

Jürgen Habermas' Concept of Universal Pragmatics: A Practical Approach to Ethics and Innovation

by

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*“The essence of an independent mind lies
not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks.”*

- Christopher Hitchens¹

*“The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and
reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding.”*

- Jürgen Habermas²

INTRODUCTION: The World in a State of “Chassis”

No matter how fast we run in our Air Jordans to whatever gated community, we are namelessly and oddly bereft. We are insecure and negligent in our parenting and citizenship, caught between a public sphere (corporations, officialdom) that feels hollow, and a private sphere (family) that feels besieged. We aren't safe on the tribal streets. We are equally weightless, in orbit and cyberspace; balloonlike, in exile or migration; tiddlywinks on the credit grid; fled abroad like jobs and capital; disappeared like Latin American journalists; missing, like the children whose mugshots show up on milk cartons; bugged, tapped, videotaped, downsized, hijacked, organ-donored, gene-spliced, lite-beered, vacuum-sealed, overdrawn, nonrefundable, void where prohibited, and stealthed. “All that is solid melts into air,” wrote Karl Marx. And Stephen King agrees.³

I have been drawn, in recent years, into discussions of public service innovation with an ever widening circle of people who have occasionally displayed a sense of urgency that would have bordered on zealotry, if only there were agreement about the shape and direction that innovation should take. Academic analysts and practical public servants alike appear to hold sincere convictions about the rate of social and technological change, new economic and political realities, and the inexorable global dynamics that seem to have us in their maw. So, breathless debates take place about the necessity of finding solutions to the multiple emergencies of our time. Whether discussing infrastructure (urban transportation and communications), public services (universal health care and education), finances (budgets, debts and deficits, and the prospect of the “loonie” in free-fall), or the tension between the attack on terrorism and the further development of the “national security state,” almost everyone seems to agree with Sean O’Casey’s character

Joxer who, in *Juno and the Paycock*,⁴ let it be known that the world was in “a terrible state of chassis.” Indeed, as we are earnestly informed by premiers and pundits, the world is in a worse “state of chassis,” and allegedly will never be the same again.

It may be, of course, that much of the talk about crisis is self-serving rhetoric produced by those who stand to profit from a public stunned by the images of September 11th and persuaded by right-wing ideologues, “smart-card” innovators, and flacks for insurance companies and HMOs that social programs recently known as “sacred trusts” are just too expensive to maintain in their current form. Certainly, arms manufacturers, police forces (both public and private) and the various recipients of the billions of dollars now allocated to domestic surveillance and security are giddy with their new treasure trove, and are eager to keep their particular pots boiling.⁵ It may also be that CNN’s format of “all war all the time” does no less than provide a relentless context for cant and hyperbole intended to promote the view that homeland security (however ineptly handled) is more important than health, education, welfare, the environment and anything else except the kind of gruesome and ghoulish murders that guarantee the accused (or their lawyers) and the victims’ families (and their lawyers) what fame (or infamy) can be won on the Larry King Show. If nothing else, the international preoccupation with terrorism (or “regime change”), despite some serious second thoughts about ineptness and chicanery, can certainly be interpreted as a convenient way to extend the corporate agenda of globalization with the US 101st Airborne Division leading the way. Meanwhile, the most serious conflict extant (at the time of writing), the US attack on Iraq, is being persuasively characterized as a hoax by “the usual suspects” and identified as the product of the “Cheney-Bush junta” by the # 1 suspect, Gore Vidal, a man independently connected by blood and marriage to *both* John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier. Both the unofficial opposition and the “class traitors” of the US plutocracy are revealing the bizarre fictions that sustain at least temporarily, the current dynamics of oil and Islam.⁶

Despite the growing ambiguity, domestic social concerns can still be dismissed as belonging to the world of “September 10th” while those whose competitive advantage flows from a sense of public powerlessness do what they can to promote what Linda McQuaig has aptly called a “cult of impotence” among citizens.⁷ What is more, even those who remain skeptical of the current policies of government are likely to believe that there is little or nothing to be done to alter the current state of affairs. Corporate con games and guile may be utterly transparent, but many people seem convinced that “the fix is in.” Hypocritical expressions of outrage by politicians at corporate malfeasance as in, for example, the Enron debacle are comic. The criminal behavior of hundreds of private firms (including many of the most prosperous and, thus, respected) is well documented. Thus, the material and cultural prospects for the common weal do seem rather awful.⁸

It cannot, therefore, be gainsaid that, whatever the motives and the means, the opening years of the third millennium sent our ethical and political compasses a-spinning. Distortion, fabrication and rhetorical exaggeration aside, many people do sincerely believe that this is not the same world as before. The consequences of change are everywhere in evidence, and many are bizarre. What would Canada’s founding Prime

Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald have thought of alleged “conservatives” chastising a Liberal Prime Minister for declining to send Canadian troops to war in support of American objectives in Iraq and in apparent defiance of international law? What would the author of the “National Policy” and the creator of tariffs against US imports have made of the argument that the most compelling reason for such an action would have been ensure that Canadian free trade with the USA would not be jeopardized? At the other end of the mainstream political spectrum, what would social democrat Tommy Douglas have made his successor New Democratic Party stalwarts embracing the Anthony Giddens’ “third way” and commiserating with corporate health care providers in the interest of privatizing public health in order to meet the requirements of the *Canada Health Act*. All Orwellian newspeak and conventional political doublespeak aside, something serious is plainly going on.

The purpose of this little paper is modest. It is simply to suggest that, in the current circumstances, it may be wise to take a breath and to make room for a moment of reflection. We seem as swept up in myth and metaphor as was the survivor of a fictional narrative set out in the middle of the nineteenth century by Edgar Allan Poe who was swept up (or, rather, down) by the ocean. In a short story called “A Decent into the Maelström,” Poe's practical message was that the only way for a ship to escape destruction in an awesome whirlpool was to abandon all resistance, to go (as it were) with the flow, and to regain control after the terrifying force of nature had naturally abated.⁹ I cannot speak to the nautical wisdom of this strategy (although the advice that one should steer into the skid if losing control of an automobile on a slippery road seems both sound and similar). I do know, however, that the panicky chatter extant today is (mostly) about human ideas, human actions and all-too-human institutions. It is not (legitimate concerns about ecological degradation notwithstanding) about unfathomable, unalterable and indomitable nature. Accordingly, though faced with a future that appears fraught with danger and disposed to do us ill, it is important to remind ourselves that it remains possible to change course. We need not speak so unethically about “lifeboat ethics.” We may acknowledge that the recently popular pyrometaphor of the “burning platform” was a bit too heated. Still, to carry on in the briny tradition, we may notice that the *Titanic* is about to sail, but we need not worry that we might miss the boat! Despite all the talk about the inevitability of future trends, we must remind ourselves that the future is not predestined and that we can still choose to do otherwise.

To underscore and extend my point, let me remind you that I began in the first person singular, shamelessly revealing my willingness to express my own concerns. I am hopeful that such a self-conscious display of egocentricity will encourage others to do the same, to demonstrate that it is no longer bad form (even, I have been told, in the most recent stylistic pronouncements of the APA) to insert the “I”-word into formal discourse. Indeed, I submit that it is not just permissible, but almost necessary to do so for both rhetorical and epistemological reasons. I want, you see, to make it plain that open, honest and rational debate is possible. Not only can we get away with it; it might prove invaluable to any endeavor in which the subject of ethics is broached. I want to suggest that the place to start is neither in a polysyllabic probe of opaque academic chitchat, nor in blind acquiescence in a practical reality to which the only available response is a pre-

emptive (or, perhaps, a proactive) cringe. I want to hypothesize that it is all right to start with our very selves if we seek to understand the world, to change the world, or both.

I do not do so in the interest of solipsism, nor in pursuit of some Kantian transcendental ego. I want, instead, to start with the personal in order to get to the political, to restore a decent sense of politics to political life, and to place the individual at the motivational and interpretive center of that optimistic restoration. It certainly beats beginning with hypostatized and reified abstractions—society, the economy, the “bottom line” beneath which “ordinary Canadians” will sink “at the end of the day” into the clutches of whatever the so-called “reality is” at any given time. As for matters that are surely familiar to you, dear reader, I want also to set aside (or at least put in proper perspective) the subsets of contemporary ideological renderings of putative real life. I want especially to discount many of the theoretical and empirical treatises of academics, as well as the vision statements and strategic plans of executives together with their accompanying objectives, performance indicators, client satisfaction measures, and sundry appeals to accountability.

To do so, I propose a four-step plan:

- I think it would be helpful to divest ourselves of prejudices when dealing with people who are as concerned about public sector innovation as we are;
- I think it is important to diagnose our own predispositions, not as they relate to others but as they contaminate our own ideas and distort our views of innovation;
- I think that it is crucial to explore the relationships between human interests and human knowledge, between ideology and rationality, and between “ends” and “means” in the treatment of ethics and innovation;
- I think it is wise to reflect on the question: “What is innovation for?”

At each step, I propose that such a program can favorably be informed by the insights of one of the late twentieth-century’s most influential social philosophers, Jürgen Habermas.

HABERMAS: Marxism and Postmarxism

*The fundamental difference between Marx’s critique of politics and modern political theory lies in their respective positions on private property. ... The significance of Marx’s critique of politics and his relation to modern political theory lies in his demonstration that the solution to the contradictions inherent in politics cannot be achieved in criticism which is solely theoretical or in the manipulation of the concept of property, but that it is necessary to overcome the real existence of private property, the source of political relations, by real existing means.*¹⁰

CONFLICT
The ideal pastime.
Puts you in command.
*Any number can play ...*¹¹

For those unfamiliar with him, a few brief biographical comments may be in order. Jürgen Habermas was born in 1929, early enough to become a member of the Hitler Youth, but not to bear the weight of guilt for the events of 1933-1945 (when it is arguable that the world really *did* change). He is the foremost member of the “second generation” of the Frankfurt School, that singular collection of intellectuals associated with the Institute for Social Research, founded in Frankfurt, Germany also in 1929. Its principal figures developed what is now widely and sometimes indiscriminately known as “critical theory.” Their project was to blend elements of traditional normative philosophy with the empirical methods of modern social science and to produce from these ingredients a creative and liberating social philosophy. Inspired in large part by Marxism, but self-consciously opposed to dogma and doctrine. Its leaders incorporated insights from diverse sources. Everything from linguistics to psychoanalysis was fair game. Says *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*: “The ultimate goal of its program is to link theory and practice, to provide insight and to empower subjects to change their oppressive circumstances and achieve human emancipation, a rational society that satisfies human needs and powers ...”¹² No small task!

