Habermas on Heidegger and Bataille: Positing the Postmetaphysical Experience

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Abstract

This article critically exposes Habermas' discussion of Martin Heidegger's philosophy of Being and George Bataille's heterology as a way of identifying the postmetaphysical stance as the guiding spirit of Habermas' modernity. In his work The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Habermas argues that whereas Heidegger's Being sacrifices actuality in the name of interpretation, Bataille's heterology sets up the unlimited experience which fails to provide an impetus for societal critique. Here a postmetaphysical approach is envisaged by Habermas as a way of going beyond the confines of the metaphysical tradition, although it also needs to pay attention to charges of misreading in its attempt to deconstruct the discourse of the modern.

Keywords: being, heterology, postmetaphysical.

1. Introduction

In the world of increasing skepticism towards metaphysical systems and the attempt to subsume particularity and difference into a general system; Habermas' critical theory explicitly advocates postmetaphysical thinking. In such an attempt, the epistemological problem of certainty is replaced by linguistic commerce, and the isolated I with the intersubjective realm. In his engagement with Martin Heidegger and George Bataille in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas resists the philosophy of Being and the heterogeneous that try to dislocate the boundaries of communicative action. In criticizing Heidegger's philosophy of Being, Habermas argues that Being posited as the ultimate point of analysis undermines actuality and also negates potential critique from individual actors. As such, Heidegger's Being reincarnates Nietzsche's Dionysus as the enigmatic other of reason. In return, Bataille's heterology in its attempt to destroy conventional boundaries that limit the unique human experience, only ends up positing a non-rational experience that negates all possible communal validation.

Section one starts by analyzing Habermas' critique of Heidegger's philosophy of Being. Then in section two, Bataille's heterology is critiqued in light of the communicative paradigm and intersubjective recognition. This is followed by section three that laments postmetaphysical thinking as the alternative approach that Habermas uses to critique dominant philosophical traditions. Finally, in section four, Habermas' discourse of modernity is scrutinized in terms of charges of misreading that question its interpretation of the various thinkers within the discourse.

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2. Habermas on Heidegger's philosophy of Being

For Habermas, the fact that Heidegger's philosophy arrives at an analysis of beings through time that ends up in tracing everything to Being, can easily be seen in the "four operations that Heidegger undertakes in his confrontation with Nietzsche" (Habermas, 1987: 131). First, Heidegger restored to philosophy its traditional status of being the highest authority on truth. As Habermas sees it, what the young Hegelians had affected was the primacy of the particular and the material over the ideal, concrete relations against thought, sensibility over reason and the immediate over the conceptual. The result of this was, philosophy lost its status as the judge of all truth claims. Heidegger again empowered philosophy by calling for an ontological analysis, analyzing things in their wholeness through a horizon and interpreting them; in trying to contemplate how Being manifests itself in beings and how the existential structure of these beings as a whole could be laid out.

Traditionally metaphysics has taken over the task of interpreting "beings". So, Heidegger tried to destruct the "history of metaphysics", by reminding it of its "forgetfulness" of Being, and philosophy was given the task of unraveling this forgetful metaphysical tradition. Still, how does this affect Heidegger's critique of modernity? Secondly, at the same time, Horkheimer and Adorno were writing the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which criticizes Western rationality for being immersed in an instrumental rationality, Heidegger was also depicting "European modern dominance of the world" (*Ibid.*, 132), as being the result of the "will to power" and its excessive manifestations. The 'overman' as expressing the truth of "will to power" and "eternal recurrence of existence" was manifesting itself in the truth of the European dominance of the world. This dominance resulted in a fierce struggle to manipulate the materials of the world. Hence, "Heidegger sees the totalitarian essence of his epoch characterized by the global techniques for mastering nature, waging war, and racial breeding" (*Ibid.*, 133)

Heidegger locates the modern "European Man" and his dominance of the world as a logical result of the modern conception of man as it is developed from Descartes to Nietzsche. In modern philosophy, man became the center and measure of things. This was pioneered by Descartes' thinking "I", and culminated in Nietzsche, as man becomes the one who expresses the truth as "will to power" and existence as "eternal recurrence". The "overman" becomes the one who actualizes the "will to power" in its fullest sense, by exploiting others, including other humans As William J. Richardson sees it, Heidegger conceived man for Nietzsche in the sense that;

> If the Being of beings is will unto power, what must be said about the nature of man? His task is to assume his proper place among the ensemble of beings according to the nature of Being which permeates them all. More precisely this means to... endorse with his own will, this dominion over the earth of universal will by assuming the responsibility of achieving to the limit of his possibility the global certification in which the truth and value of all constants consist. (Richardson, 1967, 373)

For Habermas, this understanding of Heidegger of the interpretation of Being in a being that actualizes itself, and is at the center of all things, made Heidegger unable to differentiate between the positive and negative sides of the modern project. Thirdly, it's Heidegger's analysis and the fact that he is trying to go beyond modern period that leads to his destruction of the metaphysical tradition. The philosophy of modern period started with Descartes' cogito and culminated in Nietzsche's attempt to think of Being, as a universal desire for power that's best expressed in man's urges to actualize its inclinations. Further, Heidegger saw the present as chaotic and questioned whether it heralds the beginning of another period or consummation of the historical process. So, Heidegger conceptualized the need to decipher the nature of the present, and in his philosophy of Being tried to salvage the present. Still, Nietzsche's desire to revive the present through the revival of a past ideal like 'Greek tragedy' is replaced by Heidegger's vision of how the future comes out of a proper relation with the past and the present. This idea of the coming future and the reformulation of the metaphysical tradition in its forgetfulness, as Habermas claims

were influenced by "romantic models, especially Holderlin, the thought figure of the absent God, so as to be able to conceive of the end of metaphysics as a 'completion', and hence as the unmistakable sign of another beginning" (Habermas, 1987, 135).

