Occidental Civilization and Its Problems:

A Dialogue between Weber, Elias and Habermas

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ABSTRACT

This thesis starts with an analysis of Weber's thought. Weber's analysis of occidental civilization is multidimensional. Weber attempts to provide a judgement about the value of occidental civilization for the improvement of human welfare which is more differentiated and more balanced, and therefore neither overly optimistic nor overly pessimistic. Opposed to some commentators' misunderstanding that his viewpoint about occidental civilization is too pessimistic, Weber's viewpoint is actually an heroic one. Weber conceives value differentiation and value irreconcilability as the natural outcomes of societal rationalization. He suggests that his heroic pessimism provides a viable way to confront this impasse of occidental civilization.

While I appreciate Weber's attempt to provide a differentiated and balanced view about occidental civilization, I argue that his work is empirically inadequate in certain regards and is not critical enough concerning the solutions to the problems generating in occidental civilization. Therefore his work needs to be reconstructed and corrected. Elias and Habermas's works provide valuable resources for this task. In fact, an analysis of Weber's work provides a good starting point for developing a dialogue between Elias and Habermas. I believe that this is an important step in the appraisal of Elias and Habermas's contributions to our understanding of occidental civilization.

In developing a dialogue between Elias and Habermas here, I identify a central difference between their accounts of occidental civilization. While Elias admits the presence of an inescapable evaluative aspect to our understanding, and he suggests that we should keep a good balance between involvement and detachment, Habermas suggests one way of understanding which consciously incorporates into it an evaluative stance. I argue that this aspect is essential for the critique of social injustice and the promotion of human welfare. The remaining target is to show how this critical approach enriches our understanding of occidental civilization.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims at making a small contribution to our understanding of occidental civilization and its consequences for human social life.

Instead of starting out from an historical study of occidental civilization, I shall begin with an analysis of Weber's account of it. There are some reasons for adopting this approach.

More frequently than not, nineteenth-century social thought reflects an optimistic view about occidental civilization. While thinkers such as Comte and Spencer are aware of crises emerging in the transitions between stages of the development of societal forms in the Occident,[1] they nevertheless tend to base their understanding of this development on a (what we call from the hindsight) simplistic and unilineal type of evolutionary thinking. For them, such crises are only transitional and can be resolved as a new and higher stage of social development is reached. This mode of thinking supports a positive, and indeed affirmative attitude towards occidental civilization. And this affirmative attitude is deeply embodied in how these evolutionary thinkers explain the causes and consequences of this civilization as well as how they evaluate it. Marx takes a somewhat more critical view. While he affirms the West's, specifically capitalism's, achievements in technology and material growth, he is critical

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[1] How they carve history into different stages is of course an issue internal to their theories of civilization.

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of the structural contradictions it engenders and the deterioration of social justice resulting from them. However, his tendency towards being committed to an economic-determinist perspective in his work and his anticipation of communism as a genuine solution to the problems he identifies in occidental civilization reflect that he is still unable to avoid the simplistic and unilineal mode of thinking which is so common in nineteenth-century social thought. As a result, he is unable to grasp the deeper and more subtle levels of the dynamics generated in occidental civilization.

As the side-effects of modernization are increasingly felt in the twentieth century,[2] more and more people are growing suspicious of occidental civilization and its prospects for the human future. Some people even take a denigrating attitude towards it. They diagnose that occidental civilization has exhausted its dynamics for promoting human welfare. For them, it is now time for social thought to search for other routes of human development.[3]

Of course, the general picture of people's understanding of the present situation of occidental civilization is not totally negative ---- this negative attitude, which I have just indicated, is nevertheless not insignificant. At the crossroads of the present stage of human development,[4] and in the middle of the entanglement of different attitudes

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[2] This awareness goes with people's witnessing the failure of socialist modernization as an alternative route of civilization in eastern Europe, Asia and other areas.

[3] Wallerstein gives a brief and interesting account of the shift in meaning and connotation of the term `civilization' and the increasing concern over this term in social thought. See Wallerstein (1991b), ch.15.

[4] I do not think that the need to evaluate the present situation of occidental civilization is relevant for western societies alone. I agree with Weber's point that this issue is of universal significance. Every nation in other parts of the world which embarks on a process of modernization must take this issue centrally into consideration.

towards occidental civilization, it is necessary to improve our understanding of occidental civilization so that we can judge more adequately the gains and losses which it entails, and its implications for the human future.

Weber is well known for his thesis of cultural pessimism in which he observes irresolvable paradoxes deeply rooted in the process of rationalization in the Occident. But this thesis does not imply a wholly denigrating viewpoint on occidental civilization. Initially, around the 1890's, Weber worked on studies in historical economics. The what is generally called `Protestant ethic thesis' he produced a decade later constitutes an important breakthrough in historical economics, but its significance clearly extends beyond this scope into the fields of religious and cultural development. In the later period of his intellectual development, Weber expanded his intellectual horizons to include civilizational studies of the peculiarity of the different dimensions of rationalization in the Occident and their consequences for human social conditions. Here, Weber presented his insightful reflections on the pathos of modern human beings.[5]

Some interpreters of Weber's work may contend that the above picture does not adequately describe Weber's intellectual development and does not give a coherent interpretation of his writings *as a whole*.[6] However, I do not want to involve myself in this kind of debate regarding what is the true, or the most adequate, interpretation of Weber's work. My viewpoint is that we can consolidate and reconstruct *a major part*

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[5] See Schluchter (1989), ch.1.

[6] Some interpreters of Weber do contend against this view. I shall discuss only Tenbruck and Hennis briefly in chapter 1.

of Weber's work to reveal a coherent understanding concerning different aspects of rationalization in the Occident and their consequences for human social conditions.

In chapter 1, I shall try to describe systematically but briefly Weber's analysis of the economic, state-administrative and legal aspects of rationalization in the Occident, and the relationship between them. The issues I shall be concerned with most are the implications of these aspects of rationalization for the development of the modern socio-cultural condition ---- ethical life in particular. Picking up these issues in chapter 2, I shall discuss Weber's understanding concerning the development of ethical life in occidental civilization and the ethical situation of modern western societies.

I shall indicate two ethical consequences of rationalization in chapter 1. First, rationalization in the economic, state-administrative and legal spheres results in the formalization and standardardization of social relations and practices in these spheres. In effect, rationalization enhances material success and efficiency, but at the cost of value-neutralization and the suppression or neglect of individual differences. It puts the pursuit of material success and efficiency in competition with human autonomy and social justice, and intensifies the tension between them. Second, Weber observes a close affinity between modern rational capitalism and an ascetic pattern of life, an inner-worldly asceticism, developing from the Christian religion. I shall show further in chapter 2 that, according to Weber's observation, as it is set free from its religious source in the post-Reformation period, this kind of inner-worldly asceticism has become a major pattern of ethical life in the modern world; but now every human being

has to construct the goal (or meaning) of this pattern for him/herself ---- as the ends of life are no longer objectively given by a religion to which people commonly adhere.

In chapter 2, I shall draw further on Weber's analysis of ethical development. Weber perceives that this development is closely associated with rationalization in the economic, state-administrative, legal and religious spheres. According to Weber's diagnosis, within the context of the value differentiation which is in part a result of rationalization in all these spheres, the modern ethical situation is a pessimistic one. Modern human beings now live in a world where value and meaning are challenged on two fronts. First, they are increasingly in danger of being under siege from the instrumental rationalization which results from increasing emphasis on material success and efficiency. More seriously, as values and meanings are increasingly set free from religious influences and internally differentiated, there is no longer an objective base for securing collective consensus on them. Value-orientations now lack any firm ground on either the individual or the collective level, and value conflicts become ultimately irreconcilable. In other words, the modern world is one in which human freedom is greatly endangered and value-orientations are being shaken.

It is my view that Weber's pessimism about the modern ethical situation does not express a fatalistic worldview. Rather, his worldview is an heroic one. For Weber, there are benefits to gain, but also costs to bear in occidental civilization. Bearing the costs of civilization, modern human beings have to confront the danger of losses in freedom and meaning, and they can only confront this danger by leading a life with value conviction and responsibility. The philosophical conception of personality (which

embraces the ethical pattern of inner-worldly asceticism) and the ethic of responsibility are the two prongs suggested by Weber to meet the challenge of the modern world.

Weber goes beyond many other social theorists in understanding the nature of occidental civilization. For him, occidental civilization, as it proceeds up to this century, means something much more than just achievements in science, technology and material production. It includes changes in human social relationships and rationality. And he perceives that it is wrong to take an economic-reductionist viewpoint to account for these latter aspects of human civilization. Weber also rejects any determinist account of occidental civilization such as those given by Marx and other nineteenth-century evolutionary social thinkers. For him, human agency plays a part in history. History is essentially open.

Now, if history is essentially open, how should we account for Weber's pessimistic diagnosis of modernity? Does Weber assert that the paradoxical historical trend of occidental civilization which results in the increasing danger of losses in freedom and meaning (as I have indicated above) is irreversible or inescapable? Certainly not. Weber asserts explicitly in *PE*[7] that no one can predict towards what direction history will proceed.[8]

In fact, Weber considers that his diagnosis of occidental civilization emerges from his own ideal-typical construction which selectively picks out from historical reality some significant elements and conceptually depicts the connections between

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[7] Please check the abbreviation in the bibliographies.

[8] See *PE*, p.182. See also Weiss (1987) who argues that Weber's work on rationalization does not imply historical irreversibility.

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these elements and points out the dynamics that emerge from them. Assuming this methodological position, Weber in fact also assumes an unbridgeable gap between concepts and reality. He takes it that it is only in rare cases that his diagnosis closely matches historical reality ---- on the other hand, given his theory of ideal types, the normal `mismatch' between his diagnosis and reality does not in effect weaken the fruitfulness of his diagnosis for understanding reality. According to this perspective, the loss of freedom and the loss of meaning are two immanent dangers rooted in modernization. The degree to which they become reality depends on additional conditions.

Weber's work undoubtedly gives us important insights into the understanding of occidental civilization. But there are aspects of it which invoke challenges, and it is worth considering some of them towards the end of chapter 2 in order to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of Weber's work.

A major point of dispute on Weber's diagnosis of occidental civilization which I want to bring out and discuss in detail in this thesis concerns whether value conflicts are ultimately irreconcilable in a modern socio-cultural context. This problem is closely related with the problem whether it is possible for modern human beings to develop any rationally justifiable grounds for restoring value-consensus, or value-identification, among themselves. This issue concerns the problem of the evaluative base of social integration. As I have just said, Weber's answer to these two interrelated questions is negative. Indeed, in *RRW*, Weber suggests that we cannot rule out the possibility that

a higher synthesis will develop to reconcile conflicting ultimate meanings with each other.[9] Nevertheless, he never considers this possibility himself.

My viewpoint is that Weber's answers to the questions of value conflict and social integration (which I have just indicated) are inadequate, and that we must have a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of occidental civilization than that provided by Weber so that we can tackle these questions more adequately. Elias and Habermas are two important figures who have followed up Weber's issues and have made some important breakthroughs in the direction for the development of a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of occidental civilization. Therefore, the purpose of the remaining chapters of this thesis will be to analyze Elias's and Habermas's contributions to improving our understanding of occidental civilization.

Elias does not develop his own sociology by working on a critique of Weber, or any other social theorists ---- though Weber definitely has his influences on Elias. But a discussion of Elias's reception of Weber, which I shall undertake in chapter 3, helps us develop some points of contact, and therefore some directions for a systematic comparison, between them. Elias offered criticisms of Weber's ideas in several places. These criticisms concern the following topics: first, what Elias perceives as the false distinction between the rational and the irrational in Weber's work on rationalization; second, Weber's sociological nominalism and his theory of ideal types; third, in connection with the second point, Weber's social atomism; and fourth, Weber's so-called Protestant ethic thesis.

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[9] *RRW*, p.323.

Indeed, the real point of issue which constitutes Elias's split with mainstream social thought rests in the latter's tendencies towards a dichotomizing mode of thought and, related with this, its tendency to overlook or evade the temporal and relational dimensions of social phenomena. Because of these two tendencies, mainstream social thought ignores the dynamic and processual character of social phenomena. It is committed to, in Elias's terms, the fallacy of process reduction and a *homo clausus* image of human beings, both of which lack reality-congruence. Elias believes that we need major innovations in our conceptual tools in order to avoid these fallacies and permit the development of a more adequate understanding of the dynamics of social reality.

Elias's work on civilizing processes in the Occident makes explicit what this kind of conceptual innovations (and his process or figurational sociology is exemplary of it) in sociological investigations would be like; I shall dedicate one section in chapter 3 to drawing out the main themes of this work. In his major work on the civilizing processes in the Occident,[10] Elias shows that some important social changes started in about the twelfth century. Before the twelfth century, centrifugal forces counterbalanced the centripetal forces which led to the building of medieval and absolutist states. But the centripetal forces became more and more dominant in the twelfth century. For Elias, the most significant structural transformation which accompanies this change is the enormous increase in human interdependence. From the eleventh to twelfth century, human interdependence has largely extended. Money

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[10] Elias (1978) and Elias (1982).

has become more popularly used as a medium of trade and material exchange. Transportation networks increased. And land became more and more scarce. In this context, the competition among kings and nobles for land became more and more severe; as a result, some nobles grow in power and get control of bigger and bigger territories, whereas others decline in power and are even eliminated in the struggles for land. As this change in the power dynamics among kings and nobles happens, more and more territories become increasingly controlled by states. So are the resources and activities within these territories. These territories become more and more pacified. This change makes geographical mobility safer and facilitates the further development of trade. This gives space for the rise of the bourgeois classes. Indeed, monetarization, the expansion of trade and communication, the increase in geographical and social mobility, and the development of and competition among states intertwine and facilitate each other.

Within this context of social transformation, the quantity and density of human contacts rise significantly, and the specialization of social functions proceeds more and more widely in more and more aspects of human social life. These changes in turn constitute a social structural condition for triggering what Elias (referring in the first instance primarily to France) calls the courtization of the warrior noble classes surrounding the king, a consequence largely of the king's monopolization of military power and taxation. These latter social processes exert significant pressures on the behaviour patterns and personality structures of both the king and the noble classes (including what Elias calls the `court bourgeoisie', the rising bourgeois strata who are

then integrated into the court system) and the patterns of social interaction among them. In the long term, combining with other social forces, increases in human interdependence, functional specialization, the courtization of the noble classes and the emergence and expansion of absolute states lead to the downfall, or transformation, of the kingship system and the noble classes. These changes further mobilize the rise of the bourgeoisie, which favours the expansion of industrial production and capitalist economic exchange. In the nineteenth century, huge numbers of people are drawn together in unplanned ways and become closely dependent upon each other. The pressures felt by people to re-adjust their behaviour patterns, their patterns of social interaction and their personality to such social structural changes spread more and more beyond the ruling and noble classes, into the bourgeois classes which are not yet integrated into the courts, and then other social classes.

Elias's account of occidental civilization does have its difficulties, which I shall discuss in the final section of chapter 3. Nevertheless, it goes beyond Weber's account in several regards, and I shall list only two relevant points here. Like Weber, Elias puts social differentiation and changes in individuals' behaviour patterns and personality[11] within the context of long-term and multidimensional social developments to examine the nature of these changes. However, Elias is unlike Weber in two respects. The first point is that Weber conceptualizes these social developments as aspects of value differentiation and rationalization through which value spheres become increasingly

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[11] Elias sometimes uses the concept of habitus to convey the idea that these behaviour patterns and personality are themselves `embodied social learning' and that they are maintained like second nature.

differentiated from each other and develop their own inner logics. Elias does not take this analytic approach; I shall discuss the disadvantages of such an approach in the final section of chapter 2. Trying to conceptualize social differentiation from another perspective, he pays more attention to the interweaving of different social processes and the dynamics emerging from it. The second point is that, by locating transformations of behaviour patterns and personality within the context of the interweaving of different social processes, Elias can then draw our attention to how these social processes push human beings in to becoming locked into each other more and more closely and how all these changes have their impacts on human beings' psychological make-up. Under this understanding, Elias is able to give a more comprehensive account of the transformation of the self-consciousness of human beings and the patterns of mutual identification among them. While this discovery does not in itself suggest a direct response to Weber's thesis on the loss of freedom and meaning, it does indeed provide a new direction for tackling this issue; I shall show how it does this in chapter 4.

I shall also attempt to clarify some major recurrent misunderstandings of Elias's work in chapter 4. Because Elias's early historical studies trace social developments only up to the nineteenth century, there is a hesitation about the relevance of Elias's work for understanding contemporary human social conditions. While I agree that much of Elias's research is not directly addressed to the contemporary social situation, I do not agree that his studies are irrelevant for understanding it ---- it is indeed Elias's practical intention to understand the past in order to illuminate the problems of the

present era.[12] In chapter 4, I shall try to draw on the studies of two Eliasians ---- de Swaan and Wouters ---- to illuminate the relevance of Elias's work for understanding contemporary human social conditions.

Based on this reception of Elias's work through a reconstruction, I shall argue that Elias helps us to have a new and indeed fuller grasp of the cultural phenomenon which Weber conceptualizes in a one-sided way as value differentiation and value irreconcilability. On the whole, the Eliasian position is that, developmentally speaking, it is the increase in human interdependence that pushes occidental civilization forward. This latter trend of social development cannot be adequately described simply as a process of social differentiation. For Elias, it is a dual process where social differentiation is coupled with and counterbalanced by social de-differentiation, or social integration. In other words, a higher level of social differentiation emerges hand in hand with a higher level of social integration. From the perspective of individuals, this dual process brings about more self-consciousness and self-control, and therefore more choices for actions. In modern society, human beings have more relative autonomy to (re-)construct their own life-courses and social relationships, and their self-identity and social identity. But we can also say that they have less chances to escape the burden of (re-)constructing them and, indeed, confront more difficulties in this regard. Life has become more flexible, but it also has to become so ---- therefore this can become a burden.

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[12] He already made this point clear in the introduction to Elias (1978) and Elias (1982).

This Eliasian approach gives us a more comprehensive and balanced view than Weber on contemporary human social conditions. It also challenges some popular versions of cultural pessimism and provides some new insights concerning Weber's problem of what sort of a higher synthesis will become possible in a modern social context of value pluralism. I shall elaborate on these two points in the second half of chapter 4.

Habermas provides another alternative to Weber's account of occidental civilization and the problem of the loss of freedom and meaning. Habermas critically follows the track of the early Frankfurt School social thinkers, who incorporate Weber's work as a major resource for developing their critique of modern capitalism. Like the early Frankfurt School social thinkers, Habermas thinks that Weber has made valuable contributions to the identification of the central problems of capitalist modernization. His insights can be assimilated into Marxian social thought to illuminate the problems of modern capitalism. But for Habermas, both Weber and the early Frankfurt School social thinkers are unable to identify the solution to these problems. Therefore their attitude towards modernity is generally pessimistic. Habermas does not accept this pessimistic attitude. He thinks that modernization is still an incomplete project. Its inner dynamics have still not yet been exhausted. There is indeed an alternative route of modernization to capitalist modernization. Based on his perception that there is such an alternative, Habermas thinks that there are solutions to the problems generated by capitalist modernization. Therefore, value fragmentation (which results in the loss of meaning and the crisis of social integration) is avoidable.

There are ways to reconcile value conflicts. There are ways to combat the tendency of this particular path of societal rationalization in the Occident to endanger human freedom. It is possible to strike a good balance between the expansion of material success and efficiency and that of human autonomy.

Now, Habermas's problem becomes how to preserve and reconstruct the insights of Weber and the early Frankfurt School social thinkers in order to develop a theoretical framework which can provide a more comprehensive and balanced critique of capitalist modernization and at the same time point out an alternative route of modernization which can avoid the problems engendered in modern capitalism. In chapter 5, I argue that Habermas starts from what is generally called by commentators a paradigm shift from a subject-centred model in social theory to a communicative model, or a shift from the philosophy of consciousness to a philosophy of language or intersubjectivity.[13] In terms of this new model, Habermas criticizes Weber's conception of social action and rationality (and also those of the early Frankfurt School social thinkers) as one-sided. For Habermas, the communicative model provides a better basis for reconstructing these concepts.[14] This work of reconstruction results in a differentiated conception of rationality —— which distinguishes between instrumental

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[13] Wellmer (1986) discusses the nature and significance of this paradigm shift.

[14] However, I shall stress here that this alternative model is not only intended by Habermas to play an epistemological role which sets the stage and direction for social understanding. It also plays an evaluative role to defend the particular human self-image which Habermas considers to be appropriate for modern human social life. This evaluative aspect is not shared by Elias in his replacement of the human self-image of *homo clausus* by that of *homines aperti*. I shall elaborate more on Habermas's understanding of the relationship between understanding and evaluation later in this introduction. A fuller exposition will only be given in chapter 7.

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rationality and communicative rationality. This new conception (while it also incorporates the insights of other social theorists such as Mead, Durkheim and Parsons) provides a direction for reconstructing Weber's understanding of rationalization.

However, for Habermas, there is a limit to this reconstruction. He finds that Weber's conceptual framework comes up to its limit precisely with the task of conceptualizing social development on the societal level. Habermas conceives that we must incorporate the concepts of system and lifeworld to complement Weber's action-theoretic concepts. `System' and `lifeworld' then become a conceptual base of Habermas's two-level theory of society.

Perceiving occidental civilization from the aspects of the development of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality, and the rationalization of system and the rationalization of the lifeworld, Habermas points out that Weber's understanding of cultural development in the Occident is rather imbalanced, and therefore inadequate. For Habermas, Weber only focuses his attention on the religious source of cultural development. He does not look at secular sources of influence. Also, because he takes a subject-centred model of thought, instead of a communicative one which incorporates both the considerations of the instrumental and the communicative aspects of rationalization, Weber tends to equate the development of rationality per se with that of instrumental rationality. Therefore he is unable to conceptualize the communicative aspect of rationalization.

Based on the conceptual reconstruction as indicated in the above, Habermas develops his own thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld, which I shall discuss in detail in the final section of chapter 5. This thesis critically incorporates the insights of Marx, Weber, the early Frankfurt School and other social thinkers, whilst also providing a more balanced critique of modern capitalism than any of these thinkers. Through this thesis, Habermas makes an important attempt to identify the resources which are still available in occidental civilization to confront the problems emerging in capitalist modernization. He can therefore substantiate more his disagreement with Weber's diagnosis of modern human social conditions by showing why the loss of freedom and meaning is not an inescapable cost to pay for modernization and how it is possible to avoid this 'cost'.

I shall examine several criticisms of Habermas's theory of rationality and his theory of society in chapter 6. Habermas reminds us that the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action should not be taken on a par with the distinction between system and the lifeworld. However, this does not discard the fact that the originality and usefulness of the latter distinction to a significant degree depend on the soundness of the former one. My position regarding the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action is that, while there are strong arguments which query the validity of this distinction, and while these arguments are worth considering seriously, this distinction captures a deep insight about theoretical and practical discourses which should not be ruled out without being committed to what Habermas calls a 'performative contradiction'. When one is committed to such a

contradiction, one is performing an argument which rejects a necessary presupposition which makes this performance possible. All critics of Habermas's distinction on this point must take this problem into account seriously.

Both Elias and Habermas's accounts of occidental civilization are illuminating, and they stimulate many fruitful arguments on them. We can discover convergences and controversies between their accounts of occidental civilization while we go into their arguments. I think that it will help us understand the originalities and significance of Elias and Habermas's works by further considering these convergences and controversies. This is also important for my target of developing a dialogue between Elias and Habermas in the remaining part of this thesis. First of all, both Elias and Habermas reject the solitary image of human beings. Though for different reasons, both of them argue that the Cartesian distinction between subject and object cannot be sustained. Whereas Elias replaces the *homo clausus* human self-image with one which he calls *homines aperti*, Habermas replaces the subject-centred model of thought with a communicative one. Both Elias and Habermas reject Weber's Protestant ethic thesis. They argue that the significance of the Christian religion for occidental civilization has been overstressed by Weber and argue that the influence of this religion must be contextualized. In order to understand occidental civilization in a more comprehensive way, we must also consider secular sources of influence. Both Elias and Habermas see occidental civilization as consisting of both the aspects of social differentiation and social integration. For both of them, both these aspects must be considered in a balanced way before we can evaluate the positive and negative side of occidental

civilization adequately.[15] For them, the value of this civilization for promoting human happiness is rather ambivalent ---- both of them disagree with any purely optimistic or pessimistic view on this civilization; of course, the question of what is human happiness is itself an issue of controversy. Comparing them crudely here, Weber perceives the tendencies of depersonalization and value-fragmentation in modern human social life, but Elias rejects any simple-minded dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* which may be associated with this and similar views.[16] Whereas, Habermas attempts to show that there are still available resources to secure rational consensus between modern human beings on ethical matters. These are the major points of convergence between Elias and Habermas.

However, the convergence between Elias and Habermas should not be overstressed. We must also observe dissimilarities which may lead to controversies between them, and their followers. A central difference between Elias and Habermas which is related with my account here of their understanding of occidental civilization lies in their conceptions of power. As we shall see in my exposition of their ideas in the chapters below, the concept of power is central to both Elias's and Habermas's works. So the account of the differences in their conceptualizations of power constitutes an essential part of the account of the differences in their understandings of occidental civilization.

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[15] It is Elias's position that, while his research is relevant for this task of evaluation, his role and contribution as a sociologist instead rest on the development of the knowledge base for this task. I shall clarify what is involved in the connection between science and values in the main body of my thesis below.

[16] See Elias (1974).

I point out in chapter 3 that Weber's conception of power is narrowly associated with decision making. This conception of power is unable to grasp the effect of power in non-decision making and the filtering mechanisms which screen out `inadequate' issues before they appear in the agendas for collective discussions and decision making. What is more important is that, as Lukes points out, power can also have its effect in moulding our mentality even before all these stages begin. Therefore we need a more comprehensive conception of power to incorporate all these dimensions. Elias's concept of power can be seen as one successful attempt to achieve this target. Besides this target, Elias also attempts to avoid the agency-structure distinction which is implicated in many other attempts to conceptualize power, such as Lukes's three-dimensional view of power. He rejects the popular but wrong view which takes power as necessarily negative. For him, power is an intrinsic element of human social life. It is not intrinsically positive or negative; it can be both. As can be seen in my elaboration of Elias's ideas in chapter 3, Elias's concepts of power, human interdependency and human figuration define each other. They provide a coherent conceptual base for Elias's own understanding of occidental civilization.

As for Habermas's part, he is easily misunderstood as making an absolute distinction between reason and power; I shall clarify Habermas's own position on the relationship between them in the first section of chapter 6. For Habermas, power is not essentially illegitimate, i.e. not rationally grounded, from the perspective of social participants. Also, Habermas's critical theory does not pursue a utopia without power.

It is helpful to remind ourselves here of the intention behind Habermas's critical theory. This helps us to clarify the distinctiveness of Habermas's conception of power. Playing a central part in Habermas's critical theory, the concept of power carries a critical intent. I argue in this thesis that this concept is developed with a critical intent to separate, from the perspective of social participants, between legitimate uses of power and illegitimate ones. This separation between the two uses of power is indeed very important. It constitutes the basis which informs Habermas's understanding of occidental civilization and his critique of modern capitalism. And, just as the separation between legitimate uses of power and illegitimate ones involves an evaluative element, the latter tasks certainly carry an evaluative aspect within themselves.

This point regarding Habermas's critical intent/his evaluative stance brings us to another important difference between Elias and Habermas. It concerns the position of value in our understanding of occidental civilization, and, more generally, of social reality. As I shall argue in my exposition of it later, Elias's work also carries a practical intent to resolve human social problems. But it is Elias's position that we must keep a careful balance between involvement and detachment before we can improve our understanding of social reality, and it is only with better knowledge in hand that we can achieve this practical task. For Elias, while the importance of knowledge for human social practices, politics in particular, should not be neglected, it is of no less importance that the relative autonomy of the development of knowledge should not be sacrificed. For this reason, Elias is not willing *consciously* to import any evaluative element into his conception of power.

Here we can see a similarity between Weber and Elias, particularly when they are compared with Habermas. Though Elias is critical of Weber's sociological nominalism and his theory of ideal types, his ideas which I have just represented in the above paragraph concerning involvement and detachment and those concerning fantasy and reality-congruency in fact share a similar stance with Weber's theory of value-neutrality on the issue of the relationship between science and values; I shall discuss this point in the final section of chapter 3. Habermas's position differs from Weber's and Elias's precisely on this issue. In chapter 6, I shall discuss Habermas's viewpoint that understanding is inescapably connected with evaluation. If this point simply means that all understandings are value-laden, we cannot see how Habermas's position differs from Weber's and Elias's because both Weber and Elias admit this fact. But in fact, for his critical theory, Habermas's point conveys more meaning than this. Habermas's critical theory does not only recognize this fact. It actually also *consciously* incorporates into itself an evaluative aspect. It does so, and has to do so, because its target is *explicitly* the critique of social injustice (especially in the ways in which it is associated with capitalist modernization) ---- this kind of critique is achieved through disclosing illegitimate uses of power in society. However, for the reason that Elias insists upon the importance of self-detachment on the part of social investigators and the relative autonomy of knowledge development, this idea is unacceptable for him.

This thesis is not about the philosophy of science, or methodology. But I consider that it is useful to give a brief description of the positions of Weber, Elias and Habermas on these issues. Relating their positions in these regards to their

understanding of occidental civilization will help us to reveal some deeper reasons which partly constitute the differences between them on the latter issue. This would make my comparison between the understanding of these three people on occidental civilization a more complete and fair one.

Because he tries to make explicit the connection between understanding and evaluation in his own work, Habermas opens up one direction in which to understand the nature of occidental civilization which is directly related with the pursuit of improving social justice. This dimension has not yet been developed by Elias and others. Nevertheless, precisely because he wants to maintain this distinctive character of his critical theory, Habermas has to show how it is possible and how fruitful it is to develop such a direction of understanding occidental civilization. In fact, the former task also leaves Habermas the difficult task of showing us how it is possible to validate his critical theory ---- i.e. to indicate how he can show us that his theory is rationally substantiated. I shall expose Habermas's response to these problems in chapter 6 and 7.

The purpose of chapter 7 is twofold. First, I shall elucidate how Habermas employs the concept of rational reconstruction (or the reconstructive sciences) to confront the problem of how we can validate his critical theory. My opinion is that this attempt is not without problems, but it does point towards a fruitful direction in which to confront this and similar problems. Second, I think that Habermas's incorporation of the concept of rational reconstruction for conceptualizing the problem of how to validate his critical theory gives us a clue regarding how to develop further a fruitful

dialogue between Elias and Habermas which is sympathetic and fair to both sides. This kind of dialogue is important for deepening our understanding of occidental civilization. I shall indicate and elaborate a bit on some clues where we can develop this kind of dialogue towards the end of chapter 7.

Let me make one last point concerning the dialogue between Weber, Elias and Habermas that I am developing in this thesis before I go into the main body of my arguments. In each part where I introduce the ideas of Weber, Elias and Habermas, I shall write the introduction in a way which is intended to facilitate a dialogue between them which I shall develop later in this thesis. In this way, the introduction will be unavoidably selective and reconstructive. In fact, this selective and reconstructive reading of Weber, Elias and Habermas manifests one way in which these three sociologists and philosophers illuminate each other. Nonetheless, I shall be careful in undertaking this task to do as much justice as possible to their own meanings. This willingness to listen to one another's messages, I believe, plays an important part in knowledge growth.

CHAPTER 1

Weber's Account of Occidental Civilization I:
Capitalism, the State and the Law

Weber's central theme

It is a difficult task, even at a time more than seventy years after Weber's death, to grasp the central themes and ambitions of Weber's work as a whole. Time no doubt washes away some naive and wrong interpretations of Weber, but it also generates many other versions of his work. There are reasons to believe that this conflict of interpretations concerning Weber's work will continue in the foreseeable future. It is beyond the scope of the present thesis to join in the debate over these conflicts of interpretation. It is intended here to do something else; I shall bring out what it is in the following pages.

In setting a stage for looking at Weber in the rest of this chapter, it is necessary to discuss three influential versions of his work ---- those presented by Tenbruck, Hennis and Schluchter. In an important essay, Tenbruck asserts that, in working on his historical economics, Weber gradually expanded his project and set for himself the central question "what is rationality?"; or more specifically what is the process of rationalization.[1] Under this interpretation, Weber recognizes that occidental rationalization takes a path different from the rationalization of other civilizations. But Weber also recognizes the need to construct a general model (a model of universal history in Tenbruck's terms) under which

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[1] Tenbruck (1980), p.75.

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the particularity of occidental rationalization can be understood. For this task, Weber focuses his attention particularly on the rationalization of religious ideas.

Tenbruck's interpretation is echoed by Nelson, who argues that we can discover in Weber's later works an expansion of the theme of *PE* into a comparative historical differential sociology of civilizational complexes.[2]

Did Weber actually expand his theme from economic history and economic policy into cultural and civilizational studies? Second, was Weber's ambition the development of a general conceptual framework for the comparison of different civilizations? If it was, is `rationalization' a general concept which Weber develops for this job?

Let me examine another thesis on Weber's central theme before I take up these two issues. Hennis rejects Tenbruck's interpretation of Weber. Instead, concentrating on the development and amendment of *PE* by Weber and the "Anticritical Last Word" essay, Hennis argues that Weber did not have any ideas such as universal history or what Schluchter has called `the peculiarity of occidental rationalism' in mind. Rather, Weber's work evolves around a much narrower central theme ---- which is the development of *Menschentum* (commonly translated as `humankind') created by the elective affinity between ascetic Protestantism and early bourgeois capitalism. The focus of interest thus becomes narrowed down into the rationalization of *Lebensführung* (commonly translated as `the conduct of life'). The active asceticism developed in ascetic Protestantism is not just relevant for the practical life form (the spirit, the ethos) of modern capitalism, but the modern occidental culture in general. Hennis also suggests that Weber's theme remains the

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[2] Nelson (1974), p.273. In a later essay (1976), Nelson considers the paths taken by other civilizations as failed rationalization. But we can ask here: why can we not consider them as just other paths of rationalization, in spite of the judgement that they are a failure? Does not this judgement involve the danger of conflating general rationalization with occidental rationalization?

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same throughout his *PE* essays from 1905 to 1920.[3] In Hennis's words, Weber's central

theme is always

> the `development of *Menschentum*' and how it was most deeply influenced
> by a particular `combination of circumstances': the `elective' conjunction of
> `ascetic Protestantism' (expressed in the idea of vocation) with early
> bourgeois capitalism to form a new mode of rational `*Lebensführung*' for
> *Berufs- und Fachmenschen*. Asceticism had assisted `in building the
> tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order' `which today
> determines the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism'.
> Out of a "light cloak" "fate decreed" that an "iron cage" should develop.[4]

Is there any truth in Hennis's thesis? Is the theme of `the development of

Menschentum', or the rationalization of life-conduct, too large or too restricted? Can

Weber's other works be understood adequately under the theme which is reconstructed, as

it is by Hennis, by reference to the so-called *PE* essays?

Hennis's interpretation surely sheds light on and draws attention to one important

dimension of Weber's work which is still to a large extent relevant to the evaluative

understanding of our contemporary situation.[5] We can even say that it is relevant not only

for the urgently needed intellectual reflection upon modern occidental civilization and its

fate, but also for our evaluation of the present cultural situation of humanity as a whole.

However, this interpretation also has its limitations. In a long endnote to his recent book,

Schluchter challenges Hennis on two counts which are worth rehearsing in some detail

here. First, Hennis's account of modern western culture obviously deviates from Weber's

own account. Schluchter states,

> I naturally do not deny that Weber was interested in forms of life conduct
> and that he paid special attention to those forms connected to the
> development of Occidental culture. However, it is just as important to take
> into account, *in what way* he pursued this interest. For he did this in the

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[3] Hennis (1983), p.150.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.149.

[5] Scaff develops this insight further in Scaff (1989). I shall discuss this issue in detail in
the next chapter.

> framework of a sociology of culture conceived comparatively and in terms
> of developmental history that historically and empirically investigated the
> mutual dependency of (1) orders (institutional realms) and (2) forms of life
> conduct. It did not utilize here a nebulous `anthropological-
> characterological' principle, as Hennis claims.[6]

I strongly agree with Schluchter that Weber's work involves a lot of institutional analyses

which cannot be neatly fitted into the theme of the development of *Menschentum*.

Nevertheless, it is also undeniable that these institutional analyses do indeed throw light

onto the understanding of the genesis of the life conduct of modern western human beings.

Second, looking at Weber's great work more closely, it is arguable whether Weber has in

fact only one central theme. It is hardly adequate to narrow down Weber's work to the

central theme Hennis suggests. Schluchter himself argues for a much more modest view

that, in his intellectual development, Weber's interest was originally in modern rational

capitalism, but that he (Weber) gradually realized the wider relevance of his work for the

sociology of culture and shifted his interest from around 1910 to 1913 to investigating the

peculiarity of modern occidental rationalism.[7] This investigation, then, involves a whole set

of comparative studies of the rationalization of various life orders (e.g. the economic realm,

the political realm, law, etc) for locating the peculiar features of modern occidental

rationalism.

No matter whether Schluchter rightly captures Weber's central concerns, he is

certainly right in insisting on the multidimensionality of Weber's studies, at least in regard to

these life orders. It is outside the scope of my thesis to investigate all these dimensions in

detail, but one of my ambitions in this thesis is to go through the major part of Weber's

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[6] Schluchter (1989), p.575 n.10; Schluchter's emphasis.

[7] *Ibid.*, ch.XII. This view also gains support from Hamilton. See Hamilton (1984), for
example.

institutional studies briefly to examine the relationship that he saw as existing between these life orders (or institutions).

In the comment just quoted, Schluchter shares Tenbruck's view that Weber expanded his theme beyond the economic studies of the rise of modern rational capitalism, but he differs from Tenbruck on his point that religious rationalization is merely one of the different dimensions of rationalization that Weber was interested in. Tenbruck has overemphasized the relative autonomy of ideas and the rationalization of worldviews. It is important to strike a balance between ideas, interests and material and institutional conditions in order to grasp Weber's perspective correctly.[8]

To avoid being carried away by the complicated issue regarding Weber's central theme(s), I shall now turn to the issue of the perspective from which I shall approach Weber's work. Schluchter assumes that the peculiarity of modern occidental rational culture is the main theme of Weber's later studies.[9] In what follows, I shall not make any claim for or against this view. What I want to do instead is to focus on Weber's view on the development of modern occidental rational culture as a peculiar path of human civilization. Therefore my discussion of Weber's work will be intentionally selective. I shall avoid the burden of identifying Weber's `central theme' in order to illuminate Weber's work as a whole.

Anyway, it is my assumption that it is one major concern of Weber's work to identify the peculiar features of modern western civilization. In doing so, Weber concerns himself with an investigation from a developmental perspective of the different paths taken by various life orders in the Occident in their rationalization processes. The particularities

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[8] Cf. Kalberg (1979), pp.131-2. See also Collins (1980) where he highlights the institutional dimension of Weber's studies of the origin of modern rational capitalism.
[9] Schluchter (1981) and Schluchter (1989), esp. ch.1.

of these paths are identified by Weber through a comparison of them with other civilizations. One important point to be made in this connection is that Weber recognizes certain relations of elective affinity existing between the processes of rationalization of these life orders, even though they do not necessarily run parallel with each other.

I shall substantiate this point in more detail in the sections below, but let me clarify one more point before attempting this. Does Weber have a general concept of rationality (or rationalization, or rationalism) which draws together the threads of the studies I mentioned in the above paragraph? Or, does he intend to develop one through these studies? These are not easy questions partly because Weber does not provide any direct or explicit answer for them besides some scattered points. Though various attempts have been made to clarify them[10] and these attempts are of great help in understanding Weber's ideas surrounding the concept of rationality, it is nonetheless not my purpose to examine the adequacy of these attempts, or to start another project of systematically reconstructing Weber's own understanding from the scattered usages in his work. Sticking closely to the aims and ambitions I have set for myself in this thesis, it is enough to remind ourselves here that rationality is for Weber an historical concept. It includes very diverse things. In a frequently cited passage, Weber says, by the term `rationalism',

> very different things may be understood... There is, for example, rationalization of mystical contemplation, that is of an attitude which, viewed from other departments of life, is specifically irrational, just as much as there are rationalizations of economic life, of technique, of scientific research, of military training, of law and administration. Furthermore, each one of these fields may be rationalized in terms of very different ultimate values and ends and what is rational from one point of view may well be irrational from another. Hence rationalizations of the most varied character have existed in various departments of life and in all areas of culture. To characterize their differences from the view-point of cultural history it is necessary to know what departments are rationalized, and in what direction. It is hence our first concern to work out and to explain

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[10] For example, Schluchter (1979a), Kalberg (1980), Brubaker (1984), Levine (1985).

genetically the special peculiarity of Occidental rationalism, and within this
field that of the modern Occidental form.[11]

Elsewhere, in explaining the term `rationalism', he also says,

> [i]n fact, one may ... rationalize life from fundamentally different basic
> points of view and in very different directions. Rationalism is an historical
> concept which covers a whole world of different things.[12]

Weber's own qualification of the concept of rationality (though it is still incomplete) is clear

enough in these two quotations. It is another issue whether Weber's ideas about rationality

can be reconstructed structurally, but it is clearly Weber's interest to understand rationality

in its diverse forms.

