the early Key Stages (eg *ibid.*, pp. 14, 15, 23, 24), these are either absent in the later Key Stages or are redefined so as to serve advertising, marketing and persuasion to buy (eg pp. 33 and 42), as though they cease to be intrinsically important activities as children become locked into industrial and economic understanding. They become part of strategic action. In both cases the aesthetic side of economic and industrial understanding — in Habermasian terms

a counter to rationalization — is seen itself to be a service industry, furthering the technical and hermeneutic interest, and not worthwhile in its own right. It becomes a servant of strategic rather than communicative action. One is reminded of Read's (1958) comments on essentialist versus contextualist art; essentialist art is art for itself, contextualist art fulfils an instrumental function. In the *Curriculum Guidance* document here art is contextualist. If one considers the issues raised in the sociology of knowledge earlier where it was seen that affective, artistic areas of the curriculum were accorded little status, then the dropping or redefining of the arts as a service industry in education for economic and industrial understanding can be seen as an attempt to raise the status of education for economic and industrial understanding.

Further, people are seen as resources to be managed efficiently or to be manipulated — technically, strategically — as consumers. The NCC document is unequivocal on this:

Industry involves the effective management of people and other resources, and industrial organisations have different ways of maximising efficiency, output and job satisfaction (ibid. p. 41).

Habermas's technical interest is well served in this document, method is all, efficiency of the mechanism is all, and method ignores questions of aims, values and goals, one simply accepts them as given. Debate and dialogue (communicative action) are replaced by decisionism. The NCC document sets clear boundaries on what is relevant to economic and industrial understanding (business, commerce, finance and consumer affairs) (ibid., p. 3) and defines 'controversial issues' in this field as 'the impact of economic activity on the environment', thereby ruling out as irrelevant any discussion of poverty, of class oppression, of exploitative relationships, of unequal power, of the daily experience of this unequal power, of the

casualties of capitalism, ie in Habermas's terms providing unequal opportunities to employ speech acts. Even though the document calls for a 'balanced presentation of opposing views' and for pupils to be 'encouraged to explore values and beliefs, both their own and those of others' (ibid., p. 3) its silence on what those might be is, as was Thomas More's, 'not silence at all but most eloquent denial' (Bolt, 1960, p. 92), ie the *suppression of generalizable interests* and the application of *systematically distorted communication*. It sees the rewards of wealth accruing to those individuals and communities possessed of 'business enterprise' (ibid., p. 4), it assumes that industry and industrial relations are fixed — '*the organization of industry and industrial relations*' (ibid., p. 4) (italics mine), thereby replacing illocutionary communication with perlocutionary force.

The document defines the key concepts of economic and industrial understanding as production, distribution supply and demand (NCC, 1990b, p. 4), and develops in a clear 'spiral curriculum' (Bruner, 1960) of economic concepts, business enterprise, industry and the world of work, consumer affairs, government and society (see Appendix J), thus thereby relegating any other agenda of key concepts — eg exploitation, greed, materialism, need, poverty, exploitation and pauperisation. It is not totally silent on these issues,<sup>264</sup> but, importantly, leaves their consideration and the consideration of alternative economic systems until pupils have reached Key Stage four (ibid., p. 40) — a very late stage (for children in their middle teenage). This echoes Bernstein's (1971) implications discussed earlier that for those pupils who do not reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum the heart or the 'mysteries' of the subject are never met so that the problematic issues are not fully explored or, therefore, challenged. They are so-

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<sup>264</sup> Eg 'Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding involves controversial issues' (NCC, 1990b, p. 3)..

cialized — perlocutionarily, strategically — into an existing order.

One has to question the ideological interests at work in devising and ordering the NCC prescriptions in the way outlined. The government is seen to have a legitimate regulative role to perform (ibid., pp. 34 and 43), thereby not only reinforcing a bureaucratic hierarchy of power (the steering medium of the state) but delegitimizing alternative sources of power. System driven imperatives override individual or collective agency which is consigned to the roles of producers and consumers (ibid., pp. 33 and 42). In Habermasian terms the steering medium of the economy colonizes the lifeworld of individuals, the 'system' distorts communication by supplying a fixed rather than open agenda of curricular issues.

However, the document has a certain antinomial quality. On the one hand what can be observed in it is the reaching into the heart of schools and very young children the steering media of society — money, law, economics, ie wider referents in society. The lifeworld of citizens, their agency, is redefined to meet the needs of capital. Indeed 'enterprise' is defined in terms which feed into wealth generation:

Education for enterprise means two things. First, it means developing the qualities needed to be an 'enterprising' person, such as the ability to tackle problems, take initiatives, persevere, be flexible, and work in teams. Secondly, and more specifically, it means taking part in small-scale and community enterprise projects designed to develop these qualities (ibid., p. 6).

On the other hand one would hesitate to say that children ought *not* to be introduced to these issues. The question is one of adequacy; the document avoids critique in the Key Stages, it needs to widen its view of profit and loss to include human terms and humanity, it needs to question legitimacy, interests and ideology. Pupils will have to question why this has occurred — ie critically examining the perlocutionary effects of the document. This will involve a critique of the instrumental and decisionistic tone of the document. A Habermasian analysis suggests



the need to take far more seriously and in a more developed way its own call for 'rational argument' on the issues in the document (ibid., p. 5), for considerations of 'respect for alternative economic viewpoints and a willingness to reflect critically on their [pupils] own economic views and values' and 'human rights' (ibid., p. 5), ie to reflect on and evaluate the role of the economic steering medium in the lifeworld of pupils, and the ways in which communicative action — opening up issues to debate — have been limited by strategic action in the delineation of the agenda of the document. The call for rational debate and critical reflection resonates clearly with those principles of the *ideal speech situation* which require: freedom to: enter a discourse, check claims, evaluate explanations, modify frameworks, reflect on the nature of knowledge, assess justifications, reflect on the nature of political will (fig. 6.2 q.v.).

A Habermasian analysis suggests the need to counter the view of understanding as acquiring knowledge of fixed and reified economics (cf Habermas's critique of the law-like nature of positivism) with a view of human agency and humanity, with an acknowledgement that education does not simply — instrumentally, strategically — provide an economically desirable service, but that it is the bearer of dangerous knowledge, of critique, of the restoration of humanity in an age where technology scientistically threatens to commodify human conduct. Emancipation and empowerment — communicative action — upset rather than service the *status quo*. In these terms the *content* of *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding* (EIU) remains underdeveloped.

Not only does the *content* of EIU neglect critique but this is evidenced in *pedagogy* — that element identified in chapters 10 and 11 as being important in promoting empowerment. Though the document implies active, experiential

learning (p. 4) — a pedagogical principle of procedure outlined in chapter 11 — the pedagogical principles neglect critique. Figure 12.2 presents the key verbs used to describe the pedagogical aims of EIU at different key stages (KS).

**Figure 12.2 — Key Verbs in the EIU Document**

Key Stage	Key Verbs
KS1	Discuss; talk about; survey; visit
KS2	Discuss; understand; investigate; explore; visit; interview; examine; describe
KS3	Discuss; understand; survey; investigate; visit; compare; role-play; analyse; know that; recognise; collect data
KS4	Discuss; understand; collect; know; prepare; use; debate; investigate; identify

These terms neglect the higher order skills outlined earlier in the elements of the *ideal speech situation* (fig. 6.2) (cf Bloom, 1956) in verbs like ‘evaluate’, ‘critique’, ‘analyse’, ‘synthesis’, ‘judge’, ‘suggest why’, ‘interrogate’, ‘explore’, ‘propose’ and reflect a technical and hermeneutic interest rather than an interest in critique, deliberation and evaluation. Indeed the only reference to evaluation shows it to be an evaluation of the achievement of given objectives rather than of the objectives themselves: ‘Pupils were encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own work in relation to the objectives for each part of the project’ (ibid., p. 38). Hence the pedagogical principles, whilst embodying key requirements of empowering curricula, fall short of full empowerment, they neglect critique and judgement.

### 12.6.5.2 Health Education

The NCC document (NCC, 1990c) casts health education into nine components:

- substance use and misuse;
- sex education;
- family life education;
- safety;
- health-related exercise;
- food and nutrition;
- personal hygiene;
- environmental aspects of health education;
- psychological aspects of health education.

As before the question to be put here is not against the content with which it deals — it would be difficult to argue against the inclusion of the content specified — but rather the way in which the content is approached, the inclusion or exclusion of content and the hidden curriculum of such decision making.

A reading of the list of topics within health education might indicate that a wide range of issues and areas is to be covered; indeed that is the case. However the document addresses the topics in such a way as to cast health education as largely an *individual's* responsibility, suggesting that this responsibility is merely an *exercise of choice*, neglecting the requirements of the *ideal speech situation*

that a common interest and a 'cooperative search for truth' are important (fig. 6.2). For example the document indicates that 'today, non-infectious diseases, fatal accidents and unhealthy patterns of behaviour are the key factors' (ibid., p. 2), thereby minimizing environmental causes and avoiding health problems overseas in developing and third world countries. Problematical issues are alluded to: 'an understanding of environmental aspects of health education, including social, physical and economic factors which contribute to health and illness' (p. 5); 'know that within any environment there are people with different attitudes, values and beliefs and that these influence people's relationships with each other and with the environment' (p. 15); 'understand how legislation and political, social, economic and cultural decisions affect health' (p. 20). However they are defined in the early Key Stages as being a matter almost of individuals' responsibility which is subject to their own preference, for example:

know that within any environment there are people with different attitudes, values and beliefs and that these influence people's relationships with each other and with the environment (ibid., p. 15).

As with the document *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding* it is only in Key Stage four that reference is made to the politics of health care: 'understand how legislation and political, social, economic and cultural decisions affect health' (ibid., p. 20). Even here the responsibility for health, as in the previous Key Stages is overwhelmingly seen to be personal or at best a community concern — 'the overlapping interests of individual, group and community health' (ibid., p. 3). There is a 'silencing' (cf chapter 11) on the large scale political decision making to improve health care and provision.<sup>265</sup> The solubility of health problems is seen to be an individual rather than a political, social, cultural or

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<sup>265</sup> In this context it is notable, for example, that commercial sponsorship by tobacco companies is not addressed nor are questions of the ambivalent relationship between governments who enjoy tax revenue from tobacco and yet who proscribe tobacco as an addictive, killing drug.

economic issue: 'the emphasis in most health education curricula is on encouraging individual responsibility, awareness and informed decision-making' (ibid., p. 7). Such a circumscription of concerns diverts attention away from structural poverty and its relatensess to health — that many citizens cannot afford to exercise choice in their life styles — and that this is as much a politico-economic problem as it is a health problem. Though this is touched upon at Key Stage 3 (pupils should 'recognise that there are some socio-economic factors which make cleanliness more difficult for some people' (p. 17)) there is a naivety about the document which celebrates agency over structure, whereas Habermas argues for lifeworld, agency and system to be integrated: 'know that there is a wide variety of foods to choose from and that choice is based on needs and / or culture' (ibid., p. 13). That, plainly, is only an option for a fraction of the world's population.

The NCC document adopts a nationalistic, insular view of health at home as it impinges on children and overlooks massively the international politics of health. Its assumption of the low incidence of infectious diseases overlooks third world poverty and the politics of international capitalism which allows this to continue, ie communication free from domination of the *ideal speech situation* is overlooked.

Whilst health education is seen to involve more than physiological concerns — extending to 'psychological aspects of health education' it is portrayed as relatively unproblematic. Hence the NCC document simplistically states that 'those who are happy with their image are able to take increasing control of their lives, including decisions relating to healthy lifestyles' (ibid., p. 9), overlooking the reality that for many the control of their image is out of their reach, ie Habermas's speech act claim of veracity is being violated.

The NCC document is almost completely silent on the politics of health, thereby leaving the politics unchallenged; this has the effect of legitimizing the *status quo*, ie in Habermasian terms acting strategically rather than communicatively. This political silencing reaches further, for not only is the family unit (and, if the drawings in the document carry hidden messages, the white, nuclear family) celebrated as having the central role as an institution (p. 4) but alternative, less institutional groupings receive no comment. The document reinforces, both through its text and its drawings the heterosexism and homophobia of a government which — strategically — outlawed homosexuality and its manifestations; sexual relationships are only to be heterosexual and only to be fostered in the context of supporting family life (ibid., p. 4).

The 'naming' of the family unit (cf chapter 11) disregards the lived experiences of many people of the miseries of family life (or its breakdown) and the happinesses of alternative groupings, whilst the 'silencing' of non-heterosexual relationships devalues and disconfirms these groups in society. For many this 'loss of meaning' leads to 'loss of freedom', a feature exposed by Habermas's analysis of Weber.

The issue is intensely political; Worsley (1977) summarizes a wealth of research to support the view that nuclear families underpin a capitalist economic system because of their characteristics of independence, privacy, consumerism, the exploitation of women, the facility for primary social relationships — enabling bureaucratic relationships to be fostered in the bureaucracies of work, ie Habermas's 'scientization' of relationships and the intrusion of an objective, rationalized, steering medium — bureaucracy — into the lifeworld of its participants. Indeed Worsley argues that in many respects the value of the family unit is a convenient myth — an ideology — which is functionally convenient for the requirements of

capital, ie which suppresses generalizable interests.

Both examples illustrate the distortion of communicative action by the strategic action of the steering medium (the National Curriculum Council) entering the lifeworlds of participants and serve to reinforce the *status quo* which oppresses the powerless and already oppressed and does little to further the equal opportunities policy declared as a cross-curricular dimension. In this respect the document has perlocutionary rather than illocutionary effects.

In terms of pedagogy health education is seen to be more a matter of understanding than of critique, Habermas's hermeneutic rather than emancipatory interest. As with the previous document, the political sensitivity of the issues, where it is addressed, is given only scant attention and then only at the later Key Stages, ie the issues are not able to be explored communicatively, thereby violating the speech act validity requirements of truth, appropriacy and comprehensibility. There is an assumption that children should not exercise their critical faculties until they reach teenage, and that sensitive issues cannot be made accessible to children at Key Stages one or two. This runs counter to the evidence (summarized by Dixon, 1977) that race and gender stereotypes are present in pre-school children; the NCC health education document only introduces the question of labelling and stereotyping at Key Stage three (ie for secondary school pupils).

If Habermasian empowerment and emancipation are sought, then, as with the discussion of the previous document, this will require an amplification of the pedagogical sphere of health education to move beyond hermeneutic *understanding* of controversial issues to ideology critique and critical interrogation from the early Key Stages onwards of the sensitive issues of the document, the legitimacy of

the views propounded in the document, and the politics of the issues involved. What characterizes the health education document is its silence on the problematic underpinnings of its views. It devotes most of its pages to laying out content to be delivered rather than probing beneath the content to unpack the arguments, values and ideologies which are contained in it.

The document does mention the active, experiential pedagogies suggested as necessary for communicative action in chapter 11:

The participation of pupils is essential in order to encourage pupils to learn from others and to help them use appropriate language in ways that are understood by others....[M]uch of the teaching in health education will be based on the active involvement of pupils. Teaching methods particularly suited to this kind of approach include games, simulations, case studies, role plays, problem-solving exercises, questionnaires, surveys, open-ended questions and sentences and group work of various kinds (NCC. 1990c, p. 7).

However this remains underdeveloped in the document. Further, figure 12.3 indicates that, as with the document on EIU, the key verbs of this document use the lower order verbs of the technical and hermeneutic rather than the emancipatory, critical interest and higher order verbs of the *ideal speech situation*.

There is very little to suggest that pedagogical issues are sensitive, problematic and value laden. The potential for rational, critical enquiry is minimised. If the *causes* of the sensitive issues were addressed and interrogated, questioning the legitimacy of decision making — macro- as well as micro-sociologically, if rational enquiry — communicative action and ideology critique — were undertaken into the background to health related issues (eg poverty, affluence, exploitation, health care and nutrition, and the political and economic systems which undergirded the decisions) then their full emancipatory potential might be realized. What we are presented with here is another commission of the naturalistic fallacy where an understanding of what *is* replaces a critical discussion of what *ought* to be



**Figure 12.3 — Key Verbs in the Health Education Document**

Key Stage	Key Verbs
KS1	Explore; construct; talk about; know that; understand; acquire
KS2	Devise; draw; exemplify; consider; perform; know that; understand; acquire; recognise
KS3	Discuss; describe; share; assess; identify; recognise; be aware of; understand; know that
KS4	Discuss; clarify; devise; investigate; explore; understand; be aware of, know that; accept

happening in health-related enquiry.

#### **12.6.5.3 Careers Education and Guidance**

This document (NCC, 1990d) argues that children will profit from an early contact with careers education which includes:

- careers education;
- access to information;
- experience of work;
- access to individual guidance;
- recording achievement and planning for the future (NCC, 1990d, p. 5).