Further, Nietzsche's Dionysus is taken over by Heidegger's Being, specifically in the "ontological difference". Heidegger differentiated between the ontological or the concern with Being as such, and the ontic or contemplation of beings in their particularity. In this scheme, both "Being" and "Dionysus" are what are absent, and manifest themselves in the particular. In Heidegger's case, being manifests itself in things and entities, while in Nietzsche, Dionysus shows itself in the passionate, emotional and non-rational. Hence, "only Being, as distinguished from beings by way of hypostatization, can take over the role of Dionysus" (*Ibid*.). Finally, for Habermas, Heidegger does not escape the philosophy of the subject in his attempt to destruct the metaphysical tradition, since he is still, trying to employ Husserl's phenomenology as the method that excavates the existential structures within which Dasein is said to dwell daily.

Heidegger criticized the traditional approach to knowledge, the subject/object distinction and presupposed an idea that Being comes before knowing and that knowing is just one form of being. For Heidegger, to be in the world doesn't mean, I am here and they are there, we are not here dwelling in an attempt of grasping other dwellers, we are dwelling with others. In other words, to know that one is there in the world, Dasein doesn't need to objectify the others, it's there and this implies being there with others. According to Habermas Heidegger takes on Husserl's phenomenological method of investigation with an aim of unconcealing the truth of Being. This entails trying to phenomenologically dig out or lay out an experience, the existential structures through which being manifests itself. Here for Richard Polt, there are two major notions that Heidegger appropriated form Husserl's phenomenology. These are, first, "Evidence", or that there are conditions in which phenomena manifests itself and that the task of the phenomenologist is to make the hidden truth manifest itself, second, "categorical intuition", or that through beings we can have an insight into what underlines and can never be grasped in itself i.e. Being (Polt, 1999: 14-15). The difference between Heidegger and Husserl is the distinction between Being as such and beings, and then trying to apply the phenomenological method to Being itself. Still, Heidegger for Habermas "does not free himself from the traditional granting of a distinctive status to theoretical activity, to the constative use of language, and to the validity claim of propositional truth" (Habermas, 1987: 138).

3. Habermas on the limitations of Heidegger's philosophy of Being

Thus, what are some of the consequences of Heiddegerian philosophy for the critique of modernity and the modern project in general? First of all, as Habermas sees it, the need for a unifying force other than religion which was supplanted by artistic, mythological and rational ideals, was replaced by Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical tradition and its forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger emphasized on the difference between the ontic and the ontological. For Habermas, this results in an inability to address problems that arise in everyday world, and possibilities of unifying, emancipatory, ideal being generated. Secondly, Heidegger's conception of modernity is divorced from specific practical, concrete questions that are addressed by the various sciences which are oriented towards specific validity claims. Hence, "the critique of modernity is made independent of scientific analysis" (*Ibid*., 139). Finally, Heidegger arrives at a kind of an acceptance of current realities in conceiving Being itself as beyond what can be described and conceptualized, and could only be deciphered indirectly. Accordingly, "[t]he propositionally contentless speech about Being has, nevertheless, the illocutionary sense of demanding resignation to fate" (*Ibid*., 140). Habermas goes on to specifically look at Heidegger's earlier position as developed in his *Being and Time*.

Heidegger in his *Being and Time* claimed that his interrogation of Dasein was aimed at revealing the truth of Being as such, and to this extent criticized the metaphysical tradition for focusing on beings and not Being. The Dasein Analytic was supposed to be the foundation. For Habermas, this gives one an inadequate background of the context in which Heidegger developed his ideas in *Being and Time*. This context is for Habermas; "the post idealism of the nineteenth century," and specifically "neo-ontological wave that captured German philosophy after the first world war, from Rickert through Scheler down to Hartmann*"* (*Ibid.*, 141). It was a scene in which, Kantianism and pre-Kantian forms of philosophizing were being abandoned in favor of forms of thought that emphasized the concrete and the particular. The paradigm of the subject that is at the center of thought transcends itself, reflects on itself and the world, and was starting to dissolve. Even though "the idea of a subjectivity that externalizes itself, in order to melt down these objectifications into experience, remained standard" (*Ibid.*, 142). Heidegger's approach is seen as one of exposing how the metaphysical tradition has been focused on things and entities rather than Being as such. Still he tried to preserve some aspects of the tradition like the analysis of phenomena, from Kant's critique of reason to Husserl's phenomenology.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicitly states that the various sciences like anthropology, psychology and biology aren't adequate enough to carry out the Dasein Analytic. The only focus is on the ontic, and not the ontological, by treating humans as a "thing, substance or subject" (Heidegger, 1985: 78). But for Heidegger Dasein is unique in the fact that it is to be situated in the ways it tries to realize itself in the future, or the fact of it's a possibility. Still, Heidegger according to Habermas, when trying to explicate the nature of Dasein as being-in-the-world, resorts to the strategy of analyzing the subject, by going beyond it and looking at what is it that makes its existence possible (Habermas, 1987: 143). By being-in-the-world, Heidegger stressed that, Dasein's being in the world doesn't entail being inside the other or in something. "We are inclined to understand this being in as being in something*"* (Heidegger, 1985: 79).

Dasein's world is of being there with others and dwelling with them, being found alongside them. Habermas goes on the look at how Heidegger establishes the primacy of Dasein and what makes Dasein the center of analysis. First of all, Heidegger distinguishes between the ontic and the ontological, and bestows Dasein an ontological priority. For Heidegger, Dasein like other beings occurs as an entity, but it doesn't just occur, since it is oriented towards that understanding of Being itself. Dasein is the only being whose being is at issue and it inquires into Being by inquiring the Being of one's being. So, while ontically it is a being that's concerned with its being, ontologically it's concerned with Being as such this is to be situated in the context of its ontical questioning and uniqueness, leading to an ontological insight.

As, Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time,* "Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its very being, that Being is an issue for it" (*Ibid.*, 32). Secondly, Heidegger expounds his idea of phenomenology as the method that it is to be used in the Dasein project. For him phenomenology is not submitting a thing to theory or a philosophical doctrine from which truths are extracted, but a way or method of approaching things. Only as phenomenology is ontology possible for Heidegger. The phenomenological method is to unmask the various ways in which phenomena are concealed. Some of the ways through which phenomena could be concealed include "undiscoveredness", "being buried" and "disguised". In "undiscoveredness", a phenomenon has always been concealed and is in need of a revelation. In "being buried", a phenomenon has been discovered but is again concealed. Finally, in "disguising" the phenomenon has been represented as something which is not really its nature and when one tries to identify with the things it's disguised to (*Ibid.*, 60).