On this point, Tenbruck suggests that a minimal concept of rationality is implicated

in Weber's work ---- the pursuit of logical or teleological consistency.[13] This interpretation

is certainly not wrong, but too thin for understanding the significance of the concept for

Weber's studies. It is also not of much help, as does Tenbruck, to take religious

rationalization (which concerns, in confronting human finitude, the pursuit of the

elimination of feelings of uncertainty and suffering in increasingly demagicalized and

systematic ways) as an exemplary case for understanding the general meaning of rationality,

rationalism and rationalization. As Weber himself says, different life orders rationalize from

different directions and in different forms. Thus there are limitations for generalizing a

particular dimension of rationalization into other dimensions of it.

Therefore my strategy will be to keep the concept of rationality as diversified as in

Weber's own usages of it and to understand its rich content within the context of Weber's

own developmental studies of the paths taken in their rationalization by various life orders

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[11] *PE*, "Author's Introduction", p.26.

[12] *Ibid.*, p.78.

[13] Tenbruck, *op. cit.*, p.43.

in the Occident.[14] I hope that this way of proceeding will shed more light on Weber's understanding of the peculiarity of modern occidental civilization.

The following sections will concentrate on Weber's account of the genesis of the rational market economy, religion, the rational politico-administrative apparatus and rational law in the Occident, the paths of which were not repeated elsewhere.[15] The relationship between the genesis of these realms will also be examined.

The emergence of modern rational capitalism

In this section, I do not intend to provide a full account of Weber's economic sociology. Rather, I shall restrict my aim to exposing how Weber understands the development of modern occidental economic rationalism and the features that distinguish it from other paths of economic development. In fact, this question is posed by Weber himself:

> ... capitalism and capitalistic enterprises ... have existed in all civilized countries of the earth ... In any case, the capitalistic enterprise and the capitalistic entrepreneur, not only as occasional but as regular entrepreneurs, are very old and were very widespread.
> Now, however, the Occident has developed capitalism both to a quantitative extent, and (carrying this quantitative development) in types, forms, and directions which never existed elsewhere.[16]

> ... Why did not the economic development there [e.g. China and India] enter upon that path of rationalization which is peculiar to the Occident?[17]

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[14] This does not mean that I reject any attempt at reconstructing, as Brubaker and Levine do, a structural concept of rationality from its usages in discrete and diverse contexts. It is rather my position that both dimensions illuminate each other.

[15] Among other realms Weber includes in his studies are science, art (especially music) and erotic life.

[16] *PE*, pp.19-20.

Although Weber poses a question about counter-cases (e.g. China and India), the focus of his discussion remains the peculiarity of modern occidental economic rationalism.

To confront this question, I shall deal with Weber's analysis from two aspects: the institutional and the ethical dimensions of modern occidental economic rationalism. As I shall argue later, they are not treated by Weber as separate aspects. On the contrary, they depend on and interplay with each other.

One important heritage Weber obtained from his teachers from the German Historical School is the latter's critique of the classical economists for being too narrow in the way in which they dealt with activities concerning material interests. For the historical school, as well as for Weber, economic actions are certainly closely connected with material interests. But they are also determined by non-material factors such as state power, law and psychic and moral elements.[18] This standpoint is, for example, clearly expressed in Weber's earlier study of East Elbian agrarian workers in the capitalist development of Imperial Germany just before the turn of this century. In this study, he observes that the rationalization of that particular natural economy is largely stimulated and conditioned by historico-political, social structural and psychological factors.[19] The transformation of this economy in turn has an effect of breaking up the ties of relations of production within traditional communal networks and rendering these relations purely contractual and instrumental. That means, this transformation (which Weber sometimes describes as depersonalization) results in the employers' freeing themselves from their traditional moral

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[17] *Ibid.*, p.25. Of course, in the context of the quoted passage, Weber is talking about a much wider question of the peculiarity of the various dimensions of modern occidental rationalism. But I shall limit myself to the economic dimension in this section and leave the others for following ones.

[18] Hennis (1987), esp. pp.34-6.

[19] Weber (1894).

and communal responsibilities for workers. The relations between employers and workers are established in purely economic and legal terms. For Weber, this transformation has its influences not only upon the economy and economic relations. It also overturns the general social life and social relations in the area.

Material factors surely play a part in mobilizing the agrarian workers to welcome this change, but political and psychological factors are more worthy of note within this historical context. The major reason that makes the agrarian workers accept the change is not material benefits. As a matter of fact, this transformation has rendered their material conditions insecure. Their aspirations instead come from their taste of freedom due to this transformation, rather than purely material benefits. For this transformation gives them chances for liberating themselves from their traditional communal ties and opens up new opportunities for them.[20] The task Weber sets for economic policy studies and economic history is to understand the changing material condition of society, its causes, and its corollaries for the quality of human living condition in general. This task must recognize the interplay between material and non-material factors.[21]

To conclude this point, Weber's economic sociology concerns the interplay between the institutional and the ethical dimensions of economic activities, and between material and non-material factors related to them. His work is scientific to the extent that it strives for explanatory accounts of economic development. But it is also of practical and political relevance to the evaluation of human living conditions in general.[22]

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[20] *Ibid.*, p.183. Käsler has provided a more detailed discussion of this study in Käsler (1988), ch.3.

[21] Hennis (1987) provides an illuminating analysis of this viewpoint held by Weber in his earlier period.

[22] *ES, GEH* and a major part of *PE* concern the scientific task and the essays "Science as a Vocation" and "Politics as a Vocation, *RRW*, and part of "Author's Introduction" and the

Let me now briefly discuss Weber's account of the institutional features of modern occidental economic rationalism. Weber's understanding of capitalism is ambiguous but some hints can be traced from his writings that are useful for the clarification being attempted here. First of all, Weber distinguishes between economically orientated action and economic action according to the subjective meanings of the actors involved. He defines the former as being concerned with "the satisfaction of a desire for `utilities'".[23] It includes "all primarily non-economic action and all non-peaceful action which is influenced by economic considerations".[24] So every action may be economically orientated, e.g. the acquisition of capital by the threat to use, or even the direct use of force.[25] On the other hand, economic action is "any peaceful exercise of an actor's control over resources which is in its main impulse oriented towards economic ends".[26] Thus we can infer from this definition that rational economic action requires instrumental rationality (i.e. deliberate planning) for this orientation.[27] In *PE*, Weber also states that capitalistic economic action focuses its ends on opportunities for exchange and profit accumulation.[28] Starting from this action terminology, Weber defines autocephalous economic action as an `economy' and

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added sentences of the second version of *PE* (mainly the last few pages) deal with the practical task.

[23] *ES*, p.63.

[24] *Ibid.*, p.64.

[25] See also *PE*, p.20 for various forms of acquisition related with force.

[26] *ES*, p.63.

[27] *Loc. cit.*

[28] *PE*, p.17:

> We will define a capitalistic economic action as one which rests on the expectation of profit by the utilization of opportunities for exchange, that is on (formally) peaceful chances of profit.

Weber contrasts this with acquisition by force.

Schluchter reconstructs Weber's typology of economic actions and systems most notably according to the axes of the use of property for rent vs that for profit (wealth vs capital), the dominance of the household principle vs that of the business principle, and the orientation towards consumption vs production. This typology thus separates a natural economy from a market economy. See Schluchter (1989), ch.IX.

an organized system of continuous economic action as an `economic establishment'.[29]

Thus Weber's action-theoretic understanding of capitalism becomes more explicit now.

Weber talks of different forms of capitalism. Most of them are fused with non-economic elements as their means for profit-making/capital accumulation.[30] Modern occidental rational capitalism is, in Weber's time, the only exception which has differentiated economic action from other types of action and institutionalized peaceful means for the end of profit-making/capital accumulation, and which has further rationalized these means by primarily incorporating rational planning as a central element of these means. Weber sees the rational permanent enterprise with its technique of rational accounting as the proto-type of rational planning in this area. For its central aim is the maximization of the calculability of profit-making through systematic recording and prediction. This greatly enhances the efficiency of capital accumulation.[31] Weber also specifies several developmental preconditions for the existence of this kind of enterprise and its further rationalization in its functions for supporting production and capital accumulation: (1) market freedom, (2) freedom of management, (3) free labour , freedom of the labour market and freedom in the selection of workers (i.e. the existence of formally free labour as expressed in *PE*), (4) substantive freedom of contract, (5) mechanically rational technology, (6) formally rational administration and law, (7) a division between

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[29] *ES*, p.63.

[30] See, for example, Weber's discussion of them in "Author's Introduction".

[31] *GEH*, ch.22 has this brief illustration:

> Capitalism is present wherever provision for the needs of a human group is carried out by private business. More specifically, a rational capitalistic establishment is one with capital accounting, that is, an establishment which ascertains its income-yielding assets, profits and costs by calculation according to the methods of modern book-keeping. (p.275; the quotation here is adopted from Andreski (1983), p.109)

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enterprise and household, and (8) a formally rational order of the monetary system.[32] The development of all these features is peculiar to the Occident. Only in the Occident have all these elements developed and existed together and given rise to a peculiar form of capitalism, a peculiar institutional network of economic rationalism.

How did these elements develop in the Occident? I have no intention to give a detailed analysis of this issue here. I shall indicate only several points which are relevant to my discussions below.

First, Weber's definition of capitalism includes a broad and a narrow aspect. His discussion of capitalism includes cases of acquisition by the use of force or other kinds of irrational elements. But his explicit definition excludes these cases. Indeed, this definition takes modern occidental rational capitalism as its own ideal case. This gives a much narrower delimitation of capitalism. The peculiarity of this type of capitalism rests on its degree of rationality which is higher than those achieved by any other civilizations in their capitalist acquisition.[33] In talking about the degree of rationality here, Weber is of course aware that rationality is a relative concept. The degree of rationality of one type of

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[32] See *ES*, pp.161-2. See also *PE*, pp.21-5 and *GEH*, ch.22 for briefer discussions. My list here is adopted from Käsler (1988), p.161.

[33] This perspective on approaching capitalism reveals Weber's preference for understanding social phenomena with reference to the subjective meaning and rationality implicated in them. In any case, he explicitly rejects interstate conflict as an internal factor for determining the development of modern occidental rational capitalism. Acquisition through the exploitation of colonies has long existed and is essentially irrational and unstable. This contrasts him with Wallerstein, who grants central significance to this factor. See Collins (1980), pp.936-41. This perspective also contrasts Weber with Elias, who perceives interstate conflict as an important aspect related with intrastate pacification and economic growth. See my discussions in the chapter on Elias below.

In "The Anticritical Last Word", p.1128, Weber rejects technical advances as essential elements for determining the development of modern rational capitalism. In *GEH*, ch.30, he also rejects population growth and the inflow of precious metals as determinant factors. On the other hand, he considers geographical factors and military needs (consumptions for wars) as important external conditions for it.

capitalism is judged only according to its effectiveness in profit making/capital accumulation. Also, what is seen as rational from the aspect of economic development may be irrational from another. Weber is aware of the irrational effects (according to other, non-economic standards) of modern occidental rational capitalism, which is by far the most rational type of capitalism. I shall further discuss this latter point later.

Concerning the preconditions for this rational type of capitalism, Weber sees that their development takes different paths and involves various factors. These factors are largely contingent and historical ones. He also sees that the paths of development these elements take are peculiar to the Occident. For example, the development of rational accounting depends on the development of rational mathematics; this latter is peculiar to the Occident. The development of modern science and its technical utilization in industrial production enhances the efficiency of capital accumulation, but these two features are also peculiar historical products which cannot be found outside the Occident. Also, the development of the rational state and rational law is peculiar to the Occident.[34] What is of no less importance is that, though these developments facilitate each other, they take relatively independent routes. No necessary paths, directions, connections and stages can be attributed to them. We cannot squeeze them into a unified evolutionary model of social and economic development. Therefore the simple Marxian perspective must be rejected.

My discussion in the above emphasizes the divergence of development. Nevertheless, a common theme can still be observed within these diverse aspects of development (which Weber calls value spheres); though, for Weber, this common theme in

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[34] See *PE*, pp.23-5. In relation to these political and legal dimensions, Weber also talks of the emergence of the autonomous occidental city and the concept of the citizen which have no equivalence with the Medieval city and cannot be found anywhere else in the world. See *ibid.*, p.23. See also *ES*, part two, section XVI and *GEH*, ch.28 for more detailed discussions.

no way dictates the diversity of the aspects of development just mentioned, or gives them structures. We can locate in them a commonly shared logic of development which points toward increases in calculability and thus predictability (despite the different directions and paths taken by these aspects of development). The increases in calculability and predictability are achieved through the increasing differentiation of rational factors from irrational ones within these aspects (or value spheres). Thus the more rationalized the capitalist economy, the more depersonalized it becomes and the more economic activities are separated from traditions, norms and values. Fraternity, charity and ethical considerations are separated from economic action *per se*.[35] The latter becomes more and more instrumental. In this case, we can say that there is a domination of instrumental rationality. But we cannot say that value rationality then becomes totally irrelevant to economic action. Saying so has the danger of reifying social differentiation and this runs against Weber's intention. Weber has also discussed the statuses of formal and substantive rationality in modern rational capitalism. This is an issue I shall turn to later.

The ethical base of modern rational capitalism

Now let me turn to the ethical dimension of modern occidental rational capitalism. This aspect was dealt with firstly in *PE* and "The Anticritical Last Word". This theme was then expanded into a larger theme on the comparative studies of the economic ethics of the world religions. *PE* specifies its focus on the relationship between religion and the

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[35] For Weber's discussion of the separation of the market from ethical elements, see *PE*, p.171 and *ES*, p.637.

economy particularly, keeping in mind the interplay between institutional and ethical elements, and between material and non-material factors.

The issue of the relationship between religion and economy has long been a common concern among scholars. Knies has already published a book on this topic.[36] Marx has provided a materialist view about the relationship between infrastructure and superstructure. Where lies the originality Weber claims?

It is worth mentioning here that one major concern of *PE* is to balance Marx's thesis, which overstresses material factors, with one which stresses the importance of ideal factors without lapsing into the other extreme.

> ... it is, of course, not my aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and of history.[37]

Based on this qualification, *PE* takes up the task of showing the psychological and ethical relevance of religious ideas for economic rationalization. Weber himself has clarified his point further in a reply to critics of this work, stating that his concern is to show that, "under the influence of the Reformation vocational ethic, a particular variation of the capitalist spirit developed in modern times." Weber also wants to "ascertain the source of this ethic and the boundaries of its expansion as well as to examine the question of its

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[36] See Hennis's discussion in Hennis, *op. cit.*, pp.42-9.

[37] *PE*, p.183. But Weber continues,
> Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth. (p.183)

This response can be understood only with reference to Weber's conception of ideal typification. This leads to controversies especially with Elias and his followers. I shall come to this issue later.

Marx's influence on Weber's understanding of capitalism must not be ignored. But we cannot say that Weber is another `Marx'. See for example Riesebrodt (1986), pp.138-41. Löwith's comparison between them is illuminating; see Löwith (1982). I shall discuss this point in more detail later.

qualitative impact." That is to say, he attempts "to determine if the capitalist spirit, which has produced the contemporary capitalist economic system, has acquired particular characteristics from this source which are of constitutive significance for its essence."[38] In fact, in *PE*, this vocational ethic which has sprung from ascetic Protestantism is not just a particular variation of the capitalist spirit, but an element of it that is essential for modern rational capitalism to appear in its present form. This investigation of the ethical dimension of modern rational capitalism is something not attempted by anybody before Weber.

In his subsequent writings on the sociology of religion, Weber also discovers that ascetic Protestantism is in fact a product of a path of religious rationalization peculiar to the Occident. Only in the Occident has a rational religion emerged which generates an innerworldly ascetic ethical pattern. This innerworldly ascetic ethical pattern in turn positively accounts for a rational economic ethic appropriate for modern rational capitalism.[39]

This kind of innerworldly asceticism is for Weber not only relevant to the emergence of modern rational capitalism, but also of modern occidental rational culture more generally.[40] I shall deal with the latter issue in the next chapter and for the time being

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[38] "The Anticritical Last Word", p.1110. This quotation sounds idealist. But a reading of *SPWR*, *ES* and *GEH*, for instance, shows first that Weber notices also the significance of material conditions for the emergence of ideas, and also of the material interests of their social carriers; second that capitalist development is also affected by other institutional conditions.

[39] This does not imply that we cannot find modern rational capitalism elsewhere. What Weber means is that it has only developed endogenously in the Occident. It is another matter whether it can be transplanted into other civilizations through learning and cultural diffusion.

[40] *PE*, p.180:

> One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling was born ... from the spirit of Christian asceticism.

See also *ibid.*, pp.1, 26, for example. Hennis and Scaff pay particular attention to this aspect of Weber's work; see Hennis (1983) and Scaff (1989), esp. ch.3.

focus my analysis on the former. It is now certain that Weber attributes a connection between ascetic Protestantism and the ethical base of modern rational capitalism. But what kind of connection is it? How significant is it? These issues indeed constitute an important theme that Weber attempts to work on in *PE* and some of his subsequent writings. As Weber has already made clear in "The Anticritical Last Word", we cannot say that there is a causal connection between ascetic Protestantism and modern rational capitalism. Weber makes the same point again in a similar discussion in *ES*:

> ... no analysis will be made of the kind of causal relationship subsisting between a rational religious ethic [my note: ascetic Protestantism is one such type] and a particular type of commercial rationalism [my note: modern rational capitalism], where such a connection exists at all. At this point, we desire only to establish the existence of an affinity between economic rationalism and certain types of rigoristic ethical religion ... This affinity comes only occasionally outside the Occident, which is the distinctive seat of economic rationalism.[41]

So we must contextualize this connection within the development of modern occidental culture and society in order to make it more explicit.

In *PE*, Weber shows that a high percentage of the urban middle classes in western countries are Protestant by presenting some statistical data. Many of these Protestants occupy important positions in industrial production and business enterprises. So it is reasonable to postulate a relationship between their Protestant faith and their vocational choices and performances. After some doctrinal analyses, Weber discovers that ascetic Protestantism (Calvinism typically) has developed a doctrine of predestination which reinterprets the traditional Christian concept of grace. This reinterpreted concept has an effect of exploding the internal hierarchy between the virtuosos[42] and the laity of the Church and urging each individual to live his/her whole life rationally as a duty according to

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[41] *ES*, p.480.
[42] This term refers to elite classes in the religious sphere, including priestly establishments.

God's calling.[43] This has a psychological effect of producing in its followers a kind of innerworldly ascetic ethical pattern of life in their pursuit of religious redemption. A peculiar result of this religious reform is that it integrates an active and methodical type of self-mastery and world-mastery with an otherworldly religious end. This has pushed each individual follower of the Protestant faith to participate actively in mundane activities according to the duty in a calling which is wholly otherworldly. The participation in work as a duty according to a calling ---- the vocational ethic ---- is a totally new invention of the occidental culture. And it constitutes the ethical core without which modern rational capitalism would have been very different from what it appears to be now.[44]

This way of living out a religious life-style is highly rational. I shall elaborate this point more in the next chapter. For the moment, I shall discuss two more points about the relevance of the Protestant religious ethics for modern rational capitalism. As I have pointed out earlier, Weber does not think that capitalism has existed only in the Occident after the Reformation. However, it is only there where capitalistic economic action has been liberated from traditional beliefs and practices and developed to a highly rationalized level. To this extent the Protestant religious ethics can be said to have destroyed the

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[43] This religious reform may be misunderstood as resulting in the relaxation of the organizational control of the Church so that followers can enjoy more religious autonomy. Giddens rightly points out that, far from liberating the laity from control, the Christian religion after the Reformation has indeed widened and deepened its control over individuals. See Giddens (1971), p.125.

[44] In any case, Weber is acutely aware of the fact that the pursuit of endless greedy desires or the impulse to acquire the greatest possible amount of money, etc exist everywhere. But they have nothing to do with rational capitalism. To bring in one more definition here, capitalism is "identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever *renewed* profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise". (*PE*, p.17; Weber's own emphasis) In its continuous rational accumulation of capital, modern rational capitalism requires a sense of duty to work hard continuously and a significant degree of self-mastery to avoid indulging oneself in consuming the fruit of one's success in a luxurious way. This in turn requires one to distance oneself from immediate material gratification and plan one's day-to-day practices in a rational and systematic way.

influence of tradition in capitalistic economic action; ascetic Protestantism is in this regard anti-traditionalistic. From then on, capitalistic economic action does not have to consider ethical issues or problems of fraternity and charity.[45]

One more example relating to the anti-traditionalistic tendency of the Protestant ethic is that, insofar as Puritans insist on an active ascetic way of life, they criticize the spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment of life promoted by the noble classes.[46]

The Protestant ethic is also anti-traditionalistic in the third sense in that, insofar as it emphasizes universal grace and acosmistic/universal brotherliness, it breaks down all barriers between the inner religious community and the outsiders, such as those existing in the Indian caste system and that embedded in the Jewish conception of their own ascribed status as the elected people of God.[47]

This universalistic character of the Protestant ethic is highly ambivalent. In breaking down the distinction between the virtuosos and the laity, the membership of the inner religious community is open as personal spiritual and ethical achievement. For from now on, everyone should be directly and individually accountable to God. In contrast, other people are objectified as the means and environment for actualizing this religious commitment. There are, then, no intermediate strata between God and man. In this regard, the Protestant faith is highly individualistic and, in a sense, aristocratic. And this has created a feeling of inner loneliness within Protestants. On the other hand, regardless of this individualistic character of the Protestant faith, Protestants still form and join religious communities. Weber's discussion of the Protestant sects suggests that these communities

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[45] See for example *ES*, pp.71,636-7.
[46] *PE*, pp.166-7. This perception of the way of life of the noble classes is inconsistent with Elias's account, at least in terms of the so-called spontaneity and impulsiveness of this way of life. I shall discuss this point later.
[47] See *GEH*, ch.30.

are much more status groups based on members' ethical commitment and performances than formal organizations of faith.[48] Gaining membership of these Protestant sects is not only functional for psychological assurance of redemption, it is also functional from an economic point of view. For one's membership assures one's own ethical quality. This is important for building up credit relationships in business activities. Indeed, also for this reason, Protestants do businesses only with their own fellows. So gaining membership means opening up economic opportunities, too; losing it means losing credit and thus losing these opportunities. In this case, this sectarian characteristic implies that the Protestant community tends to be particularistic. This tendency checks its universalistic claims. However, this point must be balanced by Weber's own view that a sect is a voluntary association. It is, relatively speaking, an open system.[49]

Let me make three more points to conclude this discussion of the ethical dimension of modern rational capitalism. First, as I have already indicated, *PE*, and indeed much of Weber's ideas on the ethical dimension of modern rational capitalism, is intended as a balance to Marx's materialist account of capitalism. In performing this task, Weber reminds us that this ethical dimension develops within particular material and institutional contexts. Still, he also insists that the development of this ethical dimension (religious rationalization in the Occident in the present case) is in fact relatively autonomous from these contexts and has its own developmental logic. More will be said on this point later. Second, after going through Weber's arguments on the relevance of the Reformation and ascetic Protestantism for the rise of modern rational capitalism, we still have the question how significant their relevance is. In "The Anticritical Last Word", Weber only produces the vague answer that

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[48] See *FMW*, ch.XII ("The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism") and "The Anticritical Last Word".

[49] *FMW*, p.306.

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we cannot quantify their relevance. All he can say is that it is very high.[50] In fact, he does implicitly have a more substantial answer. In arguing for the connection, he always produces the counterfactual argument that modern rational capitalism would not have taken its present form without the Protestant ethic. Many people accept the common view that the Christian religion dominated western civilization in the medieval period.[51] Is this true? If it is, to what extent? This is a very big issue. Indeed, I do not pretend that I can give any substantive judgement about it in this thesis. I shall narrow the discussion of it down to the question whether there are other more important factors which determine the development of the ethical pattern appropriate for modern rational capitalism. I shall confront this in my chapters on Elias below and shall argue that Weber's argument about the relevance of the Reformation here may have been overdrawn.

The third point concerns Weber's view concerning the possibility of the continuous existence of modern rational capitalism without the Protestant ethic once it has become firmly institutionalized in modern social life. The answer to this question is much more straightforward. In *PE*, after his brief discussion of the effect of the spread of the modern capitalistic economic order on human life, Weber says,

> [today] victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support [i.e. religious asceticism] no longer.[52]

The point behind this quotation is that ascetic Protestantism plays a role only in the emergence of modern rational capitalism. An economic order of this type does not need it

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[50] "The Anticritical Last Word", pp.1128-9. In *PE*, p.182-3, Weber implies that the significance of ascetic Protestantism in this matter can be quantified, but only when much more substantial studies of other cultural elements have been carried out. (Weber talks not only about the significance of ascetic Protestantism for modern rational capitalism, but for modern rational culture more generally there.)

[51] But Abercrombie *et al* set limits to this view; see Abercrombie *et al* (1980), ch.3.

[52] *PE*, pp.181-2.

any more once it has become firmly institutionalized within western societies. Now, entrepreneurs pursue profit as an end in itself. Others have no choice but to face this reality and adapt themselves to this compelling rational capitalist system. In other words, the active ascetic ethical pattern co-existent with modern rational capitalism has divested itself of its religious root and established its own independence in line with modern economic activities.[53]

What general conclusions can we draw from this whole account of modern occidental economic rationalism? What implications does this development (if Weber's observations are correct) have on the quality of human life in general? I shall leave the core of my discussion of these issues for the following chapters. It is worth mentioning here, though, that modern rational capitalism is a great human achievement in calculability and efficiency in material production and distribution. For Weber, economic rationalization may appear from the formal and/or the substantive dimension. Though both are often closely linked with each other, they are in essence separate dimensions.[54] In any case, the increase in the calculability and efficiency of modern rational capitalism reflects the expansion of formal rationality. However, this advance does not guarantee simultaneous progress in substantive justice such as the equal sharing of the fruit of material progress. In fact, the expansion of capitalism may result in domination by the bourgeoisie and the

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[53] Weber is, of course, fully aware that this kind of judgement can be asserted only in relation to the ideal typical situation. In reality, this is but an exception. Social differentiation does have its limits. The econmic sphere still maintains links with value spheres ---- including ethics and religion.

It is true that Weber does not make himself clear what content the vocational ethic includes ---- which is generally called business ethics, corporate ethics or corporate culture in contemporary studies of management and economic institutions. The only feature he mentions about the vocational ethic is that it affirms its value as lying within itself. That is to say, vocation becomes a value for itself.

[54] *ES*, part I, ch.II, section 9 and p.108.

suppression of the proletariat.[55] This situation reflects the increase in tension between

formal rationality and substantive (or value) rationality. The danger is indeed very high

where the former dominates over and finally suppresses the latter.[56] And, with this, comes

the domination of the social carriers of the former over other social groups. Here Weber's

critical attitude towards modern rational capitalism is revealed.

Modern rational law and the modern state

The development of modern rational capitalism depends on several internal factors,

as I have indicated above. It also depends on external factors such as legal and political

conditions. For Weber, the rational economy favours a centralized, impersonal rational

state.[57] A rationalized legal order eliminates subjective factors and safeguards a predictable

and stable external environment for economic expansion.[58] This does not mean that Weber

holds an economic determinist view about legal development. Legal development depends

on other extra-economic factors as well. In fact, for Weber, it has its own relative

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[55] *Ibid.*, p.110. Here, Weber shares Marx's critical attitude towards capitalism.

[56] The dawn may come one day when the expansion of capitalism leads to mechanized petrification and the creation of specialists without spirit and sensualists without hearts (*PE*, p.182).

[57] For example, in *ES*, p.224, Weber writes,

> [t]hough by no means alone, the capitalistic system has undeniably played a major role in the development of bureaucracy. Indeed without it capitalistic production could not continue ... On the one hand, capitalism in its modern stages of development requires the bureaucracy, though *both have arisen from different historical sources.* Conversely, capitalism is the most rational economic basis for bureaucratic administration and enables it to develop in the most rational form, especially because, from a fiscal point of view, it supplies the necessary money resources. [my emphasis]

See also *ibid.*, pp.283-4, 975 for some more examples.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.312.

autonomy in relation to the economy.[59] What is more, Weber also talks of the mutual

influence between the political system and the legal system.[60] Therefore modern rational

capitalism has a complex and dynamic connection with modern rational law and the rational

state in the Occident.[61]

In what follows, I shall provide a brief discussion of Weber's view on the rise of

modern rational law and the rational state in the Occident. The aim of this discussion is to

contribute further to the clarification of Weber's view on the peculiarity of modern

occidental rational culture.

For this task, I shall touch briefly on Weber's sociology of law and his sociology of

domination. In his sociology of law, Weber indicates several peculiar features of legal

development in the Occident. According to Weber's analysis, legal rationalization involves

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[59] See for example *ES*, pp.333-7. On p.337, Weber writes,

> [t]he tempo of modern business communication requires a promptly and predictably functioning legal system, i.e. one which is guaranteed by the strongest coercive power. Finally, modern economic life by its very nature has destroyed those other associations which used to be the bearers of law and thus of legal guaranties. This has been the result of the development of the market. The universal predominance of the market consociation requires on the one hand a legal system the functioning of which is *calculable* in accordance with rational rules. On the other hand, the constant expansion of the market, ..., has favored the monopolization and regulation of all "legitimate" coercive power by *one* universalist coercive institution through the disintegration of all particularist status-determined and other coercive structures which have been resting mainly on economic monopolies.

Therefore economic rationalization and legal rationalization exert positive influences upon each other in the Occident.

[60] For example, in *ES*, p.975, Weber writes,

> ... calculable rules [are] the most important [element] for modern bureaucracy. [What is more,] [t]he peculiarity of modern culture, and specifically of its technical and economic basis, demands this very "calculability" of results.

For one more example, Weber talks about the link between the differentiation between public law and private law on the one hand and power distribution and political structure on the other in *ibid.*, pp.643-4.

[61] *GEH*, ch.29 provides a brief discussion of their interconnections.

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two processes: generalization and systematization. Generalization concerns "the reduction of the reasons relevant in the decision of concrete individual cases to one or more "principles", i.e. legal propositions".[62] Systematization concerns the "integration of all analytically derived legal propositions in such a way that they constitute a logically clear, internally consistent, and, at least in theory, gapless system of rules, under which, it is implied, all conceivable fact situations must be capable of being logically subsumed lest their order lack an effective guaranty".[63] Legal rationalization takes place on both the formal and the substantive dimensions. Weber argues that laws are formally rational to the extent that "only unambiguous general characteristics of the facts of the case are taken into account".[64] By contrast, substantive rationality in legal matters accords predominance to ethical imperatives, utilitarian and other rules of expedience, and political maxims.[65] Theoretically, Weber accords space for both formal rationalization and substantive rationalization in law. But he tends also to argue that modern rational law is predominantly formal in character.[66]

By its route of rationalization in the Occident, modern rational law develops several features peculiar to it. Ideal typically speaking, private law and public law are separated from each other.[67] The former guarantees individual rights and the freedom of contract, and is thus compatible with the market economy. Furthermore, lawmaking and lawfinding are differentiated from each other.[68] The formalization of legal forms and procedures is

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[62] *ES*, p.655.

[63] *Ibid.*, p.656.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp.656-7.

[65] *Ibid.*, p.657.

[66] *Loc. cit.* See also Schluchter (1981) for a discussion on this tendency.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp.641-4.

[68] As Weber understands these terms, lawmaking represents "the establishment of general norms which in the lawyers' thought assume the character of rational rules of law. Lawfinding, ..., is the "application" of such established norms and the legal propositions

distinguished from the formalization of content. Also, questions of legal forms and procedures are distinguished from questions of fact.[69] In sum, the whole process of legal rationalization in the Occident is one of the differentiation of form from content and the increase in the dominance of form over content. Legal formalism is emphasized. Of course, Weber is aware that what has just been said is just an ideal type which rarely happens in the actual situation. Weber depicts only a trend moving towards this case.

Two points are worth mentioning here about Weber's discoveries in his sociology of law. First, in his contrast between English law and German law, Weber discovers that, in its development, English law leaves much space for the rationalization of substantive values and emphasizes more casuistry, but German law is much more formalized and procedural. On the surface, it seems reasonable to predict that the German legal situation favours the development of capitalism because of its formalistic character, but, ironically, England is actually the first country where capitalism emerged. This contrast therefore suggests that the relationship between economy and law is one of elective affinity rather than fixed, as is claimed by Marx's economic determinism.[70] While being conditioned by the economy, law still has a certain degree of relative autonomy in relation to it. Besides, in this comparison between England and Germany, Weber points out the influence upon legal development of political structure and the power situation of the legal professions (as social carriers of the

deduced therefrom by legal thinking, to concrete "facts" which are "subsumed" under these norms." (*ES*, p.653) So the distinction between lawmaking and lawfinding is a distinction regarding the creation of general norms and the application of these norms to particular cases.

[69] For a brief discussion, see Brubaker (1984), pp.16-7.

[70] See for example Treiber (1985) and Holton and Turner (1989), ch.4 for more detailed discussions of this issue.

law) in relation to the rulers.[71] Therefore the internal rationalization of law and its relationship with other aspects of social development are very complex.

Second, because of the dominance of formal rationality in law and thus of the rise of legal formalism, Weber predicts a developmental trend towards the separation of law and ethics. Legal formalism develops hand in hand with the professionalization of legal functions. Legal professionals defend formal justice for its own sake and take an external view towards substantive values.[72] This does not imply that substantive values are repudiated by law. In order to be considered as legally accepted, they must be appropriated in general and formal terms (i.e. taken as deduced from general, formal principles) and considered in accordance with formal legal procedures. In other words, ethical considerations of particular, concrete ultimate value positions and attitudes are viewed as something outside legal principles and procedures. If they are to be legally relevant, they must be subsumed under formal legal principles and procedures.[73]

This trend of legal rationalization is effective in securing social stability and favours the expansion of a capitalist market economy. But it also arouses social conflicts. As Weber sees it,

> [f]ormal justice guarantees the maximum freedom for the interested parties to represent their formal legal interests. But because of the unequal distribution of economic power, which the system of formal justice legalizes, this very freedom must time and again produce consequences which are contrary to the substantive postulates of religious ethics or of political expediency.[74]

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[71] Rueschemeyer also emphasizes this point in Rueschemeyer (1986), ch.6.

[72] See for example *ES*, pp.812-3, 875, 882.

[73] Schluchter criticizes this view on the separation of law and ethics and insists that there is still a link between them; see Schluchter (1981), pp.108-10. Habermas is also critical of this view; more discussions will be given later.

[74] *ES*, p.812.

In other words, modern rational law only guarantees formal justice, but not an equal distribution of resources and life-chances. In this regard, it tends not only to undermine traditional authoritarian powers, but also to disregard underprivileged classes. It thus creates tensions with their interests. These classes fight back in the name of substantive justice. This manifests a form of the tension and dialectics between formal rationality and substantive rationality, the tension between law and ethics in this case.[75] Weber of course sees that the modern social condition favours the former, but whether he predicts the inevitable victory of the former over the latter is a matter of dispute among interpreters of Weber.[76]

Weber's sociology of domination includes reference not only to political development, but also to the development of social organization in general. Because the focus of the present discussion concerns the development of the rational state, the latter issue will be skipped over for the time being.

Weber defines power (*Macht*) as the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests. Domination (*Herrschaft*) is defined as the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons.[77] For Weber, domination may be based on diverse motives of compliance ---- from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage; but each of

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[75] *Ibid.*, pp.812-3. See also the discussion by Schluchter in Schluchter (1981), pp.102-3.

[76] See for example *ES* (vol.II), ch.VIII, section 4 for Weber's discussion of some counter-forces against legal formalism. Towards the end of this discussion, Weber predicts that these counter-forces cannot reverse the trend of legal rationalization towards formalism. However, according to some interpreters, Weber does not really assert a determinist view of history; see for example Mommsen (1987) and Weiss (1987). Schluchter focuses his analysis upon Weber's view regarding the irreconcilability between law and ethics in the modern rational era; see Schluchter (1981), pp.102-5.

[77] *Ibid.*, p.53.

these diverse cases precisely implies a minimum degree of voluntary compliance. In order

that the continuation of this voluntary compliance can be secured and stabilized, a further

important element is required ---- the belief in legitimacy.[78] Based on this conceptual

device, Weber develops his own typology of legitimate domination.[79] Weber's typology of

legitimate domination includes an elaboration of three basic types: charismatic domination,

traditional domination and rational-legal domination. This typological distinction does not

mean that pure cases of any of them exist; in reality, they always exist in combination.

However, it is also Weber's intention to show that, developmentally speaking, they

represent three stages of change where one or another becomes dominant.[80] I shall leave

Weber's basic definition of these three types of domination at this point and shift my focus

of analysis to Weber's view regarding the peculiarity of rational-legal domination, which

becomes the ideal typical mode of domination of the modern rational state in the

Occident.[81]

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[78] *Ibid.*, pp.212-3.

[79] This strategy of definition reflects Weber's interest in legitimate domination (i.e. the forms of domination which to different degrees involve voluntary compliance based on beliefs in their legitimacy), but also his downplaying of illegitimate forms (i.e. the forms of domination which lack this kind of voluntary compliance); though Weber does discuss them. See Mommsen (1974), pp.83-5 which indicates this characteristic of Weber's sociology of domination.

    A point of controversy over Weber's definition of power and domination rests on its focus on decision making as their central element. This approach does not pay enough attention to social relations, so it is too voluntaristic in this regard. See for example Lukes (1974) for a criticism from this direction. It is one of Elias's ambitions to develop a relational view of power and domination. More detailed discussion of this will be given later.

[80] Mommsen claims that Weber's typology presents a structural model and is-non-teleological; Mommsen (1974), p.75. But this view is inaccurate. While I agree that Weber's typology is non-teleological, I also think that Weber's typology clearly involves a developmental element which Mommsen underplays.

[81] See *ES* (vol.I), ch.III and (vol.II) chs XI-XIV. It is interesting to mention here that Hamilton points out that Weber's typology of domination is europocentric in the sense that the central aim of this typology is a comparison of the development of the mode of domination in the Occident with other civilizations in order to indicate its particularities.

Weber emphasizes that the development of rational-legal domination (a principal manifestation of which is modern bureaucracy) from traditional domination is an exceptional case historically.[82] Weber's typology in no way expresses the view that this development is natural and inevitable. But it is undeniable that only in the Occident has the hitherto most advanced mode of domination (i.e. rational-legal domination) developed. As I have indicated in the above, Weber suggests that only this type of domination can be in tune with modern rational economy and law. Not only this, but also with modern culture generally (which is highly complicated and specialized).[83] Only it is capable of securing a political order efficiently which is highly complicated and differentiated internally.

The first major feature peculiar to modern bureaucracy is its formalism. There are clearly stated rules defining the hierarchy of authority within the office, and ranges of official rights and duties. Its management is based on written documents. There is a clear separation of office from private household. And reward is based on job achievement rather than ascribed social status. The second major feature of modern beareaucracy is its reliance on specialized knowledge. Office holders are selected through technical training and selection is based on the achievement of formal qualifications. The third feature is its focus on technical efficiency.[84]

Modern bureaucracy, Weber argues, is technically superior to other modes of domination. Its superiority rests on its precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and material and

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See Hamilton (1984) where Hamilton also argues that Weber's concept of traditional domination is insufficient for analyzing the Chinese case.

[82] *Ibid.*, p.956.

[83] *ES*, p.975.

[84] *Ibid.*, pp.956-8. See Brubaker (1984), pp.20-2 for a brief and clear discussion.

personal costs, etc.[85] It is an indispensable means for administering modern societies, which are large in population and highly complex in their composition. Modern social life requires high degrees of technical specialization and efficiency. However, it also has its costs which must be paid for. Two negative effects are envisaged with the expansion of modern bureaucracy. First of all, modern bureaucracy is in itself but a technical instrument. With its expansion, the formal and instrumental aspect of political functions is emphasized.

