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JÜRGEN HABERMAS and the THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK of HIS IDEAS

JÜRGEN HABERMAS ve DÜŞÜNCELERİNİN TEORİK ÇERÇEVESİ

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Jürgen Habermas's key theories and concepts, exploring his contributions to sociology, philosophy, and critical theory. Central to Habermas's work is the theory of communicative action, which posits that communication, rather than instrumental action, forms the foundation of human sciences and socio-cultural life. Habermas critiques instrumental action as being driven solely by rational calculations, unlike communicative action, which fosters mutual understanding, solidarity, and consensus without coercion. He conceptualizes the lifeworld as the context and source of communication, emphasizing its role in reproducing societal norms and values. The study delves into Habermas's perspectives on legitimacy crises, modernity, and postmodernity. It highlights his critique of postmodernity, arguing that modernity remains an unfinished project and that postmodernist theories often present ideological attacks on modernity. Additionally, the paper examines Habermas's approach to public sphere theory, where he traces its transformation from its early emergence to its decline in modern times. Through his engagement with critical theory, Habermas revises and updates the tradition, advocating for a scientific approach that serves the goal of a better society. His work integrates historical context and ethical considerations in science and focuses on the communicative processes that sustain democratic and social life.

Keywords: *Habermas, Theory, Communicative Action, Modernity.*

ÖZ

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Bu çalışma Jürgen Habermas'ın ortaya koyduğu temel kuramları ve kavramları analiz ederek sosyolojiye, felsefeye ve eleştirel teoriye yaptığı katkıları incelemektedir. Habermas'ın çalışmalarının merkezinde, iletişimsel eylem teorisi yer almaktadır. Bu teori araçsal eylemin yerine geçen iletişimin hem insan bilimlerinin hem de sosyo-kültürel yaşamın temeli olduğunu savunmaktadır. Habermas, araçsal eylemi yalnızca rasyonel hesaplamalarla yönlendirilen bir süreç olarak eleştirmekte, buna karşılık iletişimsel eylemin, karşılıklı anlayışı, dayanışmayı ve uzlaşmayı, baskıcı olmayan bir şekilde teşvik ettiğini belirtmektedir. Habermas, yaşam dünyasını iletişimin hem bağlamı hem de kaynağı olarak kavramsallaştırmaktadır ve bunun toplumsal normların ve değerlerin yeniden üretilmesindeki rolüne vurgu yapmaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca Habermas'ın meşruiyet krizi ile modernlik ve postmodernlik konularındaki fikirlerine de değinmektedir. Habermas, postmodernliği eleştirerek modernliğin henüz tamamlanmamış bir proje olduğunu ve postmodern teorilerin modernliğe genel itibarıyla ideolojik saldırılar yönelttiğini savunmaktadır. Çalışmada ayrıca kamusal alan teorisine dair görüşleri incelenerek, kamusal alanın erken dönemdeki yükselişinden modern dönemdeki çöküşüne kadar geçirdiği dönüşüm ele alınmıştır. Eleştirel teoriyle olan etkileşimi, geleneği gözden geçirip güncelleyerek daha iyi bir topluma ulaşmayı amaçlayan bilimsel bir yaklaşımı geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Habermas, Teori, İletişimsel Eylem, Modernlik.*

1. Introduction

This study examines the core theories and concepts developed by Jürgen Habermas, one of the most influential thinkers in contemporary sociology and philosophy. Positioned within the tradition of critical theory, Habermas's intellectual contributions have reshaped our understanding of communication, modernity, and societal structures. This paper aims to analyze Habermas's key ideas by examining three main aspects: the Theory of Communicative Action, his critiques of modernity and postmodernity, and his insights into the transformation of the public sphere. By addressing these interrelated topics, the study highlights how Habermas seeks to bridge normative ideals with practical realities in the modern world. It argues that his work not only adapts critical theory to contemporary challenges but also underscores the vital role of communication in promoting mutual understanding, democratic legitimacy, and social cohesion.

This research seeks to explore the potential of Habermas's theoretical framework in contributing to broader discussions on democracy, rationality, and the role of public discourse in fostering a just society. By engaging with his ideas, the paper aims to provide a perspective that contributes to debates in social theory, philosophy, and political science, highlighting the relevance of Habermas's intellectual legacy in addressing the complexities of the contemporary world.