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4. Phenomenology and the analysis of Being

In the final analysis, phenomenology is a way of carrying out a hermeneutics or an interpretation of Dasein in its dwellings. The theme is Dasein, and it will be interpreted as it dwells in the world with other entities. It is to be interpreted in its dwellings alongside other entities in the world. Finally, in an "existentialist" tone, Heidegger interprets Dasein in terms of its choice to actualize itself or not for Heidegger, Dasein dwells with a potential of "authentic" or taking up its existence consciously towards Being. In contrast in "inauthenticity" Dasein forgets its ontological significance in its tendency to identify itself in terms of other things it encounters in the world. Dasein is the one through which the meaning of Being is to be interrogated since it turns out to be the one that raised the issue of Being. For Heidegger, whenever we ask or pose a question, it is about something and not nothing, and this in turn implies that we have to examine something for an answer, and in the final analysis we have some objective of asking. To put it differently, there is some purpose behind questioning and this can lead to a thing questioned and also a questioner further, one is to interrogate beings in their Being, to arrive at the truth of Being. But which being? It's Dasein since; it's the only being whose Being is its issue. Hence, for Heidegger, as Habermas puts it; "[t]he human being is an entity with an ontological nature for whom the Being question is an inbuilt existential necessity" (Habermas, 1987: 145).

As Habermas summarizes it, by bestowing Dasein an ontico-ontological significance, reducing all possible ontology to phenomenology, and interpreting Dasein in terms of its "authenticity" or "inauthenticity", Heidegger established his Dasein Analytic. Heidegger also established the primacy of existence against knowing; interpretation against reflection. There was also a focus on how the subject reflects upon itself and transcends one's own self. Dasein has a special insight into Being in trying to contemplate its own existence. Heidegger tried to lay out the meaningful structures within which Dasein is said to dwell. Finally, Heidegger also tries to solve the problem of existence through his notions of "authenticity' and 'inauthenticity".

One of the crucial moves that Heidegger makes in *Being and Time,* for Habermas, is from conceiving Dasein as basically different from things "present-at-hand", to Dasein as being thrown into the world of others. Earlier, in his discussion of being- in -the -world, Heidegger claims that the nature of Dasein lies in its "to be" or "mineness" or the fact that it inquiries into Being as such and is also characterized by a choice, that makes it authentic or inauthentic. This makes Dasein different from things, "Present-at-hand" which are only tools, entities, and hence have no on ontological significance. Later on, Heidegger comes to see how the question of the "who" in the existential character indicates the presence of others. Thus, we do encounter other beings in the environment that we live in. Habermas sees this as how "Heidegger extends his analysis of the tool- world, as it was presented from the perspective of the actor operating alone as a context of involvements, to the world of social relationships among several actors" (Habermas, 1987: 148-149).

Heidegger tries to show how being-in-the-world implies being constrained by others in his discussion of "oneself" and the "they". He shows, how the ways in which we act in the world is shaped by others. Thus, the way in which we behave is constructed by the one (das man) not by each Dasein privately for itself. We are thrown into the world and the inherited horizons necessarily constrain us. The "das man" is the one that provides possibility for the individual in the socialization process. As Habermas sees it, the notion of a shared lifeworld in which communicative rationality could be built is not developed in Heidegger. This is because, the context into which one is thrown is seen as a conservative state that constrains oneself in its inclination to make oneself authentic and establish a unique relation with Being. Hence; "Heidegger does not take the path to a response in terms of a theory of communication because from the start he degrades the background structures of the lifeworld that reach beyond the isolated Dasein as structures of an average everyday existence, that is, of inauthentic Dasein."

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(Ibid, 149) In emphasing being beyond knowing, the focus in Heidegger becomes on Dasein. In turn Dasein returns to the subject as in the philosophy of the subject, as a point of analysis.

For Habermas, Heidegger's ontology, in trying to sketch Dasein's dwellings, and philosophy of the subject, in focusing in how the subject knows the world, managed to negate the accumulated meanings that give background and contexts for discussing issues for individuals and also the everyday communicative processes. In the final analysis, Heidegger failed to see that truth and meaning are not something that passes through, but, is produced. Hence, "He fails to see that the horizon of the understanding of meaning brought to bear on beings is not prior to, but rather subordinate to, the question of truth" (*Ibid.*, 154). One of the controversial issues surrounding Heidegger's philosophy is its political implications, and specifically how it justified the Nazi rule. For Habermas one can witness in both Heidegger's lectures and addresses during the Nazis period, and the implicit ideas developed in *Being and Time*, how there is an intrinsic connection between Heidegger and the Nazi rule. In relation to the Dasein Analytic, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger applied it to show how the individual stands in a world in relation to other individuals and entities, and how one's existence could be deciphered in time, i.e. in its 'thrownness', dwelling and projection of a future. But, during the Nazi period Heidegger interprets Dasein as a collective group or society as a whole, and how this collectivity is moving in time, into the future. Further, after being elected as the "rector of Freiburg", in his inaugural address to students and professors, Heidegger stressed how the Germans as a whole are called on by their leaders, to actualize their collective potentials, to take their proper place in history, to become authentic and consolidate their unique place in history. As Habermas sees it; "Whereas earlier the ontology was rooted ontically in the existence of the individual in the lifeworld, now Heidegger singles out the historical existence of a nation yoked together by the Fuhrer into a collective will as the locale in which Dasein's authentic capacity to be whole is to be decided" (*Ibid.*, 157).