In this context careers education and guidance addresses Habermas's steering medium of the economy and the need to investigate market principles, personal

and social development, 'stereotyped attitudes to education, training and career opportunities' (ibid., p. 2) through the study of five strands:

- self (knowing oneself better);
- roles (being aware of education, training and career opportunities);
- work and career (making choices about continuing education and training, and about career paths);
- transition (managing transitions to new roles and situations).

In this process the document cites the concept of *partnership*, developed through liaison between education and a heterogeneity of organizations and interested parties (pp. 9 - 10),<sup>266</sup> and suggests that 'careers education and guidance has particularly close links with economic and industrial understanding and education for citizenship' (p. 11). Indeed the document advocates the 'application of industrial processes in the classroom' (p. 5), an ideological practice which resonates with the market context of education outlined earlier in this chapter.

In these links and partnerships the effect of this document is to suggest not only infinite possibility, eg 'future career possibilities' (p. 34) and 'future career opportunities' (p. 41), but also that the education system will prepare for this infinite possibility from the year a child enters school and thereafter be able to serve all of a child's career needs and interests, eg 'careers education and guidance should help pupils to know themselves better, be aware of training and career opportunities, make choices about their own continuing education and training, and

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<sup>266</sup> For example, the careers service, Compacts, employers, the Foundation for Education Business Partnerships, governors, parents, Schools Industry Liaison Officers, School Curriculum Industry Partnerships, Mini-Enterprise in Schools Project, staff from FE and HE institutions, Training and Enterprise Councils, youth and community workers.

about career paths' (p. 2). Clearly this is an example of strategic action and it neglects the lived experiences of individuals and communities where structural unemployment is an everyday feature, where the 'local employment patterns' (p. 30) are non-existent or fragile and temporary, where poor pay and conditions combine to render the concepts of a career and work not only worthless or unrealistic but undesirable, unfulfilling and undignifying, ie where, in Habermasian terms, there are not equal opportunities to employ speech acts.

There is a cosiness about the document which suggests that if one abides by the advice given in it — if one 'plays the game' — then employment is certain, that 'future work opportunities' (p. 42) are guaranteed. Indeed the language of the document is replete with references to 'opportunities' (pp. 1, 2, 22, 23, 26, 30, 33, 40, 41, 42), 'enjoyment', 'interest' and 'satisfaction' (pp. 2, 13, 19, 24, 37, 38), 'work satisfaction' (p. 24) and 'career choices' (pp. 2, 4, 5, 26, 33, 37). The message is unequivocal: understand and abide by the rules of the game, do not challenge the 'system' and prosperity will follow; the 'system' is there to help, the system can be supportive, even if it 'colonizes the lifeworld'. That this has an ideological — concealing — function is evidenced in the lived experiences of unemployment by millions.

The bureaucracies of education and its partners are seen to fulfil an enabling rather than a constraining role. This document is written in the language of opportunity and personal investment of the human capital theorists and the imperatives of capital which appeared unmoved by the dehumanization and exploitation of workers on an international scale in its thirst for surplus value, ie Habermas's *suppression of generalizable interests* which underlies strategic action. The examples of careers which the document portrays are of fulfilling roles (eg p. 24), of 'ad-

mired adults' as role models (p. 29) and of the possibilities of work both at home and overseas (p. 40); the document is marked by the theme of 'possibility', which is unrealistic in an employment context which is market-driven (ie strategic action), in which selection and competition for jobs occurs (a curious interpretation of the 'equal opportunities' of the cross-curriculum dimension!), and in which 'opportunity' is defined as the opportunity to take part in a system whose legitimacy remains unchallenged, ie the *suppression of generalizable interests in systematically distorted communication* through the concealment of interests.

The effects of casting the document in this tone are twofold. *Firstly* it diverts attention away from the desirability of the 'system' for which children are being prepared (p. 12) — a 'cooling out' process in which the steering media of work, career and the economy impact on the lifeworld of participants from their entry into school at 5 years. The whole process of preparation for participation in a steering medium has been bureaucratized — systematized, rationalized — for the period of the child's time in school. *Secondly* it minimizes the problematic areas of the world of work, redefining the problem of work as the failure of an individual to match up to the system's requirements rather than *vice versa*<sup>267</sup> and thereby violating the speech act validity requirement of truth.

As with the previous two documents the study of controversial issues is suppressed until the Key Stages three and four, thereby violating the speech act validity requirements of appropriacy and comprehensibility, and then it is given low priority by being swamped by a multiplicity of system-affirming areas of study (pp. 27 - 43). In these sixteen pages of text in the document there are only some

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<sup>267</sup> This is a rehearsal of the cultural and individual pathology model of education of the 1960s (Horton, 1966; Jackson and Marsden, 1966; Dreeben, 1968).

two dozen lines in all which mention contentious issues, eg: 'to consider controversial issues related to work' (p. 31); 'identify problems and opportunities of work overseas' ( p. 40); 'appreciate conflicts in adult work life' (p. 31); 'consult sources of specialized knowledge about hazards and conflicts at work' (p. 36); 'identify the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of specific roles' (p. 38). Understanding replaces critique, hermeneutic interest replaces emancipatory interest, empowerment only follows if one abides by, rather than challenges, the system.

The effects of this document are to delegitimize alternatives to the capitalist system, ie demonstrating perlocutionary rather than illocutionary force, to neglect the lived experiences of unemployment, ie to leave uncontested the intrusion of the system into the lifeworld, to render education instrumental (strategic action), servicing a system the consideration of whose worth is neglected, to prepare children from their entry into school at five years for the future world of work and thereby to reinforce the *status quo*. It is interesting in this context to note the conservative nature of the example of a career line which stops at marriage (p. 29).

In terms of pedagogy the declared purposes have all the rhetoric of participatory activity of the *ideal speech situation*, eg 'work visits, work simulations (eg design-and-make exercises, mini-enterprises, business games); work shadowing; application of industrial processes in the classroom; project work arising from real-life problems set by industry and community contacts' (p. 5). However figure 12.4 indicates that the verbs used in describing the pedagogy, whilst indicating some possibilities for critique, eg 'begin to challenge adult role stereotypes' (p. 15) and 'consider controversial issues' (p. 31), nevertheless use the language of Habermas's technical and hermeneutic rather than the emancipatory, critical interest.

Figure 12.4 — Key Verbs in the Careers Education Document

Key Stage	Key Verbs
KS1	Describe; form impressions; examine; plan; acquire; notice; use; identify; recognise; talk about; investigate
KS2	Understand; explore; become aware of; classify; review; compare; respond to; devise; visit; discuss; identify; use; contrast; anticipate
KS3	Understand; make decisions; solve problems; strengthen knowledge of; explore; compare; review; participate in; identify; survey; prepare for; consider; visit; research
KS4	Understand; prepare for; use; talk about; role-play; simulate; consult; compile; review; examine; share; identify; explore

This document nevertheless carries some emancipatory potential. If the ‘chinks in the armour’ (Giroux, 1983) of the system are exposed, if the system is not simply accepted and understood but interrogated, challenged and critiqued; if questions of interests, legitimacy, power, agency and determinism are addressed — subjected to rational investigation of the degree of generalizable interests which inhere in the values investigated, ie coupling Habermas’s ideology critique and communicative action — then careers education and guidance may be empowering.

As with the previous two documents, this document provides a necessary introductory platform for enquiry by indicating fields of study, knowledge and

skills, but it needs to go further; it needs to introduce critique and contestation early on if it is to interrogate the *systematically distorted communication* in the constructions of careers education and guidance placed in the document and to examine the illocutionary and perlocutionary purposes and effects of abiding by the document as it stands. The language of 'possibility' and 'opportunity' to 'know thyself' (NCC, 1990d) in careers education and guidance needs to take seriously the structural constraints, bureaucracies and contexts which affect those possibilities and opportunities. Knowing thyself, rationally reconstructing the blocks which prevent individuals from being empowered, echoes Habermas's early work on ideological distortions and his later work on the need for communicative action through rational enquiry; this can be immensely challenging to the *status quo*. Utilizing Habermas's concepts exposes the significant omissions from the document and suggests how these omissions might be addressed.

#### **12.6.5.4 Environmental Education**

Though much of this document is devoted to worked examples of environmental education about, for and through the physical environment (NCC, 1990e, p. 7) it nevertheless squarely reflects the contentious nature of environmental education, it recognizes that 'environmental education is the subject of considerable debate and that there is no clear consensus about many of the issues' (ibid., p. 1), clearly inviting those elements of the *ideal speech situation* which emphasize a 'common interest' and a rational consensus. The document requires pupils to study a range of sensitive issues which raise questions of interests, legitimacy and ideology critique, for example:

- the impact of human activities upon the environment;

- environmental issues such as the greenhouse effect, acid rain, air pollution;
- local, national and international legislative controls to protect and manage the environment; how policies and decisions are made about the environment;
- the environmental interdependence of individuals, groups, communities and nations;
- the conflicts which arise about environmental issues;
- the importance of effective action to protect and manage the environment, (NCC, 1990e, p. 4).

This is undertaken for each of a range of environmental topics (p. 10): climate (pp. 26 - 7, 30 - 1); soils, rocks and minerals (pp. 20 - 1); water (pp. 30 - 1); energy (pp. 30 - 2); plants and animals (pp. 20 - 5); people and communities (pp. 26 - 9); buildings, industrialization and waste (pp. 17, 36 - 7). Indeed the document suggests that environmental education aims to 'encourage pupils to examine and interpret the environment from a variety of perspectives — physical, geographical, biological, sociological, economic, political, technological, historical, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual' (ibid., p. 3). It suggests the need for a respect for evidence and rational argument (p. 6), clearly a sympathy with Habermas's concern for a rational consensus, and encourages individuals, schools and communities to raise awareness of personal, participatory responsibility for the environment (pp. 1 - 6): 'never has there been a greater need for young people to be aware of the necessity to look after the environment. They are its custodians' (p. 1); 'each individual can...contribute to the protection of the environment' (p. 3); 'working cooperatively with others, eg participating in group activities for the environment, taking individual and group responsibility for the environment' (p. 6).



Whilst this document is perhaps laudable it nevertheless stops short of ideology critique of the power of groups, governments and decision makers to exploit the environment, ie to practise strategic rather than communicative action, on the moral resolution of conflicts and the nature of the warranted rational consensus about environmental decisions.<sup>268</sup> The document, like that on EIU considered above, gives weight to people as producers and consumers (p. 1), reiterating the market principles which were questioned at the start of this chapter for their *suppression of generalizable interests*, and some of the examples it gives<sup>269</sup> illustrate a market mentality. One wonders, therefore, whether, even though the rhetoric of the document involves Habermasian principles of rational enquiry, responsibility and questions of legitimacy and interests, the moral arguments have received the due weight that they perhaps deserve if the aims are to be realized. Justifications are seen pragmatically — strategically — (eg p. 29 and p. 34) rather than ethically and communicatively, and questions of differential powers in decision making are understated. Influence over decision makers is not considered problematic, ie how individuals and groups can affect the participants in steering media (eg those in economic and political office) is neglected. Though there is much illocutionary potential in the document it offers little advice on how to overcome the perlocutionary decisions of those in power.

In terms of pedagogy this document possesses much potential for communicative action as it requires pupils to recognise 'all the points of view' (NCC, 1990e,

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<sup>268</sup> For instance, in the example of emissions from British power stations affecting Scandinavia (pp. 30 - 31) the nearest that the document comes to suggesting censure of the practice is to mention the need for 'environmental interdependence' (p. 30). In the passing mention it gives to rainforest destruction it neglects to consider the possible causes of rainforest destruction — eg materialist consumerism in the developed world, the developed world exploiting the third world — and the legitimacy of the enterprise.

<sup>269</sup> For example p. 39 on cattle-rearing for profit.

p. 1), it suggests that environmental education ‘introduces pupils to political processes and encourages them to take on social responsibility’ (ibid., p. 12). In the verbs it uses this document possesses many elements of empowerment though it stops short of critique (figure 12.5).

**Figure 12.5 — Key Verbs in the Environmental Education Document**

Key Stage	Key Verbs
KS1	Look at; express views on; compare; explore
KS2	Express views, argue, retrieve; interpret; evaluate; identify; investigate; formed reasoned opinions
KS3	Investigate; analyse; take responsibility for; argue; retrieve; interpret; evaluate; identify; form reasoned opinions
KS4	Draw up proposals; argue; retrieve; interpret; evaluate; identify; form reasoned opinions

One can see evidence in these of the higher order thinking of the *ideal speech situation* though it is interesting to note the same verbs appearing at three different stages, indicating perhaps a lack of progression.

Hence, as with the problematic areas of the previous documents, the problematic questions of environmental education are mentioned — indeed they are seen to lie at the heart of environmental education — but they are cast in the language of unrealistic possibility. The case studies presented are either of local small scale projects or are paper exercises in analysis of more global issues. If participatory democracy and decision making for environmental responsibility is

sought then the channels of that participation and its problematic areas need to receive greater attention, ie participants should be made aware of how they can influence communicative action for everyone's interests — the promotion of generalizable interests. Without this the effects of the document are to emphasize hermeneutic knowledge rather than critique. This document, probably more than most of the others considered here, centralizes the problematic areas of the topic under discussion, its highlighting of an ecological crisis adds to the legitimation, economic and motivational crises outlined by Habermas (1976a).<sup>270</sup>

#### 12.6.5.5 Education for Citizenship

The rhetoric of this document (NCC, 1990f) celebrates participatory democracy, positive action, responsibilities, rights and rational entitlement (p. 1), all central features of emancipatory education<sup>271</sup> dealing centrally with Habermas's steering media of law and power and addressing the notion of citizenship as a major means of breaking strategic action of illegitimate power and a technicist mentality (cf chapter 11). Indeed the title *Education for Citizenship* echoes the frequent references to 'citizenship' and 'civic courage' found in the work of Giroux. As with the previous documents discussed above, one would not wish much of the material to be excluded; rather the question, as before, is how the material is approached, discussed, treated, and whether the material goes far enough to empower pupils to realize their existential futures free from ideological distortion — *systematically distorted communication*. This document sets out an agenda of issues for citizenship education whose effects may reinforce the *status quo* and rule out of the analysis any developed questioning or critique of legitimacy, interests,

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<sup>270</sup> In this respect it addresses a major weakness of Giroux's work noted in Appendix E — his neglect of the ecological crisis in the world and his celebration of an anthropocentric view of the universe.

<sup>271</sup> Cf Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986; Giroux, 1989.

powers or degrees of freedom. There are two main ways in which this occurs:

*Firstly*, the document, in its aims of citizenship education, minimises critique in favour of understanding and delimits participatory action:

Schools must lay the foundations for positive, participative citizenship in two important ways:

- (i) by helping pupils to acquire and understand essential information;
- (ii) by providing them with opportunities and incentives to participate in all aspects of school life (NCC, 1990f, p. 1).

Thus pupils are only required to receive hermeneutically certain prescribed information, not to challenge or critique it. Moreover, there is an arrogance in the certainty of what is 'the essential information' which not only defines essential information but which rules out alternative constructions of essential information, the effects of which are therefore perlocutionary. By its prescription of essential information the document risks incorporation into the dominant ideology (discussed later), the effect of which is to buttress up the *status quo*. Further, active participation is confined to school life rather than moving outside of school, it is contained in an environment that can leave the outside world untouched, thereby neglecting that element of Habermasian pedagogy which argues for community links.