Functionality and impersonality are emphasized. In effect, personal differences are levelled. People are instrumentalized for efficient control. Personal qualities and honour, and personal ties are downplayed.[86] This is another aspect where formal rationality is accentuated at the expense of substantive rationality. Efficiency is strongly valued but with no guarantee of any improvements in substantive goals and values. In other words, means are emphasized at the expense of ends. So rationalization in political domination intensifies the tension and dialectics of formal rationality and substantive rationality, as in the case of economic and legal rationalization.

There is a more subtle level of this tension. This concerns bureaucrats as a power (or status) group and the influence of bureaucratization upon the class structure of society. As social carriers of modern bureaucracy, bureaucrats and officials do not just play a passive role in performing their functions. They actively defend their own interests in favourable situations.[87] Therefore, in Beetham's words, "bureaucracy had an inherent

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[85] *Ibid.*, p.973.

[86] *Ibid.*, pp.958-9.

[87] For example, Weber is aware of how officials of the German government, because they took control over information and expert knowledge, posed the danger of bypassing the guidance of political representatives in the parliament; see Weber's own discussion in "Politics as a Vocation". See also Beetham (1985), ch.3 for Beetham's discussion of the German case of bureaucratic domination.

A similar situation happens in private enterprises. The managerial strata have enjoyed certain degrees of (though not absolute) autonomy from the owners of the means

tendency to exceed its instrumental function, and to become a separate force within society, capable of influencing the goals and character of that society. It constituted a separate power group within the state, a separate status stratum within society at large".[88] More important, as a status group, the value and interest positions of bureaucrats are not neutral in relation to other social strata. Their positions may or may not be compatible with other social strata. They may form coalitions with or confront these strata. In fact, in Germany in Weber's time, many bureaucrats came from the middle classes. It was natural that their political attitudes should have been greatly influenced by their own class origins. Thus their political positions tended to be conservative and elitist.[89] They also valued social stability highly. This may have undermined or in effect made them neglect social innovations, substantive justice and mass democracy.[90]

In sum, modern bureaucracy is technically superior in managing social functions, but, up to a certain point, it endangers social benefits of the general public.

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of production. On the other hand, they normally do not identify themselves with lower working strata, over whom they exercise surveillance and manage in order to control.

[88] Beetham (1985), p.65.

[89] This is certainly not the case for Germany alone. It represents a general case in other countries as well; see Goldthorpe (1982).

[90] For example, Alexander has discussed Weber's ambivalence toward the double tendency of (occidental) modernity: on the one hand it promotes individual freedom; on the other hand, it also facilitates bureaucratic domination; see Alexander (1987). In other words, which alternative is actualized depends on human struggle. See also Poggi (1990), chs 5-8, who puts the discussion of this dilemma in the context of the development of the occidental nation-state and the rise of liberal democracy.

CHAPTER 2

Weber's Account of Occidental Civilization II:
Culture and Values

Rationalization and the modern socio-cultural condition

So far, I have discussed Weber's view on rationalization in the economic, the political and the legal spheres in the Occident. In this chapter, I shall discuss Weber's diagnosis of the modern social and cultural condition, i.e. his analysis of the peculiarity of modern occidental rational culture and its effects upon human social life in general.

As I have already indicated in the previous chapter, Weber suggests that rationalization can arise from different directions and take different patterns. How far different value spheres undergo processes of rationalization and how long they take for these processes depend on diverse historical factors. Therefore, squeezing the rationalization of different value spheres into a unified pattern would lead to a neglect of the rich content of rationalization which Weber intends to reveal. Nevertheless, though he observes that rationalization is determined by various historical causes, develops in different directions and manifests different patterns, Weber also observes a relationship of mutual reinforcement and conditioning between the processes of rationalization of these value spheres. And however diverse these processes of rationalization are, the peculiar paths they take in the Occident produce several significant common features. They result in a differentiation between formal rationality and substantive rationality, which finally leads to tensions and dialectics between them ---- although the modern social situation favours the

former. As I have also indicated, Weber argues that rationalization in the economic, political and legal spheres greatly enhances efficiency and material success. Efficiency and success become the main focus of these spheres, whereas conventions, customs and value-rientations are gradually filtered out from them. This achievement is vital for modern society to maintain itself. However, once the rationalized elements (such as the practice of scientific and systematic styles of labour management, the formalized procedures of lawmaking, bureaucratic rules, etc) are institutionalized into these value spheres and become general practices, the consequence is mechanical petrification. For social participants must leave aside their own value orientations and personal inclinations and preferences and comply to the demands of these orders.[1] It is the demands of these orders that society always give priority to. In other words, these value spheres have become more and more depersonalized.

Depersonalization has occurred hand in hand with the destruction of traditions[2] and the levelling of personal differences. As more and more value spheres have become more and more rationalized, human social life becomes more and more coordinated by formal

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[1] For example, when talking about the rationalized economic sphere as an objective existence which no longer depends on religious ethics in *PE*, pp.54-5, Weber writes,

> The capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action. The manufacturer who in the long run acts counter to these norms, will just be eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them will be thrown into the streets without a job.

Everyone who enters the market economy must comply to its own logic, or else s/he will be eliminated. See also *ibid*, pp.181-2.

[2] In this regard, modern occidental rational culture is anti-traditionalistic.

rationality and more and more separated from value and ethical contents. In this regard, rationalization leads to value and ethical neutralization. In more concrete terms, ethics are increasingly separated from the market economy, political administration and modern law. More and more human social activities are devoid of ethical content and focus on efficiency and success. The dominance of efficiency and success may indeed threaten human autonomy. In terms of human social relationships, what the market, bureaucracy and rational law guarantee are only fair competition and formal justice rather than equity, substantive justice, charitability and so forth. In sum, rationalization in the three value spheres discussed in the previous chapter has produced an effect of the instrumentalization of human social life in the Occident. That is to say, human social life becomes more and more depersonalized and instrumentalized. It focuses more and more upon efficiency and success at the cost of endangering human autonomy and community.

Weber also perceives that rationalization has class implications. The market guarantees formal justice, but it does not guarantee an equal distribution of chances and resources. Also, the market is more favourable for the bourgeoisie than other social classes, especially the working classes. Similarly, modern bureaucracy is more favourable for the bureaucrats and the people who gain control over it. The same is true of legal professionals who are the social carriers of modern rational law. So, we can say, rationalization does not favour underprivileged classes. As economics, politics and law coalesce and condition each other, it is not too bold to assume that there is a tendency that these power groups may at times form coalitions together and fight against underprivileged social classes. In turn, these underprivileged groups may fight back and struggle for their

own interests in the name of substantive justice and equity.[3] Just like the tensions existing between formal rationality and substantive rationality in modern rational society, social conflicts arising from this confrontation cannot be ultimately resolved.

Now I have reviewed Weber's views on the social and cultural consequences of rationalization in the economic, political and legal spheres, and their ethical implications in particular, in the following section I shall deepen the analysis of this issue by looking at Weber's understanding of the features of ethical rationalization peculiar to the Occident.

Religion and ethical rationalization

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Weber was at first interested in the rise of modern rational capitalism. What he developed was a kind of economic sociology. But this focus changed in the later period of his academic career. He expanded his economic sociology into a series of comparative studies of the economic ethics of the world religions, and finally developed it into a sociology of culture. This shift of academic interest can be detected in the series of essays he wrote in his later period.[4] No matter whether Weber actually shifted his academic interest or not, it cannot be denied that his sociology of religion not only contributes towards understanding the developmental sources of what Weber calls the spirit of modern capitalism but that it is also significant for understanding

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[3] This tendency as it is observed by Weber is discussed by Schluchter variously in Schluchter (1981).

[4] See for example "Author's Introduction", *SPWR*, *RRW*, "Science as a Vocation" and "Politics as a Vocation".

the peculiarities of modern occidental rational culture, especially the ethical dimension of this culture. In what follows, I shall give an appraisal of Weber's view regarding religious rationalization in the Occident from the aspect of its ethical and cultural significance for the development of modern human life.

First of all, Weber conceives that religious development is influenced by material conditions.[5] However, this does not imply by any means that it is totally determined by them. Weber insists that religion still enjoys some degree of relative autonomy. Religion also has its own internal dynamics and exerts great influence upon these external conditions.[6] Weber expresses this idea in a by now famous passage:

> Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the `world images' that have been created by `ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest. `From what' and `for what' one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, `could be' redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world.[7]

In another passage, Weber writes,

> For every religion we shall find that a change in the socially decisive strata has usually been of profound importance. On the other hand, the type of a religion, once stamped, has exerted a rather far-reaching influence upon the life-conduct of very heterogeneous strata.[8]

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[5] See for example *PE*, pp.277-8 n.84 and *RC*, p.249 for the influence of economic and political factors. Weber also talks about the connection of religious development with the social status of the social carriers of religion and the association of social strata with their religious faith in *ES* and *SPWR*, for example.

[6] See n.5. See also *SPWR*, pp.279, 282-4 and 286-7. This view implicitly rejects Marx's materialist perspective on religion.

[7] *SPWR*, p.280.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.270.

Now it becomes clear that, for Weber, religious ideas have independent influences upon human social action, though he also admits that the latter is directly governed by material and ideal interests.

On the surface, this view is undoubtedly correct. However, Weber's distinction between idea and interest is rather controversial. Weber has not made clear to what extent this distinction stands. It is obscure, for example, whether ideal interest comes from ideas or interests or is a combination of both.[9] Also, between material interests and ideal interests, which has more power for determining human social action? These problems indicate that the view provided by Weber on the relationship between idea, interest and human action requires reconceptualization.

For Weber, a major function of religion is to provide explanations of human fate (which leads to suffering and injustice) for unfortunate people. Conversely, it also functions to provide justifications for the good fortune of privileged people ---- to justify that they are worthy of it.[10] In many cases, this is done by rendering the world senseless, and a religious worldview and a path of redemption and salvation are established as compensation ---- to re-establish meaning.[11] This religious reinterpretation of the world potentially produces a tension between empirical reality and the religious worldview, between fact and ideal, and is and ought. So religion must continuously improve itself to resolve this tension.[12] It normally takes a path of further and further rejecting the mundane world, and moving

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[9] For an amendment, see Kalberg (1985).

[10] *SPWR*, p.271.

[11] *ES*, pp.490-2 and *SPWR*, pp.274-5.

[12] The more is the case for rational religions; see for example *ES*, pp.450-1, 576.

towards a dualism of this world and the other, extra-mundane world. As this situation continues to develop, the world becomes more and more senseless, and therefore incomprehensible; it is not necessarily followed by an increasing retreat from the mundane world ---- an alternative to this retreat from the world is the development of systematic actions to master or transform it.[13] This is a common theme of religious rationalization.

Let me now come to Weber's typology of religious rationalization. I shall, just as I have done in my earlier discussions of Weber's other typologies, limit myself to his view regarding the peculiarity of religious rationalization in the Occident. Weber suggests that religious rationalization involves two dimensions: intellectual (or theoretical) and practical. The former concerns the systematization of theological worldviews. The latter concerns the systematization of action to conform with religious demands related with redemption and so forth.

It is possible to systematize Weber's view regarding both dimensions from a developmental perspective.[14] To Weber's understanding, primitive religions present polytheistic worldviews. For primitive people, the world is an enchanted garden occupied by gods and spirits. Their relationship with these gods and spirits is just based on an instrumental intention to exchange worship and sacrifices for fortune and blessings. There does not exist any kind of religious commitment similar to those of world religions in the medieval period here. Also, the concept of the other, extra-mundane world has not yet

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[13] *SPWR*, p.275.

[14] I shall refer to Weber's own typological analysis represented mainly in *ES*, ch.VI and *SPWR*.

developed. These two elements emerge only with the rise of world religions which are developmentally much more advanced, i.e. more rationalized.

Intellectually, world religions develop rational theodicies which present monocentric (and indeed monotheistic) worldviews. At this developmental stage, the world is seen as a totality[15] which embeds meaning supplied or purported by one and only one god. In this regard, the worldview of the world religions is theocentric.[16] Normally, the world is seen as a material and temporary dwelling place. But in addition, there exists a world beyond (an ideal world) where followers will join their God. The more a religion is rationalized, the more the mundane world is devalued and the extramundane world is cherished as an ultimate ideal. Therefore the nature of the extramundane world and its relationship with this mundane world are a central issue for theological development.

Only world religions are truly ethical religions ---- only they present systematic criteria for guiding human action. It is only at this stage that followers not only exchange with God for material advantages in this world. What is more central is that they control their own actions systematically in order to fulfil ultimate ends defined by their religions, which may even contradict their own material desires. Thus world religions require commitment from their followers. It is where this appears that a religion becomes truly ethical. Believers must organize their daily activities in accordance with their religious principles and convictions. That is to say, they must live out a religious ethical pattern of

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[15] *ES*, ch.VI, section 6.

[16] This also constitutes a decisive step of disenchantment, which in the first instance means demagicalization. For, at this step, the world is seen as determined by God's law, His planning or His own principles. Things in it are thus seen as not occupied by other gods and spirits.

life. The more a religion is rationalized, the more it demands that its believers act according to this pattern in a more and more coherent way.

What has been represented so far is just Weber's understanding of the general themes of religious rationalization. There also are differences between the rationalizations of different religions. The pattern of how religious rationalization progresses from both the intellectual and practical dimensions in concrete situations is determined by the structural characteristics of particular religions, the social and power status of their social carriers, and their material conditions.[17]

The development of the Christian religion shares the above common pattern, but it also exhibits its own peculiarity. Its predecessor, Ancient Judaism, takes Yahweh as its Creator God. Only Jews are elected people who have the right of redemption. They rely on emissionary prophets to bridge the gap between God and themselves.[18] And they have the duty to obey laws given by God through these prophets. Here, in Schluchter's terms, they develop a kind of law ethics.[19] These features do not change much in Medieval Catholicism, except that it abandons the concept of elected people, and that it develops a complex organization to take control of its believers. As a consequence of the first innovation, Christianity becomes a religion open for all people. Thus it pushes forward a

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[17] For a brief discussion, see Treiber (1985). *RC* is a standard example of how Weber analyzes religion by reference to its own context. Here Weber discusses Confucianism and Taoism.

[18] By contrast, Confucianism has only exemplary prophets. See *SPWR*, pp.285, 291; see also Weber's discussions in *RC*. Likewise, the Christian God is a creator God, but the `god' of the Confucians is the cosmic order itself.

[19] See Schluchter (1981), ch.IV, esp. scheme IV.

kind of universal brotherliness and human community which cannot be found in Ancient Judaism. Related with the second innovation is the development of a highly rational hierarchy constituted by and distinguishing between the virtuosos and the laity.

For Weber, the Reformation marked an important breakthrough in religious rationalization in the Occident.[20] The emergence of ascetic Protestantism facilitated the development of modern rational capitalism. Not only this. It has had far-reaching influences upon ethical development in the Occident, and upon its cultural development in general.[21] I have already discussed some of the features peculiar to ascetic Protestantism. I shall go into greater detail now.

As pointed out by Kalberg, ascetic Protestantism develops along a path of practical rationalization.[22] Compared with Medieval Catholicism, ascetic Protestantism has made several important developmental breakthroughs. Though Christianity demands of its followers that they live out a systematic ethical pattern of life according to its own principles, the status hierarchy developed in Medieval Catholicism has an effect of limiting this pressure to being exerted only upon the virtuosos. Only they are required to live their lives in a systematic, methodical and ascetic way; they are `specialized' in doing this. The laity are to a certain extent exempted from this requirement. However, this pressure has been extended to all followers after the Reformation. By insisting upon salvation as being

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[20] Cf. Schluchter and Roth (1979), pp.32-45 for Schluchter's comparison between Medieval Catholicism and ascetic Protestantism.

[21] Weber focuses his attention on the first issue in *PE* and expands it into a wider one (i.e. on ethics and culture) in "Author's Introduction", *SPWR* and *RRW*.

[22] This contrasts ascetic Protestantism with Confucianism. Weber sees Confucianism as developing along a path of intellectual rationalization. See Kalberg (1990).

determined by God's grace alone but not hard work or anything else, ascetic Protestantism has broken down the status hierarchy between the virtuosos and the laity. Now no one can escape from this demand. Ascetic Protestantism insists that all followers must testify themselves before God directly and individually. They must develop a certain degree of self-monitoring and self-mastery in line with their religious conviction. In the past, this kind of ethic of conviction appears only among the virtuosos.

Ascetic Protestantism is still an otherworldy religion. It demands that its followers must distance themselves from the mundane desires of the world. On the other hand, it does not select the flight from the mundane world as its religious path of redemption.[23] Instead, it demands that its followers participate actively in this world and master it according to the principles of their own religion. This expresses an active ascetic ethical pattern peculiar to the Occident[24], from which the later vocational ethic develops.[25] This religious attitude of mastering the world to satisfy an otherworldly end has an innovatory tendency toward the world. It thus contrasts with the attitude of passively adjusting oneself to traditions.

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[23] This separates ascetic Protestantism from Hinduism and Buddhism.

[24] This ethical pattern of active asceticism contrasts ascetic Protestantism with Confucianism. To Weber, Confucianism is conservative and traditionalistic because it has adapted an ethical pattern of passive asceticism ---- an ethic of world acceptance and adjustment. See *RC*, chs VI and VIII.

[25] For Weber, Protestants perform their duty according to God's calling. When this ethical pattern is institutionalized, and when the Protestant religious premiss is no longer shared or even challenged by non-believers, people may now pursue their vocations as ends in themselves. They perform their vocations out of duty to a calling, not from God this time, but from the vocations themselves. See for example *PE*, pp.50-4, 70, 73-5 and 180.

Therefore, ascetic Protestantism has combined world rejection with active asceticism within its own ethical doctrine. Now believers must not just observe religious rules passively. Every individual must perform his/her duty actively in controlling his/her natural desires and planning an ethical life systematically according to God's calling.[26] No one else can do this for him/her. Also, his/her own deeds can be judged only before God. This ethical pattern is thus individualistic and, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter, aristocratic. In this regard, it conflicts with its universalist claim ---- universalism of grace and, on the basis of this doctrine, universal brotherliness.[27] This ethical pattern creates a psychological distance among the Protestants themselves. Therefore, in effect, Protestants can now secure religious community only at the level of sects.[28]

The Protestant ethic is still an ethic of conviction. To master the world, we must observe its own mechanisms. The Protestants master the world in order to fulfil their own religious convictions and purposes. But they are not responsible for whether these purposes can in fact be realized and what the consequences are of their realization. They leave the responsibility to God.

In sum, as a developmental stage in religious rationalization in the Occident, ascetic Protestantism has contributed to the emergence of an ethical pattern of performing one's

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[26] *PE*, pp.153-4.

[27] *SPWR*, pp.287-91 and *RRW*, p.333.
   As argued by Schluchter, this development of a religious ethics which are unbrotherly and aristocratic makes the ethics themselves become depersonalized. This reinforces further the process of depersonalization already effected in the economic and political spheres. See Schluchter (1981), p.172.

[28] *RRW*, p.339.

duty systematically and ascetically (i.e. methodically[29]) according to a calling, a value conviction. This provides an ethical base for the development of modern rational capitalism. Not only this. The whole notion of doing one's duty in a calling (i.e. a professional ethic, vocational ethic, etc) also exerts influences on modern culture.[30] This ethical pattern appears not only in economic functions, but in other functions, too. The Protestant ethic is an ethic of conviction which is individualistic and aristocratic in character. This direction of development determined the position of religion and its relationship with other value spheres in the modern secular world. On the other hand, it has also influenced Weber's philosophical concept of personality as an ethical solution to the core problem of modern rational culture. These are the issues I shall deal with in the next two sections.

Rationalization and value irreconcilability

I have briefly sketched Weber's typological analysis of religious rationalization in the above section. I have made special reference to the path of religious rationalization peculiar to the Occident. For Weber, this area of investigation is not just relevant for the sociology of religion, but also for understanding ethical development more generally. This section will mainly focus on Weber's view about the cultural, and ethical more specifically, significance of this whole development in the Occident.

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[29] Weber uses this expression himself; see for example *PE*, pp.153-4.

[30] *Ibid.*, p.92.

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Ascetic Protestantism has moved further towards world rejection and transformed the universalist religious ethics of early Christianity into an ethic of unbrotherly aristocracy. This direction of change has great effect upon its further development in modern secular culture. As Weber points out, ascetic Protestantism's moving further towards world rejection means also that it is further rejected by the world itself.[31] This makes the compromise between them even more difficult. Thus the influence of religion upon the world becomes contracted further and further. Does this mean that religion has no place at all in the modern secular world?

For some sociologists, secularization is a process in which religion gradually fades away and is replaced by secular beliefs. In the secular world, people no longer need religion.[32] For some other sociologists, religion has not faded away, but transformed itself, for example from an organizational type to a sectarian type, or to a civil religion.[33] Weber shares both standpoints to a certain extent, but his own prediction is still different from them in some way. Weber sees a cooperation between intellectualism and religion before the rise of modern science. This is reflected in the development of rational theology and apologetics.[34] In this regard, intellectualism is at the service of religion. However, this situation changes in the modern secular world. Modern intellectualism is differentiated from religion and develops its own inner logic. This produces a tension between modern

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[31] *RRW*, p.353. Schluchter conceptualizes this as the mutual alienation of religion and the world; see Schluchter and Roth (1979), p.43. In other words, this process radicalizes the dualism of religion and the world.

[32] See for example Wilson (1982) who proposes the so-called secularization thesis.

[33] See for example Crippen's argument for a transformation thesis in Crippen (1988).

[34] *RRW*, p.351.

intellectualism and religion, mainly in the form of fact versus value, is versus ought, etc. As in the case of modern science, scientists concern themselves only with causal mechanisms. Under modern science's mechanistic worldview, the world has no meaning or value at all. Science concerns only fact, but not value. In other words, science does not provide any meaning for life. The more science is rationalized, the more meaning is sealed off from science and treated as not relevant to it. In effect, religion is pushed towards the irrational or anti-rational realm.[35] For it still holds on to the central function of providing meaning. As science increasingly challenges the legitimacy of its rational basis, religion reacts by criticizing science for being incapable of providing meaning for human life. That is to say, it criticizes science for concerning itself with means alone while leaving aside the problem of the ultimate end of life.

In this argument, Weber talks about the irresolvable tension between science and religion, with the former speaking in the name of formal rationality and the latter speaking in the name of substantive rationality.[36] He does not predict the replacement of religion by science.[37] In other words, in as much as the modern secular world is not yet totally dominated by instrumental rationality, religion still has a place to maintain itself.[38] But it is

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[35] *Ibid.*, p.351.
    The more religion is rationalized, the more it is pushed into the irrational realm. This is a paradox of religious rationalization.

[36] Also *ibid.*, p.355.

[37] Whereas, he suggests the joint service of value commitment and scientific explanation as a way of confronting the pathos of modern rational culture. I shall discuss this point in the next section on Weber's philosophical concept of personality.

[38] See also Schluchter (1989), ch.VII.

clear that religion can no longer sustain its previous status as a major or dominant force for orientating people's lives. It is on a par with and must now struggle with other forces.

Another opposition between science and religion rests on their conflicting standpoints regarding brotherly love. In so far as science is taken as a vocation, it is based on an unbrotherly aristocracy ---- a competition for recognition and success. This contradicts the Christian religion's claim for acosmistic/universal brotherliness and human community.[39]

But not only science is harmful to human community. Other value spheres also hamper it. As economic functions become increasingly differentiated from other social functions and develop their own mechanisms such as the market and the monetary system, economic activities are increasingly carried out in a calculative and depersonalized way. The more this is the case, the less the rational economy is accessible to the religious ethics of acosmistic brotherliness, the more it is separated from substantive value orientations. (I have argued in the preceding chapter that economic rationalization has resulted in ethical neutralization in economic activity.) Hence the tension between them becomes more and more intensified.[40]

The same sort of tension also appears between religion and politics in the modern secular world where both are highly rationalized. I have already discussed Weber's view regarding how the political sphere is rationalized in the Occident. The modern bureaucratic

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[39] *RRW*, p.355.

[40] *Ibid.*, p.331.
Ascetic Protestantism has been an attempt to compromise the religious demand for salvation with the pursuit of material success, but it results in an ethic of unbrotherly aristocracy itself; see *ibid.*, p.331-3.

state apparatus functions to maintain political order in a rational way. Thus it concerns itself only with matter-of-factness in a pragmatic and depersonalized way. Like the case of the economic sphere, this instrumental and pragmatist attitude in the political sphere in effect neglects the consideration of universal love and other substantive values.[41] In its emphasis on instrumental rationality, and in its readiness for using violence to maintain internal order and survival against external threats[42], the modern bureaucratic state apparatus endangers human autonomy and hampers human community. Thus politics competes directly with religious ethics.

The development of the aesthetic sphere and erotic love points towards a different direction. Art served mainly religious purposes before the Reformation. This situation changed after the Reformation. As it becomes differentiated more and more to become an independent value sphere, it develops its own inner logic and pursues its own ends which are essentially this-worldly. It also becomes intellectualized.[43] Indeed, argues Weber, in its inwardness and its focus on spontaneity and creativity, art constitutes an escape from the forces of routinization and banalization of the economic and political spheres, and the increasing theoretical and practical rationalization of human life in general.[44] To this extent, we can say that art assumes a non-rational or anti-rational tendency and constitutes a

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[41] *Ibid.*, pp.334-5.

[42] *Ibid.*, p.334.

[43] *Ibid.*, p.341.
So there appear tensions and dialectics between art's emphasis on genuine creativeness and its demand for intellectualization. For a secondary discussion of Weber's view about this in the case of rational music, see Scaff (1989), pp.104-8.

[44] *Ibid.*, p.342.

salvation of inward flight from the world.[45] The tension between art and religion is thus apparent. Religion requires routine self-restraint and self-regulation to pursue an ultimate end, but this is considered by artists as "a coercion of their genuine creativeness and innermost selves". As observed by Weber, art's shift from the moral to the aesthetic evaluation of conduct is "a common characteristic of intellectualist epochs; it results partly from subjectivist needs and partly from the fear of appearing narrow-minded in a traditionalist and Philistine way". Conversely, from the viewpoint of religious ethics, the emphasis on creativeness as a path to salvation is "a realm of irresponsible indulgence and secret lovelessness". It may give rise to a form of unbrotherliness.[46]

Similarly, the rise of the modern rational form of erotic love also gives rise to a tension with rationalized religion. As a sphere of conscious enjoyment[47], eroticism also constitutes an inward escape from the world. Though eroticism shares with religion the struggle against rationality[48] (as it appears in the economic, political and intellectual spheres), its focus on the pure animality of the erotic relation and sensation and pure passion is regarded with contempt by religion as an undignified loss of self-control.[49] In its

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[45] See Scaff (1989), ch.3.

[46] *RRW*, p.342.

[47] *Ibid.*, p.345.

[48] *Ibid.*, p.347:
> The lover realizes himself to be rooted in the kernel of the truly living, which is eternally inaccessible to any rational endeavor. He knows himself to be freed from the cold skeleton hands of rational orders, just as completely as from the banality of everyday routine.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp.347, 349.

highly subjective, exclusive and incommunicable character, eroticism is the opposite of the religious ethic of universal love.

To conclude this section, I shall draw together Weber's analysis of the tension between religion and various value spheres in modern secular culture and draw attention to several points. I shall leave my evaluation of Weber's programme for the last section of this chapter.

First of all, just as in his analyses of the various dimensions of rationalization, Weber does not claim that the emergence of tensions is historically inevitable. He wants to show only that

> at certain points such and such internal conflicts are possible and `adequate'.
> [The ideal typical constructs of conflicting value spheres] are not intended
> to show that there is no standpoint from which the conflicts could not be
> held to be resolved in a higher synthesis.[50]

Of course, if Weber's theoretical construction is to be useful at all, the situations he has constructed must be likely possibilities. Also, he says that he does not claim that these value conflicts are ultimately irresolvable, but we find nowhere in his writing his own discussion about what this `higher synthesis' might be or how it is possible at all. Rather, as in the discussion I shall provide in the following section of Weber's philosophical concept of personality as an adequate way of life in this fragmented world of value conflicts, he seems to imply that these value conflicts are ultimately irresolvable. As each value sphere is differentiated out from the others and becomes independent to move along its path of rationalization, it clarifies itself more and more, improves its internal consistency and

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[50] *Ibid.*, p.323.

develops its own inner dynamics. This makes it more and more incompatible with other value spheres; the more those value spheres are rationalized the more is this the case.

In this world of value differentiation, value pluralism, value irreconcilability, value conflict, or whatever, one thing is apparent. In the past, the occidental culture was dominated by the Christian religion.[51] It developed an ethic of universal love, an acosmistic brotherliness which extended beyond all distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, and social associations. However, in the secular world where religion has receded to a place as but one of the determinant elements of people's value orientations, this ethic of acosmistic brotherliness is greatly hampered. What emerge everywhere are competition, struggle for control and kinds of unbrotherly aristocracy. From the viewpoint of religious ethics, the world is fragmentary and devalued.[52] Not only this. As the world is increasingly rationalized, the organization of the world is more and more rationalized. This is indeed an obstacle to human autonomy. Reacting to this domination of instrumental rationality, people may escape into conscious aesthetic and erotic experiences.[53] These experiences are considered as something touching on our innermost nature, as compared with routinized, rationalized actions.

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[51] Thus Weber shares the conventional view about medieval occidental culture.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.357.

[53] *Loc. cit.*
   Bell argues along the same line of analysis that capitalism is internally contradictory from its cultural dimension. On the one hand, capitalism generates an objectivist culture embracing rationalized market exchange, bureaucratic organizations and a vocational ethic which emphasizes diligence, discipline, etc. On the other hand, it also generates a subjectivist culture which emphasizes hedonism, the pursuit of subjective experience, etc in reaction to the objectivist cultural tendency. In the long run, the subectivist cultural tendency will become harmful to the very foundation of capitalism. See Bell (1978), esp. ch.1.

It would be a misinterpretation if we understand Weber as conceiving that this whole cultural pathos is generated by religious rationalization alone. For, as Weber argues, this cultural situation is constituted by diverse paths of rationalization of different value spheres. These paths of development involve various historical elements. But it is not too bold to assert that, according to Weber, religion is no longer capable of confronting this modern cultural situation.[54]

Value irreconcilability and Weber's ethical stance

According to Weber, unlike the culture of the medieval period, modern occidental culture is pluralistic in character. He says,

> If anything, we realize again today that something can be sacred not only in spite of its not being beautiful, but rather because and in so far as it is not beautiful.
> We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense.
> Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another.

Also,

> [o]ur civilization destines us to realize more clearly these struggles again, after our eyes have been blinded for a thousand years ---- blinded by the allegedly or presumably exclusive orientation towards the grandiose moral fervor of Christian ethics.[55]

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[54] Liebersohn argues that Weber blames Protestantism for being unable to confront the cultural condition in Germany and secure the whole society from fragmentation; see Liebersohn (1988), ch.4.

[55] "Science as a vocation", pp.147-9.

These quotations clearly show Weber's view of the modern cultural situation as evaluatively

irreconcilable[56], and thus fragmented from the religious ethical viewpoint of acosmistic

brotherliness. So, is Weber's view pessimistic ---- seeing, as do many early twentieth

century social thinkers, that occidental civilization has come to a halt or is on the decline?

Weber's view is one of ambivalence. On the one hand, rationalization in various value

spheres increases efficiency. In fact, one cannot resist economic, political and legal

rationalization in particular as the world has become so complex. Rationalization also

brings in individual rights and freedom, and thus individuality.[57] On the other hand,

rationalization reinforces routinization, instrumental domination more generally, and value

neutralization and unbrotherly aristocracy. Thus it may endanger human autonomy and

human community.[58] Even though this danger is imminent, Weber says before closing *PE*:

> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end
> of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there
> will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanical
> petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance.[59]

So the future is still open. For Weber, there is no historical inevitability. Our future

depends on our own efforts. Yet there is something we cannot resist without great loss ----

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[56] Value irreconcilability and value conflict appear on three levels. There are tensions and conflicts between various value spheres. There are tensions and conflicts between people participating in different value spheres. There are also tensions and conflicts existing within the individual as internal value conflicts and role conflicts.

[57] For the reason that Christianity suppresses individual choice and levels individual differences, Weber describes its domination of the occidental world for the past thousand years with a feeling of contempt, as can be seen in the last quotation above.

[58] See Schluchter and Roth (1979), ch.1; Brubaker (1984), ch.4; Alexander (1987) and Holton and Turner (1989), ch.3 for some secondary discussions of Weber's ambivalence.

[59] *PE*, p.182.

rationalization. If old or new ideas and ideals, or whatever value re-orientations can do anything positive to the pathos of modern occidental culture, they can only push forth something to balance the dominant trend of rationalization, instead of replacing it.[60]

Therefore, for Weber, the only way to confront the cultural pathos of modern occidental civilization is through a continuous struggle for a balance between instrumental success and value conviction, between formal rationality and substantive rationality. A mature personality is one which takes this struggle to its heart. Now, if religion no longer has the priority for giving meaning to life, how is meaning re-constituted? How can human autonomy be secured? To put it in another way, how should we live in the modern secular world? To trace Weber's answer to this set of questions, we shall now come to his philosophical concept of personality and the ethic of responsibility.

Weber's conception of human autonomy is greatly influenced by Kant.[61] In one passage, he writes,

> [t]he freer the action ... i.e. the less it has the character of a natural event, the more the concept of personality comes into play. The essence of personality lies in the constancy of its inner relation to certain ultimate values and life-meanings, which, in the course of action, turn into purposes and are thus translated into teleologically rational action.[62]

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[60] This idea runs through all of Schluchter's writings on Weber where he interprets Weber as struggling for a balance between formal rationality and substantive rationality, fact and value, means and end, meaning and consequence, and conviction and responsibility. See Schluchter and Roth (1979), chs 1-2, Schluchter (1981) and Schluchter (1989).

[61] See Schluchter (1981), ch.III; Brubaker (1985), pp.100-1 and Levine (1985), pp.143-6 for discussions of Weber's neo-Kantian concepts of value and human autonomy.

[62] *R&K*, p.192; quoted from Brubaker (1985), p.95.

Thus a person is not autonomous if s/he gives him/herself up to the determination of his/her own natural desires. S/he is truly autonomous only if s/he controls his/her own actions according to some value conviction(s). Only then can we say that s/he has a personality. S/he is then worthy of being dignified as truly human. Only then can we say that our actions convey such and such meaning. (In other words, meaning is given by human beings themselves. This viewpoint determines Weber's perspective in developing his typology of action, his interpretative sociology and so on.) So, from this conception of human autonomy, we can infer that ethical rationalization (as a part of religious rationalization until recently) makes human beings more and more human, more and more distinguished from other animals. Now, in the present era of modern secular culture, we are not at the mercy of religious authorities for giving meaning to our lives. Rather, we ourselves (as individuals) are responsible for it. We are destined to choose our own `gods'. So today we have more potential for becoming truly autonomous. We are indeed destined to become autonomous. We must keep ourselves brave and determined (in another word, heroic) enough to maintain this human quality. On this account, Weber rejects the ethic of adjustment as an adequate way of life under modern secular cultural conditions. For people with this ethic only live off adjusting themselves to the currents and demands of the day or their own life orders. In the latter case, they are at most specialists without spirit. It does not show any autonomy and individual conviction at all.

Now, what is wrong with the ethic of conviction as it has been developed in ascetic Protestantism? Can we say that it constitutes a personality? On these problems, we do not

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have any direct answer from Weber himself. What we can do is make inferences from his discussions of science and politics as vocations.[63]

Weber does not say that people committing themselves to an ethic of conviction do not have a personality at all. The contrary case seems to be more in line with his own standpoint. He conceives that, in taking up an occupation, there is a difference between living one's life off it and for it. The latter alternative involves an inward calling, passionate devotion, and thus has the quality of a personality; whereas the former does not have this quality at all.[64] A personality is one which has an inward calling, passionate devotion, to realize a pattern or style of life according to an ultimate ideal or value position. However, Weber also criticizes this ethic of conviction as being unable to cope adequately with the modern secular world. As can be perceived in ascetic Protestantism and socialism as examples of it[65], this ethic is exclusionary ---- an ethic of conviction either attempts to transform people with value convictions dissimilar to it in an attempt to make them comply with it or simply rejects them. As long as it is an ethic of conviction, there is no true compromise with other value convictions at all. More seriously, an ethic of conviction is justified by an ultimate end alone. It does not consider outcomes and is not justified by them at all. Weber rejects this ethics as far as the problem of collective social life is concerned.

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[63] *FMW*, pp.77-156. Scattered discussions are also given in *MSS* and other writings.

[64] See "Science as a vocation", pp.134-7 where Weber discusses science as a vocation; and "Politics as a vocation", p.84 where he discusses the distinction between living off politics and living for it. But he also makes a general assertion: nothing is worthy of man as man unless he can pursue it with passionate devotion. (p.135)

[65] See for example "Politics as a vocation", pp.120-6.

For Weber, passion and conviction alone are not enough for making a mature personality. A mature personality must also be a responsible one.[66] One who has a mature personality must take responsibility for his/her own value conviction. In other words, s/he must be conscious of its degree of internal consistency, and its costs and consequences, and take responsibility for them. That is to say also that s/he must confront the tensions between fact and value, means and ends, ideal and reality, in making his/her value choice with heart and soul.[67] We can say that this personality presents an ethic of responsibility.

Let me make several points to clarify further this ethic of responsibility. First, though Weber distances himself from the Protestants, we can still see traces of influence from them, even in his concept of personality.[68] Second, from Weber's diagnosis of the present cultural condition, and the present ethical condition in particular, religion no longer supplies any objective value. Value consideration must be a subjective decision made by the individual who is to be responsible for it him/herself. We cannot rely on science for this

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[66] *Ibid.*, pp.115-6, 127.

[67] In this regard, Weber perceives that the ethic of conviction and the ethic of responsibility are in conflict with each other, and he proposes to balance them so that they supplement each other; see *ibid.*, pp.120, 127. But I shall take Schluchter's amendment that Weber really wants to replace the ethic of conviction by the ethic of responsibility. For Weber's discussion of self-responsibility always includes the reference to value conviction already; e.g. "Science as a vocation", p.152. So a responsible person is one who balances his/her own value conviction with empirical reality. (We cannot perceive the ethic of responsibility as an ethic at all if it does not include a value conviction.) Otherwise, there is no way of distinguishing the ethic of responsibility from the ethic of adjustment. See Schluchter and Roth (1979), ch.1, pp.55-9 and ch.2.

Also, Schluchter terms this ethical position `heroic individualism'; Schluchter (1989), p.277. This ethical position assumes a liberalist and to some extent an existentialist stance. It proclaims acosmistic brotherliness as something of the past.

[68] Liebersohn pays particular attention to Weber's contact with his Protestant relatives and friends in Liebersohn (1988), ch.4.

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task. For Weber, science does not determine any meaning for life. For science, the world has no meaning at all. It can only settle factual problems.[69] (This position on the distinction between fact and value is disputable. I shall discuss this in the following section.) On the other hand, Weber's ethical position insists on the supplement between value conviction and logical and factual accounts. So science still plays a central part in a responsible personality. In it, science takes a technical task of making us conscious of the internal consistency of our value positions, the conditions of their realization, and their logical implications and empirical consequences.[70] This awareness is central to any responsible value decision, but it does not directly determine what choice to make. At this point, we come to the limit of science. Third, a responsible value choice is a decision based on conscious consideration between value and cost, rather than determined by external causes such as a natural desire or an authority. So the ethic of responsibility is by nature reflective and based on self-determination.

Fourth, in taking the ethic of responsibility as an adequate ethic for living in the modern secular world, Weber is not simply making a subjective value choice, but proposing an ethic which he regards as worth proposing objectively. He defends it with reasons rather than seeking an irrational following. He also provides reasons to reject other ethical forms of life as inadequate or as not so good. For example, he criticizes the devotion of the entrepreneur to his/her business as an end in itself as having the character of sport.[71] In

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[69] "Science as a vocation", pp.142-3.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp.150-1. See also Schluchter and Roth (1979), pp.85-9.

[71] *PE*, pp.182 and 283 n.115.