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research methodology rooted in a comprehensive analysis of Jürgen Habermas's primary texts and relevant secondary literature. The methodological approach is situated within the traditions of sociological inquiry, with a particular emphasis on textual analysis. By engaging with Habermas's original works and scholarly interpretations, this study seeks to construct a coherent

understanding of his theoretical contributions and their sociological implications. The study adopts a sociological lens, focusing on the interplay between theory and practice within Habermas's work. It emphasizes the historical and social dimensions of his ideas, particularly their relevance to contemporary issues such as democratic governance, legitimacy, and the role of communication in sustaining social cohesion. By synthesizing primary and secondary sources, this methodology aims to provide a balanced exploration of Habermas's intellectual legacy while addressing the central research questions of this study.

In the following section of the article, a brief overview of Habermas's life is provided, followed by a discussion of some key ideas, concepts, and theories in his works. Additionally, the scientific approach reflected in Habermas's theories, his methodology, ethics, objectives, and the unit of analysis are examined. The third part delves into Habermas's theoretical framework, exploring his concepts and theories, including the theory of communicative action, modernity as an unfinished project and critiques of postmodernity, the structural transformation of the public sphere, the legitimation crisis, and technology and science as ideology and the future of human nature.

2. Jürgen Habermas's Life, Works and Scientific Approach

Born in Germany, Habermas was shaped by a family background that reflected both professional and religious dimensions; his father served as the head of the Trade and Industry Bureau, while his grandfather was a Protestant pastor. During the 1950s, he pursued studies at the Institute for Social Research, a renowned hub of the Frankfurt School and critical theory, where he collaborated closely with Horkheimer and Adorno, even serving as Adorno's assistant. His formative years in 1940s Germany exposed him to the brutal realities of the Nazi regime, experiences that profoundly influenced his intellectual trajectory (Slattery, 2010, p. 426).

From a methodological standpoint, Habermas is noted for his reconstructive rather than purely deconstructive approach. He argues that "the theory of communicative action is conducive to preserving modern values such as social rationality, consensus, emancipation, and solidarity, thus providing a foundation for social criticism and reconstruction" (Best & Kellner, 2011, pp. 287–288). While maintaining an intellectual affiliation with the Frankfurt School, Habermas has consistently articulated a critical stance toward Marxism, Critical Theory, and Postmodernity, distinguishing his contributions within the broader critical tradition.

Habermas does not view academic and intellectual life merely as a profession; he also considers it a means to achieve "a better, more rational, and more just society," a society oriented toward "shared needs rather than arbitrary power" (Pusey, 1987).

After publishing *The Legitimation Crisis* in 1973, developing "a comprehensive theory of modern society" became a central focus of Habermas's intellectual pursuits. He constructed his theoretical framework by critically engaging with and drawing on past theories, ranging

from Durkheim to Parsons and Marx to Weber. This framework operates on both micro and macro levels, analyzing the “lifeworld” at the micro level and conducting examinations and critiques of the “social system” at the macro level (Slattery, 2010, p. 437). His macro-level analyses, particularly evident in his critiques of modernity and postmodernity and his examination of the structural transformation of the public sphere, and his micro-level analyses, such as those observed in his theory of communicative action, highlight the significance of his dual-level approach.

“If we succeed in historically understanding the complex that we now rather simplistically gather under the heading of ‘the public,’ along with its structures, we will not only sociologically clarify this concept but also systematically grasp the crux of our society through one of its central categories” (Habermas, 2003, pp. 61–62).

In his work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas emphasizes that understanding the fundamental issues of society requires grasping one of its central categories (such as the concept of “the public”) within its historical context. This highlights his view that comprehending a sociological phenomenon necessitates understanding its historical background. Furthermore, he dedicates significant attention in his work to the historical development of the “public sphere.”

The central themes of Jürgen Habermas’s work revolve around the critique and reconstruction of Marxism, the reconstruction and updating of the critical theory inherited from the Frankfurt School, the development of a new theory of knowledge and communication, and the critique of both positivism and the instrumental use of science and technology (Slattery, 2010, p. 427). These topics are intricately interconnected within Habermas’s theoretical framework, each serving as a continuation and complement to the others.