*Secondly*, when one examines the content of the citizenship curriculum one finds that its scope embraces:

(i) *the nature of community involvement* (p. 5), which, even though it includes economic and political communities, only emphasises roles and the operation of these communities, ie they are 'givens' not interrogated or critiqued, the potential for ideology critique is neglected;

(ii) *roles and relationships in a pluralist society* (p. 6), which, even though

they emphasise equality, justice, multiculturalism and multiethnicity, nevertheless neglect to detail the problematic areas of these considerations, eg the lack of opportunity for some to employ speech acts, ie they are generalized, exhortatory and administered through the operation of laws whose content or legitimacy are not interrogated; hermeneutic understanding takes precedence over critique;

(iii) *duties, responsibilities and rights of being a citizen* (pp. 6 - 7), which, in contrast, for example, to the document on Careers Education discussed earlier, include reference to equal opportunities, political rights and the protection of the rights of the weak and disadvantaged, ie those with limited powers to employ speech acts, and recognize the need for a balance between individual freedoms and social constraints (the agency and structure tension) but which neglect critique of the legitimacy of structural inequality, poverty, oppression and exploitation, ie which fail to engage ideology critique and the search for a warranted consensus;

(iv) *the family*, (p. 7) which neglects to render the family as problematic<sup>272</sup> and, in its 'naming' of the family and 'silencing' of other forms of partnerships, operates a heterosexism which violates the NCC's declared policy of equal opportunities and legitimates what, for many, is a problematic and illegitimate institution, ie generalizable interests are suppressed, the outcomes of this — perlocutionarily — are socially and culturally reproductive rather than transformative;

(v) *democracy in action* (pp. 7 - 8) which, even though it includes a comparison of different political systems, is silent on the legitimacy or questioning of political systems and mechanisms of the state, the effects of which are to confine participatory democratic behaviour to local institutions with major political decision making being seen as the legitimate responsibility of a representative democ-

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<sup>272</sup> See the comments earlier on the health education document.

racy without questioning the differential powers which it is representing and the interests at work in this. Ideology critique and communicative action to interrogate systems are neglected;

(vi) *the citizen and the law* (p. 8), which, although including questions of freedoms and rights, neglects to question, for example, how the law may operate against the interests of the poor, the disempowered and the oppressed, the relationship between the law and political interests in the creation of laws, and tensions in the law, ie which neglects unequal opportunities to employ speech acts. Further, it is only at Key Stage four that students are introduced to how laws are made and changed (p. 19), reinforcing the issue raised by Bernstein earlier that not introducing pupils to the heart of a subject until very late (ie until they have been 'schooled' into acceptance of legitimacy) has the effect that many pupils are socialized — perlocutionarily and strategically — into an existing order;

(vii) *work, employment and leisure* (pp. 8 - 9), which, although including reference to union activity and governmental responsibility for employment and unemployment, like the documents discussed earlier, carry an implicit message of infinite possibility and the benefits of wealth creation in materialist and leisure activities for those who abide by the 'rules of the capitalist game', ie which neglect ideology critique and a critique of the effects of the intrusion of the steering medium of employment into the lifeworld of participants (eg the reasons why some participants may not have equal rights to employ speech acts);

(viii) *public services* (p. 8) which, although it includes the issue of provision of public services, neglects to question the legitimacy of public, private and voluntary services and the legitimacy of the funding of, availability of, and opportunity to

access what many see as a fundamental human right.

Whilst the document recognizes that 'education for citizenship involves controversial issues upon which there is no clear consensus' (ibid., p. 14) nevertheless its emphasis on understanding a received body of knowledge neglects a critical rational and moral / ethical enquiry that Habermas's *ideal speech situation* requires. Citizenship education has become redefined as community responsibility to an existing order rather than as critical participatory democracy. A Habermasian critique suggests that the capability of all the 'systems' mentioned above to *systematically distort communication* through the *suppression of generalizable interests* needs to receive greater attention.

The *content* as described above brims over with emancipatory potential provided that this content is *interrogated* rather than simply *accepted*. How one might gain access to power, how one exercises and develops one's 'voice', how one exposes, acts on, and reduces non-generalizable vested interests needs to receive greater coverage if a fully fledged emancipation is to be wrought. As with the preceding document, without participants being made aware of how they can generate and become involved in communicative action with those in power the effects of this document are to reinforce hermeneutic rather than critical knowledge. Further, the suppression of other areas of 'citizenship' content needs to be questioned, for example Peace Studies, Political Education, Media Education.<sup>273</sup>

In terms of *pedagogical* principles, though there is some indication of interrogation and critique and frequent references to 'activities', the verbs used in the document focus on understanding and exploration rather than critique (figure 12.6). This replicates the analysis of the previous four cross-curricular themes.

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<sup>273</sup> These are areas which are arraigned by the Hillgate group (Cox et al, 1986, pp. 4 - 5).

Figure 12.6 — Key Verbs in the Education for Citizenship Document

Key Stage	Key Verbs
KS1	Think about; cooperate; agree; discuss; listen to; explore; talk about; decide; plan
KS2	Plan; review; evaluate; investigate; survey; study; organise; identify
KS3	Choose; investigate; discuss; collect examples; identify
KS4	Plan; organise; investigate; participate in; observe; debate; discuss; find out about

## 12.7 Conclusions

This case study has argued that it is in cross-curriculum issues in general and themes in particular that much of the emancipatory potential of the National Curriculum content can lie. Using a Habermasian perspective on these it has been suggested that it is in the cross-curricular issues that the controversial nature of values, legitimacy and interests resides, and as such they possess greater transformative potential than the subjects of the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Their *content* was seen to articulate with the wider society and steering media, ie to have referents beyond the confines of the school rather than to shut down external referents in school curricula (ie to refer to students' communities and objective, social and subjective worlds).

In the field of *pedagogy*, though active, practical and experiential approaches were celebrated (linking them to Habermasian pedagogical principles for emanci-



patory curricula set out in chapter 11) nevertheless they understated the interrogative and critical pedagogies which chapter 11 suggested were necessary for emancipatory curricula. The cross-curricular themes possessed the potential for communicative action in that they were seen to 'have in common the capacity to promote discussion of values and beliefs, extend knowledge and understanding, encourage practical activities and decision making and further the inter-relationship of the individual and the community' (NCC, 1990f, p. 3). However in these the emphasis needed to shift beyond instrumental and cognitive passiveness (resisting challenge to issues) to interrogation and ideology critique.

The cross-curricular themes are heavy on Habermas's technical and hermeneutic interest but very light on the emancipatory, critical interest. What we are witness to here is that emancipatory curricula — curricula that can develop student voice — are being both suppressed and reinterpreted to reduce their emancipatory potential, a clear ideological process of incorporation. They have considerable emancipatory potential, but in the construction of these emancipatory themes this potential is being under-represented in the documents.

The five cross-curricular themes place an emphasis on education as an instrumental activity in the service of the economy, reinforcing strategic action and the *suppression of generalizable interests* of the market mentality which the early part of this chapter suggested was a principle on which the National Curriculum and the 1988 Education Reform Act, which brought it into being, were premised. It has been suggested here that were they to be supplemented by another agenda of cross-curricular themes — eg empowerment, enjoyment, the experience of success, awareness, compassion, self-determination, freedom, creativity, the development of aesthetic and imaginative forms of expression which reflected the more intrinsic

worthwhileness of education<sup>274</sup> — and were they to develop a Habermasian critical pedagogy then emancipation and empowerment would become less bounded, less circumscribed, less predictable, more dangerous and system-upsetting. The cross-curricular themes have potential for learners to appropriate, contextualize and situate discussion in their own circumstances, but this not only needs to be done from an earlier age than that given in the NCC's *Curriculum Guidance* documents but needs to render more problematical the issues in the cross-curricular themes than the documents suggest. The content and pedagogy of the cross-curricular themes needed to develop critique in students. The cross-curricular themes, then, provide a foundation for empowerment which needs a fuller and more developed critical superstructure.

A fully-rounded picture of content and pedagogy — its rendering as problematical the issues which it treats — enables communicative action as rational discourse and rational interrogation of issues to be pursued. Rational interrogation exposes the degree to which generalizable interests are embodied in content and promote *action oriented to mutual understanding* in the pedagogical processes of rational interrogation.

Though the National Curriculum embodies strong classification and framing and can stifle empowerment, there is still room for emancipation to occur. If it can occur here then it is likely to have greater potential to occur in curricula which are ideologically more suited to Habermasian principles. This can be seen in an update of the politics of the curriculum in Appendix K.

In presenting the case study material this chapter has attempted to make good the empty rhetoric for which Bowers (1991) criticized Giroux; it has attempted to

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<sup>274</sup> This recognizes, of course, that the two are by no means mutually exclusive.

provide a concrete example as well as to provide a 'severe test' of Habermas's theory. The chapter has shown how Habermas's views can stand up to a 'severe' test by: (a) being applied in a context which is different from that which gave rise to the theory; (b) clarifying where and why the emancipatory potential of curricula might be limited; (c) outlining the meaning and implications of a bureaucratized curriculum and suggesting how the negative effects of a highly prescriptive and bureaucratized curriculum can be addressed; (d) exposing the dangers of a 'hegemonic academic curriculum' which suppresses challenge and the higher order thinking required of an emancipatory curriculum and indicating how these might be addressed; (e) indicating how 'generalizable interests' are blocked and yet might be developed in the curriculum; (f) undertaking an ideology critique of the political and sectional interests at work in the curriculum; (g) indicating how an analysis of knowledge-constitutive interests and communicative action might be undertaken in the curriculum and how this might be used to expose emancipatory potential within a constraining curriculum. That said, the implications of the conclusions to sections 12.4 and 12.5 suggest that Habermas's views, by dint of being exemplified in, rather than enriching, the analysis of the National Curriculum, might stand up to a 'severe' test but only minimally.

This chapter has indicated that Habermasian principles can inform a commentary on the education and suggest an agenda for reform in the National Curriculum by its exposure of interests, flaws, omissions and ways in which these can be made good by adoption of central tenets of Habermasian theory. The ability of Habermas's theories to suggest an agenda for action furnishes reasons for accepting his views, *viz.* that they have practical applicability. Whether this is borne out empirically is, of course, another question. Habermas's theories ultimately stand or

fall on empirical testing. The contribution of Habermas in this chapter is perhaps more significant than that demonstrated in chapters 10 and 11. This chapter has also demonstrated the requirement of a theory set out in chapter 8 — that it should be fruitful and fertile.

## Chapter XIII

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 13.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the strands of the arguments developed through the thesis, sets parameters to the applicability of the argument and suggests implications for the work of Habermas and for education. It is thus both retrospective and prospective. It falls into five sections:

- a summary of key factors of the argument through those chapters of the thesis which dealt with the field of education (13.2);
- an identification of the nature of a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories in the light of the sections of the thesis which dealt with the field of education (13.3);
- a discussion of the significance of Habermas's theories for the field of education and an analysis and prescription of implications of Habermas's work for the field of education (13.4);
- a critique of the thesis (13.5);
- implications for future research (13.6).

The chapter thus provides a synthesis of theory and practice and an application of this synthesis in the field of education.

## 13.2 Reviewing Habermas's Theories

The thesis traced a developing argument in its exposition and critique of Habermas's work — that its elements, singly and severally, were problematical, containing weaknesses and limitations. It was suggested that Habermas had succeeded in creating a coherent and self-supporting theory of communicative action but that there was confusion about (i) its nature and status *qua* theory, (ii) the terms of and criteria for its verification and testing, and (iii) its potential to serve the requirements of a Critical Theory. The status of the theory was seen to be undermined by sub-elemental flaws and a global relativism; the thesis has indicated that although Habermas had created a 'grand' theory it was still desirable to explore the potential of this to be verified *empirically* because (a) in its appeal to reconstructive science it was a variant of an empirical theory, and (b) because a major criterion for success of a Critical Theory is its power to bring about equality *in practice*, ie it is a prescriptive not a descriptive theory. Clarification was provided of the terms and nature of the verification of Habermas's theory.

It was argued that there was a non-positivistic alternative to or equivalent of the 'severe test' of Popperian science, *viz.* the analysis of the potential for communicative action to occur in practice even in circumstances which in many respects would forbid emancipation. This 'severe test' moved beyond an evaluation of the internal coherence of the theory to a new substantive field, for it was argued that, in order for a theory to stand empirical scrutiny and to avoid circularity (ie to move beyond simple corroboration and induction), it was necessary to test the theory under different circumstances and with different data from those which gave rise to the theory. The substantive field of education was taken as meeting these requirements. It was recognized that this was a new field for the testing of

Habermas's theory.

The test of Habermas's theory was undertaken in two ways. *Firstly* the field of education was selected to meet the requirements of fruitfulness and fertility of a test. This was undertaken in chapters 10 -12. Chapters 10 and 11 suggested that, though Habermas's theories could inform an understanding of the relationship between curricula and society and of curricula as practised in schools respectively, the issues that derived from Habermas's work did not do so exclusively, ie they did not rely on Habermas's work to give them meaning.<sup>275</sup> Coupled with the argument in chapters 10 and 11 that strategic action was seen to be potentially more empowering than communicative action it was suggested that Habermas's contribution to an analysis of education was slight.

*Secondly* the case study was taken as an example of several elements of a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories. The case study indicated prescriptions for practice, ie how the limited potential that it possessed for transformative action could be developed and maximised in the pursuit of emancipation, social and ideological critique and equality. Habermas's theories were seen to have the heuristic value suggested for them here in setting an agenda for action. In this respect his theories were seen to be tenable in a 'severe test' in chapter 12.

The demonstration of the utility of Habermas's theory lay in its potential to underpin and effect transformative practice. Chapters 10 -11 however questioned the necessity of using Habermas's theories to underpin and effect transformative practice. Transformative practice was not necessarily predicated on ideology critique and communicative action.

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<sup>275</sup> Cf Laudan's (1990) comment that '[a] theory is ... not necessarily 'tested' by all its known positive instances' (Laudan, 1990, p. 64).

The notion of 'effecting practice' was separated into two elements — *approaches to empirical investigation* and the *empirical investigation itself*. It was argued that a Habermasian approach (a) could identify an ideologically critical approach to situations and practices, (b) could clarify the nature and terms of substantive transformative practice, (c) could underpin and outline the development of emancipatory movements, programs and projects, and (d) could outline areas for empirical investigation. Chapters 10 and 11 set the ground for (a), (b), (c) and chapter 12 provided a specific example of how (d) could be approached. In this sense Habermas's work was seen to have heuristic value both in the field of methodology and substance within the field of education. His theories were demonstrated to be supportable in these chapters.

The second element of 'effecting practice' — the empirical testing of the extent to which Habermas's work can effect practice *in reality* rather than in principle or outline — still awaits empirical research. That is another thesis. However, it was argued that Habermas's work, by dint of its abstruse language, utopian idealism, emphasis on rationality and inability to suggest agendas which are not derivable from other sources, did not hold much promise in this respect. Indeed the argument was advanced that strategic action might be more empowering than communicative action and that to ignore this might render Habermas's advocacy of communicative action in reality disempowering. Language might provide a justificatory basis for a social theory but this would not be sufficient to bring empowerment. Premises do not guarantee effects. Language does not reign supreme in everyday life: 'if we devise some simple theory about the workings of a complex structure, it is bound to be inadequate' (Butler, 1983, p. 145).

The combination of flawed elements of his theory and its inability to articulate



many exclusively original insights into education severely undermined his contribution to education. That might be to give his theories the status as 'tools' as with other 'grand theories' — eg Marx and Freud — where the specific elements and terms in their work are flawed but they have survived in everyday parlance.

### 13.3 Towards an Empirical Test of Habermas's Theories

The nature of social enquiry derives from Habermas's criteria for the *ideal speech situation* and communicative action — his norms of truth, sincerity, comprehensibility, authenticity, rightness and legitimacy. Social enquiry will need to clarify its *substantive* contents and *methodological* procedures. Chapter 8 indicated criteria for testing his theories, that they must: demonstrate internal consistency; identify the type of evidence required; be empirically testable in their power to empower; be tested in new contexts; demonstrate fruitfulness and fertility; withstand a 'severe test'. Whether Habermas's theories are tested by using quantitative approaches in the style of the experimental empirical testing of the natural sciences or in a qualitative enquiry in the style of anthropology and ethnography has to be decided on the grounds of feasibility, acceptability and appropriacy.

In an experimental approach, for example, the researcher would have to isolate and control the discrete independent variables which affect the dependent variable — empowerment — operationalised into its component elements. The independent variables would include that range of factors which exert an effect on empowerment and a measurement of their effects, for example:

- the degree of authoritarianism in society;
- the degree of choice of members of society over their life styles;

- the separate *interests* at work in society;
- the degree of suppression of separate and generalizable interests in society;
- the spheres in which the suppression of generalizable interests operates;
- the spheres of operation of steering media;
- the degree of control by steering media in these spheres of operation.

The list of variables will necessarily be infinite as their identification will be a function of the numbers of individuals, groups, cultures, and societies involved. The task therefore becomes unmanageable. It poses insuperable problems of content validity. Moreover not only is there is an overwhelming problem of construct validity in this proposal as the terms are inoperationalizable, being open to interpretation and disagreement, but an attempt to operationalize them for the purposes of experimental research will give a spurious numerical value to that which is unmeasurable. Further, given the complexity of the variables not only will it be impossible to isolate and control significant variables but this, even if it were possible, would be indefensible on ethical grounds. The experimental paradigm is inappropriate and unworkable for testing Habermas's theories.<sup>276</sup> Habermas's theory is not susceptible to the 'proof' of experimental research.