The “first generation” of the Frankfurt School included such luminaries as Theodor W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse. They carried on a freewheeling Hegelian and Marxian tradition that suffered no orthodoxy and displayed extraordinary courage, versatility and virtuosity. Jürgen Habermas is doubtless the most famous of their progeny. He has, however, built new intellectual bridges to an even greater variety of thinkers than did his forebears. His gallery of influence ranges from the eighteenth-century German universalist Immanuel Kant to American pragmatists from C. S. Pierce to Richard Rorty.¹³ He has departed substantially from his mentors’ preoccupation with Karl Marx. Instead, he takes into account and integrates into his own work the encyclopedic contributions of sociologists Max Weber, George Herbert Mead and even Talcott Parsons; language theorists Wittgenstein, Whorf and Chomsky; assorted phenomenologists, ethnomethodologists, functionalists, structuralists, poststructuralists and deconstructionists; a number of developmental psychologists; Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, and most especially the aforementioned Immanuel Kant. His credentials as a polymath are staggering. Still, he has not lost contact with the ethical impulse behind critical theory; indeed, it has become the central theme of his work.

Habermas proceeds from the observation that capitalism can no longer (if it ever could) be read as a drama of class conflict, that the key to benevolent social evolution and a livable future must be found elsewhere:

The interests bearing on the maintenance of the mode of production can no longer be “clearly localized” in the social system as class interests. For the power structure, aimed as it is at avoiding dangers to the system, precisely

excludes “domination” ... exercised in such a manner that one class *confronts* another as an identifiable group.¹⁴

Gone (or at least complicated out of recognizable existence) is the traditional marxian concern with alienation (from nature, from society, from the products of our labor, and from our very selves). Taking a more prominent place is inequity which, for Habermas, has become mainly a matter of marginalization. The underprivileged may live in circumstances of poverty and dispossession because of any number of those ascribed characteristics that are commonly identified in declarations of human rights as being in the inventory of improper bases for prejudice, discrimination and harassment. Their often desperate conditions and their allocation to any number of disadvantaged social categories describes their fate; they are not, however, exploited in the traditional sense because the rich do not live off their labor. Moreover, in Habermas’ view, both real and potential class antagonisms between owners and workers have become so obscured that, although they may remain latent, few show signs of leading to serious conflict, final or otherwise.

Cutting himself off from the emancipatory project of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse and more in league with Dahrendorf than with Marx, Habermas seems to have accepted his role as a postmarxist thinker.¹⁵ Sympathetic critics such as Ben Agger describe his transition as an unprecedented enlargement of marxian thought, with socialism being reformulated as what Habermas has come to call the “ideal speech situation.”¹⁶ The concept is important. It is conceived to be a circumstance involving competent speakers; that is, adults able “to embed sentences in relations to reality in such a way that they can take on the general pragmatic functions of representation, expression, and establishing legitimate interpersonal relations.”¹⁷ These speakers, in other words, can use sentences to say something meaningful about the empirical world, freely express their normative intentions, and do both openly and honestly in order to build trust among people of good will. They must also have an effective equality of opportunity to give voice to their views, advance unconstrained and undistorted points of argument, make claims to truth based on reason and supported by evidence, and move toward a rationally motivated consensus.

That such a situation is normally counterfactual is no reason to dismiss it as a standard against which ideological confrontation can be judged and found wanting. Indeed, Agger praises Habermas for giving contemporary expression to precisely the kind of crises that Marx thought would result from the structural contradictions in capitalist economies. Habermas does not deny the problems that inhere in capitalism; according to Agger, he merely extends their discussion to the cultural and political realms, the latter being an extension made necessary because of the increased responsibility that the state has assumed for managing the economic environment in a way that is conducive to monopolistic and oligopolistic corporate profit while, at the same time, ameliorating the conditions of oppression in which most people would otherwise live. So, Habermas notes that “developed capitalism swings between the contrary policies of ‘the market’s self-healing powers’ and state interventionism. ... These *systematic disequilibria* become *crises*,” he continues, “only when the performances of economy and state remain

manifestly below an established level of expectation and harm the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld by calling forth conflicts and resistance there.”¹⁸ Agger adds, perhaps just a little presumptuously: “I suspect that Marx, were he alive today, would agree.”¹⁹

If Agger is right, then Marx might also share the belief that there is a pressing need to attempt to realize ideal speech situations in practice. The substantive rationality associated with positivism and what Habermas calls the knowledge-constitutive interests that go along with it are ultimately self-defeating.²⁰ The contradictions in modernity that were partly identified by Marx now are visible in domains outside the economy. Dominant modes of socialization and consumption combine with impending ecological problems to create crises in the legitimacy of social institutions and ideologies, to say nothing of material calamities resulting from the creation of a toxic environment by industrial nations and a toxic political standoff between industrial nations and those new nations that feel deprived of the alleged benefits of industrialism. Whether talking of the degradation of the environment or of the egregious rhetorical assaults on the homeless, the poor, the recipients of social assistance, the elderly, nurses, teachers, and almost anyone not engaged either in private business or in the neoliberal political parties that ensure corporate tax relief, it is plain that either an inchoate anger or an eremitic alienation now possesses many more than enough voters in many more than enough jurisdictions. No longer assuming the efficacy of government, citizens-especially among the comparatively young-increasingly vote with their feet by no longer walking into their polling stations. Habermas once hypothesized circumstances in which “new potentials for conflict and apathy, characterized by withdrawal of motivation and inclination toward protest, and supported by subcultures, lead to a refusal to perform assigned functions on such a scale as to endanger the system as a whole.”²¹ Today, he might hypothesize terrorism.

In critical situations, when the legitimacy of political, economic and social institutions is brought into question, Habermas insists that the conventional forms of knowledge and power will be inadequate to the task of maintaining existing social arrangements. In such cases, commitment to notions of self-regulation loses its veracity. Whether exercised by market forces or by administrative strategies based on one or another variant on systems theory, authorities are not up to the task of restoring social equilibrium precisely because, “at this stage of rationalization, critical reflection on traditional values as values is rendered superfluous.” In the end, the threat or the application of brute force awaits.

Before the end, time will be bought by processes of consultation and even negotiation that give potential dissidents just enough to keep on consulting and negotiating. Intelligent authoritarians know this, and can be counted on not only to practice, but occasionally to sincerely believe in the illusion of pluralist politics. Thomas McCarthy, Habermas’ frequent translator and elucidator, explains that “Habermas, regards the idea of a cybernetically self-regulated organization of society as the highest expression of the technological consciousness.”²²

That technological consciousness is committed to scientific-technological rationality and implies a particular theory of history that Habermas regards as dysfunctional to the extent of being autodestructive:

[This] substantive rationality ... reveals ... in the anticipated concept of a cybernetically self-regulated organization of society, a tacit philosophy of history. This is based on the questionable thesis that human beings control their destinies rationally to the degree to which social techniques are applied, and that human destiny is capable of being rationally guided in proportion to the extent of cybernetic control and the application of these techniques. But such a rational administration of the world is not simply identical with the solution of the practical problems posed by history.

There is no reason for assuming that a continuum of rationality exists extending from the capacity for technical control over objectified processes to the practical mastery of historical processes. ... A rationalization of history cannot therefore be furthered by an extended power of control on the part of manipulative human beings, but only by a higher stage of reflection, a consciousness of acting human beings moving forward in the direction of emancipation.²³

This analysis seems rather distant from Marxist orthodoxy and wholly compatible with radical ideas put forward by non-marxian and even anti-marxian thinkers. I am, however, not here occupied with the debate about whether Habermas has been loyal to the marxian tradition, or has become a socialist apostate. I am, as well, unconcerned about specific criticisms such as those related to Habermas' apparent indifference to gender issues, his desertion of the questions of alienated labor and its relationship to technology, his inflation of the idea of communications to the status of metaphor for all social relations, and his related failure to address the primary source of communicative incompetence, the advertising, entertainment and news media that so effectively trivialize and distort social processes and understanding.²⁴ Neither do I choose to worry about whether Habermas' theoretical compromises with the likes of Talcott Parsons, and his earnest efforts to use such compromises to win greater acceptance for his theories in established academic circles have enhanced his credibility or exposed his potential political vitality to what George Grant famously called the gelding knife of liberalism.²⁵

What I *am* concerned to affirm is the fact that Habermas' practical goal and moral standard, the ideal speech situation, cannot exist in conditions of practical inequality. Capitalism, albeit in its state-regulated and largely oligopolistic form, remains-even for those who feel uncomfortable within the marxian tradition-the prevailing social formation wherein domination exists. Moreover, capitalism is at least ideologically vulnerable to criticism for it no longer has much to do (if it ever did) with notions of "free enterprise," unless that phrase no longer implies the values of real risk taking, creative entrepreneurship, fair markets and genuine competition. Rather, capitalism is manifest in the domination of the economy by private corporate wealth and is ably abetted by governmental structures whose main chore is to intervene to avoid crises in production,

distribution and, most importantly, profit-taking. Apart from some labor-intensive industries that, Habermas says, are “tolerated” at the “fringe” of late capitalism, corporate hegemony can be seen simultaneously in the economic, political and cultural spheres.²⁶ So, capitalism remains a fundamental obstacle to human emancipation.

Habermas has agreed to all of this, but he finds it an inadequate basis upon which to build either a critical theory of society or a program for human emancipation. He has, therefore, turned away from political economy to the critique of ideology which vulgar and even some not-so-vulgar Marxists have traditionally tended to define merely as false consciousness, a superstructural by-product of a determining economic base. Habermas has done so with a view to extending the traditions of the enlightenment, rather than to promoting revolutionary struggle. One helpful consequence of this shift in focus is his capacity to provide us with some of the tools necessary to “deconstruct” our own ideological limitations, to supply us with a practical guide to developing some ethical considerations about the matter of social change in general, and of public sector innovation in particular.