Beyond these, Habermas’s main aim is:

“...to explain the progression of reason in human history, its use in the past as a weapon against errors, superstitions, myths, and oppression, the damage it has caused by serving the ideological dominance of advanced capitalism in the present, and its transformation into an instrument of oppression that stifles all criticism through the spread of bureaucracy, technical rationality, and scientism in late capitalism.”

He believes that rational thought will regain dominance. He contends this will occur through developing a new theory of knowledge that will weaken positivism and instrumental rationality, thus liberating communication among people and leading to a more just and free society (Slattery, 2010, p. 427).

Habermas’s important works, along with their original publication dates, are as follows: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), *Knowledge and Human*

Interests (1968), Technology and Science as Ideology (1968), Towards a Rational Society (1970), Legitimation Crisis (1973), and The Theory of Communicative Action (1981).

3. Jürgen Habermas's Theoretical Framework

Jürgen Habermas, broadly speaking, belongs to the German philosophical tradition, having placed significant emphasis on culture, the evolution of norms, and dialectical reasoning. More specifically, he is recognized as a key figure within the Frankfurt School, which sought to reshape the German philosophical tradition into a social theory that aimed to reconcile the ideas of Marx, Weber, and Freud (Balakrishnan, 2003, p. 115). Habermas is considered a leading proponent of neo-critical theory. His work extends the central themes of the Adorno-era Frankfurt School, while simultaneously marking a departure from them.

3.1. Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas criticizes Marx for failing to distinguish between two analytically different human existence components. These components are labor, goal-oriented rational action, and social interaction, or communicative action. With this criticism, Habermas establishes the fundamental distinction between labor and interaction as his starting point. Under the heading of "goal-oriented rational action," Habermas differentiates between instrumental action and strategic action. Both of these types of actions are based on self-interest and calculation, with the goal of instrumental superiority. According to him, instrumental action involves "a single actor rationally calculating the best means for a given goal."

In contrast, strategic action involves "two or more individuals coordinating goal-oriented rational actions in pursuit of a common goal." This distinction illuminates Habermas's entire body of work. The most fundamental point at which Habermas departs from Marx is his claim that communicative action is the distinctive and most common human phenomenon. According to Habermas, communicative action forms the basis of all human sciences, such as sociology, philosophy, linguistics, ethics, and the entire socio-cultural life. While Marx sought to remove the barriers to uncorrupted labor, Habermas aimed to remove the barriers to uncorrupted communication. While Marx sought a societal structure defined by communism, Habermas aimed for a structure defined by free and open communication (Ritzer, 2011, pp. 150-151). While Marx focuses on the disruptive effects of the capitalist social structure on labor, Habermas is concerned with how the modern social structure distorts communication. Despite these differences, there are similarities between the theories of Marx and Habermas; both believe that the project of modernity still needs to be completed in their respective eras and will be completed in the future (Ritzer, 2011, p. 435).

According to Best and Kellner (2011, pp. 286-287), Habermas distinguishes between instrumental and communicative action and compares these types of actions. He points out that instrumental action links tools to goals or techniques to objectives without considering the rationality or fairness of those goals. Instrumental action is subjective, lacks an intersubjective dimension, and its primary aim is domination over nature. In contrast, communicative action is oriented towards understanding and mutual agreement. In

Habermas's philosophy of communicative action, unlike the philosophy of subjectivity, intersubjective communication, social solidarity, mutual understanding, and consensus without coercion are emphasized.

According to Habermas, in modern society, the image of the world is differentiated into "objects, norms, and experiences." He defines this image through the influence of Piaget's process of "decentralization." On the other hand, Popper's theory similarly applies to this categorization. Popper's theory of three worlds is as follows: the world of physical objects and states, the world of consciousness, mind, and behaviors, and the world of sciences and arts. According to Habermas, this distinction is between the "objective world, social world, and subjective world," and the corresponding types of actions are "goal-oriented/strategic, norm-regulated, and dramaturgical actions" (Habermas, 2001, pp. 110-122). While this three-world approach serves as a starting point for him, he has also criticized it and developed a new approach in the context of language. These action types center on the subject, but in addition to these types, the "communicative action" is formed intersubjectively. Habermas's communicative action, which he constructs in the context of language, takes place within the domain he conceptualizes as the "lifeworld." In his view, the individual's self-centered understanding of the world in the lifeworld gives way to an intersubjective form. The lifeworld constitutes the context of "processes of agreement or discussion about something within the common social world of individuals or each of their subjective worlds" (Habermas, 2001, p. 159).