Habermas also locates Heidegger's affiliation with Nazism in the latter's views towards technology. During the Nazi period, Heidegger called on Germans to employ technology, to further the national socialist movement and Germany's Greatness, but later, Heidegger came to view technology as a will to power manifesting itself in domination and exploitation of the planet and hence leading humanity into destruction (*Ibid.*, 159-160). Here Richard Polt expresses how Heidegger already begun to doubt the national socialist revolution in his "private notes" in 1939. Heidegger wonders, where the nationalist movement is going, its place in history, from where it obtains its standards for collective movement and so on. Hence, for Polt, "Heidegger's frustration is obvious. A revolution that had appeared to promise a rebirth of the German spirit has turned out to be dogmatic and totalitarian" (Polt, 1999: 158).

5. Bataille and bursting of the conventional

What underlies most of Bataille's undertaking was getting beyond the conventional, the given standards and the normal. To this extent, Bataille conceives of the real human as the one that is willing to go beyond the limits, or the one that pushes the extreme to go beyond the conventional. Habermas categorizes, Bataille not under the reformers but radical critics of modernity. Habermas thinks that this radical critique of Bataille specifically focuses on the ethical side of life rather than a general critique of reason. Habermas traces the origin of Bataille's critique of modernity, to the development of the latter's concept of "the heterogeneous" at "the end of the 1920's" (Habermas, 1987: 212). Here, Bataille launched his attacks on the capitalist society, ordinary day to day life, and the sciences in favor of a kind of experience that goes beyond the standards set by all these authorities, and hence limit the human experience. For Habermas, Bataille here is echoing the surrealist notion of experience which tries to go beyond an interested, instrumental, exploitative relation to the world, abolishes given standards of right and wrong, and brings a new kind of aesthetic dimension into focus.

As Habermas sees it, Bataille in his "the Heterogeneous" focused, on those categories that don't fit into our day today lives, these are elements that are excluded from normal life, taboo, sinners "outcasts and the marginalized... pariahs and the untouchables, the prostitutes or the lumpen proletariat, the crazies, the rioters, and revolutionaries, the poets or the bohemians." (*Ibid.*) Habermas thinks that Bataille's category of "the Heterogeneous" as those excluded from the ordinary bounds of our lives, also include "fascist leaders [and their] heterogeneous existence." (*Ibid.*, 213) According to Habermas, going beyond things like political affiliations, methods of interrogation and styles of writing, one could establish certain similarities between Heidegger and Bataille. Accordingly, both conceived modern society as based in a decadent form of rationality that resulted in their times "into a totality of technically manipulable and economically realizable goods" (*Ibid.*). Still, Bataille's critique of modernity like that of Heidegger is not aimed at a critique of epistemology that yields an exploitation of the world. Rather, it's a specific kind of "ethics" behind capitalism, that's at the center of Bataille's analysis.

Bataille's focus is geared towards liberating the subject from the routines of daily life and the rationality of capitalism, into a context in which the destruction of conventionality will lead one into a genuine moment. This is a moment, and experience that has been suppressed, and excluded from our networks of truth and rightness. Unlike Heidegger's ontological difference between and Being and beings, and how the whole analysis is focused on a remembrance of Being, Bataille aims at setting the subject free, and asserts that, going beyond the limits set for the subject is the essence of "liberation to true sovereignty" (*Ibid.*, 214) Seen from this angle, Bataille was able to utilize Nietzsche's ideals of how the aesthetic frees, and how the "overman" leads to a new "transvaluation of values". Heidegger was unable to appropriate these Nietzschean insight, for Habermas, since his focus was geared at how Being will be grasped through a specific comportment of the ontical i.e. Dasein. Accordingly; "For Bataille, as for Nietzsche there is a convergence between the self- aggrandizing and meaning-creating will to power and a cosmically moored fatalism of the eternal return of the same" (*Ibid.*).

Also, Bataille and not Heidegger was able to appropriate Nietzsche's dissolving and defiance of all authority in the aftermath of the down fall of all ascetic values, in his attempt to liberate the subject from conventional standards. Heidegger was not able to utilize Nietzsche's destruction of the metaphysical system in his attempts to trace everything to the forgetfulness of Being. Here Habermas thinks that Foucault is justified in claiming that Bataille operates in a world where all the metaphysical, religious truths have lost their vitality, and that to this extent, Bataille directs his attention towards the annihilation of conventional standards that are products of human beings themselves, like capitalism. Instead of trying to expose the great philosophical and religious traditions, Bataille focuses on how the erotic, sensual experience sets the subject free from a post-metaphysical world where man is chained not by other worldly philosophies but exploitative, manipulable relations to the world that essentially limit the bounds of the subject's experience. Thus, "Bataille does not delude himself about the fact that there is nothing left to profane in modernity" (*Ibid.*, 215).

Habermas, now that he has established Bataille's project of emancipating the subject in a world where the great metaphysical systems have been destructed, would like to show how Bataille analyzes fascism and modernity. To this extent, "Bataille sees modernity embedded in a history of reason in which the forces of sovereignty and labor are in conflict with one another" (*Ibid.*). Bataille sketches the development of complex societies in humanity's history as the further degradation of freedom and sovereignty. So, how does Bataille try to sketch the move form a "reified society to a renewal of sovereignty" (*Ibid.*). According to Habermas the rise of fascism and national socialist movement in Europe was seen by some as positive and others negative. It also served as the catalytic force for the theories of Heidegger, Bataille, and Horkheimer. In this context, in his work *The Psychological Structure of Fascism,* Bataille try to go beyond Marxist categories of thought, and tries to analyze the new movements in Italy and Germany not as based

on class struggle but the psychological forces found behind such movements in history, especially the unique relation that exists "between the masses mobilized by plebiscites and their charismatic or Fuhrer figures" (*Ibid.*, 216).

6. Bataille and the heterogeneous

In a Marxist tone, Bataille asserted that before revolutionizing the modes of production and societal organization by a movement like fascism, capitalism needs to "collapse because of internal contradictions" (*Ibid.*, 217). Bataille was interested in studying the extra elements, elements out of the bounds of Bourgeoisie society that fascism will bring into the scene in such a revolution. Bataille tried to analyze how violence introduces a different, strange element by destroying boundaries. Generally, Bataille analyzed modernity in terms of how a one-sided focus on reason led to conventional norms, values and standards. Rather than trying to modify the modern project by criticizing its reason, Bataille focused on going beyond the ethics of modernity by a violent force that goes beyond fixed boundaries. Hence; "Bataille seeks an economics of the total social ecology of drives; this theory is supposed to explain why modernity continues its life-endangering exclusions without alternatives, and why hope in dialectic of enlightenment, which has accompanied, the modern project right down to western Marxism is in vain" (*Ibid.*).