An alternative to the experimental approach regards context not as a contaminating factor but as the heart of the matter (Morrison, 1993). In a qualitative research style ethnographic data could be assembled which would (a) chart the operation of communicative action (or its lack) in specific situations and circumstances, (b) be able to clarify the nature of barriers to emancipation, (c) indicate

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<sup>276</sup> This is an interesting irony, for it echoes Hayek's early views on the impossibility of knowing, let alone predicting, the variables at work in the structure of society (Butler, 1983, pp. 144-5).

where emancipatory potential lay and how it might be developed. Indeed this was the intention of the case study in this thesis. Not only would this address the requirements of a theory — that it informs manageable research enterprises — but it would make transparent the operation of ideology and the potential for and spheres of communicative action. Given that Critical Theory is premised on emancipation (ie that it is ‘situated activity’) it is more fitting that it be tested in the real lived experiences of societies and groups rather than in the antiseptic world of the laboratory. Indeed the process of rational reconstruction requires this.

From the preceding chapters it is possible to suggest the elements of an empirical test which flow from Habermas’s theories. These elements, investigated qualitatively, comprise four stages (derived from Habermas, 1972, p. 230):

(i) a description and interpretation of the existing situation;

(ii) a penetration of the reasons which brought the existing situation to the form that it takes and an evaluation of their legitimacy and acceptability;

(iii) setting an agenda for altering the situation (if that is appropriate);

(iv) an evaluation of the achievement of the agenda in practice...

This clearly maps on to the criteria for communicative action and the *ideal speech situation* outlined by Habermas (cf fig. 6.2): stage (i) addresses his notion of the *comprehensibility* of a speech situation; stage (ii) addresses his notions of the *sincerity, legitimacy, authenticity* and *acceptability* of a speech situation; stage (iii) addresses his notion of the *truth* of a speech act (truth here being defined in Habermasian terms as that which is premised on the *ideal speech situation*); stage (iv) uses the criteria of the previous three stages to evaluate the extent to

which emancipation has been achieved — the extent to which the conditions of ideal speech and communicative action have been realized in practice.<sup>277</sup>

**Stage (i):** *A description and interpretation of the existing situation.*

This can be seen as a hermeneutic exercise which not only identifies the current practices which obtain in the situation or circumstances under investigation but attempts to make sense of them. In effect this part of the methodology involves the identification of areas and ways in which the naming and / or silencing of specific features of a situation are present.

**Stage (ii):** *A penetration of the reasons which brought the existing situation to the form that it takes.*

In this stage social enquiry will look for causes and purposes of the situation and an evaluation of their legitimacy. Principally this will involve:

- an identification of *whose* interests are protected and neglected in the situation, *what* those interests are, *how* they came to be protected and neglected, *how* they continue to be protected and neglected, and *what might occur* if they continue to be protected and neglected (ie to clarify and evaluate the suppression of generalizable interests, its spheres of operation, its past, present and future);
- an identification of the alignments of powerful interests with decision makers;
- an identification of the nature and spheres of operation of that power;
- an evaluation of the legitimacy and acceptability of the power differentials ob-

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<sup>277</sup> Fairclough (1989) indicates a similar approach in teaching children about language — an essential Habermasian feature. He suggests a four-stage cycle: reflection in practice; systematizing experience; explanation; developing practice. He argues that 'such an exercise is designed to lead...to children [p]roducing...emancipatory discourse'.? (Fairclough, 1989. p. 243).

served and identified as causes and as purposes of particular projects, programs and situations;

- an evaluation of the means by which powerful interests have been served in the past and may continue to be served in the future. This will involve *firstly* an evaluation of the acceptability and legitimacy of the suppression of debate on, contestation about and resistance to specific programs, projects and situations. *Secondly* it will involve an evaluation of the mechanisms which operate to sustain the powerful in power (eg through the process of negative bureaucratization — that bureaucratization which restricts the operation of communicative action rather than promotes it).

This stage of the process not only requires rational interrogation of causes and contexts of and backgrounds to existing situations but requires the analysis to be undertaken widely and deeply if content validity is to be preserved. A research exercise which deals only at the intersubjective and interactional levels, whilst it would have the attraction of microsociological enquiry, would neglect the wider sociocultural, economic, political, historical, systemic and structural forces and constraints which brought about the existing situation (an analysis of the operation of the steering media of society), ie it would neglect the macrosociological contexts of actions. A full analysis, then would require attention to micro and macro forces which were operating on a situation. This is premised on the view that there is such a thing as 'reality' and that it is multi-layered and can be interpreted at several levels.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Pollard (1985) provides a very striking example of this where he shows how teachers' instructions can be interpreted at micro- and macrosociological levels, how day-to-day instructions resonate with the values of the wider capitalist society — achievement, individualism, hierarchy and self-reliance (Pollard. 1985. p. 110).

Stage (iii): *An agenda for altering the situation.*

Having identified areas where ideology critique, the movement towards social justice and rational reconstruction might take place there are several elements which can feature on an agenda for action:

- identifying areas in which emancipation can begin, where it can reach and how it can be managed;
- raising a debate about policies, projects, programs, situations and practices, ie raising a debate about matters which are contestable and which presently operate against the interests of some individuals and groups;
- indicating how 'things might be done differently' (R. Simon 1988);
- exposing the *suppression of generalizable interests* and setting an agenda for its reduction (in terms of content and process);
- identifying 'levers of change', ie small alterations which can bring about larger scale or larger order changes;
- identifying those areas over which the disempowered can exert some power or agency and over which they can involve themselves in democratic processes;
- identifying the means, processes and content of change by which the negative effects of steering media and bureaucratization (or indeed any structural, systemic factors) can be turned into enabling, emancipating and empowering mechanisms;
- identifying targets and criteria to evaluate the successful achievement of these (eg in terms of time scales, content and sequence of changes).

Stage (iv): *An evaluation of the achievement of that agenda in practice.*

This evaluates the value of changes in practice, praxis, attitude, belief and behaviour (individual and group) and the systems and mechanisms which support those; this is the touchstone of a Critical Theory — transformative and transformed practice. It is inadequate simply to 'feel' empowered (Ellsworth, 1989); this might be a delusion of the falsely or partially conscious.

It is possible to identify how a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories might be undertaken. Popper (1969) characterizes the essence of a 'severe test' thus:

A serious empirical test always consists in the attempt to find a refutation, a counter example....we always look in the most probable kinds of places for the most probable kinds of counter examples — most probable in the sense that we should expect to find them in the light of our background knowledge (Popper, 1969, p. 240).

A 'severe test', then, will require the theory to be tested in circumstances where it is most likely to fail. For a 'severe test' of Habermas's theory the case study suggests that this would have to include the following:

- the identification of areas where emancipatory potential and communicative action are very limited;
- the identification of powerful reasons, power structures, the sources of the power (steering media), the locus of decision making and factors which perpetuate this limitation (ie where the *suppression of generalizable interests* is not only very powerful but which appears to offer limited or no scope for alteration);
- an identification of the significant nature and extent of the *suppression of generalizable interests* in given contexts;
- an identification of major areas where communicative action is minimal and

strategic action has a significant stronghold (ie where technical and hermeneutic interests significantly outweigh the emancipatory interest);

- an identification of areas where bureaucratization has become disempowering;
- an identification of areas where the violation of the *ideal speech situation* is known by those in power but which they choose not to reform.

Having identified a situation where empowerment, emancipation and communicative action are minimal (ie stage (i) of *description* and *interpretation* outlined earlier) and having identified where there is very limited potential for altering that situation because it is buttressed by powerful forces (stage (ii) of identifying *causes* and evaluating their *legitimacy* outlined earlier), a 'severe test' will identify where, notwithstanding, emancipation is possible and will set an agenda for practical action (stage (iii) of *setting an agenda* outlined earlier). Finally, criteria for the achievement of the elements of the agenda (stage (iv) of evaluation of the *actual achievement in practice* of the agenda) together complete the 'severe test' of the theory. The test, then, moves from description, analysis, interrogation to practice; it combines formulation with application.

If, under these four conditions, Habermas's theories are found to be unsubstantiated or disproved then this would constitute a significant weakening or refutation of his theories. If, on the other hand, his theories stand up to examination in these contexts then credence can be put in them.

### 13.4 The Significance of Habermas's Theories for Education

Chapters 10 - 12 demonstrated that Habermas's theories could be used to inform a commentary on the sociology of school knowledge, ideology-critique, cur-



riculum building and curriculum analysis, even though, it was argued, the significance of his contribution was at best equivocal in chapters 10 and 11. That said, it was suggested that his contribution to the study of interactions and their dynamics was useful.

The argument that Habermas's work can be justified on the ground that it brings an added dimension to a commentary on education is weak, for it is one which could be applied to *any* additional dimensions — good or bad — which could be used to illuminate education. It echoes the dictum 'everything has meaning; nothing has value'. The possibility for simple accretion of dimensions is no recommendation for their adoption; there is a moral argument to be won for their adoption. The *particular* contribution of Habermas's work has to be stated and evaluated. In this respect several justifications can be adduced for the inclusion of Habermasian principles in a commentary on education:

- they enlarge individuals' and groups' potentials for emancipatory action towards empowerment, ie for praxis;<sup>279</sup>
- they are consciousness-raising, they offer interesting and empowering ways of analysing and approaching education;
- they indicate the nature of that empowerment and the means by which that might be reached (eg through communicative action);
- they set a substantive and methodological agenda for action;
- they are 'performatory' and practical, ie they affect action and behaviour;

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<sup>279</sup> Fairclough (1989) argues that 'empowerment has a substantial 'shock' potential, and it can help people to overcome their sense of impotence by showing them that existing orders of discourse are not immutable' (Fairclough, 1989, p. 244).

- they argue for participation in collective decision making;
- they elevate the significance of language;
- they advance the processes and substance of democracy;
- they focus on people interacting, ie they focus on the dynamics of situations and specific contexts;
- they expose the operation of power to questions of legitimation;
- they argue for issues to be brought out into the open, for motives and interests to be made public and for public discussion to be held where relevant;
- they are non-dominatory and do not prescribe outcomes of a rational consensus, ie agendas are open;<sup>280</sup>
- they 'start where people are' rather than where they ought to be;
- they strive for a rational consensus in participants' own terms;
- they indicate that the democracy of the lifeworld is served by communicative action within a system — capitalism — which is premised on strategic action;
- they argue for the need to develop communicative competence;
- they are rooted not only in an analysis of society but in the very structures of discourse (eg his appeal to reconstructive science), ie the normative foundations of his theories are evident in daily practice;

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<sup>280</sup> De La Bat Smit (1994) argues that Habermas's tenets 'do not predefine the set of issues which can be legitimately raised in the conversation. The agenda of moral conversation or discourse is radically open, being defined by the agents themselves rather than by the theorist' (De La Bat Smit, 1994, p. 203).

- they advance social justice and equality;
- they enable participants to have ideals and to be idealistic;
- they indicate a way of reducing the negative effects of bureaucratization and strengthening the positive effects of bureaucratization (eg through communicative action based on communicative rationality);
- they offer a process for developing empowerment in everyday situations (the use of the *ideal speech situation*).

The justification of Habermas's work for education, therefore, lies not only in its potential contribution to specific areas of education (discussed below) but because the implications of his work for education purport to be more than a matter of simple subjective preference and, rather, a matter whose roots lie in the moral imperative of an unavoidable characteristic of everyday communication.

Chapters 10 - 12 have addressed the curriculum-specific implications of Habermas's work; here the implications for implementing these curricula will be discussed, covering the fields of *management* and *staff development*.

#### 13.4.1 Implications for Management

In this field a set of principles of procedure, substantive and methodological, can be identified which follow from Habermasian tenets:

- the need for information sharing, consultation and open channels of communication with leaders as enablers rather than directors;
- the need for debate about and critical interrogation of educational issues and policy making and the decisions which flow from these;

- the interrogation of interests at work in decision making and their legitimacy as a preliminary to the taking of decisions which serve and embody equality and democracy;
- the identification of the nature and extent of bureaucratic processes in the institution and an identification and evaluation of their enabling and constraining potential;
- the need for debate and decision making to embody the tenets of the *ideal speech situation*;
- the replacement of technical and instrumental rationality with an emancipatory movement, strategic action with communicative action;
- the need for collegial and collective rather than autocratic decision making;

There is a powerful implication from Habermas's work — that if issues in education are essentially contestable and contested<sup>281</sup> then a debate about these issues should take place which operates from the principles of the *ideal speech situation*, ie that the debate should be rational, where interests are exposed are debated, where the positional power of advocates should be replaced by the unforced force of the argument alone with equal rights of participants to be heard. Given that the contours of much of the education system are determined by politics and the politics of the party in political power, Habermas's exhortation to a debate which is marked by equal rights of participation and the force of the argument is a call for open consultation on decision making, a stakeholder approach to decision making (either in a representative or participatory democracy), a requirement that issues and participants in a debate about these issues should be examined for their truth,

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<sup>281</sup> Cf Hartnett's and Naish's (1976) view of education as an 'essentially contested concept'.

authenticity, comprehensibility, legitimacy, sincerity, correctness, evidence, rationality, implicit values and interests. Not only are the conditions of the *ideal speech situation* to be striven for and embodied in debate but there should be a *will* that these should be addressed.

If the conditions of ideal speech are to be observed then this will require appropriate infrastructures and systems to be put into place at the appropriate levels. For example this means that channels of information-flow are open, two-way, their existence disseminated and that encouragement and the ability to use them is both activated and developed. The views of stakeholders in decision making and decision receiving should not only be canvassed but should be built into decisions — those affected by the decisions should have a right of consultation about and voting on those decisions.

The opening of two-way channels of information-flow, accompanied by collective decision making (either representatively or participatorily) marks a move away from an autocratic style of decision making and the management of educational systems to a collegial, collective style of management in a division of labour. This breaks down the stultifying effects of bureaucratization. The openness of communication channels, the extent of the free flow of information and genuine consultation which results in decision making which represents the involvement of participants and the shared ownership of those decisions is an elemental feature of organizational health and a beneficial organizational climate.<sup>282</sup> Miles (1975) suggests several elements of organizational health which clearly lie within the ambit of Habermasian principles of the *ideal speech situation* (cf figure 6.2 sic): clear goals;

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<sup>282</sup> Cf Halpin (1966), Miles (1975), Stenhouse (1975), Nicholls (1983), Fullan, (1991), Hoy et al (1991), Dalin (1993).

adequate communications; optimum equalization of power between leaders, senior managers and teachers; optimum use of resources; cohesiveness; high morale; innovativeness; autonomy; adaptiveness to change; adequate procedures for resolving problems which are internal to the institution.

In terms of organizational leadership the operation of communicative action is premised on a collegial rather than autocratic management structure. If a bureaucratic organization is required because of the need for a division of labour this need not preclude an open style of consultation and decision making. Rather, if the deadening effect of bureaucratization as embracing instrumental rationality is to be resisted then openness becomes a *requisite* rather than an *option*.

#### 13.4.2 Implications for Staff Development

It is accepted here that whilst only a limited number of teachers will probably have encountered the work of Habermas, nevertheless the implications of his work are significant. If schools are to develop the curricular and managerial implications which are exposed by a Habermasian interpretation of the curriculum then there will be a need for a substantial staff development exercise — differentiated for different staff, tasks and roles — to include: decision making about emancipatory curriculum content and emancipatory pedagogy. The potential for interrogation of critical content by teachers and students alike is a prime concern here (cf chapters 11 and 12).

A staff development exercise would need to be mounted to make teachers and educators aware of the channels of participation in political processes, curriculum content, pedagogy and evaluation in order that they possessed the power and capability to act as transformative intellectuals. In this role there is clearly room

for addressing quite specifically the work of Habermas (which might be undertaken in higher degree and in-service courses which teachers attend).<sup>283</sup>

Further, a staff development exercise would be necessary to extend the potential for communicative action in classrooms — opportunities for discourse and autonomous action. This would involve the identification of increased opportunities for language development in a variety of forms: debate, discussion, questioning, problematising, critique, the justification and defence of arguments, formal and informal communication, communication in a variety of registers and for a variety of purposes and audiences. To effect this would require action to be taken which would develop responsible student autonomy and the equalization of powers in the pedagogical situation.<sup>284</sup> A staff development exercise would conform to the four stage model of development outlined earlier in this chapter which derived from Habermas (1972):

Stage (i): description and interpretation of the situation in defined fields in order to identify where innovation and change were needs to develop communicative action, for example:

- *curriculum* aims, content, resourcing, pedagogy, assessment, evaluation, relationship to the wider society;
- the loci and zones of *power* for different types of decision making in the institution, their legitimacy, the ways in which power operates and is revealed in the institution;

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<sup>283</sup> A very clear instance of the value of this direct approach to addressing Habermas can be seen in the work of Bowman (1993) where she devises and interrogates a programme of Personal and Social Education in a comprehensive school.

<sup>284</sup> Clear examples of this are the High Scope Curriculum for early years education (Hohmann *et al*, 1979) and the move towards flexible learning and student centred learning in sixth forms (Training Agency. 1990).