As a product of this perspective, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas investigates the possibilities within the lifeworld for the individual to become a free or willful being (Torun, 2018, p. 179). In this shared lifeworld, individuals acquire a new understanding, where instead of perceiving the external world or themselves through an objectifying perspective, they view themselves as part of intersubjective interaction. This action model can be considered a consensus-based action model. Habermas developed the concept of the lifeworld by drawing inspiration from Husserl. The concept emphasizes that interaction occurs not at the individual or subjective level of consciousness but at a different intersection or context. The key difference between Habermas's definition and Husserl's is his emphasis on language rather than meaning. While meaning-making occurs in individual consciousness, which contrasts with the social aspect emphasized by Habermas, language, by its nature, demonstrates a social characteristic. The lifeworld constitutes both the context in which communication takes place and the source from which communication is nourished. In this regard, it can be said that communication reproduces the lifeworld (Habermas, 1994, pp. 297-299, 315; Şaylan, 2002, pp. 221-222).

Habermas introduces the concept of communicative rationality, which he defines in the context of the communication processes occurring within the lifeworld, as "the establishment of the necessary conditions to reach consensus through communication." This concept highlights the conciliatory nature of communication, where individuals engage in mutual dialogue, or any form of communication grounded in arguments. The

type of discourse in which individuals present and seek to justify the validity of their arguments through reasoning is referred to as “argumentation.” Argumentation aims to present the strongest arguments, dismissing those that are weaker. Habermas designates this ideal scenario as the “ideal speech situation.” In his view, the ideal speech situation is “a situation where no external constraints are preventing the presentation of evidence and arguments, and everyone has an equal and open opportunity to participate in the discussion” (Habermas, 2001, pp. 34–49). The foundation of the ideal speech situation rests on a presupposition—an unavoidable assumption inherent in discussions, thus a universal one. According to Habermas, without such presuppositions, or without establishing ideal categories, discussion or consensus becomes impossible (Habermas, 1987, p. 325, as cited in Timur, 2012, p. 161).

According to Habermas, modernization has given rise to distinct forms of social integration. These forms of integration manifest in everyday conversations, where there is no coercion, and the process of reaching consensus is facilitated (Callinicos, 2001, p. 160). However, Habermas contends that disruptions in the processes of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization within the lifeworld lead to various crises, such as the loss of meaning, anomie, and psychopathologies. These crises encompass legitimacy deficits, alienation, cultural exclusion, the collapse of tradition, the endangerment of collective identity, and the failure to internalize values. Habermas defines cultural reproduction as “the production of rational knowledge that can be agreed upon”; social integration as “the solidarity of members”; and socialization as “the development of responsible personalities” (Habermas, 2001, pp. 575–576).

3.2. Modernity as an Unfinished Project and Critiques of Postmodernity

Habermas defends modernity against the critique of postmodernity, arguing that modernity is an “unfinished project.” He asserts that there is still much to be accomplished in the incomplete modern world, and therefore, contemplating the possibility of a postmodern world is ultimately misguided. Ritzer (2011) observes that Habermas developed a theory of the pathology of modernity, critiquing modernity for its inherent contradictions. For Habermas, the contradiction within modernity arises from the disparity in rationality between the social system and the lifeworld. The rationality that characterizes each appears distinct and, in some instances, even in conflict. He contends that social systems have become increasingly complex, “differentiated, integrated, and characterized by instrumental reason” (Ritzer, 2011, p. 431). This leads to Habermas’s view of society as a dual-layered structure, with the “lifeworld” on one layer and the “system” on the other.