According to Habermas, Bataille works under Durkheim's distinction of the "profane" and "sacred". The "sacred" represents the tendency to go beyond the convention and regularity and the "profane", as the uniform aspects of day to day life. In capitalist society, labor (the creative power) becomes homogeneous by being measured in terms of "time" and "money". The uniformity of labor is further established by "science" and "technology" that create a world where identical, similar things are produced based on the demands of the capitalist and the fixing of the process of production of an object by standards given by the bourgeoisie. What the unique leaders and followers of fascism introduce is a negation of this uniformity and regularity Hence, "against the background of interest-oriented mass democracy, Hitler and Mussolini appear to be the totally other" (*Ibid.*, 218).

Habermas thinks that Bataille is especially interested in how the appropriation of the violent, the spontaneous, and the negated experience by fascism disrupts capitalist modes of organization. Bataille is also fascinated by how elements of order and chaos uniformity and disruption, are found alongside one another in fascism. On the one hand, sacrifice for the totality, performance of duties, and on the other, collective upheavals, festivities and absolute rule of the "fuhrer" are found along one another expressing the spirit "of true sovereignty" (*Ibid.*, 219). Habermas goes on to make a contrast between Bataille's and Horkheimer and Adorno's views on fascism. One thing common to both Bataille and Horkheimer and Adorno, is the focus on studying the psychological dimension of fascist rule as it is manifested in its arousal of the masses and the collective force. For Horkheimer and Adorno, Fascism arouses the suppressed urges and passions of the subjects in modern society, under a collective ideal and vision of a common destiny. So, first Bataille, Horkheimer, Adorno, focused on suppression, and later, the strategic arousal of suppressed urges. The difference is that, for Horkheimer and Adorno the result of such an arousal is delusion or false happiness, whereas for Bataille the arousal is a moment of empowering the subject to go beyond the conventional and thereby a freeing. Hence, "in the erotic and in the sacred, Bataille celebrates an "elemental violence"" (*Ibid.*, 220).

As Habermas sees it, such position of Bataille runs into the difficulty of failing to distinguish between an emancipatory ideal that utilizes the passions of the masses for revolutionizing current states of affairs versus the subsuming of such a revolutionary undertaking in the final analysis under a dictatorial, totalitarian rule. Habermas goes on to look at how Bataille tried to subsequently come up with a critique of modernity that bridges the gap of the "transition from reification to sovereignty" (*Ibid.*, 221). According to Habermas, in his 1933 Treatise on *the*

Concept of Waste alongside Marxist forms of analysis, Bataille conceives labor as the way through which humans make themselves by making products. But rather than focusing on how humans have been deprived of their labor in capitalism, Bataille focuses on the difference between merely producing for survival and a "luxurious" way of laboring where one goes beyond the basic necessities and produces surplus, and locates "sovereignty" and "authenticity" of the subject on the latter. For Bataille, and not Marx, producing beyond necessity is an expression of freedom and a sign of going beyond the conventions. Hence, Bataille according to Habermas:

> [f]ears that true sovereignty would also be suppressed in a world of material abundance as long as the rational – according to the principle of balancing payments – use of material and spiritual goods did not leave room for a radically different form of consumption-namely, of wasteful expenditure in which the consuming subject expresses himself (*Ibid.*, 222).

Based on this analysis, one of the defects of modern capitalist society is its tendency to subsume everything into the production process and this has a subversive effect of destroying entertainment and pursuing of luxury as an expression of Freedom. Alongside these lines, for Bataille; "[t]he essence of sovereignty consists of useless consumption of 'whatever pleases me' (*Ibid.*, 224). Habermas thinks that using the thesis of the intrinsic relation between "sovereignty and power"; to explain how capitalist relations of production for profit emerge, is not sufficient to show how throughout human history the "sacred" have been excluded. In favor of the "profane", Bataille also cannot appeal to Marxian categories of thought, since his analysis already deviates from that of Marx in the attempt to go beyond reason, the conventional, and the fixed standards. It also deviates in emphasizing how the problem of labor is not of being subsumed into capitalism from expression oneself to surplus production, but instead from entertaining of the luxurious as an expression of one's superiority to an endless pursuit of surplus production under capitalism. Instead, Bataille appeals to Weber's thesis of protestant ethic and rise of capitalism and applies it to how the ethical determines negation of the sacred. Habermas thinks that this can be broken down to three points, humans are different from other animals not just in the fact that they create themselves through labor, but also in the fact that their actions, desires, and wishes are constrained by the standards and conventional ways of being that are found in the world they inhabit (*Ibid.*, 230). In this context, Bataille's "excess" is going beyond the forces and standards that limit the freedom of the individual. One should conceive the conventional rules and standards beyond their role in keeping the societal order intact. Instead, the focus should be on how their transgression leads to new ways of experiencing the world and ways of being.

One can also sketch the development of a practical reason and moral rules from ancient times to the present, which succeeded in making individuals, conform to different ethical ideals, and hence bound to conventionality. In the final analysis, Bataille like Nietzsche is faced with the problem of trying to go beyond reason, and the limits set by norms but still not being able to come up with a theory that can comprehend this. What kind of theory can go beyond discourse, if all discourse is repression, and if there is a need to burst out of the boundaries of language, then what kind of theory could account for this?

7. Communicative rationality vs. the philosophy of consciousness

These days, there is a general consciousness amongst philosophers that a philosophy for contemporary society should go beyond metaphysical thinking. The metaphysical tradition failed to provide a viable alternative. In some cases, it holds absolutistic claims that fail to recognize particularity. In others, it propagated relativistic assumptions that fail to recognize the universal dimensions to humanity. The tradition also focused on isolated individuals, subjected the individual to oppressive relations, and so on. Habermas claims that the kind of rationality he

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identifies and tries to develop in modern societies is postmetaphysical, in that it's situated in daily uses of language having both particular and universalistic dimensions.