It is not my intention to attempt a learned philosophical exegesis on the formidable *oeuvre* of Herr Habermas (even considering only those of his works that have been translated into English, the quantity of the material is immense, and its density can be quite intimidating). Moreover, even were I competent to do so (and I make no pretense to possessing such competence), the place for such an exercise would surely not be here. It would be in what, for me, are the almost impenetrable pages of authoritative but largely inaccessible philosophical journals and at the high table of the sort of senior common rooms envisioned in novels by the likes of C. P. Snow.²⁷ This does not mean, however, that we in the laity need be denied some advantage from even an impure understanding of great men. My means of doing so is to cull a few concepts from the extensive Habermasian literature, to take them cheerfully out of context, and to apply them like pearls to an experiential string; that admitted, I shall, perhaps more with brazen impudence than Socratic wisdom, proceed.

THEORISTS AND PRACTITIONERS: Disposing of Prejudice about Our Friends

*Political science does not prescribe drugs, for its competence is not in human physiology or body chemistry; but it should aim at prescribing the organizational innovations and social experiments that will allow us to cultivate, in Albert Schweitzer’s term, a “reverence for life.”*²⁸

Being neither much of a theorist nor any kind of practitioner of public sector innovation, I can perhaps claim some distance from (and hence some perspective on) both activities. In discussing innovations with people whose job it is either to speculate about them or to actually put them into operation, I have commonly been troubled by the lack of interest in dealing with the question: *cui bono?* Who benefits? Instead, conversation seems more comfortable with theorists when the subject turns to such topics as the social relations among interested or affected groups (politicians, public interest groups, the general populace). It is likewise easier with practitioners when instrumental questions such as

overcoming resistance to innovation are addressed (talk here tends to focus on the importance of “empowerment,” or of “change champions”). As a result, there seems no formal difference between, say, the introduction of “workfare” and the development of an “aboriginal justice system,” though, in my mind, the kinds of political values behind each are very far apart. This tendency either to avoid or to let remain tacit the political beliefs that choose this (repressive) innovation and that (emancipatory) innovation is one of the few things that theorists and practitioners appear to have in common.

In talking to people about what I might usefully include in this paper, I was given a good deal of advice. One of the main problems I would encounter, I was often told, was the disparity between the idealistic academics and the pragmatic public servants. People who earned their living by talking about public administration and people who put food on their tables by doing public administration were, it was confided to me, two different sorts of people who regarded each other with some combination of indifference, misunderstanding and sometimes contempt. Returning momentarily to C. P. Snow, it seemed that his old hobbyhorse, *The Two Cultures*, was still being ridden with glee.²⁹

On one side, I was assured, were the denizens of various ivory towers (or, more likely, red brick or poured concrete bunkers), who sought to spin out of the web of shaggy governmental practice, the fine silk of academic theory. Unable to speak easily to the unlettered public, professors have tended to retreat to one of two forms of deep thought and publishable action (what we will come to call “language games”-see glossary). Some were preoccupied with dumping data into computers in search of attractive percentage tables or, better, correlation matrices that would, with the piercing pin of factor analytical methodology, winkle out of the slimy flesh of statistics the pearl of a causal relationship. Others, adding interminable footnotes to Weber, traded data grubbing for elegant verbal models of formal relationships, and typologies of ideas and action that have commonly had the intellectual shelf life of a genetically modified tomato-with or without the piscine gene. About them it might be truly said that no number could screw in a light bulb, for they would too soon be distracted by discourse about the discourse of disenlightenment, and might be saved only if a candle were handy and someone could recall—now that pipe smoking is politically incorrect—how to strike a match.

On the other side were the practitioners, the policy makers and line managers who had the serious task of dealing with a demanding and occasionally cranky public, and of doing so with well-known fiscal constraints. Just as academic specialists in public administration were inclined to ape the theory and methods (or at least the language) of natural scientists, so senior public servants came to mimic the theory and methods (or at least the language) of the private sector. All caught up in (or by) the “new public management,” they had acquired a lexicon imported from (or imposed upon them by) the privateers of public services. Retaining the silly sayings of systems theory that had been inappropriately appropriated from electronic circuit boards by social scientists seeking to sound scientific, they paid due attention to “inputs” and received “feedback” (best understood as the annoying whine that blasts from the speakers at high school gyms and Legion halls when the sound system is improperly set up) that was taken into account when revising their “service delivery systems.” To this, moreover, the learned disciples

of David Easton appended the pernicious vocabulary of business management gurus and ghostwriters of CEO autobiographies.³⁰ Eager to become “virtual” organizations, some “vision” (now-like “access” and “impact”-increasingly used as a transitive verb) transforming into “e-government” as quick as a bunny on a laser beam. Workers, who had already been depersonalized enough as “personnel,” now became “human resources” and “multi-tasking human resources on contract” at that. Citizens became “clients” or, worse, “consumers,” who were to be engaged by employees with “people skills.” Decisions, in what John Ralston Saul has rightly identified as an especially insulting and anti-democratic bit of administrative argot, were to involve “stakeholders.” Thus, the public sphere was restricted. Thus, all genuinely disinterested citizens were excluded from political deliberations.³¹

Partaking of the cult of efficiency, and deemed “anti-intellectual” for their efforts to focus attention on the job at hand, practitioners are commonly included among those to whom J. M. Keynes famously referred when he said: “Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist ... [or] academic scribbler of a few years back.”³²

Now these caricatures, I hasten to explain, are not intended to apply to anyone reading (or making or listening to comments derived from) this paper. The mere fact that we are gathered in one room or have gained access to one web site means that we have overcome such petty divisions. Indeed, even when applied to those outside this small “discourse community,” these exaggerated stereotypes may seem harsh. Few academics, however, can deny that an ever-so-slight sense of intellectual superiority creeps in between the lines of their loquacious textual and sophisticated mathematical models of what the objects of their study do in what is intellectually discounted as real life. Nor can many down-to-earth administrators totally resist the suspicion that, for all their apparent erudition, at least a few fuzzy-headed academicians would be rendered apoplectic if ever compelled to devise and deliver effective programs under the critical gaze of political elites and the caviling scrutiny of the voters or, in especially unpleasant cases, the reproachful regard of the mass communications media.

The first step in working toward a fruitful discussion of the ethics of innovation is, therefore, to acknowledge the temptation to treat others as we would treat some of the cardboard cutouts that have been offered here. This is not done to suggest that there is an unbridgeable chasm between theorists and practitioners, but to clear away some initial inhibitions to a discussion of ethics. These introductory impediments take the form of a systematic blurring of our perceptions and, consequently, distortion of our discussions. Talk about ethics (or anything else of actual importance) can, Habermas suggests, best take place in conditions approaching an ideal speech situation. Such a situation does not and cannot exist when participants fundamentally misunderstand each other or when the minimum condition is one of at least tentative mutual respect is not met.

Once differences are acknowledged, however, they can be at least partially resolved, and a climate of trust can grow. Meantime, the opportunity to identify areas of common understanding can be permitted to emerge. No matter how different one person’s

perception of the other as actor and thinker, it can at least be understood that some other (and more central) perceptions are shared. Without delving into how these shared perceptions came to be, or fussing much about their specific nature and practical consequences, I have little doubt that those with an expressed interest in public sector innovation have some ideas in common. Among them are likely to be a firm belief that intractable social problems exist, and that changes in public sector activities and attitudes may have pertinent ameliorative effects upon those problems. If, then, the good intentions, good will and good faith of others can be assumed (at least for the sake of argument), it is possible to build the foundations of creative discussion for the purpose of advancing toward a more inclusive discourse. It would allow for competing definitions of problems and conflicting ideas about potential solutions to become the subject of a rational collaborative enterprise. Struggles over everything from personalities and occupational dispositions to epistemological issues concerning the nature of the knowledge required to solve problems and principled political ideas concerning the policies which ought to form the substance of innovation could be transformed. They could be made over into a collegial exercise in consensus formation, provided, of course, that the achievement of a consensus about controversial topics was what the participants truly had in mind.

REASON, KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN PURPOSE: The Critique of Ideology

Even though one man's misery, as Dostoevski has pointed out, may be another's joy, to formulate our condition and prospects in bio-psychological terms can at least give us testable, empirical problems.³³

Having tentatively agreed to put merely personal differences temporarily aside, it is worthwhile to reflect on our own assumptions about what how our interests-both ideological and material-shape the nature of our communications with others. If asked, most of us would be able to provide answers to an inventory of questions concerning major and minor political issues. Indeed, most of us, at least privately, would be able to bring these discrete opinions into a coherent pattern that we might declare to be our political philosophy (and that others might dismissively label our ideology). Hence, some of us might admit (or proudly proclaim) ourselves to be conservatives or liberals or social democrats. Some others might mix and match signifiers, and hold ourselves out as fiscal conservatives, but social liberals. Supple minds might indulge in the subtlety of calling themselves "red Tories"; defensive ones would reject efforts to pigeonhole their complex and subtle mental sets, and speak defiantly against categorization for no other reason than that their ideas are internally inconsistent. A few might still seek refuge in the obfuscation that we have experienced the "end of ideology," that we are "last men" living at "the end of history," and that such distinctions as the one between "left" and "right" are now obsolete.³⁴ The more adventuresome might own up to a mild anarchic streak or a nostalgic affection for syndicalism. The truly faint of heart would try to pass themselves off as romantics. This kind of internal account of our multidimensional political selves is easy to produce. It is the stuff and substance of psychological tests, opinion surveys and self-awareness questionnaires of the sort that are regularly discussed on daytime chat shows, and appear in popular magazines from *Playboy* to *Psychology Today*.

Habermas asks us to go a little deeper. He wants us to explore knowledge-constitutive interests. Habermas posits three fundamental human interests that employ different methods for different purposes in the seemingly common quest for knowledge. He wants to probe the deep linkages among knowledge, experience and human purpose. What needs eventually to be done is a form of self-analysis for which Habermas sets the stage, especially in his book, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, and in some earlier commentaries.³⁵ What Habermas reveals is that the content of our thought is less important than the manner of our thought. Specific opinions can change or be changed but, beneath them, our epistemological assumptions frequently remain unchallenged. Put simply, it is Habermas' argument that there are different kinds of knowledge, with different criteria for truth claims, which represent and are represented in different communities with different political, economic and ideological interests. Accordingly, much human argument never gets so far as a contest about actual claims regarding "the facts of the matter." This is so because they proceed from different bases, employ incompatible vocabularies, and inevitably produce only monstrous misrepresentations distortions of rational debate. The three kinds of interests are called technical, practical and emancipatory.