A key element of his critique of modern societies is the colonization of the lifeworld by the system (Torun, 2018, p. 173). In modern societies, the lifeworld is subsumed by the system, whereas in traditional societies, the institutional structure—such as the lifeworld—dominates, and subsystems like the economy or state apparatus do not exert the same level of control. In other words, traditional societies do not experience the colonization of the lifeworld by the system (Habermas, 1968, pp. 65–67, as cited in Torun, 2018, p. 185).

According to Habermas, the completion of the modern project will be realized through the establishment of a “rational society,” where both the system and the lifeworld can express themselves fully without one colonizing or undermining the other (Ritzer, 2011, p. 432).

Habermas defends modernity against postmodernity while simultaneously critiquing postmodernists from several angles. First, he argues that there is insufficient clarity regarding whether postmodernists are producing serious theory or merely literature. Second, although postmodernists adopt normative approaches, Habermas highlights that they often conceal these positions from their readers, making it unclear what exactly they are critiquing. Third, he accuses postmodernists of adopting a totalizing perspective that fails to distinguish between the various phenomena and practices emerging within modern society. Finally, Habermas contends that postmodernists neglect the significance of everyday life and practices, which he considers crucial for understanding society from his own theoretical standpoint (Holub, 1991, pp. 158–159).

In his essay “*Modernity – An Unfinished Project*,” Habermas critiques postmodernists, arguing that various postmodern theories represent an ideological assault on the intellectual foundations of modernity. His entire body of work is centered on defending modernity as “the route, contributions, pathologies” of modernity, viewing it as “an unfinished project containing an unfulfilled liberating potential.” He contends that French postmodern theories align with anti-Enlightenment ideologies and display connections to fascism (Best & Kellner, 2011, pp. 281–282). Rather than considering modernity and its project a lost cause, Habermas argues that exaggerated attempts to negate modernity provide valuable lessons in understanding its failures. He suggests that the perception of art, in particular, could offer a way forward in addressing these challenges (Habermas, 1994, p. 41).

3.3. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

Habermas’s concept of the public sphere refers to a space within social life where public opinion can be formed and where all citizens are guaranteed access. He argues that private individuals come together to form a public body by engaging in discussions, thus becoming part of the public sphere. “Creating a public body” means that citizens, with their rights to “assemble, organize, express, and publish their opinions freely,” establish a space for discussing matters related to the general welfare of society without restriction. The communication media that constitute the public sphere include newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. For Habermas, the state does not belong to the public sphere (Habermas, 2004, p. 94).

According to Habermas, the public sphere is distinct from the private sphere. At times, it appears as a simple form of public opinion and serves as an area counter to state power. Habermas sometimes includes state organs and, at other times, media elements like the press, which facilitate communication among the public, as “public organs” (Habermas, 2003: 59). He discusses the “unifying power” of the public sphere, which arises in relatively simple interactions. This power is intersubjective, creating a unifying force while maintaining individual differences. Thus, public spheres serve a “social integration”

function through this unifying power. This integration is achieved normatively through political publicness, where solidarity is established among citizens via law in an abstract form. A shared sense of community can only be established among citizens who may not personally know each other through the formation of “public opinion and will” (Habermas, 2012: 25).

In his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas provides a thorough analysis of the transition from the early stages of capitalist modernity to its later forms. In the first part of the book, he describes the rise of what he terms the “bourgeois public sphere.” According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere is a space that facilitates free and rational inquiry and debate between the state and the private sphere. He discusses the emergence of institutions such as “literary clubs, salons, newspapers, political journals, and forums for political discussion and participation” in the eighteenth century as part of this bourgeois public sphere. This period marks the emergence of a liberal and democratic public sphere, where individuals could engage in critical discussions of their interests and public concerns within a rational debate framework. Thus, Habermas maintains a positive view of early modernity. In the second part of the book, Habermas examines the decline of the public sphere in late modernity. He argues that in later capitalist societies, the state and private corporations have taken over the key functions of the public sphere, such as rational debate and inquiry. As a result, the public sphere has been transformed into “a domain of domination” and has become corrupted (Best & Kellner, 2011, p. 283).