RRW, he comments on aestheticism and eroticism as forms of escaping or flight from the world.[72] Rather than confronting the world with devotion, they take the strategy of escaping into inward enjoyment and retreating into private spaces and intimate relations, as a compensation for the mechanical petrification and routinization resulting from rationalization. They emphasize the search for contact with the human being's innermost nature and subjective experiences. This is harmful to human community. What they nurture are only sensualists without hearts. What is more, we can even say that this kind of escape relies on the level of efficiency and material success achieved by instrumental rationality. In reality, only economically carefree people can afford such a style of life. By contrast, only the ethic of responsibility is able to face up to the modern secular world where the Christian religion no longer holds a superior position, where gods struggle with each other for following, and where formal rationality becomes more and more dominant and substantive rationality struggles on different levels to defend its place in human life.

An ethic of responsibility does not have a fixed content. It only works out its way by continuously struggling heart and soul to balance ideals with reality. Only then are we able not to abandon rationality altogether, but to struggle to turn it into a device of self-realization. To Weber, only this kind of ethics is capable of defending human value and autonomy in this world where the danger of mechanical petrification is very high, and in this world of irresolvable value conflicts. The kind of self-responsibility suggested by Weber does not in itself resolve these value conflicts, but it is, argues Weber, the only viable alternative available in this modern secular world. However, in arguing that this ethical

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[72] See also Scaff's analysis in Scaff (1989), pp.102-12.

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pattern is better than other ethical patterns, Weber contradicts this argument with his view that there is no longer any objective ground for determining the choice of meaning in the modern value-pluralistic cultural context.

Last but not least, this ethical pattern proposed by Weber depends on an institutional setting. This latter is not my main concern here. I shall point out in closing this section that Weber's ethical position is parallel with his own bourgeois liberalist political stance.[73] The model of plebiscitary democracy he supports is a combination of charismatic leadership with a bureaucratic machine for public administration, whereas both retain a certain degree of relative autonomy and keep each other in check. Here, Weber insists that charismatic leaders who live for politics and seek for mass support from the public must have the quality of self-responsibility besides political insights and convictions. In other words, a politician must have a sense of moral and political responsibility.[74] This model of democracy indicates once again Weber's diagnosis and solution of the modern pathos. We must struggle ceaselessly both internally and externally, in our individual and collective lives, for a balance of formal rationality and substantive rationality.[75]

Further discussions

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[73] For discussions about the flow of Weber's argument from ethical issues to political issues, see for example Löwith (1982) and Hennis (1988), chs 4-5. Hennis pays attention to Weber's link with Nietzsche in particular.

[74] "Politics as a vocation".

[75] See Beetham (1985) for an analysis of Weber's model of plebiscitary democracy.

In this section, I shall focus my discussion on a number of points which I take to be problematic in Weber's understanding of occidental civilization.

First, Weber conceives that, as a dimension of rationalization, bureaucratization enhances instrumental efficiency, but its impersonality endangers human freedom and community. This view has been a point of attack by a number of critics, who argue that this view is one-sided and ignores the informal dimension of bureaucracy.

To respond to these critics, as Weber's concept of bureaucracy is intended to be merely an ideal type instead of a direct depiction of reality, it is unfair to argue that Weber ignores informal elements and dysfunctions within bureaucracy.[76] However, it is arguable whether the analogy of bureaucracy as a machine (which Weber tends to employ in his analysis) is adequate for understanding the relationship between bureaucracy and efficiency. It is also arguable whether the strategy of separating out informal elements from the operation of organizations and reducing the staff to passive, obedient `cogs of the machine' guarantees efficiency, or is the only way to achieve efficiency at all.[77] It is certainly true that modern organizations cannot dispense with bureaucratic control and its impersonality altogether in sustaining their efficiency. But this does not in itself leave no space for informal elements within them. It also does not imply that bureaucracy inevitably competes with informal social relationships, ethical values, etc. What really matters here is rather the

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[76] Mouzelis (1975), pp.43-4.

[77] In any case, it is a central problem in management studies how to stimulate the incentives of the staff to comply with organizational goals and actively participate in their jobs. This is an important part of enhancing efficiency and flexibility. See Wood's discussions of industrial management in Manwaring and Wood (1985) and Wood (1989). See also Beetham (1987), ch.1.

degree to which the features of bureaucracy should be emphasized and should match with contextual factors in particular organizations.[78] If the above argument is correct, I doubt that Weber has exaggerated the extent to which modern society has become bureaucratized and the extent to which bureaucratization endangers human creativity, individuality and informal relationships.

Mouzelis suggests one direction for appraising Weber's views about bureaucracy: viewed from his own sociology of domination, Weber's concept of bureaucratic domination stands in comparison with the other two types of domination.[79] So, no matter how internally inconsistently it is constructed,[80] the concept is useful for understanding the historical transformation of human organizations. To what extent does Weber's concept stand if it is viewed from this aspect? This goes to my second criticism of Weber. This point concerns Weber's conception of the practical implications of bureaucratization.

From the point of view of historical comparison, Weber is right in pointing out that market mechanisms and bureaucracy greatly extend instrumental efficiency. But he also claims that they lead to the loss of human freedom and community. One prominent effect is the levelling of individual differences. Another is their externalization of ethics, or value neutralization. To what extent is this diagnosis correct, historically or ideal typically? It is impossible to present systematic empirical data here to show that Weber's argument is historically incorrect. But, by reference to some scattered historical evidence, it is not

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[78] Beetham, *op. cit.*, p.22.

[79] Mouzelis, *op. cit.*, p.49.

[80] For a discussion, see *ibid.*, ch.2.

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unreasonable to doubt its adequacy. In fact, I want to argue that Weber actually takes the emergence and dominance of the market and bureaucracy as irresistible. From this observation, he reads a one-sided picture of occidental civilization as a trend towards marketization, bureaucratization and value neutralization ---- thus the increasing replacement of charismatic and traditional domination by bureaucratic domination. However, history is not so simple, it is multidimensional. This whole process has moved on through intense power struggles between different value orientations and interest positions.[81] The point here is not the query about whether rationalization has been successful regardless of resistances or not, but the request to pay more attention to the extent to which these resistances actually play a part in it.

Weber can reply that his concepts and diagnosis are only ideal types. This justifies a one-sided reading of history. Of course, Weber does not stop here. He takes notice of the dialectic of formal rationality and substantive rationality, fact and value, and efficiency and justice. But to what extent are these pair-concepts oppositions? The former side has gained the upper hand in its struggles[82] with the latter side within the last two to three centuries. Without totally rejecting Weber's case, I doubt whether it would not be more in keeping with historical facts to see values and ethics as always playing a part in the rise of the market and bureaucracy; Weber's studies of the Protestant ethic give us an impression that he actually has this idea in mind. It is also more open to facts to see values and ethics

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[81] To raise but one example here, Pahl points out that factory reforms and the increasing demand for discipline in production have met severe resistance; see Pahl (1984), ch.2. Thompson points toward a similar situation; see Thompson (1967).

[82] Let us leave aside the problem of conceptual reification in seeing facts and values, etc as under struggle with each other for the time being.

as experiencing transformation in order to cope with economic and political changes instead of being pushed to one side alone. Therefore the situation is not simply one of the loss of freedom and community and the levelling of differences. It is one of a complex combination of gains and losses, and of diminishing, emerging and transformation. So what Weber depicts about ethical development is at best an imminent danger of modernity, rather than an irresistible historical trend; in fact, Weber himself wants to avoid (but not very successfully) the latter false impression. In order to understand this danger adequately, we must put it in a proper context. This certainly requires reconstructions of our conceptual tools.

This requirement of reconceptualization is all the more urgent in face of the contemporary changes which Weber himself was unable to foresee. We are currently witnessing the restructuring of the economy, the decentralization of work, spatial restructuring such as deurbanization, the restructuring of the family and gender relations, the rise of new social movements, the resurgence of fundamentalist religious beliefs, etc.[83] Is it adequate to conceptualize them as resistances to rationalization, the return of the repressed, or the revival of the individual? Or does their social significance lie elsewhere? That is to ask, do they signify a new pattern of social change or simply a regression from rationalization? All these questions press towards the need to move beyond Weber's one-sided understanding of social reality. Some of these issues will be picked up later.

This brings us to my third criticism of Weber. The central feature of Weber's theoretical perspective lies in his emphasis on inner dynamics.[84] In analyzing the case of the

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[83] See for example Lash and Urry (1987), Crook *et al* (1992) and Beck (1992).

[84] See Brubaker (1984), pp.6, 69, 74.

Occident, Weber carefully separates inner dynamics from external factors. The development of inner dynamics is the central focus of Weber's studies of rationalization.[85] Thus, while religious rationalization depends on material and social conditions, it progresses along its own track which is in the final analysis determined by how the ideas of sin, suffering, redemption, etc developed. The development of these ideas constitutes the inner dynamics of religion. Along with religious rationalization, there are also economic, political and legal rationalizations. Each value sphere depends and exerts influences on each of the others, but they move along their own paths of rationalization. The more they are rationalized, the more this is so. To this extent, we can say that, supported by his insight of perceiving occidental civilization in terms of rationalization, Weber takes up a dichotomizing and analytic approach in social investigation. This approach divides occidental history into different dimensions and traces the inner dynamics of each dimension (which Weber himself calls value spheres) and the interweaving of these dimensions. And it is under this perspective that the distinction between inner dynamics and external conditions becomes intelligible.

Under this dichotomizing, or analytic, mode of thought, Weber conceives the influx of precious metals, geographical conditions, inter-state conflicts and violence, population growth, the development of networks of transportation and communication, etc as external

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[85] Brubaker sums up Weber's point as follows:

> One aspect of rationalization is ... an increasing awareness of the *causal, axiological, and normative autonomy* of the individual value spheres, or in other words an increasing awareness that conduct in each value sphere takes place according to its own laws, has its own inherent dignity or value, and generates its own norms and obligations. This growing consciousness of the autonomy of the various value spheres intensifies the tensions among them ... (*ibid.*, p.74)

factors affecting economic rationalization, rather than as elements internal/integral to it.[86] Internal elements are distinguished from external conditions because the former are constituents (or defining elements) of modern rational capitalism while the latter are not. The latter have only a contingent relationship with modern rational capitalism.

What is the merit of this way of looking at things? Weber may suggest that this strategy helps us capture the pattern and inner dynamics of value differentiation which is a core phenomenon of occidental civilization in the past few centuries. He wants also to get a clearer view regarding the implication of this process of differentiation for the future of the human race. So Weber's view here, as I have just said, is supported by an intellectual insight into occidental modernity, and one of the aims of his work is to substantiate this insight and develop further on the issues just mentioned.

Therefore one may argue that this dichotomizing mode of analysis must be appreciated in connection with Weber's viewpoint about ideal types and their relationship with the issue of value relevance. In other words, this mode of analysis is a deliberate design grounded on a particular issue of value relevance ---- the pathos of modernity as observed by Weber. Briefly represented, Weber's idea is that social scientific research is of value relevance not only because facts, and also descriptions of facts, are inescapably value-laden. Social scientific research also involves another evaluative dimension. The choice of topics and the description of facts depend on the significance of the topics for the investigator and his/her culture.[87] Now, Weber considers that the process of rationalization

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[86] See Collins (1980) which also contrasts Weber with Wallerstein.

[87] Oakes (1988), ch.1, esp. section 4.

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which results in value differentiation is of great cultural significance for the Occident. Not only that, but also of significance for the human race as a whole. This perception constitutes a justification for Weber's dichotomizing and analytic theoretical approach. Seen in this light, Weber wants to produce a picture of the features he thinks central to the value spheres I have just discussed and a retrospective view about how they come about. He also hopes to reveal the practical implications of the present development of those value spheres based on this retrospective long-term developmental analysis. So, viewed from this direction, Weber's work is not simply retrospective, but includes a prospective function of illuminating the human future.

I draw this impression from interpreters of Weber such as Hennis, Löwith and Scaff. This line of thought distances itself from the interpretation of Weber which, under the influence of Parsons, sees him as a positivist.[88] However, I want to make explicit here

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[88] Given this judgement, I still want to give two further qualifications on my point about positivism here. First, there is so far no standard definition of positivism. The term `positivism' includes a wide range of perspectives; see for example Bryant (1985) and Giddens (1977), ch.1 for some discussions of this issue. Whether Weber is a positivist depends on our definition of the term. We must make ourselves clear when we judge Weber as a positivist. No matter whether Weber is a positivist or not, he does not commit himself to any simple and clear-cut distinction between fact and value.

Second, I am of the view that Weber's developmental studies must be understood in relation to their value relevance (i.e. in relation to what Weber supposes to be the value concerns of the modern Occidental culture). But we must also remind ourselves here that Weber wants also to retain the relative autonomy of his typological work (i.e. his general theoretical framework) from his value concerns. According to this intention, we must distinguish between different levels of theory construction and the varying degrees to which they are connected with values. For some secondary discussions on this position, see Roth, "Epilogue", in Roth and Schluchter (1979) and Schluchter (1989), pp.16-21. Whether the two positions can be made consistent with each other is a problem outside my scope here.

I shall point out later that, although Weber insists on the value relevance of social scientific investigations, he also insists on their value-neutrality. In other words, he insists on the relative autonomy of science in relation to other value spheres.

that I am not concerning myself in my discussion here with the issue of Weber's epistemological position. I just want to argue that, however illuminating it may be, this strategy closes us to certain features of occidental civilization and in consequence backs up an evaluation of it which is too pessimistic. I shall substantiate this argument later.

The value spheres which have been differentiated out from each other have always been and will still be dependent upon each other. The problem is how the mutual dependence between them, the integration of them, is transformed historically. Weber does touch on this problem, but his distinction between the internal and the external, and the constitutive and the contingent, blinds him to the complexity of this aspect of mutual dependence and integration; I shall expand my analysis of this point later.[89]

My fourth criticism concerns Weber's Protestant ethic thesis as it is generally called. There is a popular view that Weber sees a close connection between the Protestant ethic and modern rational capitalism. But what kind of connection is it? I have argued earlier that we cannot take this connection as simply a causal one.[90] We should understand that,

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[89] There is also another analytic mode of social investigation in relation to this problem. I mentioned earlier that Weber has attempted to separate conceptually between interests and ideas. I also pointed out that this separation is problematic, and thus requires much more clarification before it can stand at all.

[90] I have avoided the use of the term `elective affinity', which Weber sometimes uses, to describe the connections between different value spheres, between value spheres and elements within them, between different elements within value spheres, and so on. The term is vaguely used by Weber himself to express his view that the connections between social phenomena and the connections between elements within them are contextual, dynamic and interactive. They are never deterministic and mechanistic. The problem becomes even more complicated if we interpret the concept of elective affinity within the context of Weber's theory of ideal types. See for example Treiber and Kalberg's discussions in Treiber (1985) and Kalberg (1994), ch.4. So, to avoid ambiguities and complications, I instead use expressions such as `is significant for', `provides a condition for', 'depends on', 'mutual reinforcement', 'interweaving' and `interplay with' in discussing the connections in question.

for Weber, the connection must be contextualized historically. Within the particular historical context of occidental civilization, we can say that the significance of the Protestant ethic for the rise of modern rational capitalism is very high. Now, although Weber believes that we cannot clarify further how significant the former is for the latter,[91] he asserts with a counterfactual argument that the latter would not be as it is without the former. To make this point more explicit, the ascetic way of life is a defining characteristic of modern rational capitalism. The latter would not have emerged without it; at least, it is internal to it. And Weber sees ascetic Protestantism as responsible for the emergence of this ethical pattern within the context of the Occident. In the later period of his thought, Weber even came to the idea that this ethical pattern generated by ascetic Protestantism is not just relevant for the rise of modern rational capitalism but is also highly relevant for the development of modern rational culture. It is under this vein of thought that Weber discusses unbrotherly aristocracy, value fragmentation, the loss of meaning and the mature personality as a responsible character appropriate to the modern cultural condition.

How sound is this argument? For Weber, we should not neglect the contribution of ascetic Protestantism in transforming the activities of doing business and making profits into

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[91] Tawney is correct in claiming that Weber does not intend to produce a thesis of the psychological determination of economic development. On the contrary, economic factors are very important for economic development itself. Tawney is also correct in pointing out that it is not at all clear how significant ascetic Protestantism is for modern rational capitalism. Weber takes Calvinism as an exemplary case of ascetic Protestantism. On this score, Tawney is also correct in pointing out that Weber neglects changes in Calvinism after Calvin, and its internal inconsistencies. See Tawney (1938), preface to 1937 edition.

I have some doubt that the judgement of significance just mentioned is a matter of personal judgement rather than of precise proof; see *ibid.*, p.xi. That is to say, I suspect that Weber indeed bases his judgement on his direct feeling/sensitivity about the significance of ascetic Protestantism for the rise of modern rational capitalism. He has no idea of how the degree of significance can be identified and proven precisely.

a vocation. We should not neglect that ascetic Protestantism also contributes to the production of an economic ethic which is anti-traditionalistic and universalistic. All these are essential to the development of modern rational capitalism.

To respond to this argument, it is inadequate, as do some critics of Weber, just to produce the counter-argument that the Reformation and ascetic Protestantism are themselves responses to economic developments.[92] However, if it does not want to risk shifting into an economic determinist position, and if it does not want to reject the point that ascetic Protestantism does have an effect upon economic developments, this simple response is extremely weak and must be expanded so that it can take seriously Weber's view about the relative autonomy of ideas and their effects on actions and material and ideal interests. As Weber himself admits, religious rationalization depends on material conditions. So does economic rationalization. But we must not assume therefore that the correlation between ascetic Protestantism and modern rational capitalism is a spurious one and that what really matters is the development of material conditions.

Given these clarifications, I think that it is indded fair to argue that Weber produces an oversimplified model of a straightforward institutionalization of the religious ethic of ascetic Protestantism into the economic sphere. This ethic is thus seen by Weber as providing an impetus for furthering economic development to a new level. Weber does not consider other non-religious lines of ethical development which are also relevant and indeed contributory to modern capitalism. Even less attention is paid to the ethical implications of these material and social institutional background factors (such as the rational state with its

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[92] For a general survey of similar criticisms and responses, see Ray (1987).

internal monopoly of violence and taxation, rational law and the city[93]) for modern

capitalism.[94] In Weber's consideration of the ethical base of modern rational capitalism,

they are relegated to the status of external conditions. These two points show that the

ethical condition relevant to modern capitalism is much more complex and multifarious than

Weber supposes.[95] The same comments hold true also for Weber's account of the more

general issue of the connection between religious rationalization and the development of

modern rational culture.

Weber does not assert a simple causal connection between ascetic Protestantism

and modern rational capitalism, and modern rational culture more generally. I have pointed

out earlier, first of all, that Weber did not want to replace a materialist explanation of

modern capitalism by an idealist one. His analysis is intended instead as a balance of the

materialist view (such as the one given by Marx). The strategy for obtaining a balance is

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[93] It is of course true that Weber conceives that it is more likely for burghers and the urban middle classes to have faith in a universalistic and individualistic religion such as ascetic Protestantism than any other types. Weber makes this point in *ES*, *RRW* and *RC*.

[94] Here I am talking about the influences of these factors upon the economic ethics of modern capitalism, and the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie more generally. Weber does, of course, discuss their significance for the modern rational culture.

[95] Contrary to Weber's case, Marx and Elias focus their attention on the competitive nature of modern capitalism. While Marx emphasizes the logic of capital accumulation and the severity of the competition within the bourgeoisie, Elias emphasizes competition from all sides (power struggles and status competition between the bourgeoisie and classes from the top down to those below them, and among the bourgeoisie themselves). Elias is critical of Marx's economic determinism, but both of them share a common view that the capital accumulation of the bourgeoisie obtains its dynamics from the power structure of the capitalist society, or pressures from the specific figuration, in Elias's terms, in which the bourgeoisie find themselves.

See also Giddens (1985), ch.5 for a comparison between Marx and Weber on their understanding of modern capitalism.

carried out on the 'idealist' side, which concerns ascetic Protestantism in Weber's earlier

work. It is later expanded into a comparative study of religious rationalization. However,

this strategy of balancing the materialist side of explaining occidental civilization by an

idealist explanation is not enough to reveal the complexity of the situation Weber intends to

examine. Religious development (whether in its doctrines or in its external organizations)

intertwines with other social processes in a complex way. This dynamic cannot be captured

by the analysis of the inner dynamics of religious rationalization alone.

How significant the connection is of ascetic Protestantism with modern rational

capitalism, and with modern rational culture in the Occident (as conceived by Weber) more

generally is a controversial issue. Weber himself recognizes its complexity, though he pre-

judges its significance to be very high. In *PE*, he writes,

> [o]ur next task would be rather to show the significance of ascetic
> rationalism, which has only been touched in the foregoing sketch, for the
> content of practical social ethics, thus for the types of organization and the
> functions of social groups from the conventicle to the State. Then its
> relations to humanistic rationalism, its ideals of life and cultural influence;
> further to the development of philosophical and scientific empiricism, to
> technical development and to spiritual ideals would have to be analysed.
> Then its historical development from the medieval beginnings of worldly
> asceticism to its dissolution into pure utilitarianism would have to be traced
> out through all the areas of ascetic religion. Only then could the
> quantitative cultural significance of ascetic Protestantism in its relation to
> the other plastic elements of modern culture be estimated.[96]

Weber recognizes that other factors must be considered systematically before we come to

any firmer conclusion on this topic. However, no further work on this broader task was

produced later on by Weber himself. So we still do not know what is Weber's final

judgement about the significance of ascetic Protestantism in this connection.

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[96] *PE*, pp.182-3.

Given this uncertainty about Weber's work, however, I think that there is another dimension of it which can to some extent be separated from Weber's own sociology of religion. One intended function of Weber's sociology of religion can be seen as helping to illuminate our understanding of the modern occidental cultural situation from a developmental perspective. But, for purposes of convenience, we can skip our judgement about the validity of Weber's sociology of religion when our interest is focused on Weber's understanding of the modern occidental cultural situation and its implications for the human future.

The problems of the internal-external distinction and inner dynamics I have just discussed are also reflected in Weber's view regarding value irreconcilability as an inherent feature of modern occidental rational culture. Inferring from his thesis of value differentiation, different value spheres are differentiated out and rendered more and more independent. From now on, they run according to their own logics and pursue their own goals. This leads to irresolvable conflicts between them. Weber does not say that art and eroticism have not been historically influenced by religion, nor that the economy has not been affected by the state or vice versa. But, for him, they no longer share a common logic or value standard in the modern cultural situation.

Of course, these value spheres still exert influences upon each other. Perceived from one direction, while the economic and political value spheres coalesce in objectifying the world, art and eroticism (in reaction to this tendency) struggle to get free from them. Cultivated people also struggle to counteract them.[97] (Weber expresses very succinctly the

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[97] *RRW*, pp.356-7.

feelings of those people being involved in these struggles for cultivation.) Under this picture of differentiation and struggle for independence, we can see that social integration becomes an urgent issue. In the picture of modern rational societies under Weber's conceptualization, the market and political bureaucracy are the last resort for maintaining societal integration functionally. However, their effects are inherently very limited for this task. Being functionally integrated by the mechanisms just mentioned, modern human beings still confront the reality of value irreconcilability. For these mechanisms do not touch on the problems of value production and value consensus. Now, in an age when value consensus is breaking down, every wo/man must stand on his/her own as a self-responsible individual. S/he must rely on no one else, but become a hero(-ine). S/he must put his/her confidence in him/herself alone because no common identity can be worked out within the wider society. S/he must make value-choices him/herself.

Do all these descriptions fit the reality? What Weber mentions may well be one tendency within occidental modernity. Modern human beings have actually achieved varying degrees of independence. Nevertheless this should not close us to the case that they, and the value spheres in modern society more macroscopically speaking, are still dependent (and are becoming even more so) upon each other. They are integrated within very complex networks of relationships, which develop out of complex balances of competition and coalition, and social differentiation and mutual identification.[98] How do

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[98] Robertson considers Parsons as superior to Weber in that, while Weber sees only value differentiation, Parsons sees the emergence of value universalism which balances it out; see Robertson (1991), pp.144-9. Much of Robertson's argument in Robertson (1992) concentrates on how value pluralism and universalism develop in the global arena. He conceives that globalization is becoming more and more an important topic to which many sociologists still do not pay enough attention. I shall leave Robertson's argument here and draw attention to my discussions to be given later about Elias's viewpoint on the connection

we account for the situation that people in fact feel themselves to be more and more independent and isolated individually while they are at the same time becoming more and more dependent upon each other? (Here I am talking of different aspects of mutual dependence, rather than restricting myself to functional integration alone.) How do we deal with this dual character of modern occidental culture which involves the development of both social differentiation and social integration? Weber does not reject the possibility of a higher synthesis of differentiated value spheres.[99] But we can see nowhere in his works how this higher synthesis is possible at all.

A central theme that runs through my subsequent discussions of Elias and Habermas is to see how their works constitute two alternative analyses of differentiation-cum-integration which provide us with more comprehensive and balanced understandings of occidental civilization. These alternative analyses are important for tackling the practical question left behind by Weber of how a higher synthesis of differentiated value spheres is possible in modern occidental society. Of course, these alternative analyses are based on the perceived need to reconceptualize Weber's question before they suggest answers to it.

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between the increase in human interdependence, depersonalization and individualization, and Habermas's viewpoint on the rationalization of lifeworld and postconventional ethics.

[99] *RRW*, p.323.

CHAPTER 3

Elias's Account of Occidental Civilizattion

Elias's reception of Weber

It is a difficult task to summarize and compare Elias's work with that of others. This is partly due to the originality and creativeness of Elias's perspective which make it dissimilar from other perspectives. Part of the reason is also due to the fact that Elias does not take the strategy of building up his own work by evaluating the work of others. Nor is he deeply involved in debates with other sociologists.[1] He concerns himself centrally with working on an original theme of looking at social phenomena. We do not deny that Elias indeed learns from his predecessors, but their influences remain latent and subtle. His discussions of others' ideas are, we can say, scattered and incomplete.[2] However, these difficulties do not make the evaluation of his work against that of others impossible.[3]

To make an attempt at this difficult task, I shall start with a brief discussion of Elias's reception of Weber. I shall make four points on this score in what follows. More detailed arguments will be given in later sections.

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[1] Two notable exceptions are Comte and Marx.

[2] This remains true in Elias's work on general sociology; see Elias (1978a). (But he spends a chapter on Comte.)

[3] For one such attempt, see Arnason (1987).

The first point is about Elias's comment on the use of the concepts of rationality and rationalization. This is a major point of Elias's disagreement with Weber. It is characteristic of Weber that he creates dichotomies in conceptualizing rationality, but this is against Elias's perspective. As will be discussed in detail later, Elias conceives that all things are constantly in flux and have dynamic influences upon each other. It is wrong to treat them as static and isolated entities. Applying this view to Weber's case, we must regard it as a fact that reason is not something fixed. It is but one aspect of human personality. This personality changes and develops with social relationships within socio-historical contexts. Thus it is not a fixed state or end toward which individuals and society develop.[4] It appears under different forms as society changes. There is no ground to assume the bourgeois-capitalist type of rationality as its typical form.[5] Also, with the change in social relationships, reason always changes in conjunction with the irrational elements of human

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[4] See for example Elias (1982), pp.276, 283-4, 289-91 and 354-6 n.129, and Elias (1989). The main target of attack of this argument is traditional philosophy which Elias sees as treating reason as a fixed state, an essence of human beings or an ideal state pursued by them. It takes a teleological view of human history as a process of realizing Reason.

Weber is critical of the teleological view of history. But in Elias's eyes, Weber's thesis of rationalization amounts to the view that human history develops in the direction where human beings become more and more rational. Reason becomes a fixed end in this case. Thus it is reasonable for Elias to doubt whether Weber has a process theory (although he investigates the *process* of rationalization). (Gleichmann (1989), p.69) I think that it is not unreasonable to suppose that, in Elias's eyes, Weber's model of rationalization assumes the bourgeois-capitalist type of rationality to be the end-point of the hitherto occurring process of civilization in the Occident. In this regard, no matter whether this model is teleological or not, it assumes a static concept of rationality.

[5] There are other forms of rationality, e.g. court rationality which developed within the courtly society in the Occident; see Elias (1983), pp.110-4.

personality (such as emotion and desires). Rationality and irrationality are in fact complementary categories.[6]

Elias does not have as large a frame of reference for studying rationalization as Weber, who looks at it from different dimensions. Though he also talks of the rationalization of the whole social structure, he narrows down his focus of argument about Weber's concept of rationalization upon changes in mental processes, or structures of thought or consciousness, towards becoming more and more rational. Speaking more broadly, it is about the direction of the change in the modes of conduct towards more affect control and higher degrees of calculability and predictability within the context of a specific pattern of social transformation.[7] Whereas, Elias puts what Weber perceives as the institutional dimension of rationalization under the topic of functional differentiation, the relative autonomy of social functions, social establishments, etc.[8]

The second point is about Weber's concept of ideal types. Briefly represented, Weber's intention is not to eschew altogether the objectivity of social investigation through this concept of ideal type. But he takes it that human social phenomena are discrete events. Investigating and explaining them is primarily a task of ordering or conceptually

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[6] E.g. Elias (1982), p.230 and Elias (1983), pp.92-3. Elias also rejects Weber's distinction between purposive rationality and value rationality; see Elias (1983), p.85 n.20.

[7] Elias (1982), p.289.
    This indicates a tendency to narrow down the point of argument of Weber's whole thesis about rationalization onto the individual dimension. The institutional dimension of rationalization is picked up as concerning the differentiation of social functions. This tendency is shared by some of Elias's followers; see for example Bogner (1986), pp.319-402, Bogner (1987), p.256, Kuzmics (1988), pp.155, 160-1, Kuzmics (1991), p.13 and Mennell (1989), pp.102-4.

[8] Here, I am not implying that Elias distinguishes these two dimensions as two separate things. I shall discuss his connection between psychogenesis and sociogenesis later.

reconstructing these events according to certain value relevances perceived by the investigator. What the investigator grasps are just ideal types produced by this kind of conceptual reconstruction, not the reality of discrete events itself. But Elias rejects this view.[9] The epistemological reason behind this is very complex. It is enough here just to state briefly Elias's point against Weber's theoretical perspective. This point in fact constitutes a background of Elias's disagreement with Weber on their approaches to the understanding of occidental civilization.

While Elias agrees that understanding necessarily relies on the use of concepts and is always pervaded by value orientations[10], he rejects idealism, or nominalism (for Elias, Weber's concept of ideal type represents one such case) which he sees as pushing their power of determination to an extreme. If the link of knowledge with reality is denied, then knowledge growth and its contribution to increase human beings' mastery of their environment become fictive. So, insisting on the link of knowledge with reality (and that it is the latter which determines the adequacy of the former ultimately), the problem, under Elias's viewpoint, now becomes the historical changes in the balance between the fantasy content of human thought and beliefs which have comparatively higher degrees of reality-congruency. It is the increase in the proportion of the latter in human thought which brings

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[9] Elias (1982), p.339 n.22 and Elias (1983), pp.13-4.

[10] Elias criticizes Weber's thesis of value-neutrality in Elias (1971b), pp.368-9. However, his understanding of Weber is rather inaccurate. He has taken Weber as on a par with American positivist sociologists. This view hardly stands scrutiny if we have a careful reading of Weber's "Science as a vocation". Weber's thesis of value-neutrality must be taken in connection with his understanding of the ethical situation of modern rational culture and the place of science in it. For some other discussions, see Schluchter and Roth (1979), ch.2, Brubaker (1985), ch.3, Oakes (1988) and Lassman and Velody (1989).

about the increase in human beings' mastery over their environment.[11] This view implies that there is no clear-cut distinction between false beliefs which are based on pure imaginations and true beliefs which have high degrees of reality congruency. They constitute only a continuum where the existence of either extreme is very rare. So it is central to knowledge growth that a shift in the balance towards the latter pole of this continuum is required in the composition of knowledge. This in turn requires a shift in the balance in human thought and emotion between involvement and detachment.[12] This whole argument points towards the fact that the relationship between concept and reality is a very complex problem. To Elias, Weber's theoretical framework is unable to provide an adequate solution to it.

As a corollary, Elias rejects Weber's concept of ideal type and suggests the concept of real type (which talks about real situations rather than artificial structures created by social investigators) to replace it.[13] The main point behind this concept of real type is to emphasize again, as I have just indicated, the link between concept and reality which Elias thinks Weber has neglected.[14] Thus Weber's problem of the value-relevance of knowledge in connection with his concept of ideal type is undermined. Or, to put it in a more accurate way, the significance of this problem is re-considered and re-conceptualized under Elias's own sociology of knowledge.

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[11] See for example Elias (1978a), p.23. For a matter of convenience, I shall skip any systematic discussion of Elias's concept of reality-congruency here.

[12] Elias develops this view in detail in Elias (1987) and Elias (1989).

[13] Elias (1983), pp.13-4.

[14] See Mennell's discussion is Mennell (1989), p.88.

The third point concerns Elias's charge against another aspect of Weber's sociological nominalism, which is sometimes called social atomism ---- that social reality is discrete and diverse in character.[15] As I have just mentioned Weber's point concerning the link between concept and reality, Weber's concept of ideal type suggests that what we get from reality are data about discrete events. The function of concepts is to group them together based on certain judgements about value-relevance. Perceived in this way, there appears an unbridgeable gap between reality and concept, which amounts to an unbridgeable gap between the general and the particular, theory and data, abstract concepts and concrete events, form and content, and the structural and the individual. Thus only the discrete, the particular, the individual, etc are real. On the other hand, the general, the universal, the common, the structural, etc are but mental constructs of the observer and therefore not real. For Elias, this kind of social atomism is committed to a fallacy of process reduction under which people reduce the dynamic, the processual into the static.[16] For Elias, the general, the universal, the structural, etc are no less real than the discrete, the particular, etc. I shall analyze this point in more detail in the next section.

The fourth point touches on the issue of the position of religion in occidental civilization. Though Weber does not advocate idealism himself, many interpreters conceive that his work emphasizes the centrality of religion for the emergence of modern rational capitalism. This contrasts with Elias's work, which is in turn perceived by some critics as

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[15] This charge is presented explicitly and in detail in Elias (1978), "Introduction to the 1968 Edition". See also Elias (1978a), p.117.

[16] Elias perceives a connection between these two groups of problems himself; see Elias (1983), ch.1.

neglecting the significance of religion.[17] To give a preliminary clarification of Elias's view on religion here, let us pay attention to a comment made by Elias on Weber's studies of religion that the Protestant ethic is in fact a symptom, rather than as Weber perceives it the cause, of changes in the pattern of human conduct in the Occident beginning from the sixteenth century.[18] But elsewhere, since he admits, ideas, thought and reason are indeed among the determinant factors of human conduct, Elias has a less strong view that religion does also have the status as a cause of ---- or perhaps better, an influence on ---- the changes just mentioned. Here, Elias implies that religious development does indeed exert its influence upon other aspects of occidental civilization. But religious development also moves within a wider social context and intertwines with many other developments to which Weber seldom pays attention. More attention must be given to changes in this wider social context to understand occidental civilization. Under this view, Elias does not indeed reject Weber, but points towards a much wider and more dynamic framework to give a more adequate picture of occidental civilization to synthesize the various intertwining social processes involved in it.[19]

As I shall suggest in later sections of this chapter, Elias indicates the particularity of his own perspective in approaching the issue of religion. For example, Elias comments that Weber overlooks the fact that, to understand religious development (such as the case of the Reformation and counter-Reformation), we cannot bypass the reference to its intertwining

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[17] For example, Wehowsky (1978), Sampson (1984) and Smith (1991), pp.52-3.

[18] Elias (1991), p.235 n.11.

[19] For discussions made by some other supporters of Elias's viewpoint, see Bogner (1986), p.396 and Kuzmics (1988), pp.159-64.

with, for example, the non-courtly, middle class and the courtly lines of civilization.[20]

Under this multidimensional approach on which he insists, Elias himself pays more attention to the power balances and struggles between kings and monarchs, nobilities and the Church throughout the medieval period in the Occident.[21] To make this point more explicit, if religion is an important area of investigation at all, Elias's main concern concentrates more on changes in the position of the Church in the long-term process of state formation in the Occident.[22] I shall argue that this perspective has the merit of illuminating the dynamic character of religious development, but that it nevertheless misses a point captured by Weber ---- which is the relative autonomy of ideas.

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[20] Elias (1982), p.295 n.

    I have pointed out in the previous chapter that Weber does indeed recognize the relevance of some other non-religious elements for the emergence of modern occidental culture. But I have argued also that Weber himself does not develop his project further to include them. More importantly, we can in no way see how Weber's sociological framework helps us conceptualize the dynamic interweaving of ascetic Protestantism (as a highly rational form of the Christian religion) with those different elements he mentioned (and probably some others too).

[21] See for example Elias (1984a), pp.258-65.

    This does not mean that kings and monarchs are always in conflict with the Church. Indeed the technical knowledge provided by the Church is an important resource for them; the Church acquires a privileged status partly because it has this function for them. They can dispense with them only later when the human and financial resources they need flow more directly from the bourgeoisie later; see Elias (1982), pp.182-4.

[22] In his discussions scattered across a wider range of sources such as Elias (1982), Elias (1987), Elias (1987a) and Elias (1989), Elias indicates that the decline of religion (expressed by the popular term `secularization') means, among other things, that the monarchs have gained the upper hand in their struggle with the Church and concentrated power under their hands, and that the Church has gradually lost the monopoly of knowledge as a means of communication as well as orientation. This monopoly shifts into the hands of specialists of secular knowledge such as modern scientists. For Elias, this latter change is an aspect of knowledge development towards a higher level of reality-congruence.

The conceptual innovation of Elias's sociology

We can detect a practical task behind Elias's work. In his perception of the contemporary situation of human beings, Elias conceives that our knowledge about non-human nature has greatly expanded. We have freed ourselves from magical and wishful thinking in this respect, and we have achieved a relatively high level of control over non-human nature. However, in comparison, our understanding of ourselves is still impoverished. Nowadays, we can escape from the dangers from non-human nature to a relatively high degree, but the most imminent danger we confront comes from ourselves, instead. The first step towards dissolving this danger is to have a more realistic understanding of our own situations and respond to them in more adequate ways. For Elias, the type of scientific concepts we have at present, and indeed the dominant mode of thinking in general, restrain us from achieving this target. Therefore the revision of our conceptual tools and modes of thinking becomes a vital task.[23]

What is wrong with our dominant mode of thinking?[24] Let us take an English sentence "The wind is blowing" as an example.[25] The grammatical structure here is misleading. The sentence is composed of two parts: a subject `the wind' and a verbal predicate `is blowing'. This structure seems to imply that `the wind' can be grasped

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[23] Elias suggests this over and over again throughout his own writings; see for example Elias (1978), preface; Elias (1982), part two, conclusion; Elias (1987), esp. part I&II; and Elias (1991). Goudsblom recalls Elias's view from a television interview in Goudsblom (1987), p.333.

[24] Elias talks primarily about European modes of thinking but I think his analysis applies to the Asian ones as well.

[25] This example is discussed by Elias himself in Elias (1978a), pp.111-3.

separately from `is blowing'. But there does not exist a wind that is not blowing. This example shows that our way of thinking and speaking tends to start out from constructing static images from what are originally dynamic and processual phenomena. This Elias considers as committing a fallacy of process reduction.

This fallacy is also common in sociology at its present stage. Elias's focus is concerned to a large extent with the individual-society debate on this score. Sociologists normally take side with one of two camps: either that the individual is the ultimate ground of society (for society is nothing but a composition of individuals), or that society exists over and constrains the individual (though society is composed of individuals, it is more than the sum total of them). To Elias, Weber is on the side of the former position, and Parsons is on the latter.[26]

For Elias, this debate is a futile one. Society is nothing beyond the individuals forming it. On the other hand, individuals do not exist as isolated beings. Rather, they live in groups; or, to be more accurate, they live in networks (figurations). From early childhood onwards, they must rely on and learn from other human beings to varying degrees. So the concepts `the individual' and `society' represent only two perspectives of looking at the same thing. The first concept refers to people in the singular, whereas the second one refers to people in the plural.[27] Both concepts depend on and cannot be

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[26] Elias (1978), Part two, Appendix II: "Introduction to the 1968 Edition"; and Elias (1978a), ch.4.

Elias's criticism applies not only to sociology, but also to what he calls traditional philosophy ---- which includes figures such as Descartes, Hume, Leibniz and Kant. See his discussions in his writings on the theory of knowledge, e.g. Elias (1982a), Elias (1984a), Elias (1987) and Elias (1989).