Allocating specific intellectual projects to one of these categories is no mere question of sorting out the status of contending propositions by reference to an elementary text on logic. Not only do the different interests imply different forms of knowledge structured according to irreconcilable epistemological assumption and advanced by different methodologies; they are reflective of patterns of domination. Habermas' intent is not just to sort out formalistic semantic squabbles, to construct a quasi-Linnaean typologies of human language games; it is also to address concrete issues of social equity and justice by demonstrating the human interests that inhere in types of knowledge and modes of inquiry. He teaches us that our discrete opinions are less important than the interests that are vested in our rules about what counts as knowledge. Recognizing that there are various kinds of knowledge, each of which has human interests embedded within it, can be an enlightening step toward reducing the failures in our own perceptions, speech and action. Early on, Habermas identified three basic kinds of knowledge to correspond with the three fundamental interests. It is time to attend to them.

First, there is what we commonly call "scientific" knowledge. It is a product of the belief that it is possible to acquire "objective" knowledge of a pre-existing external world. It is derived, in its present form, from positivism and dedicated to purposive control. He calls this "empirical-analytic" knowledge.³⁶ It serves technical interests.

Second, there is the kind of knowledge won by the social sciences. Imitative of positivism, it nonetheless deals with the contingencies of human experience. It must acknowledge that human beings are not billiard balls; our behavior is not the result of simple exchanges of kinetic energy. Thus, we are not predictable in the sense that a collision of billiard balls yields predictable results provided that an observer has a knowledge of geometry and physics, and has enough prior data about the mass of the balls, the force of the cue stroke, the amount of wear on the felt and so on. Habermas

calls knowledge that must take meaning and consciousness into account “historical-hermeneutic.” It is geared to generating more than scientific and reductionist explanations. Still, it only barely masks the human purpose of control in social contexts where empirical events are constantly shifting. It is the kind of knowledge that serves practical interests.

Empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic knowledge have a good deal in common. Natural science can hold up an ideal of objective knowledge and seek natural “laws” to describe and explain physical phenomena. Social science can mimic science in the effort to come up with “law-like” statements about human action. Indeed, the clarity of the line between them is obscured not just by the pretensions of experimentally minded social scientists but by the nature of the essentially historical data upon which geologists and evolutionary biologists, for example, must depend. Indeed, the social sciences have shared a great deal with all forms of biology; they are all concerned with what Jung called *creatura*, entities governed by the *principium individuationis*, ultimately Dionysian creatures capable of distinguishing themselves from their environments, from the eternal, from “primeval, perilous sameness.”³⁷ Mirthful, engaged, aesthetic, skeptical, sullen, solitary, practical and pious, they are all merely mortal. Limited in space and time, they are likewise subject to direct and indirect observation and analysis.

As stated, both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic knowledge are contemporarily associated and historically derived from various species of positivism. Yet, paradoxically, just as social scientists yearn for the security of conceptual instruments that would perfectly describe, explain and predict human behavior, natural scientists-especially particle physicists and cosmologists-have abandoned the refuge of the Newtonian universe. They are off on a quest for knowledge that resembles poetry as much as the product of a calculator, and smacks, in some of its most daring moments, of mysticism.³⁸ Likewise, under contemporary conditions of late capitalism, social scientists are finding themselves limited precisely as the cherished external reality of science seems perilously close to becoming problematized, or at least pushed beyond the borders of ordinary language and instrumental thought. Deconstructed by Derrida, made foolish by Foucault, holding no territory where French academics fear to tread, we now behold a host of dismal social sciences. Each as bland, timid, obsequious and sycophantic as the other, modern human studies seem unable to find a persuasive language with which to imagine a life beyond *The Eighteenth Brumaire* of President Bush. As Jean-François Lyotard put it: “Capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealize familiar objects, social roles, and institutions to such a degree that the so-called realistic representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia or mockery.”³⁹

There remains, we may be glad to know, a third kind of knowledge that encourages self-reflection, that is emancipatory in intent and in effect, and within which self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one. In the concise words of one perceptive commentator, Habermas’ initial problematic boiled down to this:

Habermas found that modern society has fostered an unbalanced expansion of the technical interest in control. The drive to dominate nature

becomes a drive to dominate other human beings. Habermas' speculation about how to alleviate this distortion revolved around reasserting the rationality inherent in our "practical" and "emancipatory" interests.⁴⁰

Dallmayr extends this discussion in terms that merit quotation at length:

To some extent, existing social sciences emulated the sketched methodological paradigms of natural science; a unique kind of linkage, however, emerged in the case of critical social analysis. Such analysis proceeded from the distinction between invariant and inescapable laws of nature and such social conditions which, though ideologically rigidified and seemingly permanent, were amenable to alteration or avoidance. In the latter case a properly designed "critique of ideology," patterned after the psychoanalytical model, was able to combine explanation and understanding: once accepted and assimilated by the victim of domination, explanations of law-like conditions could engender a process of reflection which, in turn, could lead to reinterpretation and practical reorientation. The categorical framework of this critical endeavor was constituted by self-reflection, a capacity which, due to its liberating effect, could be said to be permeated by an emancipatory interest.⁴¹

One of Habermas' singular contributions has been to refine and extend crucial themes in the sociology of knowledge. He has helped us to locate truth claims in an explicitly social context, and to add to this the proposition that rational social life could be achieved only when "the validity of every norm of political consequence is made dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free of domination."⁴² Autoanalysis for the sake of clarification yields to group involvement in a process of demystifying ideological distortions in thought, word and deed.

As I understand him, Habermas is saying that both scientific and social scientific knowledge proceed from two general assumptions. First, their methods are or attempt to be "value-free." Second, within the limits imposed by circumstances, those who pursue knowledge using scientific methods do so without prejudice, without bias and without interference from normative preferences. Habermas is also suggesting that such rationales (or rationalizations) are poppycock. Both forms of scientific knowledge are geared to mastery of external phenomena-whether natural or social. Each practice is, of course, epistemologically legitimate, but they are intimately and inevitably associated with power and purpose. This is not at all to imply that either science or social science is unworthy of respect and support. It is the disproportionate prestige and power that attaches to scientism in general that Habermas seeks to redress. In fact, both he and his predecessors have put much stock in social science and its capacity to assist in achieving emancipatory results. T. W. Adorno, who took Habermas on as an assistant in 1956, won great fame for his "scientific" inquiry into the personality traits that culminated in the purportedly "authoritarian personality." Originally published by the American Jewish Committee in 1950, his psychological account revealed the individual character traits most likely to

endorse fascism, despotism, racism, religious intolerance and other unpleasantness. It was immensely popular among those who opposed prejudice and endorsed to democracy.⁴³

The fact that studies motivated by a sense of civic virtue, however, just proves Habermas' point. The power associated with scientific and social scientific statements, he says, is of two kinds. First, the statements are performed in a cultural setting in which they are compelled to compete for legitimacy with many other kinds of statements-mythological, religious, aesthetic, legalistic-which can best be described as "language games." Each language game privileges diverse or conflicting ontological assumptions and epistemological methods that are themselves expressive of inherent normative values, and that vie with one another for acceptance by the authorities, thereby becoming authoritative.

In the competition for authority, the winning language game is the one that is favored by (i.e., serves the interest of) whatever institutions and structures command economic, political and social power. Following Jean-François Lyotard, disputes about knowledge are "the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right."⁴⁴

Two brief illustrations should make the point clear. One can be found in a book that traced out the symbiotic relationship between IBM and Nazi Germany.⁴⁵ It demonstrates clearly that diverse or opposing language games, expressive of different kinds of knowledge, and associated with different human interests can have profound implications for the lives and deaths of others. In a recent review in *The Innovation Journal*, I suggested that the strategic relationship between Adolph Hitler and John Watson was of interest to more than political historians.⁴⁶ It might be made to serve as an illustration of the way in which the knowledge involved in producing computing technology and the interest in monitoring human beings amounted to more than a coincidence of technology and a specific agenda. As philosophers from Martin Heidegger-himself guilty of affiliation with the Nazi movement-to Canada's own George Grant have taken pains to show us, there is no ethical neutrality in technology. Now, Habermas has added the idea that there is no ethical neutrality in the strategies for acquiring the knowledge to create those technologies, and to play the associated language games.

In the event in question, the political interest of the Third Reich corresponded to the technological capacities of IBM. Knowledge-constitutive interests were manifest in machines that transformed complex reality into binary units, undermined quality with quantification, allowed databases to destroy individuality, and facilitated the extermination of millions. So, insofar as the social sciences are concerned, their quest for law-like generalizations about human behavior not only use the empirical methods of the natural sciences and the computational instruments of the natural sciences, but also incorporate the interests of the natural sciences (i.e., control over their objects of inquiry). Thus, the social sciences are no longer concerned with the interpretation, but with the manipulation and eventual domination of humanity.

The same or similar critiques have been made of the disciplines of psychology (notably by maverick psychiatrist, Thomas Szasz⁴⁷) and sociology. In the latter case, contrarian social theorists such as the aforementioned Martin Nicolaus have presented astonishingly perceptive and wickedly disdainful attacks on the members of their own profession. Sociological research, he says, has done with questionnaires what J. Edgar Hoover could only do with illegal wire-taps, namely collect domestic intelligence on the internally colonized and marginalized. Nicolaus, then an aspirant academic with an “in-your-face” attitude, addressed the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Washington DC in 1968. He accused mainstream sociology of “servility.” He insisted that the practice of sociology was a “criminal activity” and that sociologists were double agents, winning the trust of the dispossessed and then collecting information to be turned over to their class enemies. “The corporate rulers of this society would not be spending as much money as they do for knowledge,” he observed, “if knowledge did not confer power. So far,” he added, “sociologists have been schlepping this knowledge along a one-way chain, taking knowledge from the people, giving knowledge to the rulers. ”

Nicolaus then asked: “What if that machinery were reversed? What if the habits, problems, secrets and unconscious motivations of the wealthy were daily scrutinized by a thousand systematic researchers, were hourly pried into, analyzed and cross-referenced, tabulated and published in a hundred inexpensive mass circulation journals and written so that even a fifteen-year-old high school drop-out could understand it and predict the actions of his landlord, manipulate, and control him?”⁴⁸ The question is no longer hypothetical. The internet has made the dissemination of critical social science far more accessible than even the cheapest journals. Uncounted websites from Canadian sources such as Arthur Kroker’s *CTHEORY*, Judy Rebick’s *rabble.ca*, and *policyalternatives.ca* to such US sites as *blackradicalcongress.org*, *newdemocracy.org* and *corporatopredators.org* make oodles of information available to adversarial advocates. Leveling the field upon which language games are played, and making knowledge available to assist the dispossessed in confrontations with their oppressors have plainly emancipatory implications. All this is, however, less than Habermas desires; he believes that there is an alternative to confrontation.