According to Habermas, the formation of the bourgeois public sphere provides the sociological foundation for rational communication. He argues that the public sphere is the space in which a rational environment—capable of fostering free discussion, inquiry, and judgment—emerges, potentially challenging political sovereignty. For this reason, Habermas asserts that the bourgeois public sphere must be safeguarded from external pressures (Timur, 2018, p. 48). In summary, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas outlines both the historical and philosophical foundations of the central role he attributes to the “public sphere,” which involves the “democratic construction of the social space and the establishment of a sphere of freedom for the individual” (Torun, 2018, p. 180).

3.4. Legitimation Crisis

Habermas’s concept of the legitimacy crisis is a key element of his political sociology and historical materialism. The idea was initially introduced by the Frankfurt School and later updated by Habermas as part of his critical theory. The concept of “legitimation” refers to how a government or system justifies its power or existence. A legitimacy crisis, therefore, can be defined as “the tensions and assaults that drive governance toward anarchy and chaos.” In his work *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas examines the crises faced by capitalist societies and how these systems have sought to maintain their legitimacy, analyzing the actions taken to preserve capitalism’s legitimacy and their success or failure. While

exploring these crises, Habermas seeks to understand developments that directly and indirectly impact governmental power, including shifts in class consciousness, fluctuations in state power, and class conflicts. Contrary to what may appear on the surface, Habermas argues that advanced capitalist systems have undergone a series of crises that threaten their legitimacy and could ultimately lead to their collapse (Slattery, 2010, p. 428).

Habermas analyzes late capitalist societies through three fundamental subsystems: economic, political, and socio-cultural. For societal stability to be maintained, these subsystems must be in balance and maintain close relationships with one another. These subsystems function to keep the social system in equilibrium, and when they fail to perform this function, a crisis emerges within society. According to Habermas, there are four potential crisis tendencies in modern capitalist systems, each of which can trigger a chain of subsequent crises. These crises are economic, rationality, legitimacy, and motivation crises.

The capitalist system is in a constant state of governance crisis because the irrational structure it creates exacerbates exploitation and inequality, while failing to ensure a fair distribution of wealth and power. The imbalance generated by this injustice can only be rectified if the subsystems compensate for each other's deficiencies. For example, an economic crisis may be alleviated if the state intervenes to support unprofitable industries. However, this solution gives rise to another crisis: the crisis of rationality. This phenomenon is what Marxists describe as the "irrationality of the market economy" or "market anarchy," a situation where "no rational planning is conducted according to human needs; instead, unstable supply and demand forces are driven by private profit and personal gain." The state's intervention to assist unprofitable private enterprises leads to government borrowing, which in turn results in inflation and a fiscal crisis. Furthermore, a legitimacy crisis arises when the government attempts to reduce social security spending to overcome the financial crisis. This triggers a political perception of the state or government as biased, causing it to lose public support, and ultimately, the legitimacy of the state's "representation of the people" is called into question.

As a result, all these crises culminate in a motivation crisis, as the public begins to question the necessity of working or voting to sustain the functioning of the system. In advanced capitalist societies, legitimacy is closely tied to "ideological control," which refers to the ability of the state and cultural institutions (such as the media) to convince the masses that the current system is just, honest, rational, and, therefore, legitimate. In line with Weber's thought, Habermas views the essence of legitimacy as rooted in rationality, specifically in the capacity for reasoning and the logic of discourse. He argues that this principle forms the "foundation of modern societies' social, political, and ideological structures" (Slattery, 2010, pp. 429-431).

3.5. Technology and Science as Ideology and the Future of Human Nature

In his work "Technology and Science as Ideology," Habermas discusses whether science and technology primarily serve as instruments of instrumental reason, contributing to the

system's domination in society (Okumuş, 2018). In this work, Habermas engages with Marcuse's views on the subject. He initiates a discussion based on Marcuse's idea that "the liberating power of technology – the reification of things – turns into a chain of liberation, resulting in the reification of humans" (Habermas, 1993, p. 7). Marcuse argues that the technological a priori, where the transformation of nature leads to the transformation of humans," becomes political when human creations or products emerge from a societal whole. However, Marcuse also contends that the technological universe does not necessarily serve political purposes; its effect might merely accelerate or decelerate society. Any technological apparatus can equally serve both capitalist and socialist regimes. However, Marcuse maintains that "the inclusive form of technical material production" has the power to reshape all of culture, potentially designing "a historical totality and a universe" (Marcuse, 1967, p. 168 as cited in Habermas, 1993: 40).