[27] Elias (1978a), p.121.

isolated from each other. The references of both concepts are equally real. In arguing

whether the individual or society has a priority in existence over the other, we are reducing

what is actually in a dynamic situation to (a) static entity/ies and confusing artificial

concepts with reality itself.[28]

Elias also perceives a tendency among people to mix this academic debate up with

a political dispute. Instead of separating the academic debate at issue here from the political

dispute about the priority between the individual and society, they tend to mix them up. In

this way, the academic debate becomes highly emotionally and ideologically charged. This

makes it more difficult to sort out truth from fantasies and misunderstandings.[29]

The controversy at present over whether `the individual' has any independent

existence at all is not only entangled with the political debate on liberty and social duty,

collective goods and individual rights. It is also frequently fused with the inner feeling and

self-image of *homo clausus* (meaning `the closed individual') prevailing among modern

human beings. What is at issue here is not whether this self-image corresponds with reality.

I shall come to Elias's exploration of the sociogenesis of this self-image in the next chapter.

It is enough to state here that this self-image emerges out of a particular social structural

change in occidental civilization. People deeply immersed in this wider context do not

normally see through what is actually happening around them. They are overwhelmed with

this inner feeling of themselves as isolated individuals who are surrounded by invisible

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[28] What is currently debated about the micro-macro distinction can be resolved from the same direction. And the same argument can also be extended to the problems of the dichotomy between the individual and structure, the particular and the general, theory and data, history and development, etc.

[29] See for example Elias (1991), esp. Part I&II.

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walls, and who must confront and balance the tensions and conflicts between their own wants and desires on the one hand and social regulations and demands on the other. They may take either a positive or a negative stance towards this inner feeling in this situation. To Elias, it is not easy for them to disentangle themselves from these influences to take a more detached and realistic reflection of their own situations.[30]

Therefore, in order to improve our understanding of the real situation, Elias considers it important to distance ourselves from these value influences.[31] The second thing is to revise our conceptual devices. The concept of figuration is suggested for this aim. Against the *homo clausus* image of human beings, Elias argues that human beings normally do not exist as isolated individuals. They are open individuals (Elias uses the term *homine aperti* to express this human image) who live in figurations. They learn how to cope psychologically, socially and, to a certain extent, biologically with different people and situations within figurations throughout their life courses. It is in this process that they develop their own cognitive capacities, emotions, and indeed the whole personality. It is thus in this context that they learn to become truly human beings who can think and act with varying degrees of relative ---- never absolute ---- autonomy. Under this situation,

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[30] Elias talks about the double-bind between the high level of danger and uncertainty and the lack of adequate emotional control and knowledge to help us respond to this situation adequately. I shall return to this issue later.

[31] Because Elias emphasizes that sociology is concerned with facts, values blind us to them, and so some degree of detachment is essential to understanding social reality, some critics see Elias as a realist (see Rojek's elaboration in Rojek (1986), pp.584-5) or a sophisticated empiricist (see Layder's view in Layder (1986)). These criticisms are only partly correct. For, though Elias talks about reality congruence, he is reluctant to take any static view about knowledge development which resorts to some absolute principles or methodologies. Mennell provides a further discussion on this issue in Mennell (1989), pp.196-9. I shall return to the issue about the fact-value distinction later.

human beings are dependent upon each other. They can isolate themselves from each other to a degree only within some specific periods (however long these periods are) of their lives.

Figurations are "networks of interdependent human beings, with shifting asymmetrical power balances".[32] Within figurations, people check their power against each other and adjust themselves to each other. Perceived in this way, human social relationships are very complex and contain mixtures of consensus and conflict, alliances and competition. This view contradicts the Parsonian view that society is fundamentally built upon a harmonious order, or value consensus.[33] Therefore we cannot equate `figuration' with `social system' without violating the idea Elias originally wants to convey in the concept.[34]

Figurations are constituted of acting and thinking individuals. Because of this, figurations are always in a dynamic process. Their dynamics are derived from these agents, but this does not imply that their development is controlled by the agents themselves.[35] Figurations are, in a sense, the fundamental structure within which intentional actions are

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[32] Mennell (1989), pp.251-2 and Kuzmics (1988), p.174 n.15. In explicating the concept of figuration, Elias also makes an analogy of it with dance, the chess game and ball game; see Elias (1978a), pp.15, 128-33.

[33] Elias (1978a), pp.77-9. 'Social system' also implies the idea of clear-cut boundaries and, in Parsons's and many other cases, is implicitly equivalent to the modern nation-state. However, this idea is narrow-minded and problematic. I shall follow up this point later.

[34] Also, it is inadequate to take Elias's concept of figuration as on a par with Durkheim's concept of social facts, or social currents, or Parsons's concept of a social system. See Arnason's comparison; Arnason (1987).

[35] Therefore it does not imply the teleological or idealist view that society is the product of ideas or human intentions.

produced. The development of figurations is internally connected with these actions. But it

is unplanned; only intentional actions are planned. Though figurations do not exist outside

thinking, intentional actions, etc, it is indeed adequate to say that they are the non-

intentional structure resultant from these intentional activities.[36] In this regard, we can say

that they have an independent existence; they are real (contrary to what Weber says). They

have their own inner dynamics which can be and so far normally has been outside the

agents' own understanding and control.

Therefore it is wrong to perceive the individual and society as two separate entities.

We can see society as a figuration, a 'society of individuals'. The same case applies to the

family, organizations, the noble court, etc. At the same time, society is a more

encompassing figuration made up of these smaller ones. Society is nothing without those

individuals forming it. On the other hand, those individuals do not exist prior to society.

They do not join society in the first case. They are born into it, and grow up and learn how

to live in it.

On the whole, the above discussion points out the processual and relational

character of Elias's sociological perspective. Due to the processual character of social

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[36] See Bogner (1986), pp.389-92. Bogner points out that, though Elias takes a conventional strategy to connect between intentional action and unintended consequences, his focus of interest is on the `intentional' consequences of unintended social processes while others focus on the unintended consequences of intentional action. (p.392) I think that this view is correct up to a certain point, but the point is one of emphasis. Elias does not exclude the latter from consideration. (Nevertheless, it is interesting to point out here that this emphasis constitutes an important difference between Elias and Giddens, though they are in many ways similar with each other; see Giddens (1984) for Giddens's own view.)
    On the whole, Elias's originality lies in his studies of the intertwining of intentional actions and non-intentional social processes.

phenomena, Elias suggests that we must take a long-term developmental perspective in looking at them. This developmental perspective also helps us firstly to avoid an ethnocentric view which reads currently dominant conceptions into social phenomena and secondly to take a more detached stance in understanding them.[37] Due to his understanding of the relational character in question, Elias rejects any dichotomies between subject and object, mind and body, inner nature and external environment, human agency and social structure, and idea and material conditions.[38]

Elias also highlights the centrality of interdependence and power in the development of human social relationship. Elias does not have a technical definition of human interdependence. In his clarifications, he indicates that human mutual dependence is not restricted to material needs, but also includes many other dimensions of need, e.g. political needs and affective needs.[39] So human beings are dependent on each other for fulfilling their needs. Just as needs are not fixed in the first hand, the patterns and dimensions of human interdependence change historically.[40]

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[37] See Elias (1987a).

[38] See Elias (1978), Introduction to the 1968 edition, section VIII-IX.
      It is mainly the commitment of traditional philosophers to these dichotomies and their non-processual pattern of thinking that constitute Elias's disagreement with them in his sociology of knowledge.

[39] In Elias (1978a), ch.5, Elias discusses economic, political and affective needs and dependence. He also talks of the need for orientation in Elias (1987a) and Elias (1989). But this list is by no means exhaustive. For Elias, human bonding is highly complex. We still await further investigations of its other dimensions; see especially Elias (1987a).
      Elias rejects Marx's reductionism on needs and mutual dependence. He conceives that human beings have material as well as non-material needs and are dependent on each other in many different ways. It is wrong to reduce them to material needs and dependence; see for example Elias (1987a), pp.231-2.

[40] Elias conceives that two rival groups under competition can be seen as interdependent. For the actions and reactions of one side (and indeed their feelings and

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Elias's concept of power is very complex. It will be of help to draw out a line of debate on power[41] here to appraise the originality of Elias's view. Lukes's three dimensional concept of power aroused much dispute in the 1970s.[42] Lukes criticizes the pluralist concept of power (such as that avowed by Dahl)[43] as being restricted too much to decision making and ignoring power as manifested in the dimension of non-decision making, e.g. the exertion of control through non-action, setting and screening the agenda of a meeting or whatsoever so that the issue(s) to deal with and alternative(s) available are narrowed down before coming to a decision, etc. Bachrach and Baratz's two dimensional view is intended to include this dimension of power. But Lukes considers their view as still too restricted and behaviouristic. Not enough attention is put on the social mechanisms which subtly remould or suppress people's real interests. This is the third dimension where power is exercised and where the critique of ideology is required to reveal latent conflicts of interest and social repression by means of ideological control (here Lukes relies on Gramsci's concept of hegemony).

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self-image) depend on the responses of the other. So, we can say, even enemies in a war are dependent on and have functions for each other. Here, Elias's use of the term 'interdependence' extends beyond our ordinary understanding of it. See Elias (1978a), pp.76-80.

[41] See my *Anthony Giddens and the Structure of Social Theory* (University of Leicester: unpublished MPhil thesis, 1988), ch.3 for a more detailed analysis.

[42] Lukes (1974).

[43] Lukes's criticism here can be extended to include Weber's case. For Weber's concept of power, as I have stated in the above, focuses exclusively on the agent's intention and his/her capacity to act despite resistance. See Lukes (1986), introduction for Lukes's own analysis.

Though Lukes's concept of power is illuminating in its multidimensionality and subtleness, it is still open to criticisms which I think are relevant to my discussion here. By pointing out the latent level of exercising power, Lukes points towards a structural dimension and goes beyond the level of agency and decision and non-decision making. But his progress in this direction is still restricted because he still insists on a connection between power and conflicts of interest and sees power as essentially negative and repressive. He has also been queried about whether this connection of power with conflicts of interest is necessary at all and how he can avoid the difficulty of defining real interests.[44] Without sufficient investigation of the structural dimensions of power, Lukes wrongly conceptualizes power and structural constraint as constituting the poles of a continuum and poses the question where structural determination ends and power begins.[45] This is a kind of process reduction which separates power from structure and relates it with agency and the individual. Agency is seen as a source of human autonomy whereas structure is a source of constraint. An opposition still exists between autonomy and constraint, where an increase on the one side leads to a decrease on the other.

Elias does not start from the individual, from intentions or even from interests in conceptualizing power; nor structure, of course. Without committing himself to the fallacy of process reduction, Elias resists the reification of power as a property to be owned by any person. Power is conceived as a structural characteristic of social relations, of figurations,

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[44] See for example Bradshaw (1977), Benton (1981) and Giddens (1984), p.15. In fact, Lukes has tried to overcome the problem of defining real interest, but this does not dissolve much difficulty; see Lukes (1986).

[45] See also Lukes (1977), essay 1, esp. p.29.

of networks of interdependent people where their actions interweave those of others.[46] Therefore it is not static, but dynamic, relational and processual. As a structural characteristic of human relationships, it is unplanned, and is thus nonintentional, in character. It is also polymorphous by nature, for people are interdependent in many different ways and on many different levels.[47] Power balances are always shifting in accordance with figurational changes and changes in the personnel who comprise them. There can be cases where the power balance between two social groups shifts so much towards one side that one group has a very high degree of control over the other. But where both sides have functions for each other, we can say that they have power over each other. It is an extremely rare, if not an impossible, case that one side has almost absolute power over the other.[48]

It is also important to remind ourselves here that this conception implies that power is an element central to all human relationships. In this regard, there is no such case as that where power does not exist at all. Power is neither good nor bad; it may be both.[49] This

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[46] See Elias (1978a), where Elias writes,
[balances of power] form an integral element of all human relationships. ... [W]hether power differentials are large or small, balances of power are always present wherever there is functional interdependence between people. ... Power is not an amulet possessed by one person and not by another; it is a structural characteristic of human relationships ---- of *all* human relationships. (p.74)
[A]ll relationships between men, all their functional interdependencies, are processes. (p.79)

[47] *Ibid.*, p.92.

[48] This view is similar to Giddens's idea of the dialectic of control; see Giddens (1984), pp.15-6.

[49] *Ibid.*, p.93.

runs counter to Lukes's view. As it is wrong to associate power simply with the agent as its property, and since power has a structural dimension, it is wrong to see autonomy and constraint as the two poles of an opposition.[50] It is always possible that both increase at the same time.

To conclude this section, Elias's conceptual revision just discussed in fact takes a hypothetical form. That is to say, it is but a step in the progress of scientific knowledge which awaits further validation and revision. At this stage of scientific progress, Elias suggests that the starting point of social investigation should not be the individual or the society, but human social relations, or more accurately figurations.

In the following, I shall draw attention to the problem of what new light this conceptual revision provides us with for the understanding of occidental civilization.

The civilizing process

The word `civilization' emerged from the French words `courtoisie' and `civilité' and has been in competition with the German word `Kultur' historically.[51] It is only in its recent development that the word `civilization' has become the opposite term to `barbarism' and is associated with the identity and national pride of occidental human beings.[52] It then

[50] It is wrong to associate power with the agent, and social constraint with social structure as implied by Lukes's concept of power.
See Elias (1978), p.185 where Elias rejects the distinction between freedom and constraint. More detailed arguments which relate between the distinction of the individual versus society, the distinction of freedom versus constraint and the view which connects power with the individual and freedom, see *ibid.*, Introduction to the 1968 edition.

[51] See Elias (1978), esp. ch.1, part 1.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.3. Also Mennell (1989), p.35 and Kuzmics (1988), p.152.

conveys positive and negative connotations. In developing towards an explanation of

occidental civilization in his earlier writings, Elias separates his own use of the term

cautiously from these associated meanings.[53]

Civilization is a long-term process that has so far moved in a specific direction.[54]

This process is unplanned and non-intentional. In Elias's words, it is a 'blind' long-term

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[53] Elias (1978), Elias (1982) and Elias (1983) provide historical accounts of several European societies. Elias (1991), part I (it was written in 1939; part II and III develop further the issues discussed in it) draws out the general implications of these studies.

[54] I quote two elucidations of Elias's concept of civilization by two sympathetic commentators of Elias here for a reference:

> Being civilized means that the emotions become rationalized and 'psychologized'. The image of others that we produce becomes deeper, psychologically speaking, due to the intensified interdependence of actions and to the necessity of making inferences from others' facial expressions to their strategic interests and involuntary motives. Emotions are also increasingly rationalized as the social space between individuals becomes a passionless void; to these individuals' rational image there corresponds a rational way of acting which transcends the logic of double-entry accounting since, as at the court, spontaneous feelings are subordinated to long-term strategic interests. (Kuzmics (1988), p.153)

> ... Elias also uses the term civilization in a social scientific sense, to refer to the actual historical evidence of a lessening of violent tensions within nation states in the West, and the externalization of those violent tensions into the relations between different nations. ... The term civilization therefore does have an empirical, sociological referent ---- the internal pacification of society and the greater self-regulation practised by individuals over their own behaviour. (Burkitt (1991), pp.173-4)

Generally speaking, these two quotations express briefly and correctly the main content of Elias's concept. But there are still problems of accuracy in them. The expressions 'being civilized', 'rationalized' and 'psychologized' in Kuzmics's paragraph seem to emphasize civilization as a state rather than a process, whereas Elias emphasizes the latter meaning of his concept. The term 'civilization' is used in Burkitt's paragraph. Though Elias sometimes uses this words, he prefers the term 'the civilizing processes'. He does so because, first, the term 'civilization' generally has an evaluative connotation, but he wants to avoid this. Second, Elias wants to emphasize the processual character of civilization.

As will be indicated later, Elias's talk about civilization, or the civilizing processes, is not restricted to the aspect of the development of personality structure and behaviour and

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process. It is a consequence of the interweaving of countless intentional acts of countless interdependent individuals over many generations.[55] It has no absolute beginning or end-point. It is not a state, as is commonly assumed. It involves various dimensions, ranging from habitus (understood as pschological make-up within Elias's usage) and personality development to the development of the state and even global integration. Under this topic, Elias puts forward the view that the personality structure of occidental human beings has developed in a specific direction during last ten centuries or so. This development has to be understood in connection with the process of state formation in the Occident around the same period. The latter in turn emerges within a particular wider social context. This constellation of issues constitutes the specific focus of Elias's earlier studies.[56]

Elias starts from the articulation of a history of manners.[57] This history is mainly strata-/class-specific. It concerns mainly changes in the conduct of the secular upper

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emotional control. He relates this aspect with the development of the wider social context as another aspect of civilization. But he sometimes does use the terms `civilization' and `civilized' to focus more narrowly on the former aspect; see for example Elias (1978a), p.157.

[55] See for example Elias (1982), pp.229, 243.

[56] See for example Elias (1978), preface and Elias (1982), pp.242-3, 282-4.

[57] The studies of the history of manners in the Occident do not stand on its own. It constitutes part of Elias's studies of the civilizing processes of the Occident; I shall elaborate more on this point later. According to Dunning, the subtitles of the English translation of the two volumes of *The Civilizing Process* are put in a way which is against Elias's own will. They indeed violate the meaning of the subtitles of the original German text. The English translations are *The History of Manners* and *State Formation and Civilization*. But "[m]ore accurate translations would read as: *On the Process of Civilization: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, volume 1, *Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West*; volume 2, *Changes of Society: Outline of a Theory of Civilization*. (Dunning (1992), p.260; see also Mennell (1989), pp.32-4) This correction makes more explicit and more accurate the scope and perspective of Elias's studies of the civilizing processes.

classes. By investigating into sources such as manners books and books of behavioural codes, Elias detects behavioural changes in areas related to table manners, natural functions, blowing one's nose, spitting, behaviour in the bedroom, sex, aggression, etc from the twelfth to the nineteenth century.

What do these changes indicate? What lies behind them? Obviously, the medieval standard of behaviour was becoming tighter and tighter among the ruling classes (i.e. kings and nobilities). Generally speaking, it demands higher and higher levels of mutual consideration and affect control. On affect control, Elias pays attention also to its connection with class differences. In the medieval period, the demand among people of inferior positions for affect control is higher when they are in the presence of people of superior positions. Conversely speaking, people of superior positions had greater scopes for abandoning themselves to their immediate desires. This was partly due to their greater power relative to social subordinates. Towards the nineteenth century, this differentiation of demand was gradually levelled. Now people control themselves automatically even when they are alone.[58]

The increase in the demand for mutual consideration and affect control cannot simply be understood in quantitative terms. It represents the requirement of higher degrees of detachment from our emotions, more foresight and hindsight, more long-term and nuanced calculations, and more all-round, more differentiated and more stable control over our drives and affects.[59]

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[58] See Elias (1978), pp.136-7.

[59] Elias (1982), p.240.

A corollary of the tightening of affect control is that many natural functions and daily practices are moved behind the scenes. The separation between the public and the private becomes sharper and sharper. The latter is reserved for the intimate circle of people. The display of the naked body is an example. Public display of nakedness was common before the sixteenth century, but then it gradually receded into the most private spaces, and the intimate spaces of the nuclear family in the nineteenth century.[60]

One more qualification must be made here about the tightening of affect control. Contrary to Weber, Elias conceives 'reason' as playing a relatively minor part in this change. In the Occident, it was only after the behavioural patterns had changed that they were rationalized by reasons of health, hygiene, respect and so on. It is not people's conceptions or ideas that mobilize such changes in behavioural patterns. As Elias observes it, they were effected by changes in the wider society.[61] In fact, Elias puts more weight on competition, social pressure, and social fears such as the fear of social degradation and isolation. These factors produce an effect of the internalization of external control; or more accurately the transformation of mutual constraints between people into self-restraints. I shall discuss this point in more detail later in this section.

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[60] Elias (1978), pp.163-5.
  The pattern of the changes described in this paragraph refers to the period from around the eleventh to the nineteenth century. The situation of the twentieth century is a bit different from that period. This point will be picked up again later.

[61] It is changes in the wider society that play a major part in the increase of affect control and the development of ideas interpreting this increase. Elias does not give so much weight to ideas and their historical development towards systematization as driving forces of civilization, as does Weber, in his account of occidental civilization.

Thus we cannot understand these changes in the behavioural and psychological structures of occidental human beings (as an aspect of their psychogenesis) in their own right. We must relate them with changes in the wider society. In Elias's words,

> [t]he psychogenesis of the adult makeup in civilized society cannot ... be understood if considered independently of the sociogenesis of our "civilization".[62]

By the sociogenesis of occidental civilization, Elias refers mainly to the transformation of "the extremely decentralized society of the early Middle Ages, in which numerous greater and smaller warriors were the real rulers of Western territory, [to] become one of the internally more or less pacified but outwardly embattled societies that we call states".[63] This transformation in turn must be understood in relation to changes in the dynamics of human interdependencies in the Occident.

Elias suggests that the first period of feudalization before the eleventh century was dominated by centrifugal forces. Each stage of kingdom or empire building was followed by the progressive weakening and fragmentation of kings' control over their territories. Their power gradually shifted into the hands of warrior nobilities, who dispersed in local territories and became feudal lords. This trend turned into reverse gear beginning from the twelfth century. There are, of course, political struggles, wars and the rise of great men in this period, the historical details of which I shall not discuss here. What is important in the present context is the pattern under which centripetal forces became dominant and the control over local territories gradually concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer kings

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[62] Elias (1978), p.xiii.

[63] *Ibid.*, p.xv.

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and monarchs. And also the importance of the social factors leading to this reverse development in the Occident which was not planned or anticipated by anyone at the time.

For Elias, one social structural feature which prevails in the Occident in the first feudal period and determines its dispersed power structure is the self-sufficiency of local territories. Since these areas are mostly economic and political autarkies, they need mutual communication and the coordination and protection of a central administration only very rarely.[64] Distant transportation and communication are rare, too. This social condition favours the decentralizing tendency in the development of European states during the period.[65] However, around the eleventh century, this social condition began to change. Transportation, trade, economic exchange and communication become more frequent. This is but what would be conventionally called the 'economic' aspect of the initial move towards the growing central control of human social relationships. There are also other changes in parallel with these changes, most notably the increase in population density[66], the increasing differentiation of social functions, and the integration of larger areas and populations. In other words, there is a whole process of the expansion of the network of human interdependency chains from all directions. All these changes increase the need for standard units of exchange and coordination; money in the case of economic exchange.[67]

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[64] Elias considers economic autarky to be the predominant base of political autarky; see Elias (1982), p.28.

[65] Elias (1982), pp.25-8.

[66] We must not neglect Elias's viewpoint that, as a motor of social change, the increase and decrease in population size cannot be isolated from the whole dynamic web of human relationships. It cannot be seen as an independent variable in the positivist sense. It must be contextualized. See Elias (1982), p.32.

[67] *Ibid.*, p.27.

The latter case indicates Elias's viewpoint that the transformation from a barter economy to a monetary economy manifests an underlying transformation ---- an increase in 'economic' interdependence.

Under the pressure of the change in social equilibrium, inter- and intra-state competition becomes intensified. A new trend of social development begins in which centripetal forces become dominant. Larger and larger areas and populations are integrated into larger and larger units which we call 'states', including 'absolute' states in France and the German territories, which then develop into nation-states of the kinds we know today. State power is concentrated more and more in the hands, first of all, of kings and monarchs. On the other hand, they also depend more and more on administrators to sustain their rulership. The states become more and more truly governments which develop central administrative apparatuses to exercise surveillance over activities within their territories and administer intra- and inter-state affairs systematically. Eventually such forms of private ownership of the means of ruling give way to more public forms of ownership and control.

How does this transformation take place? Elias suggests three mechanisms to illustrate it: first, the monopoly mechanism under which political units with more or less equal power compete with each other, and weaker and less successful units are eliminated and absorbed by those which are stronger and more successful, which then enter another round of competition and so on until the situation develops where the attempt to eliminate each other becomes too costly and more and more impossible; second, the royal mechanism under which the king or monarch secures his supreme position by balancing out the power of different classes below him (in the case of the French absolute state for example, Louis XIV maintains his superior status as the power centre of France by keeping a power

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balance between the courtly nobility and the rising bourgeois classes); finally, the shift from private monopolies to public monopolies where state rulership becomes more and more centralized under a central authority, sometimes but not always still led by a king or monarch but which at the same time relies on more and more people to run its functions.[68] These 'mechanisms' do not take a sequential order, but overlap and develop together with one or another becoming more dominant at particular times.

This is how state formation proceeds in the Occident. What lies behind this process of state formation is the increase in human contact and interdependence. This in turn increases the pressure towards competition and the development of a new level of mutual coordination which incorporates more and more people into ever-expanding functional units such as the states.[69] There is the progressive differentiation of social functions. There is also a trend towards equalization in the balance of power between differentiated but functionally integrated groups and individuals. This whole trend of development is what Elias calls functional democratization.[70] With the differentiation of economic functions, there is also monetarization. From the political dimension, as more and more people are drawn together, and society becomes more and more complex, the need for a central bureaucratic authority in coordinating their activities becomes greater and greater.

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[68] For a secondary discussion, see Mennell (1989), pp.66-79. Elias elaborates these mechanisms with an abstract game model in Elias (1978a), pp.71-100.

[69] Elias talks about the levels of integration in Elias (1991), part III.

[70] The differentiation of social functions goes along with the increase in human interdependence. So more and more people become dependent upon more and more people.

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As aspects of the sociogenesis of occidental civilization, the centralization of state power and the differentiation of political administrative functions have several important social consequences. The concentration of more and more political power on the central authority of the king or monarch centrally derives from its monopoly over violence and taxation.[71] Taxation is important for the state because it becomes more and more its major source of income. Therefore the state's burden of administrative functions and its reliance on the general economic prosperity of its territory[72] increase as its reliance on taxation increases. Also, the monopoly over taxation and the monopoly over violence reinforce each other; they are indeed the twin major instruments of ruling. The state's monopoly over violence goes hand in hand with the specialization of violence and intra-state pacification. But this does not mean that the world has become totally pacified. What Elias asserts is a shift in the balance of tensions and conflicts. We must not interpret internal pacification as implying a reduction in intra-state tensions and conflicts. What Elias means is that, with the state's monopoly over violence, there appears stricter control over the use of violence in resolving internal tensions and conflicts. This pushes the latter increasingly to take non-violent forms.[73] Whereas, in the inter-state context where no such monopoly yet exists,

[71] Elias agrees with Weber about the connection between the state and its monopoly of violence, but he considers also that Weber neglects another aspect of state power ---- its monopoly of taxation. Elias conceives both as two sides of the same monopoly, for they depend on each other. See Elias (1982), p.104.

[72] It is also true that general economic prosperity depends on the state's function of keeping internal peace and stability; see for example Elias (1982), p.163. See also Bogner (1986), p.399 and Kuzmics (1988), p.159.

[73] Elias (1982), pp.234-5. For Elias's analysis of internal pacification and the parliamentarization of England, see Elias and Dunning (1986), introduction.

violence often appears as a final resort for resolving tensions and conflicts.[74] In fact, internal pacification (which results from state formation) is considered by Elias as an important condition of economic growth. For only in environments with a high degree of stability, predictability and security can transportation and trade develop to a considerable extent.[75]

The picture thus far of occidental civilization runs parallel with Weber's viewpoint of it as a rationalization, notwithstanding the fact that Weber focuses his attention on the peculiarity of the route of rationalization taken by the Occident whereas Elias's emphasis is put on the general condition underlying it ---- the increase in human social interdependence.[76]

Elias is clear that the increase in affect control does not spread across the whole society all at once. It starts from the secular upper classes, or more specifically the noble classes, and spreads into the bourgeois classes later. The first stage of this process results from the courtization of the warrior noble classes. One side of courtization is the gradual concentration of the nobilities around the kings and monarchs in their courts. The other side of it is the expropriation of the nobilities' control of means of violence. This goes hand in hand with the kings and monarchs' monopolization of violence. So the capacity of the

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[74] This does not imply that, from now on, intra-state tensions and conflicts are isolated from inter-state ones. Drawing on Elias's insight, the link between both levels is very complex and is by no means static. See Elias (1982), p.166, for example.

On the depersonalization of violence, see *ibid.*, pp.237-9.

[75] See Elias (1982), pp.149-51, 239-40, 297-9; Mennell (1989), p.70 and Bogner (1987), p.257.

[76] Though, Elias also talks of the peculiarity of the West as it advances in these areas to a level unequalled in world history; see Elias (1982), p.247.

kings and monarchs for maintaining peace within states increases. Courtization does not happen voluntaristically. It is not even planned by kings and monarchs in order to centralize their power. It is an unplanned process that arises out of the intertwining of structural changes and networks of individual actions to cope with these changes.[77] The structural changes figured out in the above provide a favourable situation where kings and monarchs can centralize their own power. Indeed, within a context of severe inter-state competition, they are forced to do so in order to survive. In this situation, we can say that the balance of power between the kings and the nobilities below them tilts towards the former, but the kings do not and cannot do away with the nobilities because they still need their support to some extent.[78] Under this increased pressure from above,[79] and as their social context changes,[80] the nobilities have to gather around the kings to seek their favours. And the competition between the nobles becomes more and more intensified. Their need to observe and predict the behaviour of others from the top to the classes below them increases. Inside this kind of complex power dynamics, their awareness of the consequences of their own behaviour also increases.

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[77] Elias (1983) provides a detailed analysis of how this proceeds in France.

[78] And even psychologically because the display of etiquette and ceremonies serves not only tactical reasons but also reflects and constitutes the kings' identity, and their value orientations; see *ibid.*, chs 6-7.

[79] Of course, pressure does not come from the above alone. It is a central part of Elias's argument, which we must not neglect, that, with the expansion of trade and production, the bourgeoisie gain more power and constitute a challenge to the courtly nobilities from below.

[80] As the kings are now in control of the means of violence, the nobles cannot resort to the use of violence for settling conflicts. The alternative left to them is competition through peaceful means ---- in their case, power struggle in the kings' courts.

This balance of power and mutual tensions has immense effects upon the psychological make-up of the nobles. Under the changed structure of the balance of power, the nobles can no longer escape the power struggle between the kings and themselves. Now everyone must seek to affiliate with those whose power positions are in the ascendant and distance themselves from those who are on the decline. This presses them, in the pursuit of their own self-interests, towards developing more and more mutual observation, self-awareness and self-control of affects and drives. They must also socialize these `skills' into their younger generations so that they, in turn, can prepare themselves for these power `games'.

This phenomenon of courtization shows that the development of more and more self-control is closely related with the life-and-death situation of the nobles and their fear of social degradation.[81] For Elias, it is this social pressure, not some ideas or ideals, which gives momentum to the development of human personality. In coping with this social pressure, the nobles have to develop more and more stable, all-round and differentiated control over their own affects, drives and behaviour. They must develop greater foresight regarding the consequences of their behaviour and actions. In other words, they must 'rationalize' their behaviour.

This kind of control does not work totally consciously. Within the social context of the courts, people slowly adapt themselves to the demands of their social circles. And these demands become so internalized that they respond to them almost always automatically. They do not need to think through all the time what kind and degree of self-control they

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[81] See Elias (1982), pp.297-300, 326-31, 361 for the significance of fear for the development of affect control.

must maintain and how they must behave in any particular situation. In Elias's terms, the social constraint they have to live with is psychologized.[82] In this case, we can also say that the social constraint is internalized as self-restraint.[83] An important psychological effect must be noted here: with such a transformation in the pattern of control, social pressure, authorities, powerful figures which act as external guardians of behaviour are transformed into conscience and feelings of shame and embarrassment.[84] Therefore, we can say that, as social constraints increase, self-restraints also increase through the internalization of these constraints. The result is an advance in the thresholds of shame and embarrassment.

As I have said, the pattern just analyzed in which social structural changes push forth psychological and behavioural changes[85] does not just happen among the nobles. It is also relevant to the development of the bourgeoisie, and other lower social classes. Elias does not mean that the pattern is simply duplicated by these classes. Rather, he discovers that a complex process is involved in which different classes from top to lower down are gradually incorporated more closely into a network of relationships of human

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[82] For Elias's discussion of psychologization, see Elias (1982), pp.270-91.

[83] See Elias (1978), p.129 and Elias (1982), pp.242-3 for example.

[84] This view resembles Freud's conception of the super-ego as a product of the internalization of external social authorities in many ways. But Elias is also critical of Freud's tripartite concept of id, ego and super-ego. For Elias, Freud's concept presents an ahistorical picture of human nature which is increasingly under tension with society in the process of civilization. In other words, Freud commits himself to a *homo clausus* picture of human beings, which implies that they are in essence static and isolated. See Freud (1930) for Freud's view, and see Elias (1982), pp.284-6 for Elias's view. See for example Bogner (1987), pp.252-62, Mennell (1989), p.96 and Burkitt (1991), pp.19-21, 167-8, 175-6 for secondary analyses.

[85] I am not talking about Elias's work as implying a kind of sociologism (the reduction of the psychological to the sociological) here. I shall elaborate on this point later.

interdependence. In this process, the personality pattern developed within the noble classes ---- with variations ----is diffused into these other social classes. On this issue of diffusion, Elias suggests the concepts of colonization/assimilation and repulsion/distinction, and diminishing contrast and increasing varieties; I shall discuss these concepts below.[86]

The long-term rise in the social position of the bourgeoisie has its social 'causes' in, among other things, the expansion of the monetary economy and free trade, the expansion of material needs, the state's expanded need for income from outside the king's household, and more generally the increase in functional differentiation and human interdependence.[87] Also, the power game between the king and the nobles in the court also provides a further opportunity for the ascending bourgeoisie to rise in power and social position. For example, in France, Louis XIV incorporates the upper bourgeoisie into his court as part of his strategy to curb the power of the nobles.[88]

However crude this articulation of the rise of the bourgeoisie is, it has two implications for the personality structure of the bourgeoisie in relation to the courtly nobility. First, as the bourgeoisie's social environment becomes more and more complex (because of the increase in functional differentiation and human interdependence), and as they are increasingly incorporated into the upper social strata and therefore have to survive in a complex network of power struggles, their personality structure must become more and more complex and internally differentiated, and show higher degrees of self-control.

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[86] These concepts are mainly discussed in Elias (1982), part two, sections III & VII.

[87] Cf. Kuzmics (1988), p.159 and Arnason (1989), pp.49, 52.

[88] See Elias's discussion of the royal mechanism in Elias (1982) and his analysis of the French case in Elias (1983), ch.7.

Second, Elias observes that, as the bourgeoisie are increasingly incorporated into the upper social strata, there appears a dual process of colonization (or assimilation) and repulsion (or differentiation or emancipation), or equalization and distinction.[89] This process centrally involves a power dimension. The first stage of this process is the identification of the rising inferior classes with the upper classes and their incorporation of the latter's behaviour patterns and lifestyles. This one-way traffic is then balanced by counter-actions in which repulsion and emancipation become dominant when these rising classes develop sufficient self-confidence to take pride in their own relatively independent social positions. On the other hand, in response to the rise in power and prestige of the lower social classes and their imitation of the lifestyle and behaviour pattern of the upper classes, the upper classes attempt to defend their privileged statuses by developing further distinctive behaviour patterns and lifestyles to differentiate themselves from these rising classes. This whole process can be seen in the example where the rising French bourgeoisie adopt the luxurious pattern of consumption of the courtly nobility to some extent while still critical of the degree of luxury these noble people show. So the process of the integration of these two classes involves a complex mixture of mutual identifications and tensions.

Therefore, every process of assimilation and emancipation is a dual process of mutual identification and distinction where common features are shared and class differences are developed depending on the power distribution between the classes. In short, it is a process involving a mixture of mutual identifications and tensions, whereby diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties in behaviour pattern, lifestyle, etc result in the

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[89] Elias (1982), p.311.

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long run as the distribution of power becomes more even. This process proceeds further and further as more and more social classes are integrated into the developing overall framework.

On the whole, we can see continuities as well as discontinuities between the personality structure and rationality of the courtly nobility and the bourgeoisie. Elias draws attention to the difference between courtly rationality and bourgeois rationality:

> ... in the bourgeois type of `rational' behaviour-control, the calculation of financial gains and losses plays a primary role, while in the court aristocratic type the calculation is of gains and losses of prestige, finance and prestige respectively being the means to power in these societies. As we saw, in court circles a gain in prestige was sometimes bought with a financial loss.
> ... Court `rationality', if we may call it so, derived its specific character neither, like scientific rationality from the endeavour to know and control extra-human natural phenomena, nor, like bourgeois rationality, from the calculated planning of strategy in the competition for economic power; it arose, as we saw, from the calculated planning of strategy in the face of the possible gain or loss of status in the incessant competition for this kind of power.[90]

At first glance, we notice a difference between these two types of rationality. Both are rational in different ways. Aristocrats and bourgeois systematically pursue different ends: one prestige and the other financial gains. Some supporters of Elias follow this line of comparison and criticize Weber for expressing a conflated image of rationality.[91] So there

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[90] Elias (1983), pp.92-3. See also Bogner (1986), p.401.
   As Elias says, what is "considered `rational' depends at any time on the structure of society". (Elias (1983), p.110) Therefore, the differences between court rationality and bourgeois rationality arise from the differences in the social contexts in which the courtly nobility and the bourgeoisie are situated. See Kuzmics's comparison between these two types of rationality in Kuzmics (1988), pp.161-3.

[91] This conflated image (which is seen by those followers of Elias as presented by Weber) is seen as incorrect because we do not have any simple and straightforward standard to say that court rationality is less rational than bourgeois rationality. Different types of rationality are rational in different ways. See for example Bogner (1986), pp.401-2 and Mennell (1989), pp.83-4.

is a discontinuity between the two types of rationality. There is a discontinuity in the rise of modern occidental civilization.

It is true that there exist significant differences between court rationality and bourgeois rationality. However, this expresses only part of the story. Elias also perceives continuities in the long-term social development I am discussing here.[92] Within the broader framework of comparison of human interdependency, we can say that bourgeois rationality has become more attuned to the complex social environment and develops further towards greater foresight and self-restraint during the past three centuries. Under this picture, we see that, in line with the further social development of the Occident, the bourgeoisie rise in their power position and progressively develop higher levels of self-control and more complex personality structures following the track left by the courtly nobility.[93]

People may argue that the understanding of occidental civilization provided by Elias stresses too much the dynamics of the noble classes. It is also important to explain the rise

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However, it is interesting to stress here that, as I have indicated in my discussion of Weber in the above, Weber conceives also that what is rational from one dimension may be irrational from another.

[92] See for example Elias (1978), p.152 where Elias points out that, along with the decline of the courtly nobility and the rise of the bourgeoisie, human interdependence has become less visible and more impersonal. This presses towards the need for the bourgeoisie, and virtually all social classes, to develop higher degrees of self-scrutiny and self-restraint. In Elias (1982), p.278, Elias argues that we can reveal common structural features behind different types of rationality.

See Bogner (1986), p.402 and Kuzmics (1988), p.163 for some other discussions about the continuity between court rationality and bourgeois rationality.

[93] Here, I am not presenting an evolutionary model of explanation which focuses on the survival of the fittest. There are also other lines of social influence leading to the rise of the bourgeoisie. I have already indicated some of these factors and shall show some more in what follows.

of the bourgeoisie in order to understand modern occidental civilization. About this issue, they may suggest, Elias provides only a partial explanation.

This argument is indeed sound. Nonetheless, it goes too far if it implies that Elias is unaware of this limitation of his work (i.e. this imbalance of interest in the bourgeoisie compared with the noble classes), that he thinks that the bourgeoisie are not important in the emergence of modern occidental civilization, and that his framework of analysis has little place for the bourgeoisie. Elias is aware of this limitation of his own work.[94] Contrary to what one may think, Elias considers that his work constitutes a new starting point, or a breakthrough, in the direction for providing a more comprehensive framework, to account for the issues related with the bourgeoisie. His earlier works[95] concentrate on the investigation of state formation in the Occident. This process of state formation proceeds only within a wider social context in which human interdependence is on the incline plane. As I have indicated earlier, this process of state formation has made the social environment

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[94] See Elias (1978), pp.xvi-xvii; also Bogner (1987), p.256 and Kuzmics (1988), pp.157, 163. See Bogner (1986), p.402 where it is argued that Elias's focus on courtly nobilities is a corrective to a mainstream view in social theory which has looked too exclusively at the bourgeoisie as the creators of the modern world.