Here, I will employ James Gordon Finlayson's discussion of what Habermas generally means by the philosophy of consciousness, to show in fact that Habermas does go beyond this orientation. Habermas' analysis of speech acts is part of the 'linguistic turn' in twentieth century philosophy, which abandons the look for absolute truth and certainty within a subject. Instead it focuses on analyzing the language we speak and employ. It inquiries into what this language tells us about the basic questions of reality, knowledge, values and so on. Finlayson identifies under the term philosophy of consciousness, seven major orientations in Western philosophy that Habermas' communicative paradigm supposedly stands in opposition.

1. In "Cartesian subjectivity" (Finlayson, 2005: 29), it's assumed that there is a clear essence that we can ascribe to the individual, and that this is thinking or generally thought. We can say that, Habermas goes beyond this orientation since in his approach; the 'I' cannot be separated from others. Rather, there is a world of claims through which one affirms unique individuality by raising distinct claims in relation to others.

2. In "metaphysical dualism" (*Ibid.*), it is assumed that there are two major kinds of substance in the world, one reflective and other corporal. Habermas doesn't assume that one can distinguish between thinking and the body, either in the individual or the individual as thinking and the world as body. He stresses that modern individuals have the space in which they raise their claims to one another thereby coordinating their actions.

3. In "Subject-object metaphysics" (*Ibid.*), the subject either as thinking or interested, relates to possible states of affairs in an attempt of gaining knowledge or laboring. Habermas in turn tries to show how modern individuals raise their claims in relation to the objective, social, and subjective dimensions of reality and are willing to defend their positions in an intersubjective arena in which they establish their identities.

4. "Foundationalism" (*Ibid.*), signifies the search for either an empirical or transcendental ground on which questions of ontology, epistemology and social theory could be built. Habermas didn't try to trace his theory to an underlying reality or an absolute truth about reality or the individual. Instead, he focuses on demonstrating how modern societies have gone through a historical process of rationalization, which has managed to establish an intersubjective arena in which contestable claims to truth are raised.

5. "First Philosophy" (*Ibid.*) is seen as the ultimate judge in questions of knowledge, truth, and reality. But in Habermas's approach, philosophy is located between everyday validity claims and the special fields of inquiries facilitating a mutual learning and influence. Further, philosophy "may act as a stand in for … empirical theories with strong universalistic claims, that is, it can help fill gaps in natural science by offering hypotheses for empirical confirmation" (*Ibid.*).

6. In "Social atomism" (*Ibid.*), society is the concretization of individual interests. Isolated, autonomous individuals further their desires by entering into a mechanism called society. For Habermas, there is no isolated individuality since we find our claims intertwined with one another, in an attempt to affirm our existence by seeking recognition.

7. If we take "Society as a macro subject" (*Ibid.*), macro realities, whether it be the state, meaning formation, power/knowledge nexuses, are elevated beyond the individual. For Habermas, the various forms of inquiries are in an open relationship to everyday world of validity claims. Claims raised in daily interactions relate directly to the special forms of inquiries. Habermas also claims that, modern individuals find themselves in a world of claims in which they equally participate by raising their views, not under hegemonic macro realities. There is a space for intersubjective reflection, hence for freedom and equality.

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In escaping such metaphysical trapping and orientations under which modern societies are disempowered, Habermas' communicative paradigm is unique in the following terms. First of all, in principle it's a rationality in which everybody can participate. It's procedural in that, it depends on following certain rules and raising certain claims. Secondly, it's a kind of rationality which invites continuous revision since every time validity claims are raised the truth is in question and in chance of being revised. Thirdly, it's a rationality that encompasses the entire objective, social and subjective dimensions, going beyond a strict insistence on isolated subjectivity, the objective world, and macro social reality and incorporating all in modern individual's claims towards the world. Habermas' communicative paradigm does go beyond the metaphysical trappings in western thought. Still, beyond the postmetaphysical nature of Habermas' communicative paradigm, the question should be that of how this secular discourse stands in relation to non-secular communities, whether it addresses concrete asymmetrical relations, and sufficiently deconstructs the negative, other side of modernity.

8. Habermas' discourse of modernity and charges of misreading

In this section, I will briefly present charges of misreading on Habermas' discussions of Weber, Hegel, Derrida, Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger and Bataille in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Austin Harrington tries to look at Habermas' appropriation of a universal process of rationalization from Weber's sociology of religion. Harrington tries to examine the extent to which Habermas' attempt to extract the intersubjective communicative process of modern societies from Weber's "theory of social evolution", remains faithful to Weber's original ideas (Harrington, 2000: 84). Harrington asks, did Weber really regard the process of rationalization which takes foot in the West as representing the highest stage in the rationalization of humanity in general, or was he trying to point out the unique aspects of the rationalization of the occident. Harrington admits that Habermas certainly developed the optimistic aspects of Weber's work, when he tried to develop the spheres as hosting a distinct rationality, instead of Weber's celebrated thesis that modern society is being trapped in an instrumental rationality. Habermas also diverged from Weber's intention, when focusing in his emancipatory ideal not on the courageous individuals which "devote themselves to their chosen value axioms", but on the everyday communicative action of modern societies which hosts critical ` and emancipatory claims towards the objective, social and subjective dimensions of reality (*Ibid.*, 87). As Harrington sees it, the Habermasian analogy between Kant's three critiques i.e. of pure reason, practical reason and judgment and the three value spheres in Weber, (i.e. theoretic, practical and aesthetic ones) is flawed. This is because Weber enumerated "five spheres; the economic, the political, the aesthetic, the erotic and the intellectual" (*Ibid.*, 88).