Marcuse's critiques of Max Weber on this issue have also caught Habermas's attention. According to Marcuse, Weber's critique leads to the following conclusion:

"Perhaps the concept of technical reason itself is ideology. It is not just the mere use of technology, but technology itself (over nature and humans) that is power—methodical, scientific, calculated, and calculating power! The specific goals and interests (Interesse) of power are not merely imposed 'later' and from the outside onto technology—they are intrinsic to the very structure of the technical apparatus; technology is, at each instance, a historical-social design, and within it, the approaches of a society and the interests that govern it are reflected in their relations to humans and things. Such a goal of power is 'material' and, in this respect, belongs to the very form of technical reason" (Marcuse, 1965, as cited in Habermas, 1993, p. 34).

Habermas underscores the distinction between the political and scientific-technical realms, attributing distinct meanings to each. While he acknowledges the pivotal role of scientific and technological progress in human history, he cautions against reducing democratic decision-making processes to technical matters. For Habermas, the ideological perception of science and technology exerts a profound influence on society. However, he critiques Weber's notion of *rationalization* and Marcuse's assertion that science and technology, by intertwining with existing power structures, establish a new form of power mechanism. From Habermas's perspective, these interpretations fail to provide a meaningful solution to the challenges posed by modernity (Torun, 2018, p. 182).

In Habermas's view, technology represents the "*scientific, rational use of objectified processes.*" Within this framework, scientific research and technology function as "*elements of a system fueled by the economy and management*" (Torun, 2018, pp. 188-189). While Habermas aligns with Marcuse's critical stance on the relationship between science, technology, and power, he diverges on a key point: whereas Marcuse advocates

for the creation of “*a new science and a new technology*”—alongside a reimagined set of productive forces—predicated on the unity between technology and power, Habermas remains skeptical of this proposal (Timur, 2012, p. 111).

In his work *The Future of Human Nature*, Habermas evaluates the future of human nature in the context of the development of science and technology, assessing the crises that may arise. In this work, he primarily focuses on the technologization of human nature. According to him, “the technologization of human nature represents another example of the increasing ability to exercise control over the natural environment” (Habermas, 2018, p. 49).

He evaluates the legitimacy of the technologization of human nature in terms of its contribution to human health and increased life expectancy. According to Habermas, due to the perceptions and expectations surrounding technology, the technologization of human nature will continue to appear legitimate. However, the individual’s desire to achieve autonomy is closely aligned with this goal (Habermas, 2018, p. 51). He explores whether the genetic self-transformation of the human species serves to enhance individual autonomy or, conversely, disrupts the social order of people living with mutual respect as masters of their own lives. If the latter is true, it would result in an ethical situation that, even without providing a moral argument to individuals, would urge them to “exercise caution and restraint,” thereby fostering harmony among them (Habermas, 2018, p. 57).

4. Conclusion

Habermas has made profound contributions to sociology and philosophy through his extensive body of work, maintaining a significant intellectual presence in ongoing political, philosophical, and social debates. His scientific inquiries are primarily conducted through philosophical discourse. This study offers brief evaluations of the ideas, concepts, and theories presented in Habermas’s works, which are not isolated but are instead presented in a coherent, interconnected manner. Additionally, his scientific approach and methodology are assessed in relation to their alignment with foundational paradigms.

An examination of his approach to societal issues reveals that Habermas engages with multiple paradigms. Although he is situated within the critical theory tradition, his work is characterized by a process of continual updating and reconstruction, which can be understood as a self-reflexive and critical approach. Regarding scientific ethics and objectives, Habermas views science and academic life not merely as professions but as instruments for the realization of a “better society.” From a historical perspective, Habermas’s discussions—particularly those related to the public sphere—demonstrate a marked emphasis on historical context, highlighting its critical role in shaping both contemporary social and political structures.

This study examines Habermas’s core ideas, theories, and concepts under five main headings. The first of these, the “Theory of Communicative Action,” asserts that communicative action forms the foundation of the human sciences and sociocultural life.