It would, however, be wrong to see Elias as replacing the mainstream view by the view that it is not the bourgeoisie but the courtly nobility who have created the modern world. In an interview where he is discussing the source of the civilizing process in Europe, Elias says,

> [there is a] play of dialectical relations between groups in society. I don't think that a single class could be the author of changes while the rest follow passively. All I maintain is that the court aristocracy was for several centuries one of the workshops where such models of conduct were invented. They corresponded to profound changes in the structure of society. This explains their diffusion among all social classes in France and Europe. (Elias (1978b), pp.251-2)

[95] Elias (1978) and Elias (1982). But Elias (1991), part I, which is written at the same period, concerns more general issues.

within the state more secure and predictable. This in turn provides a vital ground for the development of market exchange and long-distance trade. There must also be a psychological process that occurs correlatively with these changes. This psychological aspect is related with Elias's investigation of the courtization of warrior nobilities and the rise and demise of court rationality. These processes are also placed within the context of the development of the wider society that I examined earlier. In this vein, Elias discusses the bourgeoisie, and their personality structure, behaviour patterns and rationality, though we can say that his account of them remains incomplete compared with his account of the noble classes.

Elias does indeed stress that we must understand the courtly nobility before we can understand the bourgeoisie; more generally, we must understand the past so that we can understand the present better.[96] So, however partial and incomplete Elias's studies are, they remain a vital step for us to understand modern occidental civilization better.

Further discussions

In the previous section, I have discussed Elias's view of occidental civilization. According to Elias, human interdependence has greatly increased and more and more social functions have become differentiated in the Occident in the past eight hundred years or so. This has produced more and more immense social pressure upon people towards

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[96] See Elias (1978), preface and Elias (1987a).

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developing more and more mutual consideration and adjustment, and therefore more and more self-control.

This discovery has become a guideline for further sociological research. In his later work, Elias suggests that we can investigate one aspect of social development ---- the triad of basic controls, i.e. the control-chances of a society over natural events, its control-chances over social relationships, and the control-chances of each of its members over him/herself. These three types of basic control are interdependent. But this by no means means that they necessarily develop in parallel with each other.[97] In the case of occidental civilization, all of these basic controls have increased greatly. So has knowledge about these three aspects.[98] However, the control over non-human nature has expanded to such an extent in recent centuries that human social relationships have become very much more

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[97] Elias (1978a), pp.156-7. Elias makes even more explicit the relationship between the three basic controls in Elias (1991):

> The increasing control of non-human, natural forces by human beings *was only possible, could only be sustained over a long period, within the framework of* a stable, highly organized social structure. This stability and organization *depended largely, in their turn, on* the extensive control of natural forces. And, at the same time, the increasing control of natural forces *was only possible in conjunction with* increasing self-control by human beings. It could only be maintained with the aid of a fairly stable control of short-term affects and instincts, exerted partly by social institutions and partly by the individual himself. This latter kind of control *could only develop and be maintained at a fairly high level in conjunction with* an ordered management of social controls. Control of nature, social control and self-control form a kind of chain ring: they form a triangle of interconnected functions which can serve as a basic pattern for the observation of human affairs. *One side cannot develop without the others; the extent and form of one depend on those of the others; and if one of them collapses, sooner or later the others follow.* (pp.138-9; my emphases)

[98] On this issue, Elias talks about the change from magical worldviews to geocentric worldviews and then heliocentric ones; see for example Elias (1987), part II. He also talks about the increasing awareness of non-intentional processes behind intentional social actions; see for example Elias (1984b).

complex and so the burdens of developing further mutual knowledge and coordination increase correspondingly. This demand for gaining greater control over human social relationships requires more emotional detachment. But to Elias, there is a vicious circle (a double-bind) running between the demand for increasing control over social relationships and the requirement of more emotional detachment which cannot be easily broken. For the more the former is felt (which also means that greater uncertainty and insecurity are felt within social relationships), the more pressure it exerts on people, and so the more difficult it is for them to control their own emotions and sort things out realistically. Therefore the chance is high that people will observe facts through their own fantasies and ideologies.[99]

Therefore, we can sum up Elias's view that, in general, human interdependency, and thus human social relationships, has become so complex and so dense that the control over the self has also increased considerably in the Occident over the centuries. Nevertheless, Elias is also aware of new changes which make the twentieth century different from before. When writing the two volumes of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias mentioned a certain relaxation of morals after World War I which can be seen as reactions and fluctuations within the long-term expansion of self-restraint.[100] He has also mentioned that this is merely a very slight recession, and we can find "the precursors of a shift towards the cultivation of new and stricter constraints".[101] So, in Elias's view, this phenomenon does not contradict his diagnosis of the direction of the civilizing process in the Occident up to the point of writing the two volumes. After all, it is not at all clear whether Elias considers

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[99] Much of the introduction and part I of Elias (1987) is focused on this vicious circle.

[100] Elias (1978), pp.165, 186-7.

[101] *Ibid.*, p.187.

this `relaxation' as but a counter-spurt within the path of civilization or as an instance of further (or a deeper level of) civilization. This issue has been picked up by other Eliasians. I shall return to it in the next chapter.

Now let me consider some popular criticisms of Elias. First of all, some people criticize Elias for being committed to a form of evolutionary gradualism in terms of which occidental civilization is viewed as a gradual and unilinear evolution towards an ever-increasing differentiation of social functions, monopoly over violence inside the state and more basic controls.[102] This model of occidental civilization is said to disregard historical complexity, to be simplistic[103] and to overemphasize continuity.[104] Some people even criticize Elias for sustaining the old model of nineteenth-century social thought which treats the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis.[105]

Such criticisms are based on a misunderstanding of Elias's position. What Elias asserts in his work is that there are spurts and counter-spurts of civilization in the Occident. Contingent factors play a part in them. But this historical diversity should not blind us to the historical fact that, on the whole, occidental history has continued along this path of civilization.[106] This path of social development is cumulative, but, on balance and using one

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[102] See for example Buck-Morss (1978-79), p.189, Giddens (1984), pp.240-1 and Lasch (1985), pp.708-9.

[103] Haferkamp (1987), p.552.

[104] Buck-Morss, *op. cit.*, pp.190-2 and Honneth and Joas (1988), pp.121, 123.

[105] Haferkamp indicates that this is a tendency in the early Elias; see Haferkamp (1987), p.549. Robertson argues that Elias takes an intra-state model of civilization which neglects civilization on the inter-state level. To Robertson, civilization has developed also on the inter-state level which is relatively autonomous from civilization on the intra-state level; see Robertson (1992), esp. pp.217-22.

[106] Elias (1978a), p.155.

half of a contemporary false dichotomy, in a 'qualitative' sense. Elias also insists that, as an

aspect of social development, civilization can turn into reverse gear.[107] So a relevant

criticism would be one which employs historical evidence to refute Elias's case or aspects of

it empirically. In any case, it is clear that Elias is not committed to the naive evolutionary

model of civilization which was common in nineteenth-century social thought.[108]

The second criticism concentrates on Elias's alleged neglect of religion in his

account of occidental civilization. We can easily pick out examples which take Christianity

as an important element in understanding medieval occidental culture.[109] Weber draws

attention to the contribution of Christianity to the development of modern rational

capitalism, and indeed modern rational culture in general. Now, Elias seems to go against

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[107] *Loc. cit.* See *ibid.*, ch.6 on the problem of social inevitability. Elias carefully separates social development from natural evolution. To express this point more accurately, there are continuities as well discontinuities between them.

See *ibid.*, p.157 where Elias states explicitly that civilization does not necessarily take a unilinear pattern. Haferkamp claims that Elias neglects reverse developments before the twelfth century; see Haferkamp (1987), p.552. However, this criticism actually totally overlooks Elias's analysis of centrifugal forces before the twelfth century and his analysis of how and why the historical trend turned from the dominance of centrifugal forces towards one of centripetal forces. These centripetal forces contribute to lead occidental history towards the direction of civilization. See Elias (1982), ch.1, esp. section II. See also Mennell's reply to Haferkamp; Mennell (1987).

See also Mennell (1990a) which provides an Eliasian perspective on tackling decivilizing processes.

[108] Elias (1984b), p.43-9.

[109] For example, Mann perceives Christianity as having been an important resource (as a normative ground) for resolving conflicts among kings and princes, though it is certainly naive to assume that they, or at least most of them, are committed believers in this religion. See Mann (1986) and Mann (1988). In his studies of modern social domination, Foucault articulates a line of development of modern techniques of social control which emphasizes the Christian faith as an important contributor. Among other things, there develop within Christianity techniques of maintaining discipline on the organizational level and on the individual level (particularly the technique of confession). See Foucault (1977) and Foucault (1979).

this conventional line of thought. For he turns instead to state formation and courtization in his studies of occidental civilization. We can hardly find in Elias's work any analysis of Christianity. Only very sparing discussions are given on the Church.[110] Leaving aside for the moment the economic and political significance of the Church in the medieval age, some people argue that the Christian faith (particularly ascetic Protestantism) played an important role in the development of bourgeois behavioural codes. This latter is considered by them as important for understanding modern capitalism, but Elias seems to bypass this issue in his civilizational studies.[111]

Let me digress into some more general issues that I touched on earlier concerning Elias's reception of Weber before I return to this specific point. Elias is in agreement with Weber in favouring a long-term developmental perspective for understanding occidental civilization. Such a perspective takes it that the modern social condition in which human beings find themselves is indeed the product of very long-term processes. Any sociological approach which does not take account of this feature is doomed to failure.[112] Also, these very long-term processes involve various dimensions which cannot be grasped by any unidimensional sociological approach. (For this reason, both Weber and Elias reject Marx's economic determinism.[113])

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[110] See for example Sampson (1984) and Smith (1991).

[111] Wehowsky (178), pp.71-6 and Sampson (1984), p.25.

[112] See Goudsblom (1989a) and Mennell (1989) for discussions of Elias's case.

[113] See Dunning and Rojek (eds) (1992), pp.226-35 where Dunning elaborates an Eliasian critique of Marxian economic reductionism.

However, both take diverging strategies to substantiate this multi-dimensional, long-term developmental perspective. For Elias's part, he insists that we must avoid the fallacy of process-reduction. This strategy involves the rejection of dichotomization of various types ---- individual vs society, the micro vs the macro, subject vs object, the internal vs the external, material vs ideal, nature vs society, order vs change, the rational vs the irrational, the qualitative vs the quantitative, etc. I have discussed Elias's reasons for rejecting these dichotomies and the major implications of rejecting them. One important implication which separates Elias from Weber is that this rejection of dichotomization (behind which lies the attitude favouring the analytic approach of understanding social phenomena) implies a processual, contextualizing and synthesizing perspective towards social phenomena. The inherently dynamic character of social phenomena is emphasized. This latter perspective rejects any attempt at examining `inner dynamics' on their own. For it involves the strategy of de-contextualizing the `internal' from the `external', and the `essential' from the `contingent'.[114]

I have discussed Elias's criticism of Weber's concept of rationalization. Compared with the insights Weber wants to convey, Elias's criticism is oversimplified. Elias restricts Weber's concept to changes in mental processes and human conscious control of affects and behaviour. But one point remains relevant here. Elias takes Weber's concept of rationalization as involving a distinction between the rational and the irrational. Thus value spheres which have become more rational have freed themselves from the influence of the

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[114] I believe that this emphasis on contextualization and synthesis constitutes one of Elias's main reasons for rejecting Weber's concept of ideal type in favour of the real types. For Elias, real types are designed to represent how things operate within their own figurational contexts.

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irrational. However, for Elias, the rational remains under the influence of the irrational, though the form the influence takes may change.[115] We see the force of Elias's argument if we link it to the discussion about inner dynamics here. Value spheres which have become rationalized are still under the influence of those factors being externalized. To understand how they interplay with each other, we must re-contextualize what have been differentiated out in the process of rationalization and take a synthetic view to locate the dynamic interweaving of these rationalized aspects of social life, which Weber calls value spheres. Elias's point also reminds us that we must not take social differentiation as a separate dimension as opposed to social integration.[116] The two are always linked with each other, at least in the medium to longer term.

The same problem appears in Weber's treatment of ideas. Let us see how Weber deals with the problem of the development of ideas and their influences upon human social life. Weber recognizes the relative autonomy of ideas. This is reflected in his analysis of the significance of ascetic Protestantism for the development of modern rational capitalism. The effects of the former on the latter show that religious ideas do exert influences in some way on economic developments and therefore that any materialist explanation of modern

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[115] See for example Elias (1982), pp.230-1.

[116] See for example Elias (1978a), p.167 where Elias talks about these two processes in parallel. Elias also talks about the dual-process of individualization and the rise in the level of integration in Elias (1987) and Elias (1991).

Wallerstein interprets the phenomenon of the differentiation of the economic sphere, the political sphere and civil society (as a residue of these two spheres) under his conceptual framework of world-systems analysis as features of the development of the capitalist world-system. He also connects this level of differentiation with the academic differentiation of economics, political science, sociology and anthropology. However insightful this analysis may be, Wallerstein's approach to the problem of differentiation is still economic determinist (though in a much more sophisticated form than that of Marx). See Wallerstein (1991a), ch.18. For Elias's analysis of the problem, see Elias (1984b).

capitalism is hopelessly one-sided. Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis is thus seen as providing

an idealist explanation to balance it. This strategy for a balance which clips together a

materialist and an idealist explanation of modern capitalism indeed assumes that we can

work on the material and ideal aspects of modern capitalism separately. To the degree that

this strategy is considered acceptable, it is also acceptable to articulate a separate dimension

which accounts for the path of religious rationalization. I have argued earlier that this

whole strategy does not stand against complex reality, which resists process-reduction and

dichotomization.[117] Therefore it is not justified to analyze the development of ideas by

abstracting them from their contexts.

It is not totally fair to criticize Weber as an idealist. Nevertheless, due to his

emphasis on ideas and rationality and his action-theoretic and analytic approach to dealing

with social institutions, Elias criticizes Weber for being committed to the fallacy of process

reduction because his sociology starts from the absolute individual. To understand social

reality more adequately, according to Elias, we must contextualize individuals within the

figurations that they form. To do so, it is necessary to speak of individuals in the plural,

rather than the individual in the singular.

The problems with Weber's action-theoretic perspective are very complex. It is not

my intention to give a detailed and systematic analysis of these problems within the present

thesis. It is enough to point out here that, viewed from the value-relevance of his own

project, Weber's action theory is grounded on his penetrating but also controversial insight

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[117] I have also queried earlier whether Weber's distinction between interest and idea
stands_scrutiny, and indicated that the conceptual distinction between material interest and
ideal interest is not at all clear.

about value differentiation and value irreconcilability. This insight is in turn reflected in Weber's neo-Kantian interpretation about human values and human autonomy. His practical task is thus to illustrate the human future (based on this neo-Kantian interpretation) through sober and systematic social developmental studies.[118]

As I have said earlier, Elias is critical of mixing up scientific understanding with social and political ideals[119] although he also recognizes that facts are inextricably connected with values.[120] He considers that it is only when we detach ourselves from political disputes, or, more accurately, when we strike a balance between the detached position and the evaluative or political position in confronting our situations that we can obtain more reality-congruent views about them.[121] This standpoint contrasts with Weber's recognition of the value-relevance of science.[122]

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[118] Under his own thesis of value-relevance, Weber's practical concern constitutes the value reference in accordance with which the object of study is selected and indeed established ideal- typically. But, for Weber, this does not affect the objectivity of the study itself.

This thesis is a matter of controversy which I cannot touch on here. (Some of its problems are discussed in Oakes (1988).) My main concern is only with revealing the epistemological ground which illuminates Weber's understanding of occidental civilization. I do the same thing in the parts on Elias and Habermas.

[119] See for example discussions in Elias (1984b), pp.43-7 and Elias (1987), esp. pp.12-6, 29-30, 70, 93-102. In terms of Elias's argument in the last secion of Elias (1982a), we must struggle for the relative autonomy of sociology against social values and political power.

[120] See for example Elias (1978a), chs 1-2; Elias (1982a), esp. p.29; Elias (1987), pp.17-20, 34-5; and Elias (1989) where Elias elaborates a sociology of knowledge which rejects the dichotomies of fact and value, and truth and falsehood by replacing them with the pair-concepts of fantasy content and reality-congruency, and involvement and detachment. Each pair of these concepts constitutes a continuum where the extreme polar cases appear very unlikely.

[121] Elias (1987), p.70 and Elias (1991), pp.47-9.

[122] Also, as I have indicated earlier and shall elaborate a bit more here, viewed from Elias's perspective which is no doubt realist, our value concerns do not have the final say of

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On the other hand, both Weber and Elias agree on one point. Science should have

its role not for determining our value choices, but for providing recommendations related

with them. These recommendations should be made from the perspective of the observer's

position of the social scientist. This implies that scientific explanation and value judgement

should be kept as distinct as possible from each other, however closely they are related with

each other in reality.[123] In what way is the recognition of this indirect function of science

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what we select as our object of study and how we conceptualize it. The target of Elias's sociological studies is not typified `objects', but real human figurations (which of course include an ideal dimension, but it must be seen as part of the human figurations). To this extent, the real situations have the final say about the adequacy/acceptability of our studies.

[123] Compare, for example, these two quotations which discuss Weber and Elias's viewpoints on the relationship of science with value respectively:

> For Weber as well as for existential thinkers, ultimate choices are necessarily non-rational, for they cannot be guided by any objective criteria ... But for Weber there is none the less an element of rationality in choice. For while fundamental choices cannot be rationally governed, they can be rationally *framed*. Choice situations, that is, can be rationally analyzed, and the logical implications and empirical consequencess of the various possible choices can be specified. Choice occurs, in short, between rationally delineable alternatives. (Brubaker (1984), p.101; Brubaker's emphasis)

This is, I consider, a fair summary of Weber's position about the value-neutrality of science that he himself proposes in "Science as a vocation" and *MSS*.

In identifying the roots of Elias's sociology in the German tradition in around the 30's, Kilminster writes:

> There is a forgotten `evaluative' dimension, born in the German tradition of the sociology of knowledge. It has its origins as a moral-political strategy, a wager for a strong scientific sociology as a counterweight to the spiralling social and ideological conflicts of the 1930s. Sociology can evaluate the feasibility, credibility and desirability of reform programmes put forward by political groups and in political ideologies and illuminate the roots of conflicts. At the same time, coming from this tradition it means almost certainly that Elias takes it for granted, hence does not always bother to keep repeating, that sociology can by comparative, empirical inquiries into real societies, also significantly reframe so-called `ethical' questions posed by philosophers. It is thus obvious that Elias is no practitioner of any simple-minded `value-free' sociology. (Kilminster (1991), p.173)

for value-choices in tune with Elias's own emphasis on detachment? I shall return to this issue in the part below on Habermas's critical theory, which rejects this distinction between science and value and provides another direction for looking at occidental civilization.

Let me now turn to the criticism about Elias's neglect of religion in his studies of occidental civilization. To be sure, I have indicated in the preceding section that Elias's studies of occidental civilization say relatively very little about the bourgeoisie compared with state formation and courtization. To a certain extent, we can say that they are mainly concerned with the noble classes (and their fall in power and status) and the correlated trend of development under which state power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the kings. Not only this, of course; these changes intertwine with, and are in fact partly caused by, the rise of the bourgeoisie and the increasing incorporation of other social classes into the power centre of the state. So, as far as state formation is concerned, Elias does not observe only the rise of administrative power (i.e. bureaucracy and the rational law), but the changing power balance and the rise and fall of social groups. Now the puzzles are: first, if Elias does recognize the rise of the bourgeoisie as a significant historical

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It is, of course, true that both Weber and Elias are not practitioners of any simple-minded 'value-free' sociology. Anyway, beyond verbal differences, there can be observed an important similarity between them concerning the role of science in value-choices.

On the other hand, Elias does not make any explicit judgement that value-choices are non-rational. He talks about knowledge as a means of orientation. He also talks about the detour of science via detachment from value judgements as well as re-engagement in them. (Still, are they logically distinct stages of the 'scientific intervention' into practical problems? Does Elias agree that the adequacy of knowledge for explaining social reality which is achieved through the detour of science via detachment from value judgement depends on its re-engagement?) Elias talks about keeping a balance between the detachment from and the involvement in value. See Kilminster (1989), pp.300-1 and Dunning (1992), pp.251-2, 254. Does this make any significant difference which separates Elias from Weber? I shall return to this point later.

outcome of occidental civilization, why does he not take their historical transformation as a major part of his studies but turns his focus of interest to the noble classes instead? Also, the Church is not just relevant to the development of the moral codes of the bourgeoisie at the turn of the modern age as supposed by Weber. It is also a power group which has significant effects upon the power balances within and between states and which plays the role as guardians of culture (or producers of cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms[124]) in the medieval age. Why does Elias not pay more attention to it?

Let me turn to the issue concerning religion and the Church first. The charge against Elias's neglect of religion and the Church is to a certain extent sound. After all, it is not true that Elias totally ignores the significance of the Church. For example, he sees its significance as a power group controlling information about agricultural production and administration.[125] It also controls revealed knowledge. Revealed knowledge is indeed an important resource for maintaining psychological security for people living in those situations in the past which were much less secure than those of today because of their lack of knowledge and power to control their environment compared with us. These functions of the Church are not peculiar to the Occident, but are a general case within tribal and agrarian societies.[126] The control over these functions gives priests power. To give one more example here, in relation to the Christian faith, Elias states in one passage that "the existence of a centralized church enforcing the belief in a single god was probably quite an

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[124] See Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), p.119.

[125] This point is also discussed by Goudsblom; see Goudsblom (1989b).

[126] See the second half of Elias (1987a). Also Elias (1992), pp.163-71 where Elias draws attention to priests' functions for regulating the timing of sacrifices, agriculture and other social activities of the tribes because of their control of the techniques of timing.

important determining factor in the emergence of a type of theory embodying the concept of unified nature ordered according to eternal laws".[127] Weber also considers this as an important factor in religious rationalization. However, Elias also draws our attention to the downfall of the Pope and the Church in the Occident in parallel with the rise of state power and the `renaissance' of science. Instead of making the simple claim that the latter led to the decline of the former, Elias conceives that the power balance tilts towards kings and princes in their struggles with the Church only under specific conditions of human interdependency. Also, the decline of the former makes possible the so-called renaissance of science. The decline of the Church also means the breakdown of the Church's monopoly of knowledge.[128] In the transition from the Church's monopoly of knowledge to the specialization of science, there is in the background an increase in human interdependence. Human beings have achieved more detached ways of looking at reality[129] and themselves. They have also extended their capacities in the three basic controls mentioned earlier.

I have discussed the problem of Elias's lack of sufficient attention to the bourgeoisie in the preceding section. I argued there that the focus of attention of Elias's civilization studies is much longer trends of social development which predate the rise in power and status of the bourgeoisie. They reflect more fundamental changes in society ---- the continuous increase of human interdependence in wider and wider areas of the Occident.

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[127] Elias (1982a), p.57.

[128] Elias (1982a), pp.37-8 and Elias (1984a), pp.259-62.

[129] Elias talks about the transformation from the geocentric view of the cosmos to the heliocentric one in Elias (1987).

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All these changes constitute the social conditions of the rise of the bourgeoisie. Therefore it is not totally correct to say that Elias does not pay attention to the bourgeoisie.

Also, Elias perceives an important difference between the courtly nobility and the bourgeoisie. Both have highly rational control over their own affects and behaviour. But while the courtly nobility concentrate their energy on the strategy of conspicuous consumption for social honour, the bourgeoisie concentrate their efforts on the income-expenditure strategy which subordinates their short-term inclinations as consumers to the saving-for-future-profits ethos.[130] While the courtly nobility direct their considerations towards social superiors, the bourgeoisie direct their attention more and more towards impersonal conditions (this latter pattern is not restricted to the bourgeoisie in modern industrial societies).[131]

Let me recall here several points I have already made to sum up the general intentions behind Elias's civilization studies. Elias's studies are concerned directly with state formation and the courtization of the noble classes. These social processes are made possible by the increase in human interdependence. They are also closely connected with the rise and fall of social classes ---- particularly the fall of the noble classes and the rise of the bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, etc. They result in and from pacification within states. This latter provides a favourable condition for economic development. To this extent, we can say that state formation is a necessary condition for the emergence of modern capitalism.[132]

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[130] Elias (1983), pp.66-72, 110-6.

[131] Elias (1978), p.152 and Elias (1983), p.111.

[132] See for example Elias (1982), pp.149-51; Bogner (1987), p.257 and Arnason (1989), pp.48-9.
    Once again we see here the particularity of Elias's synthetic approach which opposes de-contextualization and dichotomization. Though Elias insists that state

State formation and courtization also have significant impacts upon the personality development of members of these and other social classes.

Elias insists that state formation is central to other changes in medieval occidental civilization, and so cannot be neglected. But he is aware that the line of history he traces about power struggles in royal and noble courts provides only a partial explanation of the complex processes in question. For no single class can mobilize and control big social changes.[133] This self-limitation does not reduce the importance of his studies. Elias perceives that, generally speaking, we must understand the past before we can understand the present; we must understand the courtly nobility before we can understand the bourgeoisie. In this light, we can say that Elias provides an essential, though partial, line of social investigation for understanding the rise of modern capitalism.[134] There is no intention to provide a total explanation which excludes other explanations, e.g. that of

formation is a necessary condition of further economic development, the reverse is also true. Elias asserts explicitly that both require and intertwine with each other. More importantly, he also shows empirically how the intertwining appears. The separation between economic and political development (whether it be a conceptual or an absolute distinction) indeed results from the ideology of economic liberalism; see Elias (1978a), pp.141, 167. So Elias's theoretical orientation contradicts Weber's.

[133] Elias (1978b), pp.251-3 and Elias (1982), p.289. See also Kuzmics (1988), pp.157, 163; Bogner (1987), p.256 and Bogner (1986), p.401 where it is argued that Elias's studies are a corrective to conventional explanations of the issue.

[134] See Elias (1978), preface; Elias (1978b), pp.251-3; Elias (1984a), p.263 and Elias (1987a).

In defending Elias's case, Kuzmics deems that the problem of bourgeois ethics "would have amounted to a different undertaking, which nevertheless could have been accomplished on the basis of Elias's approach"; see Kuzmics (1988), p.164. In other words, Kuzmics has confidence in the capability of Elias's theoretical framework for dealing with this issue.

Weber. Therefore we can say that Elias's studies are complementary with those of Weber.[135]

However, this talk of complementariness should not make us ignore the following two facts. First, Elias perceives that the Protestant ethic is "a symptom rather than the cause of a change in the social habitus of human beings".[136] This points to the fact that Elias has reservations regarding Weber's thesis because of the latter's overemphasis on the historical significance of the Protestant ethic, even though we recognize that the rise of ascetic Protestantism indicates some important historical changes. Second, given my earlier discussions of Elias's critical attitude towards Weber's de-contextualizing, dichotomizing and analytic rather than synthesizing sociological perspective, it follows that Elias also disagrees with Weber's approach to dealing with religion.[137]

Having said all this, to what extent are the above two puzzles still sound? Elias and his followers see an extent to which Weber's viewpoint can be subsumed under Elias's point about civilization. About the point that modern capitalism requires a certain degree of discipline, Elias's studies are seen as providing a more complete explanation which

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[135] Many interpreters support this view; see for example Kuzmics (1988), pp.159, 164, and Bogner (1986), p.402 which alludes to this view. This view is confirmed by Elias himself; see Elias (1982), p.295.

[136] Elias (1991), p.235 n.11. In connection with this point, it is also useful to recall Elias's view here that what Weber conceives about rationalization is but an aspect of the transformation of the whole personality structure in the period in question; see Elias (1982), pp.276-7, 326.

[137] On one occasion, Elias criticizes Weber's analysis of the Protestant ethic for its lack of reference to the power context within which the Church and the state are situated. This criticism amounts to saying that Weber's analysis is not contextualized enough and involves insufficient consideration of power. See Elias (1984a), pp.259-62.

subsumes Weber's concept of rationalization under it.[138]   The point about human interdependency is considered to be more fundamental. However, this reception neglects one central point behind Weber's thesis about the Protestant ethic. Weber does not simply assert that the Protestant faith contributes to extend the degree of discipline among the bourgeoisie. What is more important is the concept of vocation behind the extension of discipline. That is to say, Weber wants to show that the Protestant businessmen lead highly disciplinary, ascetic lives because they intend to control and plan their own lives so that salvation is guaranteed for them. In the modern secular world where the Protestant faith no longer dominates the business world, doing business becomes a duty according to one's calling to it. Doing business becomes a vocation on its own. It becomes, one may say, an end in itself, and is divested of its original religious meaning. For Weber, this ethical aspect of the bourgeois professions cannot be found outside modern rational capitalism.[139] Weber also perceives that this ethical attitude of "performing one's duty according to a calling" (this ethic of vocation) is relevant not only to the rise of modern rational capitalism. It also has significant effects upon modern occidental rational culture, and so upon modern human social lives in general. In the modern secular world, people no longer commit themselves to Jahweh's will alone. They also serve other gods. This is a source of the value irreconcilability I discussed earlier.

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[138] See for example Bogner (1986), pp.401-2 and Kuzmics (1988), pp.155, 160 again for their focus on the disciplinary aspect of Weber's thesis.

[139] I think it is because of Wehowsky's awareness of this dimension of Weber's thesis that he criticizes Elias for neglecting the Christian source of the bourgeois moral codes; see Wehowsky (1978).

I do not intend to make any judgement about the adequacy of Weber's explanation here. Is this ethical dimension as vital to modern capitalism as Weber claims? Even if it is, is ascetic Protestantism essential to its emergence at all? Or, are there other sources as well? It is difficult to judge these issues without further substantial researches. Weber's thesis stresses a discontinuity in the rise of modern capitalism, i.e. the peculiarity of its ethical base. In revealing the feature of the ethical base, and in stressing its peculiarity, Weber also opens up the scope for considering the relevance of ideas for the emergence of modern capitalism, and for modern occidental culture more generally. By contrast, Elias indicates what are on balance historical continuities. These include the increase in human interdependence, the increasing differentiation of social functions, state formation, the strengthening of the three types of basic control, the intensification of competition within and between social classes, etc. To repeat what I have said already, for Elias, the so-called rationalization process makes sense against these backgrounds. Has Elias bypassed Weber's issue about the relevance of ideas? Or, does Elias take a reductionist viewpoint toward this issue? The dispute here is not whether ideas (religious ideas among others) develop within social contexts,[140] but whether the former can be reduced to the latter. Do they enjoy degrees of relative autonomy in relation to their social contexts?[141]

We have no shortage of examples from Elias's work showing that Elias is not committed to such a reductionist standpoint. But more than anything else, these examples

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[140] In discussing the Protestant faith, Weber mentions the material and social structural conditions of its development. Among others, he judges that it is a religion of burghers, craftsmen and other city dwellers; e.g. Weber points this out in *SPWR* and *ES*, ch.VI.

[141] A further problem will be how we specify this relative autonomy.

are about how ideas develop within social contexts.[142] Elias accepts that ideas do indeed

have impacts upon human social life.[143] Otherwise, what is the use of involving ourselves

in all these complex issues here? What is the use of Elias's urge for conceptual innovations

in sociology? However, it is rarely the case that Elias shows how ideas influence reality.

We cannot say that Elias ignores this aspect altogether. We can see his sociological

theory of knowledge as an early attempt at clarifying this issue. In this theory, he analyzes

knowledge as, not only a means of communication, but also a means of orientation. He

also states explicitly that

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[142] For example, we can find Elias's investigation of the historical transformation of the words 'civilization', 'culture' and 'economics' in Elias (1978) and Elias (1984b). There is an analysis of the social background of French Romanticism in Elias (1983), ch.8. Elias shows how the transformation of painting is related to the increase in the degreee of self-awareness and self-control in the wider society; see Elias (1987), part 2 of the introduction. In an earlier discussion, I have shown how Elias relates the *homo clausus* self-image of human beings with the particular social context from which it emerges.

Elias's sociological theory of knowledge also explains how social structural factors condition knowledge and ideas. So, for example, states Elias, no matter how innovative the ideas of Galileo or whoever may be, it is social structure which determines the general recognition by the wider society of them. Elias also talks of the development of worldviews from a magical one, to a geocentric one and then to a heliocentric one. In tracing the background of this development, he looks towards social structural factors. See Elias (1987), esp. part II and Elias (1989).

Can we call this reductionism a kind of sociologism? In his attempt to explain the relationship between ideas/beliefs/knowledge and their social contexts, Elias faces the danger of failing, in his attempt, to transcend the dichotomies of the ideal and the material, and the individual and the social in his shift towards the latter poles of these two pairs.

[143] He talks about knowledge as a means of orientation. In this way, knowledge is not only a means of communication or for controlling our environment, it provides meaning for orienting our actions and life-plans; see for example Elias (1982a), p.41; Elias (1984b), pp.252, 258-9 and Elias (1989), pp.348-9. Nevertheless, in confronting Weber's stress on meaning, Elias shifts his focus of discussion towards the problem of the absolute individual. No further response is given on the significance of meaning. See Elias (1989), p.201.

> [w]hat is needed ... is a sociological type of enquiry, capable of working out process models of the development of knowledge, fitting into, but not reducible to, models of the long-term development of human societies.[144]

His pair-concepts of fantasy content and reality-congruence, and involvement and detachment can be applied to analyze knowledge development. But again, the aspect of how ideas, while they are embodied in human social practices, influence reality remains relatively underdeveloped. In fact, it is more the case that Elias focuses his attention on the social conditions determining knowledge growth. Even less has he investigated the relevance of ideas for occidental civilization.[145] This is indeed the deeper reason for Elias's neglect of religion in his civilizational studies.

This limitation in Elias's work suggests that what are fundamental to human social life are not only human interdependency, pressures from human figurations and competition. Ideas, beliefs and values are also elements central to it. Only a more integrated and encompassing theoretical framework which incorporates these elements and pays more and fairer attention to their dynamics can provide a more thorough view of occidental civilization.

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[144] Elias (1982a), p.37.

[145] To this extent, I agree with Arnason's criticism of Elias's lack of a theory of culture; see Arnason (1987), pp.445-7. Also Arnason (1989), pp.55-6, where Arnason states:
> ... Elias's neutralization of the cultural field is the most important and also the most problematic part of his attempt to generalize the theory of power. The result of this operation is a view of European history that seems to leave no place for relatively autonomous, let alone a "pace-setting" development of worldviews.

CHAPTER 4

Elias and Modern Human Conditions

I have discussed Elias's stance against decontextualizing strategies and dichomization in the previous chapter. I have also briefly touched on Elias's critique of Weber's theory of ideal types, which provides the epistemological ground for Weber's sociological approach. I have indicated that, to move away from this approach of social understanding, Elias takes as his focus of study the dynamics of social networks or human interdependency chains. All social investigations, whether they be about social institutions or individual events, must take account of the dynamics of these networks. This process-, or figurational, sociological perspective informs an original direction of looking at human situations.

To help improve our understanding of occidental civilization, Elias develops a concept of civilization which Elias hopes can avoid the commitment to any value judgement about it. For him, it is only through this attempt at detaching ourselves from any emotional involvement and the prior commitment to any fantasy-contents and ideologies that we can improve our understanding of the actual situation of occidental history.

Through his studies of occidental civilization, Elias points out that there was a gradual increase in human interdependence, and in connection with this, an equally gradual pacification within states, and an increase in the three types of basic control in human social life. These have resulted from the intertwining of many different factors and have been to a certain extent checked by counter-spurts, rather than exhibiting a sort of historical

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inevitability. Through these studies, Elias is able to locate the wider socio-historical context where emerges the social phenomenon of what Weber conceptualizes as rationalization. Therefore Elias is able to give a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, which he shows successfully as involving dynamic processes of social differentiation as well as social integration, rather than just the former. His studies suggest concretely how we can grasp cognitively the dynamics of the interweaving of different dimensions of social development. This mode of investigation contrasts with Weber's analytic approach, which I have illustrated in my first two chapters. Under this highly original sociological perspective, Elias is able to provide a direction for distancing ourselves more from emotional and ideological involvement and for evaluating more adequately the `gains' and `losses' of occidental civilization. This is where Elias goes beyond Weber in his sociological achievement.

Now, before going into Elias's view about present human situations, let me examine several criticisms of Elias's civilizational studies which concern their implications or predictions about these situations.

Barbarism or permissiveness?

First of all, Susan Buck-Morss produces an argument against Elias's view that, parallel with civilization and state formation, human social lives have become more and more pacified and human self-control has been increased and become more and more stable. It is surprising, she says, how Elias, as a person who has gone through the Second World War, can ignore the experience of barbarism and brutality, say for example,

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generated in fascism, and German Nazism in particular.[1] It seems that Elias cannot explain why fascism and extreme racial hatred can occur in such a highly civilized area of the world as what is, by all standards, Western Europe.

This criticism has indeed misread Elias's viewpoint about civilization. Two points are in order to clarify this misreading. First, civilization, according to Elias, is a very brittle human achievement, even though it takes its form through a very long period of development. Regression is likely to occur whenever social and psychological senses of security contract to a significant degree.[2] The civilizing process Elias investigates "does not follow a straight line".[3] It can digress into other directions or turn into a reverse gear whenever and wherever social conditions change. Second, the internal development of states such as absolute states and then nation-states has always been accompanied by intrastate and interstate tensions and conflicts. So internal pacification developed in parallel with the specialization of violence.[4] More and more, interstate violence took a rational and disciplined form. Civilization does not mean the disappearance of conflicts and violence, but rather their displacement and transformation into some other forms different from before. Elias has been aware of the imminent danger of another world war which will

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[1] Buck-Morss (1978-79), pp.187-8.

[2] Elias draws attention to this brittle feature of civilization in Elias (1988). See Mennell (1990) on decivilizing processes.

[3] Elias (1978), p.186.

[4] See for example Elias (1987), pp.80-1.
Giddens also talks about the industrialization of war which integrates technology into international warfare; see Giddens (1985), ch.9.

involve the use of nuclear energy and lead to human extinction ever since such a threat first became apparent in the 1940's.[5]

In fact, the deeper source of Buck-Morss's disagreement with Elias rests on her dissatisfaction regarding what she perceives as Elias's uncritical attitude towards occidental civilization. Buck-Morss follows the Frankfurt tradition handed down by Adorno and Horkheimer. The thinkers sharing this tradition generally view occidental civilization as a history of the expansion of human beings' control over nature at the cost of losing their own freedom. To these members of the Frankfurt School, the expansion of instrumental domination results paradoxically in the growing bureaucratization of society. This bureaucratization threatens human freedom and puts individuals increasingly under the surveillance of the state bureaucracy. The rise of fascism and Nazism is an expression of this trend. From the perspective of this tradition of thought, Elias's view is too uncritical about the dark side of occidental civilization.[6] Indeed, we can also see that Lasch's critique of late capitalism and his criticism of Elias's work assume a similar perspective regarding the dark side of occidental civilization.[7]

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[5] Elias (1982), pp.320-2, 329, 331, Elias (1987) and Elias (1991), part III.
There is of course also the possibility of the emergence of a new and higher level of integration which incorporates the whole globe. Here, Elias expresses a view less optimistic than those of some Dutch sociologists such as Bentham van den Bergh and Goudsblom. They propose the concepts of mutually assured destruction and mutually expected self-restraint, which point towards a specific direction of constraining global conflicts. But Elias consistently insists that a global power centre has to emerge which plays the function of maintaining order within the global dimension. See Mennell (1989), pp.220-4.

[6] See Bogner's more detailed analysis in Bogner (1987).

[7] Lasch has been reprimanded by several followers of Elias from the Netherlands. Their arguments help to prepare a direction for more direct contact between the Frankfurt tradition and Elias's process sociology. I shall go into them later.

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To what extent is this diagnosis correct? Is this argument a just criticism of Elias's case? Before I examine this whole set of arguments systematically in a later section on cultural pessimism,[8] let me make a detour into discussing a query about Elias's case from the opposite direction.

As I have indicated before, Elias detects changes in the direction of increasing human interdependence and self-control in occidental civilization. Of course, he recognizes trends of the relaxation of morals, but this aspect is far less developed in his studies of civilization. How does Elias understand the more permissive social trend towards developing higher degrees of tolerance towards different value standards and behavioural patterns in the twentieth century? How does he understand the recent trend towards a decline in the emphasis on discipline in work and other social activities and towards an increase in the importance of diversity and flexibility?[9] Is this social trend simply a regression in the civilizing process, or is it a further stage in this process? Let me now discuss the responses made by two Eliasians before I come to Elias's own viewpoint in the next section.