Also, Habermas' attempt to extract universal moral principles from Weber's empirical observation on the development of a protestant ethic are questionable, since Weber by no means took these principles as being universal or laying objective grounds for discussion of moral issues. Harrington adds, even though the intention of Weber's empirical inquiries into the rationalization of the occident were aimed at grasping the extent to which this process managed to implant a universal structure, still it should be noted that Weber called for a further empirical inquiry and held that the universal significance of the West, is debatable. Also, Habermas' insistence on the creation of a ground where a single value sphere addresses a specific validity claim is questionable, since "it is possible to challenge one sphere from the standpoint of another sphere in a way that is not a priori refuted by the terms of the first sphere" (*Ibid.*, 95). On our day to day lives we usually make aesthetic judgments about the moral, moral judgments about the scientific and so on. Thus, the idea of a single validity claim addressed in a distinct realm is questionable. Weber's ideas on the universal significance of rationalization in the West could be interpreted as instances of a civilization that strives for universality and not necessarily a civilization that implanted its lasting influences on humanity in general.

At the heart of Habermas' ideas on the inauguration and development of modernity, is the role given to Hegel as the one who pioneered the attempt to grasp what modernity is, by looking at the historical process through which modernity concretely established its own status and inquiring into the issue of normativity in the modern project. Fred Dallmayr expresses some of his reservations towards Habermas' appropriation of Hegel. As Dallmayr sees it, there is no clear distinction between the "young' Hegel which expounded his views on religion, aesthetics and mythology and the 'mature" Hegel who tried to accommodate everything into the "spirit". In other words, Hegel remained faithful to his earlier ideas, eventhough he developed his ideas in a larger context. (Dallmayr, 1987: 699) Dallmayr remarks that; "Hegel never abandoned his early views on "ethical totality or did he dismiss the notions of public religiosity the 'nexus of guilt' or the function of art as emblems of an ethical social bond. He simply proceeded to reformulate these notions in accordance with the needs of this overall system" *(Ibid.)*. Also, for Dallmayr, Habermas' interpretation of Hegel failed to fully capture the progress of reason in history and thought, and instead focused on the right Hegelian interpretation of pointing out the universal significance of Hegelianism or the left Hegelian attempt to put reason in contact with the concrete.

In his discourse of modernity, Habermas accuses Derrida of trying to destroy the distinction between philosophy and literature. Habermas also sees Derrida's threat as of emphasizing the aesthetic aspects of language and interpretation in general. Sandler wonders whether there is such a distinction taking into mind the usual employment of metaphor and non-literary forms in most philosophical texts. Simply invoking the instance of Plato's Dialogues will show that the nature of these works as artistic forms and philosophical conversations is equal. So, "how are we to decide which function of language is the dominant in Plato's dialogs" (Sandler, 2007: 3). Hence the view that philosophy is rational argumentation, and literature "ficticious" needs to be questioned. Sandler situates Derrida's project as one of introducing a moderate approach that emphasizes both literal and non-literal elements and giving a voice to the various contexts in which meaning is formed. The tendency of the Western philosophical tradition, to strictly insist on the argumentative nature of philosophy, excluding other elements dates all the way to platonic dialogs where, "the wonderfully comical and humorous nature of most dialogs is also discarded and only reappear as Socratic irony when the argument derived from the text clearly contradicts the line of argument traditionally viewed as Platonic" (*Ibid.*, 5).

Sandler adds, Habermas, is right in pointing out that in Derrida, "literature and literary criticism" are conflated. But this is just Derrida's way of finding a form of writing that gives a sufficient space to diverse aspects of meaning formation, while simultaneously being critical of other forms of writing. This was not clearly addressed by the existing metaphysical tradition which operated on a theoretic, binary form, amongst others. For Sandler, the insistence of Derrida on not being authoritative, fixing meaning and hence making texts open could easily be demonstrated by looking at the terms he employs like "difference" which are neither words nor concepts" (*Ibid.*, 8). Habermas' analysis of Derrida also errs in not directly interrogating Derrida's works but secondary interpretations and the application of deconstruction in American universities. Further, trying to come up with an inclusive form of writing that goes beyond argumentative and non-argumentative forms is essential as a critique to restrictive theories of meaning and the binary operations of the Western metaphysical tradition, which Habermas did not give a sufficient voice to.

For Thomas Blebricher, most of the defenses of Foucault against Habermas' severe attacks in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* are focused on showing that the former has been misread and that he could be defended against such charges of "presentism", "relativism" and "cryptonormativism". Still, what's lacking in such defenses is a broader understanding of what caused Habermas' misreading in the first place. Blebricher identifies two major causes for such grave misunderstandings. These are, first reading Foucault's later works through his archaeological method and two, misreading Nietzsche's genealogy and then reading Foucault

through Nietzsche's genealogy. Further, Habermas attacks the objectives tendencies of Foucault's genealogy when in fact the latter sees genealogy as forwarding "very modest truth claims of a peculiar character" (Blebricher, 2005: 1-2). As Blebricher sees it, Habermas' readings of Nietzsche could be traced to the Former's *Knowledge and Human Interests*, where Nietzsche is credited with developing a this-worldly, practical, approach to knowledge and truth. Nietzsche is interpreted as criticizing metaphysical conceptions of truth and putting knowledge in touch with practical interests. Still, Habermas was also critical towards Nietzsche, since he interpreted the latter as advocating "a perspectivism of values" where all we have is different interpretations, different ways of cognizing and bringing reality into our control, and that there is no good and bad, right and wrong. Blebricher maintains that; "While both philosophers agree in their critique of the positivists sciences that deny the link between knowledge and interests, Habermas treats the 'illusions' of mankind [and makes the] difference between the useful illusions of causality and other rather dream like illusions the implementation of which necessarily fails in the face of the materiality of nature" (*Ibid.*, 5).

Both Habermas and Nietzsche recognize this-worldliness of all values and claims to truth. Still, Habermas interprets Nietzsche as blurring the distinction between perspectives that enhance life and those that devalue it. Habermas interprets Nietzsche as bestowing an equal value to all perspectives. Later, Habermas' views towards Nietzsche became harsher. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Nietzsche's views were reduced to introducing a destructive reading of modernity, and anticipating the postmodernist movement which stood against the values of reason and Enlightenment. For Blebricher, what especially worries Habermas is the destruction of the clear-cut distinction between the theoretical, practical and aesthetic spheres, the emphasis on a heterogeneous meaning formation and reduction of all statements to that of "artistic preferences" (*Ibid.*, 6).