- *rationales* and *premises* which underpin the existing ethos of the institution, its administration and organization;
- the *bureaucratic elements* of the institution;
- *roles* and *relationships* in the institution;
- the areas of *agreement* and *conflict or disagreement* in the institution;
- the nature of *collaboration* and *teamwork* in the institution;

Stage (ii): analysis of the causes of and background to these fields and situations, for example:

- the operation of power and decision making;
- the nature of the bureaucratic processes in the institution their facilitating and inhibiting potentials (ie the extent to which they serve communicative or strategic action);
- the operation, nature and extent of democratic procedures in the institution;
- the curricular (formal and hidden), managerial, organizational, interpersonal practices in the institution;
- the management of discussion, debate and conflict;

Stage (iii): setting an agenda to develop communicative action in terms of content, management, resource support and success criteria (the elements of a school development plan (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991)), identifying:

- the operation of bureaucratic processes in-enabling styles;



- the equalising of power in institutions;
- the furthering of democratic principles and processes in the institution;
- spheres of change (eg curricular, managerial, administrative, organizational, interpersonal — who and what has to change);
- the degree of involvement, ownership of and concern for the change, (eg the development of collaborative and teamwork aspects of the change in terms of content and process);
- the leadership of and tasks involved in the change;
- the management of dissensus;
- the areas in which the change can be trialled, where its sub-elements can be tried (ie the notion of divisibility), who might be involved;
- starting points, short term, medium term and long term aims.

Stage (iv): an evaluation of the achievement of the agenda — the criteria for which have been identified in stage (iii).

The substantive points in stages (i) to (iv) derive from a synthesis of issues outlined in chapters 10 - 12 and factors in change theory.<sup>285</sup> This also conforms to the spiral of action research (Hopkins, 1985) and reflective practice (Appendix G) which has been adopted by several writers in the field of a critical educational theory<sup>286</sup> as an appropriate methodology for embracing the form and content of

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<sup>285</sup> These derive from the work of Bennis, Benne and Chin (1961); Havelock (1973); Stenhouse (1975); Hoyle (1976); Miles (1975); Dalin (1978); Dalin and Rust (1983); Davis (1983); Nicholls (1983); Huberman and Miles (1984); Hall and Hord (1987); Morrison (1989d); Hargreaves (1989); Lieberman (1990); Fullan (1991); Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991); Dalin (1993).

<sup>286</sup> For example Carr and Kemmis (1986); Grundy (1987); Young (1989); Kincheloe (1991).

the development of personal and collective empowerment and the development of emancipatory curricula.

## 13.5 A Critique of the Thesis

This section is organised into two parts — (a) those issues which relate specifically to Habermas's work (13.5.1 - 13.5.3) and (b) those issues which relate to the chapters of the thesis which address the field of education (13.5.4 - 13.5.7).

### 13.5.1 The Limits on the Analysis of Habermas

Though care has been taken to ensure that Habermas's work has been fairly represented within the parameters set nevertheless one has to acknowledge that this cannot do justice to the close and encyclopaedic way in which Habermas argues through his sources. What has been taken from his works are the *key issues* of his *own* developing theories rather than the analysis which he provides of others' writings. There are dangers in this approach: problems of *selectivity* and *criteria* for judging Habermas's work. These two areas are discussed below.

### 13.5.2 The Problem of Selectivity

The potential threat to the validity of the argument in the thesis in adopting a selective reading of Habermas was recognised from chapter one. For example the criticism was put that Habermas does little more than offer a set of slogans which support a particular viewpoint or value system. Now, if one simply *selects in* supporting points and *excludes* the fine grain of his argument then, of course, one is left with little more than slogans, ie it is the writer of the thesis who is guilty of '*sloganizing*' rather than Habermas. Whilst this might be inevitable in attempting to digest and reduce the thousands of pages of Habermas's work the

selective reading of Habermas can be justified if:

(i) the argument fairly represents the key issues which Habermas is discussing;

(ii) it can be shown that the criticism of '*sloganizing*' is a fair criticism of Habermas's work;

With regard to (i) chapters 1 - 8 deliberately provided a panoramic yet synoptic view which was developed through his works, ie fidelity to his key points was shown through their repeated mention and development over more than two decades of his work. This was documented through the references and arguments provided.

With regard to (ii) it can be seen through these two decades of his work and within each of his major texts that he *repeatedly* uses the same form of words, terms, concepts, ideas and theories, ie that his work is characterised by the repetition of key terms. This was documented through the references provided. In one sense the charge of '*sloganizing*' might be unfair as it does not do justice to the careful argument which led to these, ie that his terms are less slogans than summary epithets which are used symbolically or as shorthand for a cluster of supporting issues and arguments. However the critiques raised through the first eight chapters demonstrated one of the essential properties of a slogan — that it is used un-self-critically. One of the main features of the several critiques was that Habermas did not apply to his own work the scrutiny and interrogation which he applied to others. Further, it was demonstrated that there were significant flaws in his works; the suggestion that his terms be used as slogans therefore might be to Habermas's advantage as a slogan conceals contradictions and problematical issues. The arrival at the charge of '*sloganism*', then, was justified through the analysis provided.

### 13.5.3 Criteria for Judging Habermas's Work

Several criteria to evaluate Habermas's work have been indicated throughout the thesis. These can be organized into *internal* and *external* criteria. For Habermas to meet *internal* criteria his work must demonstrate internal coherence, consistency, completeness; his success in these terms has been partial — the thesis has argued that, though his theory is complete, its elements are so internally consistent in substance and methodology that it is impenetrable and hermetically sealed. To meet *external* criteria his work must demonstrate not only the potential to explain comprehensively the phenomena that it purports to explain, but that, given the peculiar character of Critical Theory, it must be able to effect practice, to transform lived experiences. On both of these criteria doubts were expressed about the efficacy of his theory.

### 13.5.4 The Analysis of the Curriculum

In turning to the field of the curriculum this section of the thesis was justified as a testing ground for Habermas's work. Though such a justification was provided in the thesis however this raises problematical issues which have to be addressed: (a) the generalised use of terminology; (b) the limitations of the case study. These two areas are discussed below.

### 13.5.5 The Use of Terminology

This thesis has used terminology as though it were unproblematical, eg democracy, social justice, empowerment, emancipation, resistance, mediation, freedom, responsibility, authentication, high status knowledge etc. For example the concept of *democracy* is used here as if situations where there were conflicts of values simply

did not occur, where collisions of interests and ideologies were avoidable through communicative action; the thesis mentions representative and participatory democracies without indicating the several and very real problems which inhere in these interpretations. Similarly the term *social justice* is equated with equality of access and equality of outcome and that these serve the common good, it neglects the very powerful arguments which have been advanced for *inequality*, ie the interpretation here is ideologically loaded. The term *empowerment* operates from a relatively undifferentiated and open-ended view rather than a zero-sum model; though this is justified in the thesis nevertheless it is only one interpretation. The clarification of high and low status knowledge might require further justification than that provided by Young, Bernstein and Hargreaves. One could perform such an analysis of very many terms used in this thesis.

One can provide a twofold justification for the lack of interpretation of key terms in this thesis:

- *the literature which has been used here assumes an understanding of the ways in which the terms are used;*

It was stated in the thesis that one of the problematical areas of the work of Habermas and of educationists in this field (eg Giroux) is their assumption not only of a shared interpretation of key terms but a shared consensus to exclude other interpretations of key terms.<sup>287</sup> This is evidenced by the lack of explanation of key terms and by the suggestion in the thesis that the writers and readers in these fields were members of a cabal of *cognoscenti* whose immersion in the issues was such as to obviate the necessity for explanation and interpretations of key

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<sup>287</sup> This is scarcely surprising, perhaps, as rival translations of Habermas's work have not yet appeared. One could speculate that future translations (as, for example, of Freud) might cause further clarification to become necessary.

terms.<sup>288</sup> To do justice to the key writers in the fields one acts as they do, *viz.* by accepting the putative if unspoken interpretation of key terms, and neglecting the uncovering of the problematical aspects of these terms. This is evidence of the degree to which these terms carry strong ideological connotations for writers in these fields. This is a justification which is marked by contradiction, for it supports an intellectual élitism against which Critical Theory inveighs in its appeal to all elements of society. In this thesis the writer is as guilty of unspoken consensus as those writers whose work is critiqued in it. The appeal to the shorthand of assuming a given interpretation is open to question.

- *the issues which are raised do not require an extended analysis of different interpretations of specific words;*

Even if one were to accept that key terms were capable of several interpretations it might be immaterial to the argument of Habermas or indeed of critical educationists to unpack all of these interpretations, for the thrust of their message would be the same regardless of the minutiae of interpretation. This is especially so if the principles of the *ideal speech situation* were adopted as the touchstone for debate. (This is not to justify a neglect of interpretation. For example much of Giroux's writing is a polemical advocacy of *participatory* rather than *representative* democracy, regardless of how, in fact, this could possibly operate in large societies with necessary bureaucracies and a multiple division of labour; clearly it would be advantageous to have a more fully worked out analysis of these key interpretations). This last point is significant, for it was argued in the early chapters that some of the strength of Critical Theorists was their exhortatory appeal; an

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<sup>288</sup> This echoes Bernstein's (1971) view that those who have been schooled over a matter of several years are able to see a subject from the inside.

exhortation in practice seldom benefits from a convoluted examination of all its nuances, indeed the nature of an exhortation perhaps denies this.

Whilst this justification for generality has been offered it should not rule out an analytical examination of writers in this field. This thesis has attempted to provide definitions of key terms where they appear in the text (eg empowerment, emancipation, praxis, social justice) even though it leaves underdeveloped discussions of significant large ideas (eg democracy, freedom, responsibility), clearly another thesis might focus on further interpretations of these ideas.

### **13.5.6 The Limitations of the Case Study**

The parameters of the case study were carefully defined and justified in chapter 12. However it might be argued that the details of the National Curriculum and its elements were presented selectively — its denial of emancipatory potential, its coverage of the technical and hermeneutic interests, its use as an example of a bureaucratised curriculum, its socially reproductive rather than transformative potential, the differential status it accords to different areas of content, organization and pedagogy, its demonstration of strategic rather than communicative action, its instrumentalism, its limited potential for developing communicative competence. Further, the Gramscian principle of conservative schooling for radical politics (Entwistle, 1980) was understated (only being addressed in the notion of 'entitlement' to the National Curriculum). What is being suggested here is that the interpretation of the National Curriculum is driven by ideology, that it was only one reading of the situation; in that respect that is true — the commentary was deliberately Habermasian and took pains to stay within that perspective or paradigm. Further, the case study took care to provide evidence from an array

of sources, putting the case for and against the specific details of the National Curriculum through argument rather than polemic. In this respect, although the argument was paradigmatic, nevertheless it was faithful to the 'facts' of the case. Where prescription was offered it was from a Habermasian perspective.

A further issue is that insufficient justice was done to the literature on the core and foundation subjects and the cross-curricular issues, only the cross-curricular themes were the subject of extended analysis, ie that if a wider selection of literature about the National Curriculum and cross-curricular issues had been taken then a different interpretation might have ensued. In one respect this is true; the case study took only the *Curriculum Guidance* documents of the National Curriculum Council even though it justified this decision as an instance of documentation from the government in power. It might be argued that these are ideologically loaded and therefore are an easy target for ideology critique. So they are. However it was suggested that this was the very reason why they were chosen for extended focus, the selectivity of focus was deliberate in order to present a 'severe test' of Habermas's theories. Clearly a more developed analysis of content and pedagogy of the cross-curricular themes, drawing on a wider pool of literature and practice, might have provided an attenuation of the critique. That literature and practice was not available for the period of the National Curriculum under study.

### **3.5.7 Conclusion to the Critique**

Though this section has accepted that there are limitations to the analysis which has been performed in this thesis an attempt to justify these has been made. It has been argued above that in some cases the justification is sufficient. In other cases the justification has been accepted as limited and suggestions have



been made for further research beyond the bounds of this thesis (eg the analysis of key terms, certain aspects of the case study, the empirical testing of the thesis). What has been argued is that the thesis has set the grounds for empirical testing. That Habermas's views should have practical application in bringing collective empowerment and emancipation is a significant summary message of this thesis.

## 13.6 Implications for Future Research

The issue of developing personal and collective empowerment suggests an important avenue for further empirical research. This thesis has suggested that empowerment might take place through a reconsideration and implementation of aims, emancipatory models of the curriculum, content, pedagogy, evaluation, curriculum development and research (principally action research). Whether addressing these in the ways outlined above (chapter 11) *in fact* develops empowerment is an empirical question. This thesis has attempted to set out the field or focus of future empirical research, ie to prepare for an empirical investigation. Further, empirical research could usefully investigate teachers' constructions of empowerment, how and where they see it developing in schools — in terms of possibilities and actualities — and the extent to which they feel empowered or disempowered by the developments in the National Curriculum of England and Wales (chapter 12) or in other aspects of the curriculum. The foci, loci and degrees of empowerment could be matched with those outlined in chapters 10 - 12; this could be analysed from Habermasian perspectives to investigate how applicable his themes were in practice. Indeed one could undertake an investigation into the foci, ways and extent to which 'knowledgeable teachers' — those aware of Habermas's work — actually found his work empowering.

This thesis was critical of the originality of the contribution that Habermas's principles offered to an analysis of the curriculum. This suggests that an empirical investigation might be necessary to discover exactly and exclusively what his theories offer educationists in practice. It was argued in chapter 11 that the educational outcomes of Habermas's theories were often served better by other writers. That being so there is a case to be investigated for defining the fields (empirically and conceptually) in which Habermas's theories might be most applicable. For example, chapter 11 indicated the shortcomings in applying Habermas's theories to an accepted model of the curriculum (Skilbeck's model). Whilst this might suggest problems with Habermas's analysis one could speculate that the problem lay with the use of Skilbeck's model, and that alternative conceptions of the curriculum might be more conducive to Habermasian analysis. For example, a more *communicative* framework of curriculum discourse, and the interpersonal, psychological, personal, emotional and social aspects of curriculum discourse (including the formal and hidden curriculum, the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as transacted) might be a richer furrow to plough with Habermasian principles than those chosen in this thesis. That is an empirical question. Given that shortcomings were found in sociological, philosophical and 'traditional' curriculum-theoretic analyses of Habermas's work, there is a need to clarify the curriculum territories in which his work might be most applicable.<sup>289</sup> If one accepts Habermas's argument for communicative and aesthetic-expressive rationality then his work may be applicable in the development of these forms of rationality. That is an empirical question.

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<sup>289</sup> For example Young (1992) suggests that Habermas's work is particularly useful in an analysis of classroom talk. Lakomski (1987) sees Habermas's work as making a significant contribution to management theory.

The empirical field of Habermas's work is not confined to empowerment alone or to the fields of curriculum theory set out above, but spreads much wider to include, for example:

- the development of ideology critique in teachers and students;
- the paths to the emancipatory interest in schools;
- the realization of communicative action and the *ideal speech situation* in schools;
- the recoupling of lifeworld and system in schools.

All of these features have been discussed in the preceding chapters and set a wide agenda for empirical investigation (see also chapter 13.3).

The introduction of Habermasian principles into education is a call to move in the opposite direction from that which teachers are being driven down by forces out of their control, for Habermasian principles resist negative bureaucracies and disempowerment. The struggle for empowerment is not easy or straightforward. However, as indicated earlier, even the most forbidding circumstances contain possibilities for emancipation. Clinging to that possibility offers a hope for the realization of a just, free and egalitarian society.

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## Appendix A

### The Cultural Capital Thesis

The cultural capital thesis derives from the work of Bourdieu. It states that whilst schools formally offer equality of opportunity to all pupils to take up high status knowledge, there are differential *outcomes* to this process, dependent on the backgrounds of children (Bourdieu, 1976, 1977; Bernstein 1977). Some children will have the background cultural and linguistic capital and 'habitus' — the necessary 'dispositions' and positive attitudes to school, motivations to learning, parental support for education, social advantage, ease in dealing with authority figures, high culture — so that when they meet school knowledge they can engage it comfortably and take advantage of it (cf Wells, 1986; Tizard *et al*, 1988). For other children school knowledge represents an alien culture and methodology such that they cannot engage it as easily and hence are disadvantaged. For them the 'hegemonic academic curriculum' produces a culture shock.