PROCEDURAL AND EVALUATIVE NORMS: Getting Where from Here?

*Cum finis est licitus, etiam media sunt licitus.*⁴⁹

“Isn’t that unethical?”

*“It’s not illegal; in the criminal justice system, that makes it ethical.”*⁵⁰

*Natural Justice: A duty of procedural fairness to persons in the course of lawful interference with various of their interests.*⁵¹

Some evidence can be found that even pragmatic business theorists have a few ideas in common with Habermas. Canadian author Henry Mintzberg, for example, is only one of many experts who have written extensively on the advisability of abandoning some of the more rigid and authoritarian elements of organizational practice, albeit with the aim of

achieving dominance by other means. He has vilified every “top-down” business methodology since the highly fashionable 1960s phenomenon, PPBS that Robert S. McNamara made famous at Ford, and disastrously took to war in Vietnam.⁵² PPBS, according to US budgeting guru, Aaron Wildavsky, “has failed everywhere and at all times”; Mintzberg agrees.⁵³ It is only one of many corporate strategies intended to cope with change. Mintzberg’s critique of the more general phenomenon of strategic planning, his celebration of the “grassroots” and of “adhocracy,” and his embrace of “fluidity” and “ambiguity” as essential to effective innovation all bear a superficial resemblance to Habermas’ emancipatory ambitions.⁵⁴

He is, moreover, not content to demonstrate that most corporate strategies to enhance fiscal efficacy through autocratic means are organizationally obsolete. In this, he is in a minority that differs from most philosophers of business innovation whose commitment to leanness and meanness leads simply to the downsizing of employee rosters and the re-engineering of the working lives of those fortunate enough to keep their jobs. Led by nonagenarian neophilic Peter Drucker, efficiency enthusiasts now pursue global change in a manner that has little to do with minimal standards of human decency, to say nothing of democracy, much less of emancipation.⁵⁵

The issue at hand is larger, however, than the strategic advantage that may from time be held by suppressive or by libertarian decision-making processes. The issue is one of means versus ends, but with a twist. Determining whether or not unethical means can legitimately be used to achieve a more general and higher good is a worthy and venerable question. What Habermas discloses is the likelihood that commonly understood means almost inevitably imply predetermined ends. Processes, in short, are most often “for” something and “against” something else. Distinguishing clearly between the two is a task that is daunting to all but the most rigorously philosophical.

One relatively familiar example regularly makes itself known in courts of law. There, concepts such as “due process” are separable from the substantive results of a trial. A “guilty” person may be acquitted and an “innocent” person may be convicted depending on the relative skill of the opposing lawyers, the procedural decisions of judges, and technical rules concerning such matters as the admissibility of evidence; however, “fairness” in the process is to be distinguished from “justice” in the verdict. The degree to which we worry about process and let the chips of substance fall where they may is of considerable importance.

The point is made concrete in conservative historian W. L. Morton’s discussion of the noble differences that, he says, once distinguished Canadian from American politics. Morton built upon US historian Clinton Rossiter’s analysis of Americans as a people of a “covenant” born in revolutionary fervor, and compelled by their fate to merge procedural and evaluative norms in a conformist, exclusionary and occasionally messianic “way of life.” Canadians, by contrast, admired social order tempered by incremental social change, and placed their faith in the moderation inherent in constitutional monarchy. What Americans would then take to be a paradox was, nonetheless, the reality of Canadian life—a more tolerant, ideologically diverse society wherein genuine liberty

flourished more than in the democratic and republican country to the south. All this, said Morton, was the result of the Canadian ability to distinguish between procedural and evaluative norms with the pertinent result that, so long as Canadians obeyed the law, they were free to maintain multicultural traditions, to embrace democratic socialism and toryism as well as liberalism, and to dissent from the substantive decisions of government while remaining loyal to parliamentary democracy. "As America is united at the bottom by the covenant," Morton intones, "Canada is united at the top by allegiance."⁵⁶ One historical effect of this difference in political culture was that the United States went through the agony of a sanguinary Civil War, whereas more sanguine Canadians have been debating "sovereignty-association" and its successor concepts for a quarter-century without a shot being fired.

So persuasive is this account of Canadian constitutional affairs that such matters as the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 and the inability of the Charlottetown Accord to gain the support of the Canadian people in 1992 have emerged as examples much discussed by those who wish to make plain the relevance of Habermas' principles to actual political life. As Simone Chambers states: "Discourse is essentially open ended. Decision making is essentially close ended. A realistic model of deliberative democracy must concede that decision rules in large democracies will always place constraints on constraint-free dialogue."⁵⁷ That said, the seriousness with which Canadian citizens took their public duty to engage each other in rational discussion and the massive participation in the resulting 1992 referendum speak well of the possibilities of Habermas' project.

Habermas' central concept concerning the validity of norms is that "all affected can *freely* accept the consequences and the side effects that the *general* observance of a controversial norm can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the interests of *each individual*."⁵⁸ Reflecting on the implications of this statement, J. Donald Moon rightly argues that "if moral discourse must include questions of the good life, as well as questions of justice and, if it must acknowledge others in their concrete particularity, then the ideal of a universal consensus must elude us."⁵⁹ To achieve consensus on the nature of the good is a denial of procedural justice; it is a totalitarian ambition. We must, it seems, seek consensus but refuse to permit closure; on important issues, we must debate endlessly. The extant empirical asymmetry of power demands no less. We may follow our modern Moses only on the condition that we, too, never get to the promised land.

TOWARD AN ETHICS OF INNOVATION: Morality without Content

Politics ... is not the end to which [Habermas'] work is the means. It is no more an ideal state which might be brought about by using his work as a blueprint for an ideal society than Plato's Republic. Like play or dance or music-like Plato's interminable dialogues-politics is not good for anything beyond it. It is simply not useful, and therefore intolerable within a utilitarian, instrumentalist society. Sheer play, politics is but the exhilarating exercise of enhancing knowledge, a joyous way of doing epistemology, a gay science, in Nietzsche's phrase. Such politics, such

*poetics, give alien interests shelter within its infinitely contradictory structures.*⁶⁰

The “categorical imperative” offered by Immanuel Kant as “the supreme, absolute, moral law of rational self-determining beings,” can be put simply: act according to principles that would remain ethical even if they were elevated to the status of a universal law.⁶¹ It elevates the “golden rule” from a private homily to a universal conceit. Habermas goes him one better. Kant’s prescribed method amounts to no more than an internal dialogue. In applying the categorical imperative, I have no one to convince but myself, no matter how widely my choice is to be hypothetically applied. Habermas requires that the conversation be less restricted.

Whereas Kant limits meaningful discourse to the unique person deciding alone, Habermas posits an irreducible pluralism in which various concepts and values are assumed. He then introduces linguistic intersubjectivity that allows for the articulation of diversity. Then, if consensus is to be reached, he insists that it must be premised on a speech situation in which all must be free to make up their own minds, all must possess communicative competence, and all must be exempt from coercion. In such an ideal arrangement, according to Axel Honneth, “the possibility of making the validity of norms dependent on a procedure of discursive will formation is tied to the transcendental idea of discourse free from domination.”⁶² Unlikely conditions need obtain, Habermas admits. Each speaker must display a minimal concern for the “welfare of one’s fellow man” and a sense of “solidarity” at least concerning the desirability of finding rational agreement.⁶³ This requires mutual recognition and respect among all segments of the discourse community. Such improbabilities do not, of course, threaten the theoretical consistency of Habermas’ project. His aim, he says, is “to clarify the universal core of our moral intuitions and thereby to refute value skepticism.” This can be done (indeed, it must be done) without giving “privileged access to particular moral truths.”⁶⁴ Habermas expresses it this way:

The utopian content of a society based on communication is limited to the formal aspects of an undamaged intersubjectivity. To the extent to which it suggests a concrete form of life, even the expression “ideal speech situation” is misleading. What can be outlined normatively are the necessary but general conditions for the communicative practice of everyday life and the procedure of discursive will-formation that would put participants *themselves* in a position to realize concrete possibilities for a better and less threatened life, on *their own* initiative and in accordance with *their own* needs and insights.⁶⁵

We are being given the tools to construct emancipatory ethical systems; the content of those systems remains stubbornly undefined. Kant, we must remember, began and ended with a solitary transcendental consciousness. Habermas takes the ethical question out of the mind (and control) of that isolated, ahistorical individual and contextualizes it in society; but, he does remain true to Kant’s project of framing ethical discussion within abstract, procedural and formal norms.

As Chambers shortly says:

Discourse ethics replaces the image of public debate as a marketplace of ideas between elites in which interests and understandings compete with each other for domination with the idea of public debate as a democratized form in which we cooperatively construct common understandings and work through our differences.⁶⁶

In the end, Habermas confronts and is confronted by *nothing*. He is responding to an overly scientific society, dominated by an economic world that is literally out of control, that is guided by an overpowering intellectual instrumentalism, that drives the pursuit of happiness out of the public and into the private domain of received entertainment, and that reduces intentional political meaning to functional administrative operations. In such circumstances, as Dallmayr points out, “the postulate of ethical responsibility for actions, not to speak of the demand for moral legitimation of whole systems, becomes entirely vacuous.”⁶⁷ Deprived of content, ethical thinking can nonetheless persist, provided that it grasps, indeed celebrates, its essential moral hollowness. Ethics, in Habermas’ ideal speech situation becomes a playground in which meanings are variously created, tried and tested with no external standard of validity imposing significance and validity upon the language games of the participants. Befitting the postmodern condition in which all moral standards are problematized, Habermas leads us to a purposeless, unrestrained ground wherein we are free to think and act, our values deliberately chosen, our fate squarely in our own hands. Uncontaminated by instrumentalism, we engage in “genuine communication,” discourse that, as Barbara Herrstein-Smith says, is “sublimely empty.” In the “superlunary universe of Habermas’ ideal situation,” she continues: “no wind blows ill and there need be no tallies of cost and benefit, where there are no exchanges but only gifts, where all debts are paid by unrepayable acts of forgiveness.”⁶⁸ Well, not quite.