Habermas locates two paths out of Nietzsche's critique of modern reason. These are (1) a critique of reason in terms of a will to power, and (2) seeking an alternative in reason's other. For Blebricher, "it is this clear cut distinction between two strategies and two respective 'paths' into postmodernity that lies at the bottom of Habermas' mistaken or at least impoverished account of Foucault" (*Ibid.*). Blebricher adds that both Nietzsche and Foucault focused on the emergence of diverse conception of the moral, the aesthetic and generally truth in human history, without assuming objectivity or continuity between various conceptions. Further, Foucault's genealogy didn't claim to have an objective standard by which the various discursive formations could be viewed. Foucault himself was aware that his own method was a particular power/knowledge formation and that a science having "an outside perspective" was not realizable (*Ibid.*, 11). Still, Foucault was also looking for a way through which he could go beyond a description of such formations and offer an emancipatory critique.

Blebricher argues that Nietzsche's critique of modernity should not be reduced to "aestheticizing" or of reducing all questions to that of tastes. Nietzsche's project also contains diverse insights from scientific, artistic and biological backgrounds. Further Habermas' reading of Foucault like that of Nietzsche tries to reduce Foucault's project under labels such as power/knowledge nexus. Hence, both Nietzsche and Foucault tried to introduce a new form of critique that offers a "hybrid" approach (*Ibid.*, 15). In both Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogy there is an attempt to combine different forms of interrogations and insights, and Habermas' critique misses this point. Habermas shortsightedly assumed that Foucault was trying to extract the scientific element of Nietzsche's works. This is the attempt to identify various formations and apply it to genealogy that sees itself as an objective science gazing at power/knowledge formation. For Blebricher, Habermas didn't deliberately distort the ideas of Foucault to consolidate his communicative paradigm. Rather, Habermas erred in reading Foucault through his interpretation of Nietzsche. Thus, "Habermas' misunderstanding of Foucault does not have to be seen as an

intentional misreading, neither are we dealing with a strategic deformation of the Foucaultian oeuvre, the creation of a straw man" (*Ibid.*, 17).

Habermas charges Heidegger's philosophy of Being as being unable to address problems that a rise in everyday world, not establishing a place for scientific analysis, and being fatalistic. For David Kolb, Habermas needs to address the difference between his theory of communication action where one finds himself in an intersubjectivist communicative arena which is open to argumentation, and Heidegger's "temporality" where Dasein is thrown into a horizon that necessarily determines its destiny in providing the existential structures through which one dwells. Further, in Heidegger, there is a place for the individual in the sense that the individual reaffirms himself by creating meanings out of the inherited horizon. Also, the claims raised in a particular horizon can have a universal significance, even though they are necessarily measured with their respective horizons (Kolb, 1992: 689). Heidegger, as Kolb sees it, should not be interpreted as conceiving Being as restrictively supplying the frameworks through which we lead our lives, but the space one is thrown into and gains "authenticity" or "inauthenticity" in its attempt to actualize its unique ontico-ontological significance. Put in simple terms, there is enough space for one to define oneself within a horizon. Hence "Heidegger's destructive point is not that validity claims are world bound but that the limited revelation of Being within a world is what makes possible any cognitive or practical claims at all" (*Ibid.*, 690).

Andrew Stein raises doubts about Habermas' reading of Bataille, and tries to offer an interpretation that situates Bataille's philosophy in the historical context in which it developed. As Stein sees it, Habermas' analysis is flawed in trying contextualize Bataille in terms of German history "rather than French intellectual history" (Stein, 1993: 21). Bataille's attempt to go beyond the conventional boundaries of Western thought is interpreted as representing a Nietzschean fascism and irrationalism, and Stein tries to defend Bataille from such charges. For Stein, what motivates Habermas' reading of Bataille amongst other factors is the revival of thinking in Germany which tries to evade responsibly over crimes against the Jews. Habermas advocates a responsibility for history and proposed a tradition which will take foot in a transparent and accountable public sphere. Along these lines, Habermas sees in Bataille the rebirth of an authoritarian, Fascist German philosophy developed before the Second World War by appealing to the ideas of Nietzsche. According to Stein, for Bataille, Nazis and Nietzscheanism were not equivalent since in Nazism there is a homogeneous population led by the head of the system, while "Nietzscheanism exploded the authoritarian will that leads to fascism and all ideal metaphysics" (*Ibid.*, 42).

Bataille was interested in studying the psychological aspects of fascism and wondered how fascism was able to "mobilize the aggressive instincts of the masses'' but this admiration did not lead Bataille into advocating fascism. (ibid) Stein also questions the degree to which Bataille is an irrationalist, and stood against science and rationality. Stein argues, Bataille was trying to develop a science of heterogeneous states and how these states are being expressed in various practices and institutions. Bataille's science was "heterology". He studied excess and deviation "not as pathology" but as ways of going beyond repressive religious, capitalistic, conventional boundaries. (Ibid, 49) Further, in "heterology", reason was seen as the opposite of unlimited experience, a way of analyzing how this excess is being manifested in various institutions and practices, and also a boundary and "limit" to excessive experience (*Ibid.*, 50).

Generally, against Habermas' charges, Stein argued that Bataille clearly denounced fascism, and that there is also a place for science and rationality in Bataille's heterology which criticizes excessive rationality and tries to awaken suppressed energies, as a viable alternative.

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9. Conclusion

In positing the postmetaphysical stance against the absolute, Habermas tried to critique Heidegger's philosophy of Being and Bataille's heterogeneous. As such, Habermas charged Heidegger with neglecting everyday problems and actuality, the concrete and situated dynamism of experience and undermining critique by resigning to fate in his restricted conception of the life world. Again, Bataille's heterology advocating the unconventional, excessive and heterogeneous against the normal and three-dimensional process of validating envisions an idea which going beyond reason fails to realize emancipation. Finally, sensitivity must be developed towards charges that Habermas misinterprets authors in his discourse of modernity.

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