With reference to the National Curriculum, whilst formal equality of opportunity is enshrined in the National Curriculum's view of 'entitlement' it produces unequal outcomes as children do not start the educational race from the same starting line. Schools are not ideologically innocent (Giroux, 1989, p. 134), the knowledge that they treat confirms a dominant controlling culture and disconfirms subordinate cultures:

Those students who represent cultural forms that might rely on 'restricted' linguistic codes, working class or oppositional modes of dress..., who downplay the ethos of individualism, who espouse a form of solidarity, or who reject those forms of academic knowledge that embody particular versions of history, social science, and success at odds with their own cultural experiences and norms, often find themselves excluded from the reward systems of schools as well as the larger society. What is important to remember here is that the dominant school culture functions not only to

legitimate the interests and values of dominant groups, it also functions to marginalize and disconfirm knowledge forms and experiences that are extremely important to subordinate and oppressed groups (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986 p. 47).

The cultural capital thesis identifies the limitations of the liberal view that school knowledge, albeit ostensibly open to all, will reduce inequality. In Habermasian terms the effects of the cultural capital thesis are to highlight the perlocutionary effects of a high status academic curriculum even if its purposes (and access to it) are illocutionary.

Bourdieu's argument is supported by the implications of the research of Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) a decade ago. In this they demonstrated that, though the grammar schools offered the opportunity to working class children to gain an academic curriculum, because this curriculum was already on offer to the middle classes the effect was to raise educational advantage proportionately across the social spectrum. A middle class child would still remain more privileged than the working class child even though the working class child had had access to a privileging curriculum. Both strata of society raised their level of advantage but this did not upset the relative, superordinate position of the middle classes. The few working class children who did succeed in breaking out of their class confines were enough to convince the remainder that the system was equitable but not enough to upset significantly the social stratification of society. The same argument applies here; a curriculum which in principle is on offer to all strata of society will have the effect of reproducing the *status quo*, also adopting the 'cooling out' mechanism of social reproduction in enabling a small proportion of working class pupils to achieve highly but not in sufficient numbers to upset the *status quo*.

Halsey (1992) charts the existence of the cultural capital thesis in higher ed-

ucation, whilst Bowe *et al* (1992) argue that market competition and open enrolments into schools will see schools competing to attract 'students bearing cultural capital' as they 'look like good long-term investments' (Bowe *et al*, (1992) p. 53).

Apple reiterates the cultural capital thesis in his view that:

the granting of sole legitimacy to such a system of [academic] culture through its incorporation within the official centralized curriculum, then, creates a situation in which the markers of taste become the markers of people. The school becomes a class school (Apple, 1993, p. 223).

However, one cannot assume too tight a fit between school and society. This forms the basis of Aronowitz's and Giroux's critique of theories of cultural reproduction (Aronowitz and Giroux, 19856 chapter 5). They critique Bourdieu's views on a variety of fronts (*ibid.*, pp. 83 - 87), arguing that he:

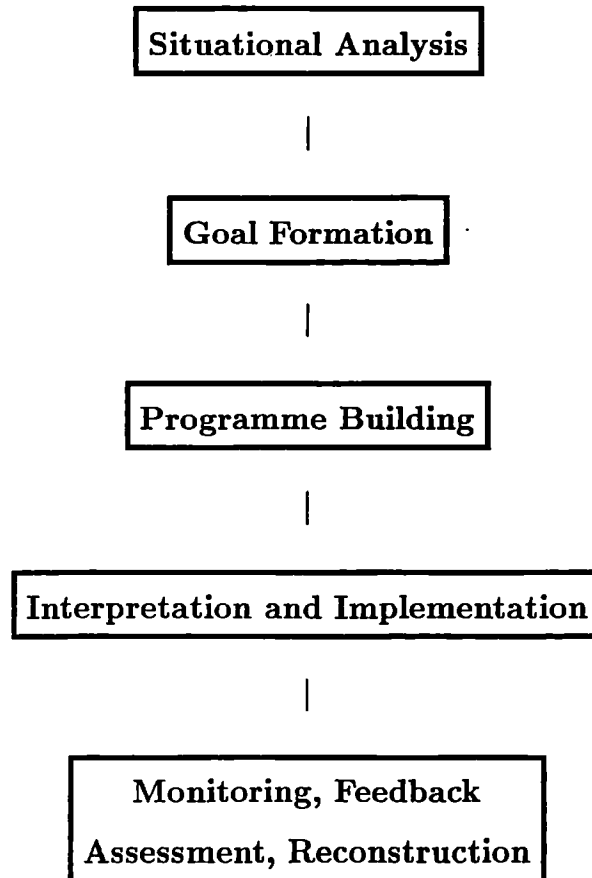
- operates from a mechanistic view of power and domination;
- regards human agency as too overdetermined;
- is too accepting of the logic of domination;
- neglects the notions of resistance and contestation;
- assumes that working class capital is merely a pale reflection of dominant cultural capital;
- collapses the notions of culture and class;
- accords homogeneity to classes;
- neglects the mediating effects of race, gender and class on culture;
- neglects to link domination with economic forces.

Despite these reservations the work of Halsey and Bourdieu indicates that the cultural capital thesis is an empirical reality.

## Appendix B

### Skilbeck's Curriculum Development Model

Source: Skilbeck (1976a)



Skilbeck argues that the elements can be addressed in any sequence and that they enable outside-school and within-school factors to be represented in the curriculum.

## Appendix C

### Freire's *Método Paulo Freire*

Freire has been practising his *Método Paulo Freire* for over a quarter of a century and it has received international acclaim in raising standards of literacy and political consciousness amongst disadvantaged groups in society, principally in Brazil. Freire teaches literacy so that the Brazilian disempowered can understand and critique the ideological forces which maintain their oppression and legitimize the *status quo*, ie to develop an insight into cultural hegemony. He argues that dialogue cannot exist unless it involves critical thinking (Freire, 1972). Taylor (1993) indicates how Freire's work establishes a link between individual and collective emancipation, outlining a five point rationale of Freire's *Método Paulo Freire* to increase literacy:

- (i) The individual deprived of Dialogue is oppressed;
- (ii) Dialogue is the Process and Practice of liberation;
- (iii) The individual engaged in Dialogue is liberated;
- (iv) Dialogue, by definition, requires more than one person;
- (v) More than one person can be called a society (Taylor, 1993, p. 59).

Freire's method requires learners to move from *naming* (what is the problem?) to *reflection* (why is this the case?) and onwards to *action* (what can be done about it?).<sup>290</sup> His students generate key words which are then used as the basis for phonic

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<sup>290</sup> Smyth (1989d) echoes this in his suggestions for description, information, confrontation and reconstruction outlined earlier, and Habermas's (1972) work suggests a similar sequence in the process of rational reconstruction.

word-attack skills; the key words reflect the learners' own situations — for example, 'slum', 'rain', 'plough', 'hoe', 'land', 'food', 'wealth', 'brick' (Taylor, 1993, p. 75). Reading thereby is meaningful. These words derive from the everyday experiences and life of the Brazilian groups with whom his method is used, principally peasant groups, they are 'strong on reality'.

Freire's work, however, has been seen as problematical (Taylor, 1993). Taylor sums up a range of criticisms of Freire:

(i) he fails to define the oppressed and the oppressors;

(ii) his 'generative words' appear to be remarkably similar despite being generated in different parts of Brazil, indicating the possibility of strong teacher direction or even manipulation. Teachers, therefore, are operating instrumentally, inflexibly and mechanistically;

(iii) his generative words are all nouns, no prepositions, verbs or adjectives — 'naming the word does not and cannot mean inventing, creating the world' (Taylor, 1993, p. 80), ie Freire's method is contradictory as it does not allow praxis, his nouns overlook the significance of relationships;

(iv) he sees the literate person as one who can read, neglecting the importance of writing: 'If I can read I can follow what you want to say to me. But if I can write, you can read what I want to say to you....Reading is the currency of Banking Education, Writing is the currency of Dialogue. The former creates imitation, the latter innovation' (Taylor, 1993, p. 146). 'Reading enables the student to conform to the world, writing to transform it' (ibid., p. 129);

(v) Freire, in celebrating the culture of the book, is guilty of 'cultural invasion'



and assimilationist practices. He removes one form of indoctrination only to replace it with another;

(vi) his pictorial examples do not indicate *dialogue* and partnership but strong teacher direction and control — the teacher is active and the students sit passively facing the teacher.

Hence, though Freire's work does have palpable worth in raising critical consciousness, the extent to which this is derived or prescribed, cultural representation or cultural imperialism, is a moot point.

## Appendix D

### Smyth's (1987a, 1989a) Questions in Critical Pedagogy

Smyth (1987a, 1989a) suggests that it is possible to generate a critical consciousness through content and pedagogy by interrogating curriculum content, following a line of questioning which focuses on understanding, a questioning of legitimacy and the setting of an agenda for action. He outlines a series of questions in this respect:

- What do my practices say about my assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching?
- Where did these ideas come from?
- How did I come to appropriate them?
- Why do I continue to endorse them now in my work?
- What social practices are expressed in these ideas?
- What is it that causes me to maintain my theories?
- What views of power do they embody?
- Whose interests seem to be served by my practices?
- What power relationships are involved?
- How do these ideas influence my relationships with my students?
- What is it that acts to constrain my views of what is possible in teaching?

- In the light of what I have discovered, how might I work differently?

Smyth (1989a) regards teaching as the antithesis of an apolitical, ahistorical, atheoretical activity. These questions, he argues, cast education and teaching as a political activity. Clearly these questions resonate with the process of rational reconstruction which Habermas (1972, p. 230) outlined in his references to Freudian psychoanalysis: describing, interpreting, giving reasons for the current state of the patient's neurosis in terms of repression, analysing the legitimacy of repressive forces and setting an agenda for altering the situation.

## Appendix E

### Gore's and Bowers' Critique of Giroux's Critical Pedagogy

Giroux's work, though of international standing, is not to be accepted uncritically. One can discern in the work of Giroux the same weakness as that which was demonstrated in the work of Habermas (chapter 8), *viz.* that his work is exhortatory and replete with repeated slogans to the detriment of specific detail. Gore (1993) criticizes Giroux's work as offering only outline features of a critical pedagogy, she argues that Giroux 'provides no sense of his own attempts to implement the critical pedagogy he espouses' (Gore (1993, p. 38). Indeed she suggests that Giroux's work is less about critical pedagogy and more about a 'critical educational theory' (*ibid.*, p. 42). She contrasts this with the work of Freire, which indicates specific pedagogical practices for specific contexts (*ibid.*, p. 17).

Gore's critique of Giroux and McLaren (a writer in a similar vein to Giroux) is significant, writing that:

there are few references in their writings to their own teaching or to 'testing out' their theories of critical pedagogy. To what extent has their political and theoretical project been shifted by their location in a small, predominantly white, middle / upper class university? (*ibid.*, p. 112).

Further, she takes issue with the crude bi-polarity of Giroux's conception of human groups (*ibid.*, p. 95), *either* empowered *or* powerless, *either* silenced *or* legitimated, paralleling the Marxian conception of a two class society (see also Bowers, 1991). What is missing from the work of Giroux is any detailed guidance on how to *manage* disagreement (how to operate the *ideal speech situation*), how to move to communicative action. Giroux has generated a set of highly charged

clichés which are met repeatedly in his works, for example: *emancipation, domination, civic courage, pedagogy of empowerment, resistance, interrogate, discourse of possibility.*

Bowers (1991) argues that Giroux must contextualise his terms so that it is actually possible to see what can take place in classrooms for emancipation to occur. Not only has Giroux 'turned the metaphor of emancipation into an empty abstraction' (ibid., p. 244) but Giroux (and McLaren) 'transform the problem of emancipation, which is seldom the exercise in binary thinking that they represent it to be, into a banal and empty rhetoric' (ibid., p. 244). In Habermasian terms their language needs to become more dialogical, more located in given and examined lifeworlds, more contextualised. For Bowers (1991), Giroux's work is ultimately too anthropocentric in an age characterised by ecological crisis and talk of biodiversity. It is too individualistic for an era in which ecology and interdependence have to include all forms of life on the planet. Participatory democracy and the appeal to collective political reforms, therefore, must consider a much wider view of interdependence than Giroux adopts.

## Appendix F

### MacDonald's Debates with Evaluation Sponsors

MacDonald's five year arguments with the sponsors of the National Development program in Computer Assisted Learning exposed six main issues in democratic evaluation (Simons, 1987, pp. 47 - 8) which show how communicative action ultimately succeeded over strategic action:

(i) there were arguments about the model of evaluation — an assessment of the achievement of objectives or a portrayal — an argument which the evaluators had to win if they were to keep their independence and autonomy;

(ii) there were disagreements about the purpose and powers of the evaluators — the sponsors wanting the evaluation to make recommendations about which projects should be terminated and which supported, with the evaluation team disclaiming this as part of their task; the sponsors would have to read the reports and make up their own minds, the evaluators were simply to act as brokers of information;

(iii) there were arguments about the secrecy of the report, the sponsors wanting secret information (ie information beyond that contained in the report that would be received by a wide audience), and the evaluators rejecting this;

(iv) there were disagreements about the form of reporting and its consequences (the sponsors wanting summaries and the evaluators rejecting this on the grounds that it would do violence to the complexity and idiography of the situations being evaluated);

(v) there were disagreements about whom should be evaluated — the sponsors not wishing to be evaluated and the evaluators arguing that they were part of the whole field of the evaluation and therefore had to be evaluated;

(vi) there were disagreements about the control of the evaluators — the sponsors arguing that the evaluators were being paid to perform a service (to do as they were told) and the evaluators arguing that payments only bought a service, not a privileged exemption from focus, that evaluation was democratic and could not be bought but only sponsored.

MacDonald was arguing for an evaluation to be disinterested, a genuinely democratic process, avoiding serving the powers of the sponsors. That it took five years for the evaluators' agenda to be accepted is an indication of the potency of strategic action and the patience needed to break it by communicative action.

## Appendix G

### Dewey, Habermas and Reflective Practice

This appendix extracts a little material from the main thesis (eg parts of chapter 5, 6, and 13 to bring them to bear on a new area of reflective practice).

The difficulty with the notion of 'reflective practice' is that, as it has become popularised in the last decade, so it has become increasingly diverse. At present it is difficult to distinguish what is and what is not reflective practice as the term has become a *conceptual* and *methodological* umbrella. *Conceptually* it has come to embrace action research (Stenhouse, 1975; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Grundy, 1987), professional development (Van Manen, 1977; Prawat, 1991), the linking of theory and practice (Schön, 1983; 1987; Morrison and Ridley, 1988; Pollard and Tann, 1993), how we think (Dewey, 1933, 1938), teacher empowerment (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Prawat, 1991; Kincheloe, 1991), pedagogy and language (Young, 1989, 1990, 1992), social and political emancipation (Habermas, 1972, 1974; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Smyth, 1991) and any action which improves the quality of teaching and learning (Ashton *et al*, 1980; Moyles, 1988).

*Methodologically* it has come to embrace small scale, local, institutional interpersonal and intrapersonal initiatives, problem-solving approaches, the action-research cycle (Stenhouse, 1975, 1983; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981; Hopkins, 1985;), deliberative approaches to the curriculum and teaching (Reid, 1978; Schön, 1983, 1987), any form of enquiry into the theoretical bases of practice or the translation of theory into practice which requires teacher commitment and an openness to change (Dewey, 1933, 1938; Smyth, 1991; Kincheloe, 1991; Pollard and Tann,



1993). It is a term that has suffered from its own popularity such that any attempt by teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning becomes labelled reflective practice. The distinctive features of reflective practice have been lost.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is the term confined to classroom practice. It has been applied to a consideration of aims, planning, content, organization, resources, assessment, evaluation, development and innovation, in short to the whole gamut of the curriculum (Morrison and Ridley, 1988; Pollard and Tann, 1993). It has been seen to be a pre-requisite of teachers' professionalism (Schön, 1987; Calderhead, 1988), requiring abilities to plan, implement and evaluate which, in turn require empirical, analytical and evaluative competencies (Pollard and Tann, 1993). Indeed it has become included as part of a political project for societal emancipation (Smyth, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1991).

This appendix attempts to disentangle the several strands of reflective practice in three ways. Firstly it will 'go back to first principles' and re-examine Dewey's (1933) seminal work on reflective practice. Secondly it will update the analysis by comparing Dewey's work with Habermas's *knowledge-constitutive interests* (Habermas, 1972, 1974) and his concept of the *ideal speech situation* (Habermas, 1979a). It will define three types of reflective practice and indicate their location in Habermas's schemata of *knowledge-constitutive interests*, the *ideal speech situation* and collective emancipation in *communicative action* (Habermas, 1984, 1987a). In doing so it will suggest that reflective practice is 'interested', ie that it serves a political agenda. Finally it will be argued that there are several similarities between Dewey and Habermas, that the differences between the two stem from their starting points and purposes — Dewey was concerned to expose 'how we think' (sic) whilst Habermas has a clear political agenda — and that, whilst Habermas's

work has exhortatory appeal, Dewey's work is, in practice, more likely to achieve the aims of reflective practice (even of Habermas's reflective practice) because it concerns situated activity and realistic proposals.