It is by no means true that Elias does not have any direct contact with members of the Frankfurt School. For some biographical notes about Elias's contact with them, see Mennell (1989), ch.1. For the similarities and dissimilarities between Elias and the Frankfurt School, see Bogner (1987). For Elias's concern with the problem issues shared by the German intellectual tradition in the early twentieth century (which concerns human beings' great expansion in mastering nature but at the same time being trapped increasingly within blind social processes which they cannot control and which threaten their autonomy and may even lead them towards self-destruction), see Kilminster (1993), pp.84-7, 96. Kilminster also points out the affinity of Elias with Mannheim in confronting these problems.

[8] I shall deal with Adorno and Horkheimer's argument put forth in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the chapter that follows.

[9] Haferkamp raises a similar query in Haferkamp (1987), p.551. For a more detailed discussion of this so-called `permissive society' argument, see Mennell (1989), pp.241-6.

Wouters starts with Elias's problematic as I have summarized it in the above paragraph. To be fair, Elias has not made his own stance clear on the question of regression/further civilization.[10] A look at developments of the past few decades will show that it is not plausible to treat the phenomenon in question as a short-term regression within a long-term civilizing process. Wouters finds it necessary to develop Elias's perspective further to incorporate this recent social trend where apparently "a loosening in the code of conduct in many cases goes hand in hand, not only with a loosening of restraints, but also with a further tightening of restraints and that the latter plays a dominant part, inducing a different *pattern* of restraint".[11]

In other words, Wouters judges from an Eliasian perspective that the relaxation of morals is an expression of a higher level of self-control developed within the further process of civilization in the Occident. As more and more human beings are drawn together and become more and more dependent upon each other, society becomes more and more complex and volatile, power distribution becomes less and less uneven, and social mobility becomes more and more rapid. This new social context requires individuals to develop higher levels of self-scrutiny and self-control.

I have indicated in the previous chapter that we cannot understand this increase in mutual consideration, self-consciousness and self-control simply in quantitative terms. Expressed in terms which also include a qualitative aspect, a higher level means taking

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[10] See for example Elias (1978), pp.165-6 where Elias seems to claim that the relaxation of morals in question is a retrogressive movement within the general trend of civilization. See also Elias (1982), pp.324-5 where Elias seems to indicate it as a trend towards developing a new and higher level of self-awareness and self-control.

[11] Wouters (1977), pp.442-3; Wouters's own emphasis.

more detached (or self-distancing) and long-term perspectives in looking at things and developing more differentiated, nuanced, stable but flexible patterns of behavioural and affect control.[12] That is to say, instead of following social principles and regulations strictly, people must know where they can show their impulses and emotions and where they must take control of them in a differentiated way. (So some areas of what are considered to be private aspects of life that have to be hidden behind the scenes can be re-opened to the public. In other words, the distinction between the private and the public must be rendered much more flexible and differentiated than before.[13]) In order to be able to do so, people must develop reasons to explain why they have to do (or not to do) this or that in different situations. Wouters terms the emergence of this new pattern of social adjustment `informalization'.

In his subsequent works, Wouters refines the concept of informalization and pairs it with the concept of formalization in examining recent developments in behavioural codes.[14] To him, informalization has taken a spiral pattern in the past few decades. On the whole, informalization becomes more dominant wherever society becomes more secure, prosperous and equalized. Otherwise, formalization becomes more dominant. Wouters

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[12] Elias (1982), p.325.

[13] I think that this understanding about the flexible differentiation of the private and the public is more consistent with Elias's viewpoint than the straightforward view that intimacy is increasingly privatized. I shall come back to this issue in the next section.

[14] Wouters (1986) and Wouters (1987). According to Wouters, informalization "is a process in which dominant modes of social conduct, symbolizing institutionalized power relationships, tend towards greater leniency, variety and differentiation". (Wouters (1987), p.405) Class differences are downplayed. In contrast, in the process of formalization, codes of behavioural control become tighter. Class distinction is emphasized.

predicts that informalization is the main trend of long-term civilization in the twentieth century.

Wouters observes that, as society becomes more interdependent and in consequence power distribution becomes less uneven, class differences are downplayed in significance (but we must not confuse this with the view that they do not exist at all).[15] While class distinctions are diminishing, varieties of lifestyles and behavioural patterns are increasing.[16] More space is open for individuals to express their impulses and emotions. This trend of development also has impacts upon work (especially forms of service work which include human contact as an essential part). It makes it more informalized.[17] However, we should not neglect the highly ambivalent character of this trend of social development. Besides the fact that this trend of development opens people to more chances and choices, it also presses them towards developing more foresight and higher levels of self-control to cope with this change. This explains why emotion management is a central problem for modern human beings.[18] In this regard, civilization brings about pleasures as well as burdens.[19]

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[15] Wouters (1992), pp.230-1.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.233.

[17] Wouters traces the development of the work of flight attendants as an example of this trend of development in Wouters (1989).

[18] Wouters (1989) and Wouters (1992).

[19] Wouters (1992), pp.241, 245.
This ambivalence of civilization shows once again that autonomy and constraint do not constitute a dichotomy.

Abram de Swaan also points to this ambivalent character of civilization. As civilization progresses to a new level, it demands higher degrees of self-adjustment. Failure to meet these new demands may lead to social repulsion or problems such as psychic illnesses.[20] While Wouters coins the term 'informalization' to express the new level of self-control demanded by further civilization, de Swaan focuses on the shift from management through command to management through negotiation. As society becomes more equalized in power distribution, social relations can no longer take the form of an authoritative relationship between superiors and inferiors. Rather, they are maintained through negotiations among different parties. In other words, social relations are maintained by mutual consideration and mutual consent among the parties involved. This does not mean simply that individuals have gained more freedom. In de Swaan's words,

> [t]he shift from management through command to management through negotiation has tied people to one another even more intricately, in more and more subtle ways, in all phases of life, at all moments of the day, with regard to many more activities and desires. It compels each person, in turn, to scrutinize his own longings and to speak up for them and, at the same time, to be ready to abandon them if they clash with the claims of others.[21]

The more power is less unevenly distributed, the more this is so.

Elias and the modern self

Wouters's and de Swaan's arguments suggest that human social relations and behaviour have become more permissive as well as more demanding in the Occident in the

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[20] See de Swaan (1990), ch.7 where de Swaan refers to this level of social development as a major cause of the rise in agoraphobia especially among women.

[21] See de Swaan (1990), p.156.

past few decades. Society permits more space of action and more varieties of choices, but it also gives people burdens of negotiating and planning ahead consciously to develop opportunities and alternatives. There are more gains, but there are also higher costs. Does this view fit in with Elias's own understanding?

To respond to this question, I shall now examine Elias's conception of the modern self, i.e. his understanding about the development of personality structure in the present era. In my elaboration of Elias's ideas that follows, it can be seen that Wouters and de Swaan on the whole follow Elias's vein of thought in their conceptualization of the human condition in the twentieth century. I think, though, that one point has been downplayed by Wouters and de Swaan. While they focus attention on social transitions after the First World War (with the long-term process of civilization receding into the background), the reference point of Elias's discussion spans approximately a millennium and emphasizes continuities. So what the former consider as characteristics of the new form of social standards and moral codes Elias considers as already existing to lesser degrees in the past few centuries.[22] But I do not intend in saying this to devalue the contribution made by Wouters and de Swaan to clarifying the new stage of development recently taking place in the Occident.

One difficulty in discussing Elias's conception of the modern self is that Elias has not produced any systematic analysis of the issue. Nevertheless, it is wrong to say that Elias ignores this issue altogether, or that his viewpoint about it (however scattered it may be) is unimportant within his sociological project as a whole. Therefore, what I shall do in

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[22] So while Wouters and de Swaan focus attention on the distinctiveness of human relationships in the twentieth century, Elias's studies focus more on long-term historical continuities and illuminate recent changes in terms of them.

the following part of this section is to pick up relevant ideas from Elias's work and reconstruct as systematically as possible Elias's viewpoint about the modern self from the aspects of self-control and self-consciousness.[23] I shall then discuss its implications for examining Weber's thesis of value irreconcilability in the next section.

It is important to remind ourselves here that the development of the self moves within the wider context of social development, and is in the final analysis bound up in reciprocal 'cause and effect' relationships with the latter. More specifically, the modern self emerges within contexts where more and more social strata (and even people of different races and nationalities) are drawn together more and more closely and become more and more dependent upon each other, and where in consequence power balances become more and more even. Within this context of social development, human interdependency extends on different fronts and there is a tendency towards the rise in the level of human social integration which finally incorporates the whole human race within one network of human interdependency. Elias does not use the term `globalization' himself, but he certainly predicts this development towards global integration as one feature of the next stage of civilization.[24]

According to Elias, the developmental process of the extension of social integration from the familial level, to the tribal, the state and finally towards the global level goes hand in hand with the process of individualization.[25] This process of individualization is expressed in the growth in individuals' self-control and self-consciousness.

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[23] They are actually not separate dimensions of the self. In actual life, they always intertwine and depend on each other.

[24] This tendency is discussed by Elias in Elias (1991), part III.

[25] *Ibid.*, part III, especially pp.165-9.

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Let me elaborate this point in more detail. Within the long-term process of integration-cum-individualization, social pressures upon every individual towards developing more mutual consideration and mutual adjustment increase gradually. These pressures are internalized (or psychologized, as Elias himself uses the term) to become internal pressures towards more self-awareness and self-control. In the Occident, this whole process accelerated firstly among the noble classes and then spread into the bourgeoisie and other social classes. Through this process of internalization (or psychologization), respect for external authorities is transformed into respect for the internal conscience.[26] In the twentieth century, the latter becomes dominant across society as a whole. In this vein, Elias indicates a long-term and gradual transformation "from a more`external' conscience dependent on authorities to a more autonomous and `individual' one".[27]

Several features can be detected in this transformation. First, as I have mentioned before, within the whole process of social transformation which presses towards higher degrees of human interdependence and therefore of social integration, human self-control has become more all-round, more stable and more conscious. Thus the individual is more capable of distancing him/herself from momentary impulses and needs. Self-control has

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[26] Curiously, Giddens has also talked about the decline of the bearing of guilt feelings upon the self and the increase in importance of the feeling of shame in self development; see Giddens (1991), ch.2.

[27] See Elias (1991), p.97 where Elias points out that this transformation has already occurred in the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. So this is a long-term and gradual transformation. To this judgement, I shall add that this process has continued up to the twentieth century and become more and more widespread. This is the idea behind Wouters's and de Swaan's thesis I have discussed in the previous section.

Elias talks about this change also in Elias (1982), p.240.

also become based less on the fear of authorities and sanctions, and more on internal conscience. In this sense, it has become more autonomous and automatic. Social codes of behaviour and affect control and their application have become more differentiated and flexible. As human interdependency increases and thus society becomes more equalized, hierarchical contrasts in behavioural and moral codes diminish but the emphasis on varieties and individual differences increases.

Second, the autonomous character of internal conscience does not imply that individuals can now pursue their own needs freely and are freer from constraints by other people than before. On the contrary, as human interdependency increases, people have to consider more and more others' views and responses towards their own behaviour. They must adjust themselves to other people adequately and flexibly. This difficult task requires them to develop more understanding about themselves as well as about others.[28] There increases the need to develop more abstract or general principles which incorporate and systematize considerations responding to more and more diverse types of situations and according to which the appropriateness of actions and responses in these situations can be judged. These principles not only provide criteria of judgement and action, they also act as points of reference according to which the continuity of people's life histories and their internal consistency can be established against discrete social practices. This continuity and internal consistency are very important for establishing people's self-identity. Emerging from the whole process of social transformation which results in the rapidly expanding need for mutual adjustment and the increase in importance of internal conscience, this type of

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[28] This shows once again that the development of the knowing self and the acting self condition and reinforce each other.

personality is simultaneously inner-directed and other-directed,[29] directed towards subject and directed towards object, or self-centred and other-centred.[30] And it is within this context that Elias talks about a personality with an autonomous conscience.[31]

Thus the heightening of the need to adjust oneself to others strengthens one's consciousness of others' perceptions and responses, and at the same time strengthens one's own self-consciousness. This process-sociological perspective on personality development provides a ground for Elias to criticize the *homo clausus* image of human beings (i.e. the image of the isolated individual, or the `we-less I'). This self-image focuses only on the inner-directed aspect of the self but ignores its other-directed aspect.

From the perspective of the double-edged character of civilization, we can infer that, at its present stage of development, society has developed a higher degree of social integration as well as individualization. Looked at from one dimension, the self has increasingly differentiated from others (i.e. the balance between we-identity and I-identity tilts towards the latter) while it has also become integrated more closely with them. So we can say that there emerges an ambivalent relationship between the self and society.[32]

Furthermore, as self-consciousness has become more heightened, people are "in a position to distance themselves as a physical organization in observing and thinking about

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[29] Wouters (1989), p.110.

[30] Elias and Dunning (1986), p.106. Elias also talks about the distanciation between subject and object in Elias (1989), p.367.

[31] This also indicates why Elias criticizes the *homo clausus* image of human beings as empirically inadequate. For this image is itself a product of a particular social context. It only reflects human beings' feeling about themselves within this situation.

[32] See for example Elias (1991), part II, "The Thinking Statues"; also "Individualization in the Social Process", esp. pp.121-2.

themselves".[33] In this regard, we can say that the self has also increasingly differentiated from its body, or nature.[34] This differentiation increases as human beings' capacities of self-control and control over nature increase. In sum, there is a process of differentiation between the self, society and nature. But at the same time a counter-trend towards higher levels of integration between them is demanded.

I have so far summed up the major features of Elias's conception of the modern self. This conception has several important implications. First of all, as increases in human interdependency press people towards more mutual adjustment and flexibility in self-control, the demand for self-consciousness increases. The heightening of the demand for self-control and self-consciousness mobilizes further the differentiation between internal needs and external demands. The gap between them may widen to such an extent that people find themselves increasingly unable to re-merge or strike a balance between them. This situation may then intensify feelings of inauthenticity within public life, i.e. of self-isolation or inner loneliness. An invisible wall is felt increasingly between the self and

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[33] Elias (1991), p.187.

[34] Elias talks about symbolic emancipation whereby human beings become emancipated more and more from natural determinations in Elias (1989), p.205. We must notice here, as some Eliasians have pointed out, that, in parallel with this development, the need for impression management (i.e. the management of the nuances of ones' own natural functions and bodily movements to present/keep certain images before the audience) becomes more acute. To this extent, nature conveys a new meaning to human social life.

On the other hand, Elias rejects any ontological distinction between the individual, society and nature; see for example *ibid.*, especially part one.

society.[35] It is therefore understandable why modern human beings feel more the need for intimacy and personal support within small social circles, especially the nuclear family.[36]

This analysis should not give us the wrong impression that human social relations have become more and more rigid. On the contrary, Elias perceives that they have become more impermanent, variable and diverse. Social transformation towards greater degrees of civilization gives people greater scope for developing voluntary human `communities'. But, looked at from another angle, this represents also a cost that modern human beings have to pay. The increasing impermanence of human communities, as I have indicated before, intensifies the burden of conscious (re-)working and experimentation on social relations through mutual consideration, non-violent negotiation and mutual adjustment. In consequence, self-identity and mutual identification among people across different social strata become something much more fluid than before. So do family relationships. As the power balances between the sexes and between adults and children become more even, human social relationships within the family become more open to negotiation and compromise.[37] In sum, this trend of development makes human social relationship more

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[35] Here we have a sociological explanation of the *homo clausus* image of human beings. See Elias and Dunning (1986), p.116 and Elias (1991), pp.199, 205.

[36] Elias postulates sociability and emotional support as universal human needs; see Elias (1978a), pp.134-8, Elias and Dunning (1986), pp.114-5 and Elias (1991), pp.204-5. Of course the form they take varies across different social contexts.

Besides the increasing need for intimacy and emotional support, the need for leisure activities also increases. People can de-routinize their daily life and soothe themselves from strict demands for self-control through excitement in leisure activities. This issue is a topic of study in Elias and Dunning (1986).

[37] Elias and Dunning (1986), p.117. This point is also made by Wouters; see Wouters (1977).

voluntary and enjoyable, but it also makes them more brittle. It becomes more costly to secure them.

These two features of development represented in the above two paragraphs have two further consequences. First of all, the awareness of internal needs and the pressure for adjustment to external reality press towards, or (we can say) make more space for, the pursuit of individual difference and experience, creativity and authenticity.[38] Furthermore, this social trend towards an upwards incline in the pursuit of individual difference and experience (within the context of the increase in human interdependency and the differentiation of social functions) is coupled with the increase in social and geographic mobility and the decline of individuals' economic and political dependence on their families and local communities. Within this situation, we can say, local human communities are increasingly defunctionalized and human community is gradually extended across localities.[39] As the function of human community (such as the family and kinship ties) for maintaining human survival declines in importance, the importance of its function for the provision of intimacy and emotional support increases. Human community is less and less fixed by blood origin, physical distance, etc, but is more and more something worked out voluntarily.

In this connection, I shall draw attention to an ambiguous point in Elias's analysis and query a prediction Elias made in the 70's. Elias predicted a tendency towards the

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[38] Elias has mentioned this trend very early in Elias (1982), pp.274, 297-8. The orientation to experience and difference is also manifested in modern art. It is interesting to indicate here that, for Elias, the degree of self-detachment achieved by modern art goes hand in hand with social transformation; see Elias (1987), introduction, part 2.

[39] See Elias (1974) where Elias criticizes the futile opposition of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

widening of the gap between the private and the public and the increasing privatization of communal relationships.[40] Now, does Elias really mean that, at the present stage of occidental civilization, the private and the public have become more and more separate from each other? Is he on the side of a generally accepted view that, while the gap between the private and the public is widening (assuming that we give a positive answer to the first question), the nuclear family is increasingly divested of its survival functions for its own members while its function of intimacy for them increases, i.e. that the nuclear family has gradually retreated into the private sphere?

To be fair, Elias's point is not entirely clear concerning these issues. Anyway, we should not come to such a prediction if the elucidation I have just posed in this section is an adequate interpretation of Elias's own understanding of the modern self. Elias's earlier viewpoint about the differentiation and defunctionalization in question identifies only one side of a long-term process. But we should also anticipate counter-processes (which have already emerged recently) re-merging the private and the public, and the intimate (or the affectual) and the functional, which Elias himself alludes to. To take account of these counter-processes to have a more balanced understanding of the present situation, it is indeed more appropriate to say that the relationships between the private and the public, and the intimate and the functional have progressed to a new stage.

We do not lack sources from Elias himself to support this comment. For example, Elias himself says that social functions which have impersonal characters are often hardly divorced from those which have private or personal characters. From a developmental point of view, we can say: "what we call private or personal affairs of people are more

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[40] *Ibid.*, pp.xxvi-xxix.

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public and public affairs more personalized at this stage."[41] To express more accurately what the aforementioned new stage of development involves, people have gone through a dual process of differentiation-cum-integration of public and private life.[42]

At some places in his work, we can see that Elias does not agree entirely with the idea that, as social functions become more impersonalized, people retreat increasingly into the nuclear family. While it is generally true that the family is the most private and intimate place in the nineteenth century, this may not be true for the contemporary situation. Elias perceives a structural transformation at present of the nuclear family under the impact of power equalization (which results in the shift towards more symmetrical power balances between both sexes and between parents and their children). Today, in family life, it is understood that people still have to assume responsibilities for certain degrees of self-control and commitment. That is to say, the nuclear family still assumes some degrees of routinization, though it undoubtedly also functions to provide some degrees of relaxation from daily routines outside the family. This tendency of routinization increases especially for the male family head as the balance of power within the family tilts towards women and children. In this situation, building social relations within other spaces may provide other outlets for de-routinization and excitement. Drinking in the pub and joining voluntary social service organizations are examples of this case.[43]

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[41] *Ibid.*, p.xxi.
The point is not only that the differentiation can hardly be complete, but also that there emerge processes counterbalancing it. In fact, Wouters's concept of informalization expresses such an idea about recent social changes.

[42] This viewpoint contradicts Weber's judgement I have discussed in the above chapters about rationalization and depersonalization, which perceives only the side of differentiation.

[43] Elias and Dunning (1986), ch.2, section VII.

For one last example picked up from the works of Elias's followers about the private-public issue, Wouters's research on flight attendants suggests that there emerges a counter-process of re-merging personality traits and personal tastes into formal work among flight attendants after the 60's. So the fact is not simply that the private is increasingly separated from the public. There is some degree of re-merging between them, which does not imply that a differentiation no longer exists between them.

Let me recall here one of Elias's observations about the development of self-control that I mentioned in the previous chapter. Elias understands clearly how very close the relationships are between the three basic controls. So we must understand the development of self-control in relation to the development of the other two basic controls. This kind of connection also applies to self-consciousness:

> ... the image which members of the pioneering European and American societies have of themselves today ---- an image of beings who understand events solely by the application of intelligence, by individual observation and thought ---- should not be taken for granted as something which exists a priori. It cannot be understood in isolation from the social situation of those who see themselves in this way. It evolved as a symptom of and a factor in a specific transformation which, like all such changes, simultaneously affected all the three basic coordinates of human life: the shaping and the position of the individual within the social structure, the social structure itself and the relation of social human beings to events in the non-human world.[44]

It is implicitly assumed in the above discussion of Elias's conception of the modern self that human consciousness of the self, others (or more broadly `society') and nature develop within the wider context of social development. This point is important for understanding the nature of self-consciousness in the modern social situation. I have touched on Elias's understanding of self-consciousness in my earlier discussion of Elias's conception of the

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[44] Elias (1991), p.97.

modern self. In the pages that follow, let me single it out and elaborate it in somewhat greater detail.

In order to make Elias's understanding of self-consciousness more explicit, let me locate it within his wider discussion of knowledge development.[45] In Elias's sociology of knowledge, it is suggested that human beings living in `primitive' societies take an anthropocentric position in understanding the world (no matter whether themselves, their relations with other people or the rest of `nature'). Their understanding is normally charged with high levels of emotional involvement and fused with fantasies and magical thoughts. They normally live in situations with very high risks compared to the experience of people in the more advanced industrial nation-states. The degrees of socially required self-control are also in most areas comparatively very low. Their knowledge about the world has therefore very low degrees of reality-congruence, and so their control over it is very limited.

The transformation of magical and highly emotionally charged worldviews to geocentric ones and then heliocentric ones must be understood against the background of the increase in human interdependence and the differentiation of social functions (their influence upon human social life has already been discussed in the above).[46] This transformation represents a human achievement in understanding the world in a less emotionally involved and more detached (or self-distancing) way. In other words, human beings have shifted more and more towards a third-person perspective in looking at the world. And, in this way, they have detached their understanding more and more from the

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[45] I rely mainly on Elias (1971a), Elias (1971b), Elias (1982a), Elias (1984a), Elias (1984b), Elias (1987), Elias (1989) and Elias (1992) for my interpretation below.

[46] Elias indicates the social conditions connected with Galileo's scientific discovery in Elias (1992).

influence of their own wants, wishes and imaginations. Their understanding becomes more and more object-centred, or directed towards objects, and based less and less on wishful thinking. Thus this represents a gradual process towards recognizing and targetting the discovery of the regularities of the world as it exists independently of human wishes and imagination. As a result, human knowledge becomes more reality-congruent, and the portion of fantasy-contents decreases correlatively. Corresponding to the gradual recognition of the existence of different mechanisms in different dimensions of the world, knowledge becomes more and more differentiated internally.[47] This helps to expand human control over the world in more and more differentiated ways.[48]

This brief summary of Elias's viewpoint about the development of knowledge in the direction towards greater detachment and object-centredness must be connected with the point about the increase in subject-centredness (being directed more towards the subject) and self-consciousness that I have mentioned before. From one point of view, Elias states that in moving from animal communications and communications through signals to symbolic communications, human beings have achieved a greater degree of self-distanciation (or self-detachment) and thus communication becomes more object-centred

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[47] See, for example, Elias's analysis of the sociogenesis of economics and sociology in Elias (1984b). Elias's viewpoint reflects the influence of Comte's idea of the hierarchy of sciences and their relative autonomy in relation to each other; see Elias (1978a), ch.1 for Elias's own interpretation of Comte.

De Swaan suggests the concept of proto-professionalization to explain the process whereby specialized knowledge is integrated into lay social practices again; see de Swaan (1988), pp.244-6 and Elias (1990), p.158.

[48] Of course, as I have indicated in an earlier part of this thesis, this does not imply that human knowledge progresses at the same speed in all dimensions (including our knowledge about nature, society and ourselves).

and reality-congruent.[49] The situation becomes more so as society becomes more complex and human interdependence increases. But from another point of view, the same development leads also to greater subject-centredness and higher degrees of self-consciousness. Objective social situations push people towards developing understanding which is more object-centred. This helps increase their awareness of others. The increase in the awareness of others in turn contributes to the increase in self-awareness.[50] To this extent, self-distanciation cannot be separated from self-awareness. Both aspects must be taken into account to have a more adequate understanding of knowledge development.

On the whole, civilization goes hand in hand with the differentiation of knowledge about the self, society and nature. But this in no way means that they no longer influence each other. They integrate with each other in more complex and subtle ways (if I do not misunderstand Elias's standpoint).

I shall conclude this section by making three more points about Elias's understanding of self-consciousness and its relationship with the modern self, the first of which I have mentioned before but shall elaborate a bit more here. First, in simpler societies, human beings' self-consciousness is determined mostly by their own social groups or strata. In this case, we can say that their we-image dominates over, or determines their I-image. People feel more like members of a community than independent individuals. Through the long-term process of individualization as well as the knowledge development I have just outlined, the balance of we-image and I-image tilts towards the latter in the

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[49] See Elias (1989), pp.267-7, 277.

[50] Expressing this in a different way, Elias says in Elias (1978a), p.124:
[o]ne's awareness of one's own separate existence is identical with one's awareness of other people existing separately.

constitution of people's self-consciousness. They still identify themselves as members of this or that social group, but they become aware of themselves increasingly as individuals existing beyond their membership of these social groups, having their own feelings, emotions, desires, wishes and indeed unique characters. Individuality becomes more and more a core feature of self-consciousness.[51]

Once again, and let me come to the second point, we must bear in mind that the increase in self-consciousness (and therefore the awareness of one's own individuality) goes hand in hand with the increase in the awareness of others. This latter kind of awareness must be achieved by increases in self-distanciation. That is to say, it is achieved through the growth in the capacity to distance oneself from one's own position and perspective and take the others' own perspective, or even the perspective of the third-person (which extends beyond the perspective of those people who one tries to understand), to understand them.[52] This growth in the capacity to take a perspective `outside oneself' goes hand in hand with the growth in the capacity to take the perspective of the first-person for self-understanding.[53] Therefore, we can infer from this point that, through the long-term process of civilization, there proceed processes and counter-processes which balance and re-balance I-image with we-image.[54] This kind of balancing and re-balancing is becoming

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[51] See Elias's elaboration of this point in Elias (1991), part III.

[52] This idea is expressed by Elias's concepts of geocentric and heliocentric worldviews, which I have discussed before.

[53] It goes without saying that the growth in the capacity to take a perspective outside oneself (especially the perspective of the third-person) to understand others goes hand in hand with the growth in the capacity to take the same perspective to understand oneself.

[54] Following this line of thought, we can say that, as civilizing processes proceed, people (tend to) build up mutual identifications with more and more other people in more and more different ways. To this extent, the mutual identifications among people

more and more complicated; or, we can say, it is becoming more and more difficult to secure or re-establish a we-identity among people whose self-awareness has greatly increased. This is the case because, in such a civilizatory situation, people's awareness of the differences among themselves in social position, disposition and perspective have increased substantially. It is more difficult to re-integrate with this awareness of difference an awareness of sameness which is a constituent part of the securing or re-establishing of a we-identity among themselves. Such a re-integration in one's own awareness involves an attempt to strike a balance between the two perspectives one take to perceive the others: first, the perspective of the third-person (i.e. a they-perspective), which contributes to distinguish oneself from others, and the perspective of the first-person plural (i.e. a we-perspective), which contributes to secure one's identification with others. In other words, this re-integration involves balancing between distinction and identity in one's comparison of oneself with others inside one's consciousness.

Of course, Elias does not pose his analysis in the way I have here. Nevertheless, I consider that this elaboration indeed draws out an important implication of Elias's viewpoint on the development of human consciousness and knowledge. It points towards a direction which stretches the strength of Elias's perspective for grasping the development of self-identity and collective identity in the civilizing processes of the Occident.

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become more and more generalized and differentiated. For example, I am not only a member of my family, and of my local community. I am also a Chinese, a Christian, and a human being! There is, then, an interesting question: does this analysis imply that modern human beings are less committed to the norms and values shared within their communities, that they are less convicted to their collective identities?

However, I also want to pick up one point concerning this issue of self-identity and collective identity which I think Elias has left out. Following the exposition I have just made, the increase in self-consciousness and the awareness of others raises the awareness of the differences in perspective among different people ---- this is one aspect of individualization. This awareness of difference increases the burden for securing or re-establishing a we-identity (or we-image)[55] between them based on a new type of mutual consensus or identification. This new type of mutual consensus or identification is in turn built upon an awareness of sameness, or identity, among people in the community. It is then important to clarify what features are contained in this new type of mutual consensus in the contemporary situation.[56]

This further task of re-establishing a we-identity involves more than identifying the inner dynamics of its figurational background. For, while it may be true that the increase in human interdependence pushes people so locked together towards developing more mutual consideration and, further on, mutual identification, it is not true that this trend proceeds automatically. Other alternative trends are also possible. Elias has touched on this issue of we-identity only indirectly in his discussion of the emergence of new types of integration

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[55] Here, I am not talking about social integration in the broad sense of the term which Elias puts forward. For Elias, social integration is more than social solidarity (or social consensus and we-identity). The latter emerges within the context of the former. However, I think that this point does not negate the possibility of, and the need for, an analysis of the development of social solidarity. This latter task touches on an important practical concern shared by Weber, Habermas and others ---- how do we secure social solidarity in modern society?

[56] This comment echoes with my comment at the end of the previous chapter for Elias's insufficient concern of ideas, beliefs, values, etc.

and the tensions and conflicts between these new types of integration and older ones within the process of civilization.[57] I shall come to this argument in more detail in the next section.

The organization of Elias's ideas as I have attempted it in the present section is far from complete. Nevertheless, I hope that this sketch of Elias's ideas helps to illuminate Elias's viewpoint relating to issues about the modern self.

On cultural pessimism

Elias explicitly rejects making any optimistic or pessimistic judgement about occidental civilization. His concept of civilization is intended as a relatively detached concept in tackling the developmental pattern of occidental history. Nevertheless, his studies do indeed have implications for our evaluative judgement of occidental civilization. Some of these implications can be worked out through a more detailed comparison of Elias's process sociology with Weber's thesis of value irreconcilability and Lasch's critique of late capitalism.

Let me recall my criticisms of Weber in the preceding chapters. I have indicated that rationalization is a central concept for interpreting Weber's studies of occidental civilization. I have traced the different dimensions of rationalization. I have then pointed out that Weber takes an analytic, decontextualizing and dichotomizing strategy in carving out these different dimensions and tracing their inner dynamics. This strategy has the merit

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[57] See Elias (1984) and Elias (1991), part III.

Elias has perceived the conflict between tribal identity and national identity at the stage of state formation in Ghana; see Elias (1991), p.213. See also de Swaan (1988), ch.3 about education and language policies as an arena of struggle between local identity and national identity. This of course involves a power dimension.

of elaborating Weber's insights about the modern human condition in the Occident. In one way, it helps to open up our view of value differentiation and value conflict. But, in another way, it also closes us to the way modern human beings, as well as different value spheres, are locked together.

Elias's process sociology figures out a sociological approach which rejects dichotomization and decontextualization. Starting from such an approach opposed in specific respects to that of Weber, Elias is interested more in locating the inner dynamics of human figurations. In terms of this approach, we look at society from a processual, contextualizing and relational perspective. This approach stresses synthesis rather than breaking down dynamic wholes into analytic elements. It thus opens a new direction for looking at occidental civilization and examining its consequences for the human condition. I have analyzed some of these consequences in the first half of this chapter.

Now, does Weber's thesis of value irreconcilability contradict Elias's viewpoint? Does rejecting decontextualization and dichotomization imply rejecting this particular thesis of Weber? First of all, Elias is critical of Weber's social atomism. From a sympathetic point of view, we can say that Weber does not put forth a wholesale thesis of social atomism. For him, social atomism is indeed a developmental product of rationalization in the Occident. So is value differentiation. In Elias's terms, *homo clausus* is only a product of modernization. I think Weber would not accept the naive view that modern human beings can live totally independently of each other. Contrarily, they must rely more and more on each other. But Weber does not see any contradiction between accepting this point and accepting his thesis of value differentiation. For Weber, value differentiation leads to value irreconcilability. Weber suggests his own philosophy of personality to confront this

impasse of value irreconcilability. He suggests that modern human beings must become responsible for themselves and assert their own independence and individuality if they are to become truly human and live autonomous and meaningful lives at all. This is the critical import of Weber's thesis.

Now, what new light does Elias shed on this issue? Elias and his followers intentionally avoid making evaluative recommendations about modern human social life. But his understanding of it puts in doubt whether the picture presented by Weber (as summarized in the previous paragraph) fits in with social reality. I have made clear in the above sections that Elias and his followers perceive a social trend of development towards an increase in human interdependence, mutual consideration and mutual identification. So there is actually an expansion of social integration; of course, there is also a counter-process of individualization (or disintegration).

No matter what Weber's practical recommendation is, his social diagnosis is certainly challenged by Elias's work as empirically inadequate. Under his social diagnosis, Weber takes social integration as increasingly evaluatively irrelevant, i.e. value-neutralized. Value consensus has crumbled apart as a consequence of secularization and value differentiation. But Elias perceives a different case. In the civilizing process, human beings are pressed towards more and more mutual consideration and self-awareness. So, contrary to Weber's case, people's behaviour and emotional patterns become more and more relevant and susceptible to human interaction and relationship. Through directing more and more towards others and the internalization of social pressure, individuals build up their

own self-images and principles of social practice.[58] Through adjusting more and more flexibly and effectively to others, they become more and more autonomous and independent human beings.[59] Elias admits that modern human beings have developed more and more self-control and self-awareness. But, for him, we must balance this view with a more comprehensive understanding about social development that modern human beings are knitted together more and more closely to form networks of human interdependency chains which are so complex that they find it harder and harder to understand and get control of them.[60]

Elias's approach opens to us another important dimension of social integration. On the issue of social integration, with his analysis of rationalization in the Occident, Weber comes to the conclusion that, under its path of value differentiation, modern occidental culture reveals a pathos of value irreconcilability, or value fragmentation (which is but another side of value differentiation and value pluralism). Weber himself talks of the possibility of the emergence of a higher level of synthesis to resolve this crisis of value fragmentation. However, he contributes very little to the conceptualization of this

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[58] It goes too far if we suppose that this increase in mutual consideration, and possibly mutual identification, implies an achievement of value consensus. On the other hand, we can suppose that this kind of mutuality normally includes an evaluative aspect; it is not purely functional, or legal and administrative in character ---- since Weber supposes that modern society is evaluatively fragmented, he seems to imply that it can only secure its internal cohesion by legal and administrative apparatuses.

[59] Also, once again, we have another example that social constraint and individual freedom do not normally constitute a dichotomy or poles of an opposition where the increase of the one leads to the decrease of the other.

[60] Indeed, we cannot take human autonomy and individuality for granted, but must relate them with long-term social development.

possibility. In fact, Elias's viewpoint about social integration throws new light on how to reconceptualize and resolve this problem. Elias's concept of integration must be understood in close connection with his concept of interdependency. For Elias, the historical trend of the emergence of higher and higher levels of social integration goes within the context of the continuous increase in human interdependence. The rise of the absolute state and then the nation-state is a case in point. Elias also takes cognizance of the fact that a global level of social integration has been emerging for several centuries, and that, in the twentieth century, this porcess has speeded up. It is interesting to speculate about what kind of institution would replace the nation-state to become the guardian of the global order.

Elias sees the development of global integration as an important issue at the present time. The task of elaborating how a global level of integration emerges to incorporate humankind as a whole was indeed a major concern throughout his academic career.[61] Two points must be stressed regarding this issue here. First, the emergence of this higher level of integration has important positive effects for the individualization of human self-consciousness; or we can say more safely that it develops in parallel with the latter.[62] For Elias, global integration goes hand in hand with human beings' awareness of their independence and individuality and their identification with each other as members of the human race.[63] Second, this global level of integration does not emerge in a smooth and

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[61] This issue first appears in the last few pages of Elias (1982) and is discussed more extensively in Elias (1987) and Elias (1991).

[62] I have discussed this point in detail in the previous section.

[63] Elias (1991), pp.232-3.

peaceful way.[64] The emergence of global integration does not imply the automatic withering away of other types of integration. Integration conflicts arise between the global level of integration and the national level of integration. For the gaining in importance of the former means the loss in significance of the latter. These conflicts may find expression in many aspects. Identity crisis is but one of them. One thing is clear: this viewpoint about integration conflict and identity crisis is in a significant way different from Weber's thesis of value irreconcilability, as I have elaborated on these issues so far. Whereas Weber sees the rise of individualism as a counterpart of value fragmentation, Elias sees individualization as a counterpart of the emergence of global integration. This difference is more than a verbal one. Weber indicates how social differentiation makes social integration more difficult, but Elias sees that it leads the way to (a need for, to say the least) a higher level of integration.

Now, if we think that it is still useful to consider the problem of national identity as an aspect of social integration, we can look at how Elias's ideas about we-identity can be of help in undertaking this task.[65] Put into the context of the discussion of the levels of social integration here, Weber's problematic of the internal integration of modern society becomes how to maintain a nation-wide we-identity under the condition of the increase in global interdependence and high degrees of the differentiation of social functions and individualization. In fact, nothing can guarantee *a priori* that we can secure this we-identity

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[64] Integration is full of tensions and conflicts. See for example Elias (1974), esp. p.xxiii where Elias talks about integration conflicts, i.e. the conflicts between newly emerged levels of integration and the levels of integration existing before their emergence. So Elias's concept of integration must be distinguished from Weber's concept of legitimate domination and Parsons's concept of integration (which develops partly from it).

[65] See Elias (1978a), pp.122-8 for Elias's viewpoint on the interweaving of the I, we, they, and etc perspectives. I-identity does not stand on its own. It exists relative to others.

at all. In a particular figurational situation, a nation can crumble and human agency can do nothing about it. It is of course also possible that, in another figurational situation, a nation will secure its own internal cohesion firmly and may become wary about the `invasion' from the outside world. It is likely that further processes of individualization will weaken this internal cohesion; it means also that other types of integration become more dominant. Therefore, it is extremely important to take various dimensions of human figurations into account for considering each of these cases.

Here, the difference between Elias and Weber which I have mentioned two paragraphs before becomes more explicit. When Weber talks about value fragmentation, he anticipates the possibility of social fragmentation. Under this view, he takes for granted that what he refers to as society is identical with the nation-state; this shows one dimension of the value-relevance of Weber's sociology. Elias does not want to be bound by this assumption. Rather, from the sociological point of view, national identity is only one kind of we-identity among others. Developmentally, there may be more encompassing ones. In this regard, Weber's sociology shows a moral concern, in despair, for national cohesion based on value consensus while Elias takes a perspective which is relatively much more detached from this concern; Elias thinks that this and similar kinds of detachment are very important for gaining a more reality-congruent understanding of the problem we are confronting here.

We can say that Elias does not reject Weber's concern out of hand. He only provides a more comprehensive sociological framework for tackling the problem. In any case, Elias is reluctant to separate we-identity from tensions and conflicts within human figurations. We can also say that, through taking a relatively more self-detached standpoint

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from the search for national identity (which is still deeply entwined in various aspects of human social life today), Elias gives us an impression that social fragmentation can mean something developmentally progressive. It may itself be a transition from the national level of integration to a higher level of integration —— global integration; this transition is not an historical necessity and it is unlikely to be a peaceful and smooth one. It certainly will not be accepted by everyone concerned.[66]

Cultural pessimists such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Buck-Morss often associate modernization with the expansion of social control and the repression of individual freedom. In this case, an opposition is perceived between the individual and society, freedom and control (though it is perceived as an historical product of modernity).[67] Weber is another example. He perceives that rationalization brings about material prosperity and efficiency, but it also endangers human autonomy. Viewing the problem from Elias's standpoint, we should not come to this conclusion in such a straightforward manner. As I have discussed before, civilization brings with it more space for individual choices and decisions as well as more burdens for mutual adjustment and self-control. To conceptualize this complex and ambivalent case, we must first of all reform our conceptual tools. We must avoid any *homo clausus* image of human beings and zero-sum concept of power. We must also avoid conceptual reification which decontextualizes social existence and reduces dynamic features into static ones.