Habermas emphasizes that communicative action, rather than goal-oriented rational action, is “the most widespread human phenomenon,” he aims for a societal structure shaped by free communication to prevail. He criticizes instrumental action, which results from rational calculations without underlying thought. He highlights the importance of communicative action in facilitating intersubjective communication, social solidarity, mutual understanding, and consensus without coercion. Communicative action takes place within the realm that Habermas conceptualizes as the lifeworld. The lifeworld serves as the context in which communication occurs and as the source from which communication is nourished, reproducing the lifeworld itself.

Second, under the heading “Modernity as an Unfinished Project and Critiques of Postmodernity,” Habermas’s position on modernity and postmodernity is examined. Habermas contends that modernity is an unfinished project, thereby arguing that the notion of postmodernity need not be considered. He defends modernity against postmodernity, critiquing it from multiple perspectives, and views postmodernist theories as an ideological assault on the principles of modernity.

Third, under the title “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,” Habermas’s concept of the public sphere and its functions are discussed. Habermas refers to the concept of the public sphere as something akin to public opinion, which is accessible to all citizens. Individuals become part of the public sphere by forming a public body. Creating a public body means establishing an area where individuals can gather, organize, express, and publish their thoughts without restrictions on matters of general public interest. Habermas outlines the transformation of the public sphere, from its rise in the early stages of modernity to its eventual decline in later periods.

Fourth, under the heading “Legitimation Crisis,” the concept of the legitimacy crisis, central to Habermas’s political sociology and historical materialism, is explored. According to Habermas, the legitimacy crisis refers to the tensions that propel governments toward instability and potential anarchy. This crisis arises in capitalist societies when substantial segments of the population become unconvinced of the rationality underpinning the existing system, thereby undermining the system’s legitimacy.

Fifth, under the heading “Technology and Science as Ideology and the Future of Human Nature,” Habermas critically engages with Marcuse’s concept of the liberating potential of technology, suggesting that it ultimately leads to the instrumentalization of human beings. He explores how, akin to instrumental reason, technology is similarly instrumentalized to serve the system’s mechanisms of domination. In his examination of the future of human nature, Habermas focuses on the technologization of human nature, asserting that its legitimacy can only be evaluated based on its contribution to enhancing human health and extending life expectancy.

Habermas’s insights remain profoundly relevant in contemporary debates, particularly in addressing legitimacy crises, the ethical implications of scientific advancements, and the

societal consequences of technological transformation. His call for unfinished modernity and his revision of critical theory underscores the need for continual engagement with the principles of rationality, democracy, and public discourse in the face of evolving global challenges.

In conclusion, this study has explored Habermas's theoretical contributions by examining his key concepts, such as communicative action, modernity as an unfinished project, the public sphere, legitimacy crises, and the interplay between technology and human nature. Beyond summarizing these frameworks, it is essential to situate them within broader social contexts to understand their implications for contemporary societal challenges. Habermas's emphasis on communicative rationality provides a robust lens for analyzing how democratic legitimacy and social cohesion can be cultivated through inclusive and dialogical public discourse. This perspective is particularly pertinent in addressing societal fragmentation and the erosion of trust in democratic institutions, as it underscores the transformative potential of rational communication in mitigating polarization and fostering mutual understanding.

Moreover, Habermas's critique of instrumental rationality and its implications for technology and modernity resonates with ongoing debates about the ethical dimensions of scientific and technological advancements. His work challenges societies to reconsider how technological developments can either reinforce systems of domination or serve as tools for emancipation and human flourishing. The historical and sociological grounding of his analyses—particularly his exploration of the public sphere—provides a valuable framework for understanding the evolving dynamics of power, agency, and collective action in an era marked by rapid social and technological change.

Ultimately, Habermas's theoretical approach bridges normative ideals with practical realities, offering critical tools for rethinking the relationship between individuals, institutions, and society. By advocating for a communicatively rational society that prioritizes dialogue, inclusion, and solidarity, Habermas not only enriches sociological theory but also equips contemporary societies with a vision for navigating the complexities of modernity in pursuit of a more equitable and democratic future.

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