Habermas truly has no illusion that conflict can be removed simply by inviting contesting parties to obey civil rules of discourse. He understands fully that his problem-solving, dispute-resolving process demands an unlikely *a priori* commitment to mutual understanding above all else. He is aware that some people have no wish to enter into such a process, and that some people lack the communicative competence to participate successfully. What then?

The answer must be that Habermas is offering a model of wellness for the polity. He has (more or less) successfully diagnosed the pathologies of contemporary public life, and offers a course of political therapy. For now, the treatment is palliative. No credible observer would imagine that we can stay the profit motive, nor expect entrenched interests to divest themselves of control in the expectation that shared information and participation in decision making will achieve the best possible outcome for all.

*Well, that Earth Goddess program on Channel 3 went national
Iran and Iraq became one country called "Irrational"
Every commuter in greater Los Angeles learned how to ride a bus
And the rich folks said "Please tax the shit out of us" ⁶⁹*

Like any organism, the health of the body politic is best described by verbs instead of nouns. It is no static state of affairs, much less a process directed at any other teleological point of arrival save death. The end of humans, individually and collectively remains the grave. So, we must remain content, as did Henry S. Kariel, to find ourselves "in the company of pragmatists and hermeneuticists, especially those who buoyantly acknowledge the hopelessness of their ventures, who've given up expecting another renaissance, a phoenix to rise out of the ashes."⁷⁰ Our sites duly lowered, we can gain from Habermas a template for criticism, a standard against which can measure the relative failure of the institutions within which we perform our dances of (in)decision.

WHAT INNOVATIONS ARE FOR: Purposelessness as Our Last Best Hope

Artists maneuvering in a postmodernist manner, actors treating all the world as a stage, espionage agents prevailing in no-man's-land, and children playing with reality are at one in enacting their lives in the darkest of times. Unheroic, amoral, and composed, they are our last best hope.⁷¹

While awaiting governments generous enough to provide funds for dissenters to present their ideas ably (i.e., with expert technical advice and wise legal counsel) so to meet Habermas' criteria for communicative competence, while passing the time as hotly contested issues are cooled down in the process of intellectual reflection on the part of fiery contestants, and while watching for signs of mutual respect among citizens whose true and recognized interest is in the emancipation of all, we could do worse than to look for exemplars of innovation off the beaten track.

Defining good purposes, imagining the means to achieve them, and then working diligently to assemble the political will, the public acceptance and the material support needed to achieve those desirable ends is the *modus operandi* of most socially responsible innovators in and out of the public sector, but especially in. That is as may be and as will be. I wish to insert an alternative.

We must first disabuse ourselves of our illusions about the ecology of games in advanced capitalist, socially pluralistic and representatively democratic society. Prevailing reports from political scientists and the chattering classes in Washington, Ottawa and other centers of local, if not global, power do their best to convey the soothing idea that in the amiable give-and-take of formal politics, the amicable allocation of values, every group is given its due and, to put the official gloss on Harold D. Lasswell's classic formulation of the object of academic political inquiry, all get something, somewhere, somehow.⁷² In this reassuring representation, it is seen, in Henry S. Kariel's incisive description that:

... every flow of pressure sooner or later generates its countervailing pressure, that no decision is final, no line firm, no interest vested, no upset basic, no pattern heroic. The net impression one gains after one is done with all the case studies and with all the warnings that the last word is never in, is that everything is fluidity and continuity and process. The net impression is of an amorphous continuum. True, the boundaries of the studies are tightly delineated. One may assume that beyond these boundaries other things stir; that there is at least one cluster of men who are exhausted and powerless, and another cluster of men who are overbearing and decisive. But they are assumed to inhabit the world of nonpolitics, the world the serious student of politics leaves to the moralist, the muckraker and the novelist.⁷³

As for the standard theories themselves, it is important to recognize how ideological and fundamentally apolitical they are. Early in the game (when communications theory meant something much different than it has after the Habermasian turn); Sheldon Wolin rendered this judgement:

Systems theory, communications theories, and structural-functional theories are unpolitical theories shaped by the desire to explain certain forms of non-political phenomena. They offer no significant choice or critical analysis of the quality, direction, or fate of public life. Where they are not alien intrusions, they share the same uncritical-and therefore untheoretical-assumptions of the prevailing political ideology which justifies the present “authoritative allocation of values” in our society.⁷⁴

The reassuring hum of politics is now rendered discordant as much by the caviling of “social conservatives” as by the protestations of the dispossessed. How loud the cacaphony will become is an empirical question; it’s anybody’s guess. In the meantime, corporate sponsored and government-run innovations initiated to still the savage breast are underway (privatizing penitentiaries, criminalizing homelessness, corporatizing school curricula, and “branding” the Olympics being just a few cases in point).⁷⁵

A modest example, less dramatic but potentially no less effective than George W. Bush’s ultimatum (“You are either with us or you are with the terrorists”) is taking place today in my home. Ontario’s York Region, just north of Toronto, is the loose but swiftly tightening collection of mainly suburban towns and villages wherein I have resided for the past seventeen years. There, Regional Councilors, local Mayors and “opinion leaders” (school board officials, local newspaper editors, business executives, and so on) have responded to their own political seismographs. They have apparently detected underground rumbles of discontent. They have therefore undertaken a wholesale assault on the public consciousness. Henceforward, inspirational speakers will be placed in schools, community centers and shopping malls to build a “character community,” in which values of nouns such as “responsibility, initiative, enthusiasm, dependability, honor, loyalty, creativity, compassion,” and so on, will be encouraged to trump the adjectives of artistic, experimental, playful, rational, skeptical and, of course, erotic,

every time. Should the program be successful, my nightmare scenario features civic officials mouthing sanctimonious platitudes to captive audiences of children dressed in clean white shirts as the strains of the *Horst Wessell Song* well up softly from below.

Skeptics, of course, need only glance at the community of Celebration, Florida, to realize the potential for mischief. The community, built near Orlando by Disney, is a Fantasyland built on a reactionary ideology that celebrates nostalgia and sameness. Science fiction dystopian turned “urban design consultant,” Ray Bradbury (who previously contributed to Disney World’s EPCOT Center) was once asked to describe “the city of the future.” He replied: “Disneyland! They’ve done everything right ...”⁷⁶ He forgot to add, “under martial law.”

My objection to such innovations does not lie, or at least do not lie exclusively, in the content of the contemplated message, but in its form. It sabotages communicative competence and denies ideal speech situations by its method. Divorced from any empirically verifiable reality by its reliance on assumptions rather than hypotheses, composed of cookie-cutter values rather than authentically expressed interests, and carried on as an exercise in proselytizing rather than discourse based on respect for an audience of equals, such innovations violate every criterion that Habermas has specified as appropriate to adult discussion and, hence, seeks to ensure that the children to whom it is directed will not grow up.

Opening up the discussion of ethics in innovation must have the opposite focus. It must probe the boundaries of our political life. It must address closed systems and make their walls more porous. Within our professional lives, we are called upon to conduct research, and to plan programs for the benefit of citizens. In times of alleged crisis, quick action denies time for reflection, pleas for ambiguity go unheeded, public debate is said foolishly to waste time. In times of alleged crisis, however, much can be saved by standing back, by choosing (following the admonition of literary critic Kenneth Burke) to gain “perspective by incongruity,”⁷⁷ or, as Kariel expressed it, “dialectically oppose whatever seems imperative, attempting to gain knowledge by viewing our situation from incongruous points of view.”⁷⁸ In doing so, we may cultivate new ways to construct reality. We may recover genuine experience, disclose previously unseen interests, conduct authentic experiments, and see the study of public administration and the performance of innovation as forms of action dedicated not only to understanding the world but to changing it.

Such a shake-up is surely needed. Following Kariel in the direction of Habermas’ ideal, we surely know that the dominant myths of liberalism confine political action to the promotion of private interests, most obviously the interests of private capital. The institutions of our society sustain corporate technological structures that isolate individuals, and suppress unacknowledged community needs. While contemporary troubles cry out for social renewal and social change, current appeals for solutions to problems remain politically sterile. In response, innovations can be seen as ethical to the extent that they acknowledge repressed political dimensions, and embrace an open-ended aesthetics that validates projects and leads to a new political theory. Reconfiguring

policies and programs as artistic performances designed not only to show pleasing results but to incorporate the audience into the play, we can build the groundwork for both communicative competence and ideal speech situations. We can empower people with instruments more compelling than surveys and suggestion boxes. We can demystify conventional institutions and transform them into arenas for political action. Exchanging ideas and, ultimately, exchanging political roles, may then emerge as an actionable expression of postliberalism.⁷⁹

How to proceed? Nietzsche put it concisely: “First step toward sobriety: to grasp to what extent we have been seduced-for things could easily be the reverse.”⁸⁰

C. Wright Mills, arguably the most widely read sociologist of the 1950s, provided a specific set of recommendations, only the first of which has been made obsolete by the tyranny of computers which permit only “virtual” files:

- Dump out the contents of heretofore unrelated folders, mixing up their contents, and then re-sort them-revealing in the process previously unidentified connections;
- Adopt an attitude of playfulness toward language by looking up synonyms for all key terms;
- Rather than remaining content with existing classifications of social phenomena, make up new ones and search for the conditions and consequences of each one;
- Consider extremes by thinking of the opposite of that with which you are concerned: if thinking of despair, then think of elation for contrasts help understanding;
- Deliberately invert your sense of proportion by imagining something important to be trifling and *vice versa*, and then ask what difference it would make;
- Search for comparisons in other cultures or in other times: sociologists unfamiliar with history (no matter what else they know) are crippled;
- When conducting research, distinguish between themes (or theories) and topics (or data), and be able to write down in simple sentences what themes and topics are present and how they relate to one another. If you discover that you really have no themes, just a string of topics, surround each with methodological introductions to methodology and theoretical introductions to theory. Both, as well as unintelligibility, are indispensable to successful projects undertaken by people with no ideas.⁸¹

Taking Mills’ suggestions only one step further, we can apply his technique to current questions with comparative ease. When studying schools to determine why students drop out, pose the question thus: how do schools function to destroy creativity? When inquiring into social service agencies, ask how community services guarantee dependency. When plumbing the depths of poverty, turn your attention to unconscionable wealth. When assessing measures to protect the environment, be mindful of how the

concept of sustainable development ensures that it is only development that will be sustained. Simple reversals of dependent and independent variables will illuminate much.⁸²

Using alternative methodologies drawn from other disciplines will also help. An unassuming case in point is my own research into multicultural education. Most attempts to determine whether or not education and training programs devoted to “teaching” anti-racism actually work involve observing subsequent behavior (difficult to do when the birds have flown) or distributing questionnaires that, in effect, ask people to reveal whether or not they are still prejudiced. (This is a variation on “Have you stopped beating your wife yet?” Or, as elaborated in the form of a complete double bind, we may recall that in *Mary Poppins*, the mother asks her daughters if they had given the other children any gingerbread yet. “Not yet, mother,” they reply, and are consequently upbraided: “Who gave you permission to give away my gingerbread?”⁸³)

My choice has been to use the psychological instrument known as the semantic differential (a psychological technique that came to public awareness-if at all-mainly through clinical work in multiple personality disorder made famous by the Joanne Woodward movie, *The Three Faces of Eve*.⁸⁴ Not only do *I* gain important empirical information but, by subsequently revealing to the subjects the methodology and involving *them* in the analysis of the data, it becomes possible to make them collaborators in their own investigation-an auspicious and genuinely “empowering” moment, precisely because it involves a shift from the historical-hermeneutic enterprise of discovering things about people to the emancipatory program of letting the people in on the game, and providing them with empirical information that is of use in their own personal growth and social development.