## Dewey and Reflective Practice

Dewey (1933) provides a very full account of reflective practice, arguing that

*reflective* thinking, in distinction from other operations to which we apply the name of thought, involves (1) a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity' (Dewey, 1933, p. 12).

Thinking, he avers, 'begins in what may fairly enough be called a *forked-road* situation, a situation that is ambiguous' (p. 14).

Dewey roots his notion of reflective thinking in a problem-based approach which strives for resolution, for homeostasis, consensus: 'the aim and outcome of thinking...is the transformation of a *dubious* and perplexing situation into a *settled*, or determinate one' (p. 95). The problems are *real* rather than contrived or imagined ('thinking arises out of a directly experienced situation' (p. 99) wherein 'the moment he [the reflective practitioner] begins to reflect, he [sic] begins of necessity to observe in order to take stock of conditions' (p. 102)) and the solutions are to be practicable:

Data (facts) and ideas (suggestions, possible solutions) thus form the two indispensable and correlative factors of all reflective activity. The two factors are carried on by means respectively of *observation*...and *inference*. The latter...relates, therefore, to what is *possible*, rather than to what is *actual* .... [W]hat is inferred demands a double test: first, the process of forming the idea or supposed solution is checked by constant cross reference to the conditions observed to be actually present; secondly, the idea *after* it is formed is tested by *acting* upon it (Dewey, 1933, p. 104).

Dewey is explicit on practicability, then, arguing that 'proving is testing' (p. 96) and that 'what is important is that every inference be a tested inference'

(p. 97). He argues that reflective practitioners have to exercise their judgement in choosing between alternative solutions, and that this judgement needs to weigh the evidence, the warrants of the elements (p. 119). Reflective practice, for Dewey, has five phases<sup>2</sup> or aspects which can be addressed in any sequence (p. 115):

(1) *suggestions*, in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution; (2) an intellectualization of the difficulty or perplexity that has been *felt* (directly experienced) into a *problem* to be solved, a question for which the answer must be sought; (3) the use of one suggestion after another as a leading idea, or *hypothesis*, to initiate and guide observation and other operations in collection of factual material; (4) the mental elaboration of the idea or supposition as an idea or supposition (*reasoning*, in the sense in which reasoning is a part, not the whole, of inference); and (5) testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action (Dewey, 1933, p. 107).

The involvement of the reflective practitioner, in Dewey's view, is not only an intellectual, cerebral activity, but an activity which involves the whole person, requiring the emotional involvement of the practitioner. For example he writes that 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitute reflective thought' (ibid., p. 9). He argues that there are three constitutive attitudes required for effective reflective practice: *open-mindedness* ('freedom from prejudice, partisanship, and such other habits as close the mind and make it unwilling to consider the problems and entertain new ideas' (p. 30)); *whole-heartedness* ('absorbed interest' (p. 33)); *responsibility* ('to carry something through to completion' (p. 33)). These, he argues 'are themselves personal qualities, traits of character' (p. 33). Indeed he argues that at the *forked road* situation the decision to 'face the situations' (p. 102) fully, frontally, rather than to 'abandon the suspense of judgement and intellectual search' (p. 16) requires a degree of personal commitment.

In summary, then, one can suggest key features of Dewey's notions of reflective

practice:

- it is problem based, rooted in 'real' problems;
- it is situated activity, context bound;
- it seeks a resolution to ambiguous situations, it seeks settlement;
- it involves an open-ended and open-minded search for solution;
- it explores possibilities and requires the exercise of judgement in deciding which of those possibilities is worth pursuing or accepting;
- it requires problems to be empirically operationalizable and soluble;
- it projects forward anticipated solutions to problems which are then to be tested in practice;
- it requires the personal commitment of the practitioner.

### **Habermas and Reflective Practice**

Habermas's early work (1972) suggests that knowledge and reflective practice are not neutral but that they serve a range of interests and power structures in society. His critical theory, like that of the Frankfurt School in general, is explicitly normative, prescribing a view that society *ought* to be based on equality, freedom, democracy, autonomy, collective empowerment and 'generalizable interests'.<sup>3</sup> It will be argued that reflective practice can serve this view of society, discussed in terms of the intentions, operations and effects of reflective practice.

Habermas justifies his normative theory by the principles of the *ideal speech situation* (1976, 1979) (see chapter 6.8 of this thesis).- Hence the process of reflective

practice is to render understanding and practices comprehensible, true, legitimate and sincere and to bring about equality, freedom, justice, generalizable interests, autonomy, emancipation and empowerment.

In seeking a rational warrant for claims and practices Habermas's view resonates with Dewey where Dewey writes that:

[r]eflection...commences when we begin to inquire into the reliability, the worth of any particular indication .... Reflection thus implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as *ground of belief* (Dewey, 1933, p. 11).

Habermas's *communicative action* (Habermas, 1979a, 1984) requires a rational warrant for claims and is illocutionary, it strives for a rational and warranted consensus on practices, it is an open-ended inquiry into situations and circumstances — a clear sympathy with reflective practice. *Strategic action*, on the other hand, is perlocutionary and instrumental in reaching prescribed and deliberate ends; it defines a closed, technical form of reflection. Whilst *communicative action* — domination-free communication — is emancipatory, strategic action reproduces existing power differentials in society. Hence using Habermas's principles to underpin a conceptualisation of reflective practice suggests that reflective practice can link to a wider political agenda of teacher empowerment.

Habermas roots his analysis of reflective practice in Freudian psychoanalysis (Habermas, 1974a, pp. 25 - 32), using this as an analogy for the development of societal health, in particular the value he accords to the power of self-reflection as a tool of emancipation — 'depth hermeneutics' (Habermas, 1972, p. 218), knowledge of oneself which has become inaccessible to oneself through repression (ibid., p. 217).<sup>4</sup> Habermas's use of Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that a patient will engage in self-reflection and that such reflection has emancipatory power

(Habermas, 1972, p. 197) as it exposes the repressive forces which have induced false consciousness and hence the neurosis (p. 208). Habermas sets great store by reflection; for him 'self-reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence' (p. 208).

In the process of self-reflection the neurotic is facilitated by the analyst to perceive the latent, repressed experiences which have given rise to the present neurotic condition, just as a social group suffering from ideological distortion will have to see through the sources of that distortion. The analyst is cast in a therapeutic mode — a 'reflective participant' (Habermas, 1988, p. 93). This might be perfectly acceptable in psychoanalytic theory but it creates many problems in macro-sociological theory — eg the notion that society can be changed by a process akin to psychoanalysis *writ large*. Patients, through self-reflection, will be involved in identifying the factors which have distorted their psyche and hence their functioning as fully-fledged individuals in control of their own lives. This involves:

(a) a *hermeneutic* element — where the patient comes to reconstruct (Habermas, 1972, p. 230), understand and interpret previous experiences;

(b) a *positivistic* element — where the analyst helps the patient to comprehend the significance of experiences by making nomothetic constructions of them;

(c) a *critical* element — where the patient reflects on the factors which have led to the distortion and repression (ibid. p. 231) in the psyche and which are subject to critical scrutiny in an attempt to dissolve their capacity to distort.

This process of reflexive analysis with the assistance of the analyst brings about self-awareness in patients, an understanding of the constraining elements on

their lives, and the disempowering of those factors to exert any further pressure to distort (cf Habermas, 1962). The progress, then, is from neurosis to emancipation. The self-aware individual, having clarified the causes of the oppression or repression, bringing them back to consciousness and reflecting on them, achieves the state of being able to break free of her / his oppressive ties: 'through ... psychoanalysis, as interpreted in terms of communication theory, the two procedures of reconstruction and of self-critique can...be brought together within the framework of one and the same theory' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 300). This is the process of *rational reconstruction* — the partner to self-reflection (cf Habermas, 1987b, p. 300). Habermas asserts that there is a symbiosis of self-understanding and liberation, the movement is from unfreedom to freedom.

The strengths of this analysis are twofold. *Firstly* it accords responsibility for the condition and its solution to the patient — it 'demands moral responsibility for the content of the illness' (Habermas, 1972 p. 235) — a fitting model for an analogy of society premised on participatory democracy (see also Lukes, 1982, p. 137), however illusory this may be in reality. Indeed Habermas writes that 'truth must converge with authenticity — in other words, the patient himself is the final authority' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 29). *Secondly* Habermas (1974a) (and Freud) acknowledge that it is society, institutions and pressures which can cause the repression in the individual's psyche (ibid. p. 29). The role of psychoanalysis in Habermas, though largely of analogical value, also identifies the significance of *systematically distorted communication* (Habermas, 1970a), where external structural — system wide — societal constraints and repressions reach right into the individual psyche.

As an analogy for the projected progress of societies from ideological oppres-

sion to self-control the importation of Freudian analysis has considerable exhortatory and symbolic significance. Just as ideology distorts the realization of the 'real' interests (Geuss, 1981) of social groups, bringing to their awareness the power of ideological oppression, so rational reconstruction sets the scene for the restoration of the health of that society which, in Habermas's terms, is founded on the principles of social justice — democracy, equality, and the generalizability of interests. In Habermas's view the progress towards societal emancipation involves self understanding writ large. A four-stage process for this to occur can be derived from Habermas (1972, p. 230):<sup>5</sup>

- (i) a description and interpretation of the existing situation;
- (ii) a penetration of the reasons which brought the existing situation to the form that it takes and an evaluation of their legitimacy and acceptability;
- (iii) setting an agenda for altering the situation (if that is appropriate);
- (iv) an evaluation of the achievement of the agenda in practice.

This clearly resonates with Dewey's (1933) five-phase approach to reflective practice outlined earlier and maps on to the criteria for *communicative action* and the *ideal speech situation* outlined by Habermas (1976a; 1979a; 1984). Stage (i) addresses his notion of the *comprehensibility* of a speech situation; stage (ii) addresses his notions of the *sincerity, legitimacy, authenticity* and *acceptability* of a speech situation; stage (iii) addresses his notion of the *truth* of a speech act; stage (iv) uses the criteria of the previous three stages to evaluate the extent to which emancipation has been achieved — the extent to which the conditions of ideal speech and *communicative action* have been realized in practice (see also chapter 13 of this thesis).



**Stage (i):** *A description and interpretation of the existing situation.*

This can be seen as a hermeneutic exercise which not only identifies the current practices which obtain in the situation or circumstances under investigation but attempts to make sense of them. ...

**Stage (ii):** *A penetration of the reasons which brought the existing situation to the form that it takes.*

In this stage social enquiry will look for causes and purposes of the situation and an evaluation of their legitimacy (see chapter 13 of this thesis). This stage of the process not only requires rational interrogation of causes and contexts of and backgrounds to existing situations but requires the analysis to be undertaken widely and deeply if content validity is to be preserved. Reflective practice which deals only at the intersubjective and interactional levels, whilst it has the attraction of microsociological enquiry, neglects the wider sociocultural, economic, political, historical, systemic and structural forces and constraints which have brought about the existing situation (an analysis of the operation of Habermas's *steering media* of society) (Habermas, 1984, 1987a). A full analysis, then would require attention to micro and macro forces which were operating on a situation. This is premised on the view that 'reality' is multi-layered and can be interpreted at several levels (Pollard, 1985, p. 110).

**Stage (iii):** *An agenda for altering the situation.*

Having identified areas where ideology critique, the movement towards social justice and rational reconstruction might take place an agenda for action is prepared (see chapter 13 of this thesis)....

**Stage (iv):** *An evaluation of the achievement of that agenda in practice.*

This evaluates the value of changes in practice, praxis, attitude, belief and behaviour (individual and group) and the systems and mechanisms which support those; this is the touchstone of a critical theory — transformative and transformed practice. Habermas (1974a) summarizes the retrospective and prospective elements of reflective practice where he writes that:

the mediation of theory and praxis can only be clarified if to begin with we distinguish three functions...the formation and extension of critical theorems which can stand up to scientific discourse; the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested in a unique manner by the initiation of processes of reflection carried on within certain groups toward which these processes have been directed; and the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of the political struggle (Habermas, 1974a. p. 32).

Having outlined the views of Dewey and Habermas on reflective practice the remainder of this appendix will set out Habermas's threefold schema of knowledge-constitutive interests and indicate their similarities and differences with Dewey's analysis of reflective practice. Finally, the conclusion will make some evaluative comments on the merits of the two approaches to reflective practice.

### **Three Types of Reflective Practice**

This section derives a schema of three types of reflective practice from Habermas's *knowledge-constitutive interests* and his *ideal speech situation*. It argues that Habermas's technical knowledge-constitutive interest is an example of strategic action in *intent* and that this leads to technical reflective practice; that his hermeneutic interest is an example of strategic action in its *effects* and that this leads to hermeneutic reflective practice; that his emancipatory interest is communicative in its *intents, processes and effects* and is premised on the *ideal speech situation*, but whether it is actually operable is questionable.

## Technical Reflective Practice

Habermas (1972, p. 47, 56) argues that the 'technical' knowledge-constitutive interest, characteristic of the empirical-analytic sciences, has a fundamental interest in predicting and controlling the environment (however defined) through the establishing of efficient and effective rules of procedure (see chapter 4.3.2 of this thesis). This resonates with Dewey's (1933) view that thinking is teleological, it 'makes possible action with a conscious aim' (p. 17), it 'makes possible systematic preparations and inventions' (p. 18) and these 'two values mentioned are of a practical sort; they give increased power of *control* (p. 21). This has a clear affinity to the positivism of the natural sciences which, in turn, has a clear affinity to behaviourism.

The intentions of 'technical reflective practice' are to render more efficient the existing situation rather than to transform it. In this type of reflective practice teachers seek to improve their technical skills in teaching, essentially a practical activity which develops their 'craft of the classroom'. It comprises reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987) and 'reflection-on-action' but without the necessity for any theoretical underpinning. It asks what can be done to improve teaching and learning rather than what are the principles behind it. It concerns reflecting on practice from the basis of practice — 'technical skills of day-to-day practice' (Schön, 1987, p. 9). Such an approach can be seen in the *Curriculum in Action* (Ashton *et al* (1980) approach to reflective practice which asks six questions:

- What did the pupils actually do?
- What were they learning?
- How worthwhile was it?

- What did I do?
- What did I learn?
- What do I intend to do now?

It can be seen in these questions, designed for self-evaluation, that the intention is to improve practice through the application of improved practical techniques, replacing one set of routines with another (cf Dewey's (1933, p. 17) distinction between routine and reflective action), a pragmatic and instrumental rather than principled justification which often concerns itself with low-level details of practice. It is an example of Habermas's 'strategic action' (Habermas, 1979, 1984). It is atheoretical and is evidenced in the competencies model of the professional preparation of teachers (cf Moyles's (1988) questions for teacher self-evaluation).

Though, in its effects, it may improve everyday practice this view of reflective practice has all the dangers of a competencies model, eg its behaviourism, its trivialisation of teaching, its narrowing of teachers' behaviours, its reduction of teaching to the performance of trained behaviours. Moreover the technical interest in prediction and control is a very suspect model for reflective education, which is marked by openness rather than closure, activity rather than passivity, developed interpersonal relations rather than a freezing of relationships: '[t]echnical rationality rests on an *objectivist* view of the relation of the knowing practitioner to the reality he knows...professional knowledge rests on a foundation of facts' (Schön, 1987, p. 36). The effects of this approach to reflective practice are to sustain the existing classroom order and practices and to render them more efficient rather than to understand or to transform them. It assumes that the existing order is legitimate and does not question that legitimacy. Moreover, this view of reflective

practice is essentially isolationist and monological, it can be undertaken by an individual teacher without impinging on, or being informed by, other teachers. This is a model which sits uncomfortably with a collegial view of practice.

### **Hermeneutic Reflective Practice**

Habermas (1972, pp. 50-1) argues that the hermeneutic knowledge-constitutive interest (see chapter 4.3.3 of this thesis), characteristic of the historical-hermeneutic sciences, has a fundamental interest in clarifying, understanding and interpreting meanings, intentions, actions and communications of 'speaking and acting subjects' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 8) and has a strong affinity to Weber's concept of *Verstehen*. It strives for consensus and a 'fusion of horizons' between participants (a term which Habermas borrows from Gadamer (1975)). In this model the reflective practitioner will seek to make sense of situations, to understand them, by engaging the theoretical underpinnings of the practices. Unlike the previous model this concerns reflecting on practice from the basis of theory. This is by far the most widely used view of reflective practice (eg Schön, 1983, 1987; Morrison and Ridley, 1988; Van Manen 1977; Pollard and Tann, 1993). It shifts reflective practice from technical craft knowledge to artistry, an applied science (Schön, 1987, p. 9): 'artistry is an exercise of intelligence.... There are an art of problem framing, an art of implementation, and an art of improvisation — all necessary to mediate the use in practice of applied science and technique' (ibid., p. 13).