As for the most problematic of Habermas’ conditions for an ideal speech situation, it goes (or should go) without saying that the ethical imperative arising out of universal pragmatics is the obligation to provide relentless advocacy on behalf of those now either excluded or denied the advantages of communicative competence in deliberations with the state.

ADVOCATUS DIABOLI

The legitimation of language games is currently determined according to the performativity criterion. Efficiency is prioritized as a standard means of maximizing the profits of language games; only the most efficient and profitable language games are legitimized as authoritative knowledge. ... In the competition for authority...not only are the dispossessed perpetually refused authority and power, but they are also prevented from even challenging the homeostasis of their rules governing language games, rules legitimating authority according to performativity criteria and preserving the smooth functioning of the systems they govern. Capital provides legitimacy, legitimacy authorizes knowledge, and capital-based knowledge becomes a source of power in a self-perpetuating cycle of

*authority and legitimacy defined by the performativity criterion of capitalism.*⁸⁵

*The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.*⁸⁶

The fact that Habermas is only offering a method for reconciling differences and cannot compel compliance with civility causes me no particular difficulty. He does, after all, help to show how to critique those unwilling to cooperate. Some other criticisms do deserve mention. One serious concern is raised by Lyotard. Habermas is striving for an emancipatory program that would embody ethical procedures and supply, through egalitarian and equitable discourse opportunities, a path to achieve the common good.

To Lyotard, this is terrorism. The postulate of consensus necessarily eliminates the logical possibility of dissent. Habermas insists that his discursive ethics will lead to a shared understanding and the withering away of opposition since all will eventually freely agree (and talk will continue until such agreement is won). Lyotard, in the alternative, argues that the ideal of consensus necessarily undermines the emancipation project. Habermas' universal pragmatics denies legitimacy to any language game that fails to conform, that does not "buy in" to his civilized debating format. Lyotard refuses to endorse "an emancipatory politics of consensus obtained by discussion [which] relies upon the assumption that rationality is inherently emancipatory."⁸⁷ This is not self-evident. Asks Lyotard: "Is legitimacy to be found in consensus obtained through discussion, as Habermas thinks? Such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games."⁸⁸

The imposition of an ideal speech situation is, of course, self-contradictory, but contradictions between theory and practice have happened before. We can, however, take some solace in the self-reflective capacities of most (Habermas' included) critical theorists. Concludes Richard Kilminster: "Traditional theory generally does not know that its protective belief of being free from interests is illusory."⁸⁹ Those who follow Habermas will, if nothing else, have no excuse for future illusions.

CODA

If we agree that "the revolution" is as yet some way off, then Habermas can be useful. Given current events and interpretations, that agreement seems apt. For those few who retain teleological expectations, a word of caution can be had from the "old boy" himself: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are made by men and that the educator must himself be educated."⁹⁰ So, I conclude with a brief quotation from Christopher Hitchens, the man with whom I started: "Socialism was an idea before Marx. Democracy was an idea before Marx. Social revolution was an idea before Marx. What he argued was that you can't have any of the above until you are ready for them, and that you can't have one without the others."⁹¹

Notes

¹ Christopher Hitchens, *Letters to a Young Contrarian: The Art of Mentoring* (New York: BasicBooks, 2001), p. 3.

² Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1979), p. 1.

³ John Leonard, "King of High and Low," *The New York Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (February 14, 2002), p. 34.

⁴ Sean O'Casey, *Three Plays* (London: Pan, 1980).

⁵ According to a radio transmission on CBC, in the United Kingdom, home of the "liberties of the freeborn English," over 150,000 police cameras monitor life on the street, with the average British citizen appearing in front of the public lens 300 times a day; meantime, street crime in London is reportedly up 40% and no "terrorists" have been apprehended.

⁶ Gore Vidal, *Dreaming War: Blood for Oil and the Cheney-Bush Junta* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation's Books, 2003).

⁷ See Linda McQuaig, *The Cult of Impotence: Selling the Myth of Powerlessness in the Global Economy* (Toronto: Viking, 1998).

⁸ A recent list of the "top ten" corporate criminals in the USA includes ADM, BASF, Exxon and Hoffmann-LaRoche. Their combined fines for such misdeeds as fraud and criminal violations of anti-trust and environmental law violations amounted to over \$1.7 billion. See www.corporatepredators.org.

⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, "A Descent into the Maelström," *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Greystone Press, nd).

¹⁰ Gary Teeple, *Marx's Critique of Politics 1842-1847* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 214-215.

¹¹ Advertisement for a war game by Baxter Amusement Co., in Henry S. Kariel, *Open Systems: Arenas for Political Action* (Itasca IL: F. E. Peacock, 1968), p. x.

¹² Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 278.

¹³ "Habermas' distance from the Frankfurt School of the 1930s, is abundantly clear in his assertion that a critical theory of society cannot be founded today on the critique of political economy." Phil Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: A Marxist Perspective* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 157.

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics* (Boston: Beacon, 1970), p.109.

¹⁵ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959). This classic exercise in revisionism showed the way to eliminate class structure through the simple ruse of pretending we were on the verge of a postcapitalist society. Sociologists S. M. Lipset and Daniel Bell said similar things. Lipset proclaimed that there was no more need to seek the "good society," because the USA was "the good society in operation." See *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 403. For his part, Bell affirmed the obsolescence of normative political beliefs in *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1960). In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), he even foretold the "subordination of the corporation," and a shift from "market rationality" to a "communal ethic in business," (p. 298). Firms, he said, were self-financing through profits and relied less on equity capital, so "ownership is simply a legal fiction." Thus, he explained, since "private enterprise" institutions are no longer "private property" institutions, they would become more socially responsible. As for workers, he thought it "politically and morally unthinkable that their lives should be at the mercy of a financial speculator" (p. 294). Such nonsense made him an American sociological superstar. It is more realistic to think of global corporations as arbiters of political judgement, usurpers of the

authority of national governments and, in Richard Gwyn's phrase, "stateless legislators." See *Nationalism without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

¹⁶ Ben Agger, *Critical Social Theories: An Introduction* (Boulder CO: Westview, 1998), p. 94.

¹⁷ Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 32.

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon, 1987), p. 385.

¹⁹ Agger, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

²⁰ The notions of knowledge-constitutive interest was set out in Habermas' inaugural lecture, presented when he was appointed to a professorship at Frankfurt in 1965.

²¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), p. 6.

²² Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1978), p. 10. Habermas, it should be mentioned, has it at least partly wrong. When Warren McCulloch, John von Neumann, Norbert Wiener and the rest dreamed up cybernetics at the Macy Foundation and Wenner-Genn conferences in the 1940s, one of the participants was Gregory Bateson. The κυβερνητής (if I have it right), the ancient Greek helmsman, was not given to positivistic technocratic purposefulness. Like many contemporary scientists, Bateson considered technological consciousness to be pathological and its practical effects to be hideous. His argument is nicely presented in "Conscious Purpose Versus Nature," in David Cooper, *Dialectics of Liberation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 34-49, and in Gregory Bateson, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-439.

²³ Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p. 254.

²⁴ In this respect, culture critics such as Neil Postman frequently seem to have more trenchant (and certainly more accessible) critiques of popular culture than does Habermas. I refer, for example, to books such as *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1986), *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1993), and *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

²⁵ See George Grant, "Protest and Technology," in Charles Hanley, ed., *Revolution and Response* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p.126.

²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon, 1975), p. 34.

²⁷ C. P. Snow, *The Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

²⁸ Christian Bay, "The Cheerful Science of Dismal Politics," quoted in Henry S. Kariel, "Goals for Administrative Reform in Developing States," in Ralph Braibanti, ed., *Political and Administrative Development* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969), p. 148.

²⁹ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and A Second Look: An Expanded Version of the Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

³⁰ Canadian political scientist David Easton was one of the leading figures in the popularization of systems theory in the 1950s and 1960s. See his major work: *The Political System* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

³¹ This opinion was expressed in Saul's address to the public forum, "Reflections on the Public Good," at the University of Toronto, broadcast on CPAC, January, 2002. It was part of a rather devastating critique of the importation of "market" language into the discussion of political issues.

³² John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936), p. 383.

³³ Henry S. Kariel, "Goals for Administrative Reform in Developing States," p. 148.

³⁴ So said Daniel Bell in *The End of Ideology*, and so echoed Francis Fukayama in the 1990s in *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

³⁵ See especially the “Appendix” in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 301-317, and *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics*, pp. 81-122.

³⁶ Habermas has carried on a long battle with positivism and scientism, but not with empiricism and science. Emancipation, no less than domination, requires information.

³⁷ The distinction between *pleroma* and *creatura* is accessibly explained, as well as anything Jungian can be, in June Singer’s *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jungian Psychology* (Garden City: Anchor, 1973), pp. 374-376. A further Nietzschean as well as a marxian connection is suggested in my “Rock: A Nascent Protean Form,” *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer, 1973).

³⁸ Fritjof Capra, who some regard as being to physics what Carlos Castaneda was to anthropology, hints at some problems and solutions in *The Tao of Physics*, a book that I, for one, perhaps took too seriously when preparing “Alpha Time,” *Bridges: Explorations in Science, Technology and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (February, 1987).

³⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 74.

⁴⁰ Stephen K. White, “Reason, Modernity and Democracy,” in Stephen K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 6.