Here the reflective practitioner becomes a connoisseur (Eisner, 1985) by seeking the theoretical underpinnings of practice, subjecting them to 'criticism' and 'disclosing' them to others (Eisner, 1985). Eisner argues that 'if connoisseurship is the art of experience, criticism is the art of disclosure' (Eisner, 1985, p. 92).

Connoisseurship, he argues, is private whereas criticism is public (p. 93). This resonates with Dewey's view that 'the end of criticism is the re-education of the perception' (Dewey, 1934, p. 324). Indeed Dewey (1933) inveighs against the person who is not 'sufficiently *critical* about the ideas that occur to him' (Dewey, 1933, p. 16).

There are four main strengths to this approach. *Firstly*, in its appeal to *understanding* this approach values theory and the explicit link between theory and practice. *Secondly*, building on Eisner's notion of disclosure, it replaces the monological practice of the technical interest with a dialogical process, building collegiality and underlining the importance of collective practice as a pathway to teacher empowerment. It *requires* practitioners to engage in debate and discussion with each other and *requires* that debate to be informed. It recognises that reflective practice must focus on interpersonal factors, must be made public and must be disseminated. This resonates with Habermas's (1976a, 1979a, 1984, 1987a, 1987b) concept of the *ideal speech situation* which includes features such as 'only the unforced force of the better argument comes into play' (Habermas, 1987b, p. 130), the 'unconstrained, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech' (Habermas, 1984, p. 110), freedom to: modify a given conceptual framework; check questionable claims; reflect on the nature of knowledge; assess justifications; alter norms; evaluate explanations; participate in a discussion as an equal. *Thirdly*, it respects teachers' professional, informed judgement, it requires practice to be principled and thoughtful. *Fourthly*, it replaces the passivity of the technical model with an active constructive approach to teaching, echoing Schön's (1987) suggestion that '[u]nderlying this view...is a *constructionist* view of the reality with which the practitioner deals — a view that leads us to see the practitioner as constructing

situations of his practice, not only in the exercise of professional artistry but also in all other modes of professional competence' (p. 36).

This model, however, is not without its drawbacks. For example, the emphasis placed on *understanding* — making sense of — situations does not guarantee to improve practice; that is a contingent rather than an analytical claim.<sup>6</sup> Further, if, as is claimed (eg Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kincheloe, 1991; Smyth, 1991) reflective practice should lead to teacher empowerment, it is by no means certain that simply understanding a situation (however many theoretical lenses are used) will lead to empowerment. Indeed it might increase the sense of frustration in teachers who can see what needs to be done but are powerless to effect this.<sup>7</sup> In its effects a hermeneutic understanding might be reproductive rather than transformative of the *status quo*; it is partially rather than fully empowering.

In pinning so much on an understanding of the situation and a theoretical underpinning of practice there is an optimism in this approach that theory *will* effect practice. However the recourse to rationalisation of practice does not necessarily lead to its improvement. Moreover it is not clear which theories will be addressed, which will be 'understood' or applied. This is an important point, not only because theories might conflict (eg behaviourism and constructivism) but because the espousal of a theory neglects the debate about *values* — the justifications for adopting one theory or set of theories over another. A hermeneutic model offers little insights into how ideological disagreements might be resolved. In this respect Dewey has more to offer than Habermas, for Dewey's (1933) commitment to the exercise of judgement and the practicability of putative solutions takes the issue beyond mere understanding to action and requires the reflective practitioner to weigh different theories and judge their relative merits before embarking on action

(p. 120).

### Emancipatory Reflective Practice

Habermas (1974, p. 22) argues that the emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest has a fundamental interest in bringing about a society (a) that is based on freedom, equality and democracy, (b) in which illegitimate repressive forces have been dissolved and (c) which promotes individual and social empowerment, in short an emancipated society — ‘individual autonomy within a just society’ (Masschelein, 1991, p. 97) (see chapter 4.3.4 of this thesis). In this model the practitioner will seek to become empowered — emancipated — through reflective practice. Reflective practice, then, has an educational agenda of improving classroom practice and a political agenda of affording teachers a high degree of autonomy, informed professional judgement decision-making and existential self-realization in education — individually and collectively — ie it has a particular substantive agenda. It couples education and society very firmly (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Smyth, 1989b, 1991; Kincheloe, 1991; Prawat, 1991). It moves beyond craft knowledge and artistry to empowerment and emancipation.

The claim of the power of critical theory to interrogate and transform the *status quo* (Gage, 1989, p. 140) in education is immense though not, of course, exclusive. Dewey, for example (1933) argues that

[t]he function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious (Dewey, 1933, p. 100).

The emancipatory reflective interest has all the attractions of the hermeneutic interest outlined earlier but, additionally and significantly, it has a political agenda. Unlike the hermeneutic interest which is indiscriminating in the theoretical fields



to be chosen, Habermas's emancipatory interest is specific in defining the theories with which it is concerned — ideology critique, the notion of the *ideal speech situation* and the theory of *communicative action*.

However, as with the hermeneutic interest, the putative power of critical theory (and Habermas's version of it in particular) to effect change and empowerment is not guaranteed. Ottmann (1982) argues that there is a 'singular overestimation of the power of reflection' in Habermas's work (Ottman, 1982, p. 86). Though Habermas's views entail subjects examining the causes and legitimacy of their circumstances he may be overemphasizing their abilities to alter the situation. He singularly neglects the practicalities of achieving agendas for empowerment. In this respect Dewey's is a far more promising set of proposals, being rooted in action.

Nevertheless Habermas's principle of ideal speech is a powerful call to begin the process of emancipation by taking account of people's current circumstances, to have *them* set their agenda rather than to have it imposed. It begins where people are. In that respect it embodies the collegiality and dialogical practices noted in the hermeneutic interest. In its call for the involvement of teachers in realizing their own futures themselves, emancipatory reflective practice is a means of overcoming the motivation crisis to which Habermas (1976a) alludes. Emancipatory reflective practice motivates practitioners to create their own freedoms.

### Conclusion

One can see that in many respects there are important similarities and differences between Dewey and Habermas in their interpretation and prescriptions for reflective practice. These can be summarised thus (Table 1): —

Table 1: Habermas and Dewey Compared

Habermas's and Dewey's Concerns in Reflective Practice	
Habermas's Concerns	Dewey's Concerns
Political Agenda	Psychological Agenda
Problem based, deriving from real situations and the 'suppression of generalizable interests';	Problem based, deriving from real situations, situated activity which is context-bound
Prescribes resolutions to problems through communicative action, the <i>ideal speech situation</i> and an appeal to freedom, equality, rational argument, autonomy, justice and empowerment;	Seeks resolution to ambiguous situations through judgement and the practicability of proposed solutions; seeks a rational consensus;
Prescribes the operation of the <i>ideal speech situation</i> in seeking solutions;	Involves open-ended and open-minded search;
Requires ideology critique;	Requires the exercise of judgement;
Requires rational reconstruction of <i>systematically distorted communication</i> which has led to the repression and the <i>suppression of generalizable interests</i> ;	Requires problems to be empirically operationalizable;
Assumes that rational reconstruction and the <i>ideal speech situation</i> will dissolve problems;	Requires problems to be empirically soluble;
Anticipates real solutions;	Anticipates real solutions;
Requires personal commitment of practitioners.	Requires personal commitment of practitioners.

Habermas appears to be much more narrowly prescriptive in his analysis than does Dewey. Indeed for Habermas reflective practice only springs from repression and the *suppression of generalizable interests* — a narrow view of reflective practice which is rooted in pathology, when something has gone wrong. Additionally Habermas puts exclusive store by a series of exhortations to the *ideal speech situation*, the process of rational reconstruction and ideology critique to bring about an emancipatory reflective interest. Whether he is correct in so doing, however optimistic a view of human nature this espouses, is ultimately an empirical matter; that is where Dewey's work has an advantage for he *requires* solutions to be

practicable. Though Dewey does not concern himself with an agenda of political emancipation in his 1933 publication (though clearly he does so in his *Democracy in Education* (1916)) it does not follow that his prescriptions for reflective practice are any less emancipatory. Indeed it could be argued that Dewey's notions of reflective practice, resonating much more with Habermas's strategic action rather than communicative action, could be much more certain to bring about teachers' empowerment than the ethereal rationalisation of Habermas (cf the critiques of Habermas by Bernstein, 1976; Keat, 1981; Lukes, 1982; Boudon, 1989). Hence though Habermas may have an additional agenda to Dewey it is by no means certain that his narrow prescriptions for the achievement of that agenda will be successful. On the other hand Dewey's prescriptions are much more eclectic, much more 'down-to-earth', much less dogmatically prescriptive and begin with the agendas of teachers rather than the agendas of critical theorists. Whether he is correct to do so is another matter; Habermas's prescriptions give a high profile to central tenets of freedom, justice, democracy, autonomy and equality. In an age where threats to these are evidenced daily throughout the world it may be that Habermas's elevation of these principles is both timely and welcome. Reflective practice is neither educationally nor politically innocent.

## Notes

[1] Pollard's and Tann's (1993) introduction to reflective teaching, rooted in the work of Dewey (1933), provides a six-fold definition of reflective teaching (pp. 9 - 10) which captures the wide range of meanings and components of reflective practice but, nevertheless, does not enable the practitioner to distinguish that which makes reflective practice different from other forms of enquiry—

[2] Dewey notes that 'it has been suggested that reflective thinking involves a look into the future, a forecast, an anticipation, or a prediction, and that this should be listed as a sixth aspect, or phase' (Dewey, 1933, p. 117) but he dismisses this on the grounds that this is evident in all 'intellectual suggestion', ie it is not peculiar to reflection.

[3] This appendix will not dwell on Habermas's justifications for his views or the several critiques of his views. These are discussed fully in the thesis.

[4] Habermas (1974a) accords considerable power to self-reflection as a tool of critique as it can provide 'emancipation from unrecognized dependencies — that is, knowledge coincides with the fulfilment of the interest in liberation through knowledge' (Habermas, 1974a, p. 9).

[5] Smyth (1989b) parallels this in his model of critical reflective action which has a sequence of four stages: description, information, confrontation and reconstruction (pp. 5 - 7).

[6] This is akin to Habermas's (1970b, 1988) critique of Gadamer's emphasis on hermeneutics, *viz.* that Gadamer is too accepting of history and tradition, overlooks the role of ideology in concealing the operation of illegitimate power, is neglectful of critique and, thereby, neglectful of setting an agenda for democracy, freedom, equality and the furtherance of 'generalizable interests'.

[7] This resonates with Lukes's (1977), Keat's (1981), Fay's (1987) and Boudon's (1989) criticisms of Habermas's *ideal speech situation*, that he neglects the day-to-day realities of oppression, power and constraint that cannot be resolved by the force of argument or the ability to understand others' perspectives alone.

## Appendix H

### The Pressure for the Reduction of LEA Powers

There was a concern amongst right wing pressure groups (outlined in chapter 12) for the number of perceived 'left-of-centre' LEAs, particularly the former Inner London Education Authority. The power of LEAs stood in the way of centralised control of education and the opening up of education to market forces, a central tenet of the conservative government anxious to secure a fourth term in office (Simon, 1988).

The breaking of the power of the LEAs was introduced in the name of allowing parents greater variety and choice in their children's education by providing: (i) more types of schools (eg City Technology College, grant-maintained schools); (ii) more information about schools (through school prospectuses and the publication of schools' examination and assessment results); (iii) the opportunity to 'opt out' of local authority control (grant-maintained schools) accompanied by a massive publicity campaign and the massive diversion of funds into sponsoring them.

Further, the introduction of Local Management of Schools, combined with the devolution of monies for in-service work, effectively deprived the LEAs of power over budgetary control of schools. With regard to in-service money the government *required* money to be spent on its own agenda — principally servicing the National Curriculum and management development, ie the LEAs had little control over the in-service money which had not been devolved to schools.

This breaking of LEA power was part of an overall conservative policy of reducing local authority power generally, evidenced in rate capping. Dismantling

local authority powers enabled an authoritarian centralist regime to drive in its policies directly into schools, power-coercively, (Havelock, 1973), without a middle tier of realistic opposition from democratically elected representatives of local communities (Coffield and Edwards, 1989).

## Appendix I

### The Neglect of Professional Opinion in Education

The history of the conservative government of the 1980s and 1990s is one of sidelining professional opinion. For example the Schools Council (a curriculum development agency with teacher representatives on its governing committee) and the Central Advisory Councils for Education were abolished in 1984 and 1986 respectively and increased lay representation on governing bodies was introduced in the latter year.

The National Curriculum was brought in after the many thousands of dissenting voices from the spheres of education had been 'consulted' but in fact ignored (Simon, 1988). Further the National Curriculum was devised with no clear rationale (Bennett, 1990) and in the face of clear hostility to its testing arrangements from teachers and educationists (Goldstein, 1991).

Whilst the arguments of the Adam Smith Institute (1984) against listening to teachers were that they would be seeking to serve their own self-interests ('producer capture') the events of the mid-1990s displace this view (eg the eventual reduction of the National Curriculum, the failure of the policy of 'opting out' in many parts of the country, the two-year struggle over the amount and nature of testing which led to the teachers' boycott in 1993 and 1994, the dismissal of the Secretary of State for, amongst other matters, his neglect of professional opinion).

## Appendix J

### A Spiral of Objectives in the EIU Document

This is derived from an an analysis of *Education for Economic and Industrial Understanding* (National Curriculum Council (1990)).

<b>A SPIRAL OF OBJECTIVES IN THE EIU DOCUMENT</b>				
	<b>KS1</b>	<b>KS2</b>	<b>KS3</b>	<b>KS4</b>
<b>Objective</b>	1	1	1	1
<b>Number:</b>	2	3	13, 14, 19, 20	13, 14, 19, 20
	3	4	4	4
	4	5	14	14
	5	6	3	3
	6	7	10, 11	9, 11, 12
	7	8	8	8
	8	9, 10	10, 11	9, 11, 12
	9	11, 12	5	5, 10
		2,	2, 7	2, 7
		10	10, 11	9, 11, 12
		12	5	5, 10
		13	16	17
		14	6, 16, 18	6, 17, 19
			9	7
			12	9, 11, 12
			15	13, 15
			17	18
				16

One can see that each Key Stage (KS) adds new concepts as well as develops those from the previous Key Stage.



## Appendix K

### An Update on the Politics of the Curriculum

At the time of completing this thesis six events have occurred which provide an interesting update to the application of Habermas's advocacy of communicative action:

(a) in 1993 and 1994, in the face of an increasingly authoritarian and *dirigiste* government, teachers in the United Kingdom collectively and successfully refused to carry out the government's bureaucratic requirements for the testing of pupils and the provision of data for making public the results of what were seen as illegitimate tests and the serving of an inappropriate — market-driven — view of education. This action was begun in the field of the English curriculum, an interesting reference to Habermas's power of language, and swelled to include the whole curriculum. It provides a striking example of the power of a participatory democracy which operated from the principles of the *ideal speech situation*. This contributed in no small part to the dismissal of the Secretary of State for Education in July, 1994.

(b) in response to concerted objections from teachers to the lesser weightings given to their assessments in comparison to nationally set assessments, in 1993 and 1994 teacher assessments were given equal weighting with national assessments.

(c) in 1993 the Secretary of State for Education, in an attempt to defuse the growing power and militancy of teachers in their opposition to the National Curriculum, commissioned a report into the National Curriculum. He accepted its findings on the same day as the first report was published; the suggestions were

for a slimming down of the National Curriculum's level of prescription and the reduction of testing, albeit to standard written tests. One can see in the documents the erosion of the significance of pedagogy. In the first two versions of the National Curriculum they were included separately in the curriculum prescriptions (eg in the Mathematics curriculum (DES, 1991a)); in the third version they have been subsumed in other, content-framed versions of the National Curriculum, a Pyrrhic victory, perhaps, for teachers and emancipatory curricula.

(d) in 1993 the Secretary of State for Education not only refused to listen to parents' groups but described them as 'neanderthal'. This was seen to contribute to his dismissal from office in 1994 — a failure to act communicatively had sorry effects for him.

(e) in 1994 it became clear that the contents of the National Curriculum would continue to be contentious (eg the History curriculum was seen to celebrate a white, insular and supremacist culture), ie strategic action continued to be threatened by communicative action.

(f) in 1994 it became clear that the rate of growth of City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools (ie those that 'opted out' of local authority control) was much slower than desired by the government, an indication of the communicative power of collective participatory action by local authorities and parents.