⁴¹ Fred R. Dallmayr, *Beyond Dogma and Despair: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 225.

⁴² Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 284.

⁴³ T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969). Subsequently, some leftist scholars were less impressed. Shortly after his death, a then youthful Marxist scholar remarked that “his era had passed ... [and] he went unmourned.” It seems that the “eminent Frankfurt philosopher of praxis ... used police against an in-house application of his theory by his students.” See Martin Nicolaus, “The Professional Organization of Sociology: A View from Below,” in Robin Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1972), p. 59.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Fiona Otway, “Consensus, Dissensus, and the Common Good: Habermas, Lyotard, and the Center for Ethical Leadership,” *Electronic Journal of Undergraduate Research* (1999-2001).

⁴⁵ Edwin Black, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America’s Most Powerful Corporation* (New York: Crown, 2001). IBM, of course, has been the subject of many popular and academic studies. Few, however, probe much beyond “office politics.” A typical work is Robert Sobel’s *IBM: Colossus in Transition* (New York: Times Books, 1981). A Book-of-the-Month club selection, it tells the history of IBM from the youthful days of Thomas Watson Sr., to the penultimate decade of the second millenium and mentions Germany only one in a casual comment about the “genteel rivalry between IBM Deutschland and IBM France ...”, p. 194. A less provocative illustration of a parallel process and program would link the invention of the time clock to proletarian oppression before, during and after the industrial revolution. See E. P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present*, Vol. 38 (December, 1967) and reprinted in *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

⁴⁶ Howard A. Doughty, “Demonizing the Corporation,” *The Innovation Journal*, Vol. 6, No.3 (September-December, 2001).

⁴⁷ See Thomas S. Szasz, *Ideology and Insanity: Essays on the Psychiatric Dehumanization of Man* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1970).

⁴⁸ Martin Nicolaus, “Remarks at the ASA Convention,” mimeo (Washington, 1968), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁹ “The ends justify the means.” Herman Busenbaum, *Medulla Theologiae Moralis* (1650).

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- ⁵⁰ Conversation between district attorneys “Clare Kincaid” and “Jack McCoy” on the popular US television series *Law and Order*.
- ⁵¹ John A. Yogis, *Canadian Law Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Barron’s, 1990), p. 149.
- ⁵² A useful description of McNamara’s fondness for PPBS can be found in Deborah Shatley’s generally sympathetic biography, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little Brown, 1999).
- ⁵³ Aaron Wildavsky, *The Politics of the Budgetary Process* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), p. 205.
- ⁵⁴ See Henry Mintzberg, *Modern Management: Inside Our Strange World of Organizations* (New York: Free Press, 1989), pp. 196-220.
- ⁵⁵ As the dean of corporate gurus, Peter Drucker grasped firmly the cutting edge of administrative reform and has been slashing away since the 1940s; one fitting title out of many is *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1999).
- ⁵⁶ W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 85. Morton’s idyllic view, while not without its heuristic value, needs to be kept in context, especially in light of the events of October, 1945 (the invocation of the *War Measures Act* by Order-in-Council), October, 1970 (the invocation of the *War Measures Act* by Pierre E. Trudeau) and the events of October-December, 2001 (the deliberations leading to the passing of *Bill C-36*. June Callwood, Canada’s iconic journalist and social activist surely had it right when she wrote: “The Magna Carta, the most important document of British constitutional history, is the bedrock of civil rights in English common law but in Canada is suspended with a frequency unparalleled in any other functioning democracy to meet whatever situation alarms the prime minister.” June Callwood, *Emma: The True Story of Canada’s Unlikely Spy* (Toronto: General, 1984), pp. 135-136.
- ⁵⁷ Simone Chambers, “Discourse and Democratic Practices,” in White, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
- ⁵⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1990), p. 93.
- ⁵⁹ J. Donald Moon, “Practical Discourse and Communicative Ethics,” in White, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- ⁶⁰ Henry S. Kariel, *The Desperate Politics of Postmodernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p. 172.
- ⁶¹ Dagobert D. Runes, *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient-Medieval-Modern* (Paterson NJ: Littlefield Adams, 1963), p. 47.
- ⁶² Axel Honneth, “The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism,” in White, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
- ⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, “Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning Stage 6,” in Thomas E. Wren, *The Moral Domain: Essays in the Ongoing Discussion between Philosophy and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1990).
- ⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 211.
- ⁶⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1990), p.69.
- ⁶⁶ Simone Chambers, *loc. cit.*, p. 247.
- ⁶⁷ Fred R. Dallmayr, *From Contract to Community: Political Theory at the Crossroads* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1978), p. 92.
- ⁶⁸ Barbara Herrstein-Smith, “Value without Truth-value,” unpublished paper, quoted in Henry S. Kariel, *The Desperate Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 101n.
- ⁶⁹ Lines from a contemporary “folk song” recorded on the CD, “What’s Left?” by The Foremen.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. x.
- ⁷¹ Henry S. Kariel, *The Desperate Politics of Postmodernism*, p. vii.
- ⁷² Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Meridian, 1958).
- ⁷³ Henry S. Kariel, *The Promise of Politics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 103-104.

⁷⁴ Sheldon Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63 (1969), p. 1063.

⁷⁵ See: Jeff Mitchell, "Character initiative passed," and Brenda Larson, "We need you to help build our character community," *The Richmond Hill Liberal* (January 27, 2002), p. 3. My humble reply, "Character initiative right-wing attempt to stifle our very selves," *Richmond Hill Liberal* (February 5, 2002) is unlikely to be taken seriously for what is called "the 905" (the telephone area code that serves the suburban belt around Toronto falls somewhat short of being an ideal speech situation).

⁷⁶ Quoted in Jeff Ferrell, *Tearing Down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 8.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), pp. 308-314.

⁷⁸ Henry S. Kariel, *Saving Appearances: The Reestablishment of Political Science* (Belmont CA: Duxbury Press, 1972), p. 107.

⁷⁹ Henry S. Kariel, *Beyond Liberalism, Where Relations Grow* (San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1977), pp. vii-viii.

⁸⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 320.

⁸¹ Abridged and freely adapted from C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Evergreen, 1961), pp. 212-217.

⁸² Steps to creativity should be distinguished from imaginative techniques pursued in the interest of social control. A case in point is this communication that I received from innovationguru.com on 4 February, 2002: "Johannes Gutenberg, a 15th Century German printer, was fascinated by the workings of the grape press. He also was an avid coin collector and became interested in coin stamps. His knowledge of these two previous inventions-the grape press and the coin stamp-enabled him to visualize the potential for what would revolutionize the writing world, the invention of the "printing press". Other examples of people who find creative connections include: (a) artists, who use various images and mixed media to create new works of aesthetic expression; (b) advertising executives, who combine themes from current movies and fashions with the benefits of a certain product to create new ads; and (c) software developers, who mix and match different technologies to find new ways to *program our lives!*" (italics added).

⁸³ The issue is elaborated by Gregory Bateson in "Both Sides of the Necessary Paradox," in Stewart Brand, *II Cybernetic Frontiers* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 12-16, and at greater length in "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, pp. 201-227.

⁸⁴ Corbett H. Thigpen and Hervey M. Cleckley (1954) "A Case of Multiple Personality," *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology*, Vol. 49, pp. 135-151. See also: James G. Snider, "Profiles of Some Stereotypes Held by Ninth-Grade Pupils," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 8, No. 3 (1962), pp. 147-156; Howard A. Doughty and Philip H. King, "Discrimination: A Classroom Corrective," *Bridges: Explorations in Science, Technology and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (September-October, 1986), pp. 23-24; Howard A. Doughty and Philip H. King, "Their Words Fail Them," *The College Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter, 1993), pp. 15-17; and Howard A. Doughty and Philip H. King, "Deep Prejudice," *The Innovation Journal* Vol. 4, No. 2 (September-December, 1999)

⁸⁵ Otway, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II.

⁸⁷ Otway, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Richard Kilminster, *Praxis and Method: A Sociological Dialogue with Lukács, Gramsci and the Early Frankfurt School* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 235.

⁹⁰ Karl Marx, quoted in Christopher Hitchens, "The Old Boy," *The Nation* (April 2, 1983) and reproduced in *Prepared for the Worst: Selected Essays and Minority Reports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), p. 242.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

GLOSSARY

The following phrases are essential to understanding Habermas in the context of these remarks. Although some attempt was made within the text to define the terms as I understand them, the following brief elaborations may be helpful.

Communicative Competence

Habermas recognizes (and explicitly refers to language philosophers such as Chomsky) the importance of linguistic competence. Speakers of natural languages must possess mastery of language-specific rules and of the vocabulary necessary to say something (i.e., assert propositions) and do something (i.e., establish a relationship with other speakers).

Ideal Speech Situation

Habermas spells out the preconditions for rational communication. They derive from the performative aspects of speech which are presupposed by the ability to utter, not any particular speech act, but speech acts as such. This communicative competence must be enacted under conditions of intersubjective symmetry of truth (unconstrained consensus), freedom (unimpaired self-representation), and justice (universal norms). When these conditions obtain, communication is genuinely rational.

Knowledge-constitutive Interests

Habermas postulates three deep-seated human interests to which three categories of reason and knowledge correspond. Our technical interest in the control of nature is represented by science (empirical-analytic knowledge). Our practical interest in the understanding other human beings is represented by social science (historical-hermeneutic knowledge), and our emancipatory interest in freeing ourselves from domination by nature and society is represented originally by critical theory and latterly by universal pragmatics.

Language Games

According to Lyotard, every genre of discourse follows a logic of argumentation that, in a strict sense, is incompatible with that of every other genre. Thus, there can be no rationally verifiable transitions between different genres. The theory of language games attempts to reconstruct the rule-systems by means of which we generate situations of possible communication about objects and states of affairs. The communicative form of life itself depends upon a grammar of language games, a grammar that could be

integrated into Habermas' universal pragmatics but denied by Lyotard as requiring at some level a negation or a suppression of dissenting genres.

Universal Pragmatics

Habermas locates universal pragmatics stands between linguistics on the one hand and empirical pragmatics on the other. Its two most important theoretical components deal with the cognitive and the communicative uses of language. The first involves competently ordered expressions that can be employed in speech situations. The second concerns the nature of those situations in the lifeworld. All speech-acts simultaneously say something and do something. Competent speakers must be able to give reasons for their claims and grant others equal rights to do the same. These factors, reflexivity and reciprocity, make mutual understanding possible.

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