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[66] Elias (1991), part III, section XIII-XV.

[67] See Bogner (1987) for a critique which points towards Adorno and Horkheimer's commitment to such oppositions and relates their view with the *homo clausus* image of human beings. See my further discussion in the following chapter.

Another critic of modernity, Lasch, criticizes Elias for his alleged inaccuracy in understanding occidental civilization. Elias is held by Lasch to perceive an increasing internalization of behavioural and moral codes which results in the continuous increase in self-control. In Freudian terms, Elias is held to see an expansion of the superego. However, Lasch asserts the opposite case: there is an expansion of ego-control. Under this assertion, Lasch criticizes Elias's idea that more and more behaviour related to sex is moved behind the scenes and becomes strictly private. Lasch draws support from Foucault's work[68] and argues that, contrary to Elias's observation, sex is increasingly open to public discourse and becomes more and more an area of social control.[69] This phenomenon is indeed part of the general trend of the invasion of bureaucracy into human social life, for it is an example of the tendency for more and more areas of private life to turn public and be put under bureaucratic scrutiny.[70] Partly because of this invasion and partly because of the resistance to it, people take up survivalist strategies of life ---- the expansion of ego control and the retreat into intimacy. This whole network of strategies and resistances leads to the instrumentalization and demoralization of the public world.[71] Therefore, Lasch criticizes Elias for neglecting the "scars of civilization" and producing a one-sided prediction of democratization.[72]

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[68] Foucault (1978).

[69] Lasch (1985), pp.715-7.

[70] Because this judgement, Lasch rejects Sennett's argument about the fall of the public sphere; see Lasch (1979), pp.27-30.

[71] Lasch (1985), p.714.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp.712, 719 n.9. What Elias himself perceives is instead functional democratization, though it has positive effects for democratization. See Bogner (1986), pp.402-4 for Bogner's response to Lasch.

Lasch's criticism of Elias has its background in Lasch's own critique of late capitalism.[73] Rather than discussing his whole work here, I shall sketch only a general outline of it and draw attention to some points relevant to my evaluation of Elias's work. Lasch locates the social source of what he calls the culture of narcissism and survivalism within the expansion of consumerism and bureaucracy in late capitalism. To Lasch, capitalism has destroyed historical continuity and promoted individualism. Breaking with the past means also the loss of posterity. Therefore, the recent cultural trend has been to live for the moment and retain some peace of mind within an external environment outside ones' own control.[74] Capitalism requires the support of a work ethic, but this cultural trend implies that the work ethic is increasingly losing its ground.[75] This goes hand in hand with the decline of authority and the increase in significance of self-fulfillment, psychotherapy, impression management and personal relations. All these are, considers Lasch, indeed reactions to the increasing intrusion of bureaucracy into human social life, which in consequence banalizes it. As bureaucracy increasingly intrudes into human social life, the dependency on bureaucracy increases. The above social trends can be seen as reactions/counterbalances to this increase in dependency. To Lasch, society has become instrumentalized and warlike.[76]

Within this cultural trend, the nuclear family has increasingly lost its function of socialization and become unstable. The relationship between men and women has become

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[73] Lasch (1979) and Lasch (1984).

[74] Lasch (1979), pp.5-6.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp.59-63.

[76] *Ibid.*, p.51.

more and more competitive as women have gained more social status. People's need for intimacy (together with this, the decreases in their participation in public social life and their sense of responsibility in it) increases as the external environment becomes more and more routinized and life situations become more and more harsh and competitive. But a paradox arises here. As human social relationships have become more instrumentalized, this increase in the need for intimacy can only mean a further despair.[77] This increases the sense of inner loneliness and insecurity.

In this brief representation of Lasch's analysis, we see that Lasch further develops the viewpoints of Weber and the early Frankfurt School thinkers and locates the causes of those situations mentioned in the above paragraphs in capitalist and bureaucratic expansion. Thus, while Wouters perceives the rise of the democratic and egalitarian family, Lasch perceives the weakening of family ties as a result of the instrumentalization of human social relationship. Lasch does not criticize the decline in sexual inequality as itself problematic. He wants to say only that, in the context of late capitalism, this decline goes in parallel with the rise of militancy between the sexes. Furthermore, to Lasch, self development has taken on a pathological path towards self-centredness and the self has taken the world increasingly as a mirror of itself and its needs in late capitalism. Wouters on the other hand sees informalization as a trend of self development towards more flexible adjustment to the social environment. So we have a conflict of interpretation before us.

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[77] *Ibid.*, p.188. To my understanding, this is so because the development and securing of an intimate relationship require us to invest our feelings, concerns, identifications, responsibility, etc. These latter require us to take a much less instrumental attitude towards the other person, or people, within this intimate relationship. The increasing instrumentalization of human social life detected by Lasch precisely impairs our ability to do so. Informal human social relationships become more and more superficial.

To be sure, Elias himself does not give any response to Lasch's charges against him. However, some points can be developed further by looking more closely at Elias's work to illuminate Elias's viewpoint on this and similar issues. Now, it is basically an empirical issue whether Lasch's critique of late capitalism is correct. But there are also theoretical issues related with Lasch's conceptualization of the problems of late capitalism.

From Elias's perspective, the increase in human interdependence opens new scope for choices and actions, but it also leaves new burdens to bear. From this point of view, this increase is ambivalent; I have talked about this ambivalence in my earlier discussion of Wouters and de Swaan and Elias's own view on the modern self. Now, in tracing the structural contradictions of capitalism, Lasch discusses only the losses while leaving behind the gains. He talks about modern human beings' lack of depth in cutting themselves off from the past. He talks about the loss of freedom as a consequence of bureaucratization and the retreat into intimacy. He talks about inner loneliness as generated by the instrumentalization of human social life. And so on. Can we do justice to modern human social life by referring only to the problems of capitalism? Are these social phenomena, which Lasch refers to, actually products of a much longer term development? Do they convey something progressive developmentally? I shall not make any concrete judgement about these issues here. But I want to argue that Elias's sociological enterprise provides a more comprehensive framework for giving a fuller account of the issues just listed. And it is only under this more comprehensive framework that we can conceptualize the problems of capitalism more adequately.

The one-sidedness of Lasch's conceptualization of the problems results partly from its commitment to a *homo clausus* image of human beings. More specifically, it is

committed to a static image of human nature which takes a romanticist view of the period before capitalism. This view takes for granted the popular viewpoint which takes the individual and society, and individual freedom and social determination, as constituting a dichotomy. It is based on this image that Lasch makes judgements about the loss of depth and freedom. These pre-judgements must be avoided before we can develop a more adequate understanding of occidental civilization.

Wouters develops Elias's ideas to tackle these issues and criticizes Lasch for being nostalgic about the past.[78] Tackling these social trends in their own terms, Wouters, de Swaan and Kuzmics[79] conceptualize as developmental products of long-term civilizing processes the increase in the significance of self-awareness, self-fulfillment and impression management, the replacement of morality by authenticity (i.e. the replacement of obeying external moral codes by obeying internal moral conscience), the move towards power equalization between the sexes and between adults and children and so on. To Wouters, the increase in academic interest in human emotions has to be understood within the context of these changes.[80]

Under this vein of thought, de Swaan elaborates Elias's point and argues that the increasing intervention of the state into daily social practices has to be understood within the context of the increase in interdependence between the ruling groups and the lower classes, or in other words the incorporation of more and more social classes from below into the power network of the state. De Swaan's point about the equanimity of the welfare

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[78] Wouters (1992), p.241.

[79] See Kuzmics (1991).

[80] *Ibid.*, pp.244-8.

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state, related with this issue, states that, under the pressure of the increase in human interdependence, the state has to rely more on the support and cooperation of the masses to maintain its power internally and externally. Therefore, its functions of surveilling internal social activities and maintaining social stability expand in an accelerating manner. A consequence of this is that more and more people are put under state control. On the other hand, their bargaining power increases in relation to the state. Therefore, the rise of the welfare state can be understood within this context.[81] So the cropping up of professional groups serving the state to maintain social order has ambivalent implications for the masses. On the one hand, as the state has to rely more on the support and cooperation of the masses, the masses have more say in the political arena and can get access to more material resources. On the other hand, they are increasingly dependent on the state and its bureaucracy. They are increasingly under the scrutiny and direction of professional groups.[82]

This process of expansion of the state makes the environment inside the state more and more predictable. Together with other dimensions of social transformation, this development contributes to open up more and more chances of social mobility. Thus the

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[81] See de Swaan (1988), ch.7 for a fuller elaboration of this argument.

This understanding is an extension of Elias's argument about the shift from private monopoly to public monopoly in the process of state formation in the Occident. See my discussion in the above chapter on Elias's civilizational studies.

[82] We must also notice the fact that this development increases the chances for people from the lower social classes to gain access to the professional classes and upgrade their power resources.

Also, this development leads to the increase in the dependence of the professional strata on the state; some sociologists conceptualize this as the proletarianization of the professions; see for example Johnson's and Esland's essays in Esland and Salaman (1980). But, conversely, it also leads to the increase in the dependence of the state on these professional strata. So dependency is a two-way traffic.

contact between different social strata increases dramatically. Social relationships become more and more unstable and open to negotiations between social participants. To this extent, we can say that informalization is a counterpart of the rise of the welfare state.[83]

Now, Lasch pinpoints the rise of psychotherapy and other helping professions as examples of the expansion of bureaucratic control over the general public to support his conclusion about the instrumentalization of human social life and the danger of the loss of human autonomy. However, for de Swaan, the helping professions help people in resolving personal problems in more effective ways. They may stimulate the need for professional aids, but do not create sufferings.[84] He also suggests the concept of proto-professionalization to refer to the process whereby lay people assimilate professional knowledge and advice to develop more self-detached and reality-congruent viewpoints about their own problems.[85] But this does not mean that professionalization is without costs. Through professionalization, people gain more resources to solve their problems. But their dependence on the professions also increases. As de Swaan says, the helping professions "are essentially of a double nature, both helping *and* controlling institutions".[86]

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[83] See Wouters (1986), p.5 and Wouters (1992), p.235.

[84] De Swaan (1988), p.246. This judgement is sweeping. In actual social life, they sometimes do create sufferings.

[85] See de Swaan (1988), ch.7, section 3-4 and de Swaan (1990), p.158.

[86] De Swaan (1990), p.166; de Swaan's emphasis.
    De Swaan makes too quickly the judgement that the helping professions do not create sufferings and indeed does not reflect carefully the full meaning of his recognition of the controlling function of the helping professions. For, in supplying definitions and criteria of normality, these professions may in effect help to marginalize people they regard as abnormal, and repress their rights of freedom and deny them their opportunities to satisfy their own needs and desires.

Lasch's biased critique of late capitalism does not give us an adequate and balanced view about the welfare state.

Finally, Honneth and Joas criticize Elias for neglecting the possibility of the democratic state:

> For Elias, the state is, assessed with a neutrality devoid of valuation, the *supreme co-ordinator and regulator for the functionally differentiated figuration at large* (Elias, 1982, p.163). Elias's approach hides both the possibility of individual self-determination in one's dealings with oneself, with one's own body, and with others, and the possibility of taking back the state through the social organisation of the `associated producers'.[87]

Is this kind of democracy possible? It certainly requires very high degrees of self-control, mutual consideration and mutual identification to substantiate this kind of democracy. Elias does not reject such a possibility. But his interest rests more on factual accounts of existing democratic states.[88] These accounts in turn throw light on the problems of the number of options which are now open and the conditions and consequences of their implementation.

Given this clarification of Elias's intention, Honneth and Joas's criticism still reminds us of an evaluative aspect which is relevant to Elias's work: how is Elias's sociology relevant for the critique of late capitalism? More broadly, is his sociology useful for the critique of social injustice and social inequality? If so, in what way? It seems to me that Honneth and Joas's criticism of Elias's neglect of the possibility of democracy is based on the viewpoint that the search for such a possibility requires us to incorporate an evaluative stance in our studies. Precisely this is what Elias himself consciously abstains from doing. I shall elaborate on this issue in a bit more detail in the next section.

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[87] Honneth and Joas (1988), p.129; their own emphasis.

[88] See for example Elias (1987), pp.lxviii-lxix and Elias (1984a), pp.277-90.

To conclude, my discussions in this section show that Elias and his followers provide a more comprehensive framework for tackling contemporary issues related with late capitalism and human freedom. I do not think that Elias (and probably his followers) totally reject(s) Lasch's and similar views[89] about the tendency of occidental modernization for instrumentalizing human social relationships and entrapping human freedom. For Elias, the modern human social world is not all that peaceful, it is full of grievances and imminent dangers. Elias and his followers' contribution, in this kind of debate, rests on two scores: first, the dangers identified by Lasch (and in similar ways by some other cultural pessimists) must be conceptualized in more adequate (i.e. more reality-congruent and less ideology-charged) terms; second, they must be understood and evaluated in a balanced way with the positive aspect of occidental modernization (which is more than material prosperity and technical advance, for it also opens new opportunities of self-realization and developing and exploring social relationships). Any pessimistic and totally denigrating view about occidental modernization simply cannot do this job.

Concluding remarks

In pointing out the ambivalent character and the gains and losses of occidental civilization, Elias and his followers suggest a more comprehensive perspective for understanding the present situation of human social life. Human beings of the twentieth

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[89] They certainly include Weber's analysis of the rather paradoxical historical trend of societal rationalization. As I have indicated earlier, Weber comes to the conclusion that, to pay the cost of material prosperity and efficiency, modern human beings are in danger of the loss of meaning and human freedom.

century are living in very complex networks of interdependency wherein complex patterns of differentiation and integration are developed. It is only when we confront this situation that we can get more adequate understanding of problems related with occidental civilization.

Therefore it is wrong to say that Elias's work is not relevant to the issues and problems of contemporary human social life, and more so to say that his sociological framework cannot be used to illuminate them at all.[90] We can identify without difficulties some of his judgements related with them in his work.[91] But most often, Elias does not confront these issues directly. His effort is instead put more on the examination of long-term developments which are deeply rooted in the background determining contemporary social changes, and, in parallel with this, the conceptual innovation of sociology. These are Elias's pivotal tasks which make possible a major breakthrough in understanding the modern human condition.

In this vein, we can infer that the comments (drawn from an Eliasian perspective) in the above section about Weber, Lasch and other cultural pessimists point towards a more comprehensive perspective for tackling Weber's and Lasch's problem issues, rather than to dismiss them totally.

Now, where do the problems of the contemporary situation of occidental civilization lie, if they do not lie in instrumental (or bureaucratic) domination and value

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[90] I have shown before (ch.3, section 2) that Elias has a practical task concerning contemporary issues behind his civilizational studies. In this regard, I agree totally with Kilminster about the evaluative dimension of Elias's work; see Kilminster (1991), p.173.

[91] For example, Elias (1982), pp.328-33; Elias (1987), part II and Elias (1991), part III where he discusses the escalating global crisis of human extinction.

irreconcilability? Are these genuine problems of today at all? What are the sources of social inequality and social injustice in modern society?[92] We recognize that there are gains, but also costs to pay in occidental civilization. Seeing only one side of the real situation only results in unrealistic and imbalanced kinds of optimism and pessimism. To arrive at a more adequate understanding and evaluation of occidental civilization than before, we must have a more balanced view about gains and losses; this is not the same thing as to rationalize those losses, or to take a fatalistic view on them. Therefore, we can still ask whether modern human beings are actually paying costs higher than are necessary for sustaining their patterns and standards of living? How do we determine the necessary costs? And can we?[93] On this score, especially when it is applied to the national level, the Eliasian approach can easily fall prey to an optimistic position; though I do think that it is possible, and indeed helpful to separate this optimistic tendency from Elias's more comprehensive perspective which includes the consideration of both the bright and dark sides of occidental civilization. For in de Swaan's, Wouters's, Bogner's and possibly other Eliasians' replies to the pessimistic judgement regarding occidental modernity, what is emphasized are the increase in human interdependence, functional democratization, the shift towards more equal power balances, the shift from the private monopoly of the state to the public one (the same appear in other social functions[94]), the rise of higher levels of self-control (e.g. informalization in Wouters's case) and social integration (the most notable one

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[92] It is of course true that every answer to this question assumes a particular conception of fairness/social justice.

[93] These questions can be addressed to both the national and the global level of social analysis.

[94] For example, Elias mentions economic monopoly in Elias (1982), p.332.

being global integration at the present moment), etc. So the scene of occidental civilization is, in a sense, one of a trend of development towards more social equality, at least in terms of power distribution.[95] Does occidental civilization, in its actual situation, bring about avoidable negative effects which we must learn from and search for possible solutions[96]? More specifically, while generating some aspects of democratization and equalization (or the potentials for them), does it also bring about other aspects of counter-development? To answer these questions, we must respond to critics of occidental modernity and incorporate their insights in more serious and positive ways. This latter task touches on the evaluative dimension of Elias's sociological perspective directly.

Does Elias, as Lasch criticizes him[97], neglect the scars of civilization? There is no clearcut yes/no answer to this question. Elias is extremely sensitive to the global crisis generated within the expanding network of social integration among states. Much of his work discusses the dangers it brings about to the human race and possible solutions to it.[98] The increase in human interdependence and functional democratization lead to an increase in the demand for mutual consideration, mutual cooperation and mutual incorporation, and

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[95] Wouters seems to present such an image in Wouters (1990), where he suggests that there emerge succeeding waves of democratization (which is not simply functional democratization) and equalization in both national and global terms. He is of course also aware of the possibility of counter-developments.

[96] These are indeed the ambitions of classical sociologists from Comte, Marx and Weber to Durkheim.

[97] Lasch (1985), pp.712, 719 n.9.

[98] In this regard, it is interesting to mention here that, for Elias, personality development (or the development of social habitus) lags behind the process of global integration; see Elias (1987), p.lxxii. This lagging behind may lead to social conflicts and become an obstacle to confronting and resolving the crisis adequately.

social control and self-control.[99] But this whole process of development is anything but smooth. There are built-in contradictions.[100] It contains tensions and conflicts, both within and between classes, and within and between states. There are various forms of incorporation and identification, and distinction, blocking and repulsion. Elias suggests that the centralization of state power is an impetus to internal pacification and economic growth (and vice versa), but he is also aware of the problem of the abuse of monopolized physical force.[101] Elias recognizes that the differentiation of economic functions and the competition for economic monopoly lead to unresolved tensions and unconcluded processes of integration. These problems are manifested in workers' movements at the turn of this century. Elias predicted early on that the next stage of tensions and struggles would appear between bureaucracy and the rest of society.[102]

Social transitions resulting from mutual incorporation are painful processes. They imply a shift in power balances and in the level and form of social integration. New social opportunities are not open equally to all the people concerned. These lead to conflicts and upward and downward social mobility. For individuals, conflicts of integration mean

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[99] Elias claims that social control is an indispensable element of human co-existence; see Elias (1982), p.328.

[100] In connection with this, I shall recall Elias's statements here:
> The standard of civilized conduct reached by humanity so far is not all of a piece; it is not a unified standard. Recognizable contradictions which account for a good many of the personal tensions and conflicts of our age, are built into its structure. [Elias (1987), p.81]

So social contradictions can be internalized as contradictions inside the individual's personality.

[101] *Ibid.*, pp.76, 81.

[102] Elias (1982), p.332. Of course, there is very little evidence to suppose that Elias anticipates very early the rise of new social movements.

conflicts of loyalty and conscience and of personal identity.[103] It goes without saying that the expansion of complex social networks and the furthering of individualization lead to increases in self-consciousness and the awareness of differences among people, and therefore they widen the psychological and social distances among them. This makes the balance of I-image and we-image more and more difficult and may thus intensify a feeling of inner loneliness inside the individual. In highly individualized societies, there increases the need for self-fulfillment, and thus the gap between this need and the incapabilities to satisfy it may become widened; I have discussed this point in detail in the above section. Also, mutual incorporation does not go evenly among all social classes. The outsider syndrome expresses the loss of meaning (and indeed the loss of social opportunities) among members of excluded classes in a social environment controlled by established classes to secure their own interests.[104]

Elias is very aware of these problems generated in occidental civilization. More important, occidental civilization has a class-specific character in the sense that power structures and inequalities are imprinted in it. As Elias himself states, the behavioural and moral codes emerging under this power context often exist as "remnants of the power and status aspirations of established groups, and have no other function than that of reinforcing their power chances and their status superiority".[105] Therefore it is very important that we

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[103] Elias (1991), pp.178-9. This viewpoint is comparable with Durkheim's concept of anomie. In any case, Elias is critical of Durkheim's understanding of social integration; see Elias (1974).

[104] Elias and Dunning (1986), p.57. Dunning develops this concept to explain football hooliganism in Britain; see Dunning *et al* (1988) and Dunning (1989).

[105] Elias (1982), p.332.

refrain from judging that the degrees of social control and self-control actually developing in occidental civilization are indeed necessary conditions of human co-existence. There are, as Elias admits, certainly gaps between social necessity and reality.[106] We can then infer from this that there is a need to conceptualize the necessary amount of control for peaceful human co-existence as a basis for social critique.[107] So far we can only say that Elias's work points towards this need, but this aspect is still underdeveloped in it.[108]

For Elias, the increase in human interdependence and social differentiation lead to more mutual consideration and mutual adjustment. Thus there is a pressure for developing higher levels of social integration, which means also a pressure for more mutual incorporation among social groups and communities. To this extent, we can say that there is pressure for wider degrees of mutual identification, or, in other words, searching for a new source of we-image. In this sense, "[g]reater interdependency also means more common interests".[109] But there is no guarantee of the transfer from mutual consideration

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[106] *Ibid.*, p.328.

[107] In suggesting a contrast between social necessity and social reality in the preceding sentence, I am trying to weigh the gains against the costs to pay for them in occidental civilization. And when I talk about social inequality and social injustice here, we must rely on a criterion of social equality and social justice, or must also clarify whether these two terms amount to the same thing. However, it does not necessarily imply that we must regress to an ahistorical, transcendental or foundationalist perspective for these matters. This is the perspective which Habermas tries hard to avoid. I shall discuss Habermas's attempt in the chapters that follow.

[108] Some Eliasians are developing towards such a direction of working out an Eliasian approach in social studies which (in-)directly functions to inform social and political practices. This is, for example, implicitly worked out in the studies of football hooliganism made by Dunning and his colleagues. As Dunning once indicated to me, part of the target of their studies can be seen as developing reality-based policy proposals. As I shall indicate in chapter 7, Elias himself has some reservations about this task. But I think that this task is worth developing.

[109] Wouters (1986), p.9.

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to mutual identification (or securing or renewing a we-image), and even less to common interests. For, as I have just indicated, this whole process does not exist in a domination-free context. Power inequalities are imprinted in the process of mutual incorporation.[110] In many cases, some social strata are excluded from the power centre of society.[111] Or, particular interests are disguised as common interests. Therefore it does not follow strictly from a particular level of human interdependence reached by any particular society that a particular form of mutual incorporation and mutual identification will be developed among different social strata within it. Other forms of mutual incorporation and mutual identification may also be possible. There is always a possibility, and indeed a need, to ask whether people have harnessed the full potential available to them to confront each other in a more constructive, cooperative way.

To make this point more specific, I do not have any disagreement with the view that non-intentional structures of human interdependence push people towards more mutual consideration and adjustment. This situation leads them to develop more mutual incorporation in various ways. However, this does not in itself exclude the possibility for them to adjust their relationship with other social groups by the use of strategies or force to secure the privileged social positions they already enjoy. This situation of an increase in human interdependence alone does not necessarily lead to more positive ways of extending mutual identification between social strata with unequal shares of power so that they can

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[110] As I have said a few pages before, Elias himself recognizes the existence of contradictions and disproportions in the civilizing processes; see also Elias (1982), p.328.

[111] Elias himself has worked on this problem in his community studies in Elias and Scotson (1967). I have also drawn attention to Elias's concept of the outsider syndrome in the above.

co-exist in more positive and progressive ways ---- so that gains and losses of social development are distributed in a just and realistic way in society. This latter goal requires more work as a catalysis of more positive developments towards increases in mutual identification, i.e. the extension of we-identity to incorporate in more positive ways more and more people with whom we are already interdependent functionally.

Therefore, based on their specialist capabilities, intellectuals, and more specifically sociologists, can play a constructive part not as social prophets but as social critics who are already situated within the actual process of civilization, reflect on it and correct it in a piecemeal fashion. I would not say that Elias has contributed nothing in this regard. I would rather say that he has contributed his effort to clear the ground for this task. However, he is very cautious and self-restraining in what he attempts in this regard. It is Habermas who confronts this task directly as a central ambition of his own intellectual enterprise. This attempt opens up another dimension of understanding occidental civilization which I think is also worth considering seriously. I shall discuss Habermas's work in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

The tradition of critical theory

Marx's contribution to human social thought does not rest only on his attempt to discover the structural features of human history and, based on discoveries about them, to illuminate contemporary human conditions.[1] Marx takes to the heart of his social theory the problem of human emancipation. And it is under the intention to confront this problem that he develops his critique of capitalism. This critique has become a landmark in the history of social thought. For Marx, this line of critique which takes human emancipation as its central aim is internal to his understanding of the reality of capitalism. However, his economic reductionist model of accounting for these issues is a major subject of dispute.[2] It is now a view widely accepted by Marxists and non-Marxists alike that this oversimplified model has to be reconstructed or even abandoned so that Marx's valuable ideas about human history and capitalism in particular can be sustained. The need for

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[1] I have indicated earlier that, for Elias, this is an important contribution to the development of sociology as an academic discipline; see Elias (1984b).

[2] The dispute in this area is also connected with the criticism of Marx's shift between a scientific position and a critical position; see Wellmer (1976), pp.232-9 and Roderick (1986), pp.142-8. Whereas the scientific position sticks itself to the aim of understanding the objective reality of capitalism, the critical position aims at criticizing and re-shaping capitalism. In the latter regard, practice is internal to theory. And it is this latter position that constitutes the particularity of critical theory.

I have pointed out Elias and his followers' criticism of Marx's economic reductionism in the above.

conceptual revision is all the more urgent to enable Marxists to confront important historical transformations of the present century which cast doubt on many of the projections made by Marx. For one thing, in late capitalism, there is no longer the kind of separation between the economy and the state that Marx himself observed in early capitalism. The autonomy and strength of the state in relation to the economy have grown, and its intervention into economic matters and human social life in general has expanded to a significant degree. More seriously, the crumbling of capitalism that Marx predicted has not happened. The occurrence of class revolutions, followed by the establishment of socialism, has not happened in advanced capitalist societies. Nor is there any sign that it will happen in the foreseeable future.[3] Rather, socialism emerged in places where capitalist development has not yet been successful or has not even started at all. Socialist development in these places brought about not social democracy, but totalitarianism.[4] Given facts such as these, is there still any prospect for human emancipation and social justice as anticipated by Marx?

One major ambition of the Frankfurt School has been to follow on Marx's critical task, to reconstruct Marx's theoretical framework to respond to this kind of issues and to renew the Marxian critique of capitalism. They want in this connection to reconsider the prospect for human emancipation and, in order to undertake this task, they have moved

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[3] A lesson has also to be learnt about the emergence of fascism in capitalist societies such as Germany.

[4] This can be seen in the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership.

away from Marx's economic determinism and drawn upon insights from German idealism, Weber and Freud to develop their bases of critique.[5]

For Lukács and the early Frankfurt School, we cannot remain with the critique of political economy if we wish to undertake a critique of organized capitalism. We must pay attention to the `complicity' of capitalism with reason and science for its expansion.[6] This feature is no longer class-specific.[7] Lukács picks out Weber's idea about the immanent danger of instrumental domination in occidental modernization and integrates this idea with Marx's theory of reification. For Lukács, Weber's `rationalization thesis' (as it is commonly called) sheds light on the fact that the expansion of reason leads to both emancipation and reification.[8] For technological progress, human beings pay the cost of self-alienation and the loss of freedom.

Adorno and Horkheimer follow this line of thought in their philosophical critique of the Enlightenment.[9] Under this philosophical critique, they see an historical continuity between the Greek age and the present capitalist system. The continuity rests on the expansion of instrumental reason. On this issue, they criticize Weber's concept of rationality as truncated but still useful for indicating the actual situation of the development

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[5] See the discussions about some of these heritages in Wellmer (1976), Wellmer (1985) and Roderick (1986).

[6] Wellmer (1976), p.223.

[7] *Ibid.,* p.243.

[8] Wellmer (1976), p.240 and Wellmer (1985), p.41.

[9] See Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) and Horkheimer (1947). I also take reference of Kellner's analysis of their viewpoints; see Kellner (1989), ch.4.
  Adorno and Horkheimer transcend Lukács and extend their focus of critique upon occidental civilization as a whole.

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of rationality. This particular development of rationality can in turn be accounted as the internal source of capitalist development. That is to say, they use Weber's thesis as a basis for a negative dialectic of the self-destruction of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment leads to reification. Human autonomy is greatly endangered.[10] Instrumental reason (and, to be more specific, conceptual thinking, for Adorno and Horkheimer) fits discrete entities into categories and deduces laws to enhance prediction and control. In this way, human capacity is increased for control over external nature; so the chances of self-preservation increase. But this mode of control pushes forth standardization and suppresses individuality. It is also, as observed by Adorno and Horkheimer in occidental history, applied increasingly to the control of human beings' internal nature. Standardization and instrumentalization provide a rational base for Stalinism and Fascism. In America, one dominant outcome is commodity fetishism. Therefore, Adorno and Horkheimer write,

> [h]umans pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them.[11]

And,

> [t]he human being, in the process of his emancipation, shares the fate of the rest of his world. Domination of nature involves domination of man. Each subject not only has to take part in the subjugation of external nature, human and nonhuman, but in order to do so must subjugate nature in himself. Domination becomes 'internalized' for domination's sake.[12]

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[10] Wellmer (1985), p.45.

However, for Adorno and Horkheimer, Weber's thesis is not useful for identifying the solution to this paradox of the self-destruction of rationalization.

[11] Adorno and Horkheimer, *op. cit.*, p.9.

[12] Horkheimer, *op. cit.*, p.93.

Combining Marx's ideas with Weber's, Adorno and Horkheimer now understand reification as (1) the loss of freedom because of the self-application of the instrumental domination of external nature on human beings themselves, and (2) the loss of meaning (or,

Marx saw within capitalism not only technological advance, but also the seeds of human emancipation. Human history takes on a positive dialectical model of development. But Adorno and Horkheimer hold onto a negative dialectical view of history and adopt the pessimistic position that, because reason itself has been increasingly instrumentalized, a radical break with the Enlightenment is essential.[13] While Horkheimer invests his hope in dialectical philosophy as a hope for means of reconciling the binary mode of thinking of instrumental reason and the split between objective reason and subjective reason, Adorno turns to esoteric art, hoping for a reconciliation of human beings with external and internal nature and a regaining of the identity between the universal and the particular.[14]

Bogner has developed a critique of Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis of civilization from an Eliasian perspective. Bogner observes a degree of convergence between Adorno and Horkheimer, on one side, and Elias and his followers, on the other ---- for example, about the bureaucratization of society and the increasing anonymity of social dependence in occidental civilization.[15] But he also points out important divergences between both camps from both the theoretical and empirical aspects. Although both Elias and Adorno and Horkheimer converge on the judgement that there has been an increase in control over

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to be more specific, the loss of the unity of meaning, and thus collective identity and orientation) because instrumental domination results in human alienation from external and internal nature. Under this light, the human sufferings felt within capitalism are not class-specific.

[13] Wellmer (1976), p.245 and Wellmer (1985), p.45.

[14] See Kellner, *op. cit.*, pp.89, 103-4 and Wellmer (1985), pp.48-9.
    The reconciliation between the universal and the particular has been a Hegelian ideal in German philosophy; see Wellmer, *ibid.*, p.45.

[15] Bogner (1987), pp.272-3.

nature, social control and self-control in occidental civilization,[16] this increase amounts to different things under their different perspectives. According to Bogner's observation, Adorno and Horkheimer understand the increase in social control in a homogeneous and totalizing way. However, for Elias, social control is inherently heterogeneous and reciprocal. Opposite forces often neutralize each other.[17] So, from the Eliasian perspective, the increase in the three basic controls represents a shift towards more even power balances in society. In a society where power balances become more and more even, self-control also increases. But this increase actually constitutes a qualitative leap, rather than just a quantitative gain. That is to say, a new level of self-control develops as a result of the `equalization' of power differentials just mentioned. This direction of social development appears in advanced capitalist societies from the early twentieth century onward. Wouters denotes this higher level of self-control as informalization. (I have discussed this point earlier.) This increase in self-control cannot be taken as simply on a par with a growing repression of human instincts and basic needs, for it represents also greater flexibility in behaviour and affect control.[18] Bogner argues (with Wouters, de Swaan and van Stolk) that the welfare state provides favourable conditions for the development of

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp.265-6.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.273.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.272.

more egalitarian social relations (within the family and between the sexes,[19] for example), though it is also true that the dependence of individuals upon the state increases, too.[20]

Bogner suggests further that Adorno and Horkheimer's sweeping critique of occidental civilization is based on a philosophical and total concept of rationality.[21] This total concept of rationality is unable to help them to give a differentiated evaluation of occidental civilization and to see its inherently ambivalent character.[22]

Now, it is undeniable that this critique of Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimism (which indeed sticks closely to Elias's own viewpoint) points out the narrowness of their critique of Enlightenment thinking. This critique reminds us that we must develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework than theirs so that we can evaluate occidental civilization more adequately; I have elaborated this point in detail in my discussion of Elias and his followers' critique of cultural pessimism in the preceding chapter. It is under this more comprehensive framework that we can deal more adequately with the problems related with reification and the unnecessary costs of civilization. Bogner's critique should not be read as implying that these problems can be bypassed altogether. As I have just discussed, they indeed constitute the central theme behind the works of the Frankfurt School. Now, Eliasians are conscious of the ambivalence of occidental civilization.

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[19] Elias himself argues that
> the effectiveness of the state in protecting the person as well as the income
> or property of women was one of the factors responsible for changes in the
> balance of power the sexes. (Elias (1987a), p.314)

[20] Bogner, *op. cit.*, p.272.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp.273-4.

[22] Bogner also indicates that Adorno and Horkheimer accept the existence of a direct connection between commodity exchange and instrumental reason too readily; *ibid.*, p.267.

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Accordingly, they are conscious of, for example, the ambivalence of the recent trend towards a more even power balance between the sexes. They put their effort on exploring the wider social developmental background of this trend; here, they have made important contributions. There remains nevertheless the task of conceptualizing further the possibility that the welfare state becomes a powerful force for the homogenization of women's consciousness through women's increasing dependence on it. It is only then that we will know how to combat it.[23] Eliasians see the significance of the legal protection of women and children for tilting towards more even power balances, but it is also important that we pay attention to the possibility of what one might call excessive `juridification', which is a very real possibility in the present social situation.[24] More seriously, the equalization of the power differential between the sexes does not necessarily imply mutual identification and social harmony; Eliasians accept this point. A militant relationship or an instrumental type of relationship may develop between them. How do we sort things out so that we can harness our potentials to sketch a better future? What rational criterion do we have for separating out unnecessary costs (not only so, but indeed unjust costs) of civilization and determining a better future under which we can avoid them? Ultimately, to deal with these problems, we must confront the task of conceptualizing explicitly what differentiates necessary degrees of social control from excessive ones, and accordingly what is social justice-.[25]

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[23] This is indeed not only a possibility. I shall say that this is one feature of women's situation within modern capitalism. See White (1988), p.125. See also Fraser (1989), ch.7.

[24] See for example Brand (1990), p.55.

[25] By this comment, I am not intending to bypass the contributions of Elias and his followers. On the contrary, I want to take them seriously. I also want to put forth the viewpoint that this Eliasian perspective of understanding occidental civilization can be

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Habermas takes up the Marxian task of struggling for human emancipation through a renewed critique of the reification that results from capitalist development. He follows up the early Frankfurt School's critique of instrumental domination, but he also distances himself from it in two respects. The first respect concerns their epistemological positions. In the book written collaboratively by them,[26] Adorno and Horkheimer ground their critique of the Enlightenment on a kind of transcendental, or 'foundationalist' philosophy which is based on a metaphysical assumption of a telos of human history. Habermas finds it hard to defend this approach to social critique.[27] On the other hand, Habermas does not want to follow in the footsteps of Adorno in the later period of his thought. At this stage, Adorno resorted to a kind of negative dialectics ---- a kind of immanent critique which is

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integrated with another dimension which is evaluative in character in order to make our knowledge directly useful for evaluating occidental civilization. And it is from this aspect that I find it useful to discuss Habermas's critical theory here.

Dunning has made interesting remarks related with the relationship between Elias and his followers, on the one hand, and the Frankfurt School, on the other. He judges, to a certain extent rightly, in my opinion, that

> the 'scientific' and the 'critical' traditions in sociology need not necessarily be quite so incompatible as they are sometimes supposed to be. (Dunning (1992), p.255)

He also talks about the mutuality between sociological research and social critique, and the detour via detachment and secondary re-involvement. My opinion is that the relationship between both sides of these pair-concepts has still to be further clarified so that the problem I am discussing in the text can be dealt with adequately.

Dunning's discussion of social domination in gender relations in Elias and Dunning (1986), pp.268-70 makes it clearer how the Eliasian perspective is relevant to social critique. But it remains unclear where our standard of critique of excessive social control comes from.

I shall return to this whole set of issues later.

[26] Adorno and Horkheimer (1944, 1986).

[27] Habermas is aware that all attempts at developing a First Philosophy and searching for foundations of knowledge have broken down. See *TCAI*, p.2 and *MCCA*, ch.1, section I-II. See also Rasmussen (1990), pp.19-21 for a further discussion of this issue.

unable to avoid the fallacy of relativism.[28] Habermas perceives that we need to establish a

ground for our critique, but he wants to avoid both extremes (i.e. foundationalism and

relativism) in establishing his own ground for his critique of capitalist modernization, and

occidental civilization in general.   Now, Habermas's own new project must be

simultaneously contextual (so that it avoids the fallacy of foundationalism) and

transcontextual (so that it avoids the fallacy of relativism). He proposes that critical theory

can start from a communicative model to work on a theory of rationality.   This

communicative theory of rationality can then provide a much firmer ground for critical

theory.[29] It also has the merit of re-defining the intellectual division of labour between

philosophy and the social sciences which helps us avoid the above two positions.[30] This

latter issue belongs to the topic of rational reconstruction, i.e. the topic of the

reconstructive sciences; I shall discuss this in the next two chapters.

Second, Habermas wants to distance himself from the totalizing and pessimistic

critiques made by Weber and the thinkers of the early Frankfurt School. According to

Habermas's interpretation, Weber conflates all aspects of rationality with the instrumental

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[28] Being committed to relativism, one talks about truth and validity only as they are
embodied in particular contexts, and no more than these contexts. Under relativism, this
self-awareness of the contextuality of knowledge is pushed to an extreme at which one
eschews altogether the concepts of truth and validity. However, truth does not mean the
same thing as truth for us, truth for them, etc. See Habermas's discussion of relativism in
another context; *MCCA*, ch.1 and *PT*, ch.6, section III to IV. See McCarthy's elaboration
of Habermas's view in McCarthy (1992).
  I shall return to this issue of foundationalism versus relativism later.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp.97-9.

[30] While Habermas attempts to re-work the division of labour between philosophy and
the social sciences, Elias shows a much more negative attitude towards philosophy. I shall
discuss this issue in the final part of this thesis.

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one and perceives irresolvable tensions existing within rationalization.[31] Adorno and

Horkheimer follow a similar route. As I have said, they expand Marx's critique of

capitalism and produce a total critique of the Enlightenment based on a metaphysical view

of human history. They finally come up with an overly pessimistic understanding of

occidental civilization. This understanding impairs their ability to provide adequate

solutions to what they call the paradox of Enlightenment. They seem to suggest that we

must subvert the achievement of this civilization altogether; to this extent, Habermas's

critique of the early Frankfurt School coincides with Bogner's. On the issue of democracy

specifically, Habermas comments that, due to their sweeping critique of modernity, the

early Frankfurt School never took bourgeois democracy seriously as an important

achievement in the historical process of democratization.[32]

This presses the need to transcend this kind of pessimism and provide a more

differentiated and balanced critique of the Enlightenment (and occidental civilization more

broadly) ---- which will also do justice to the bourgeois constitution and bourgeois law and

their contribution to human welfare. Habermas suggests that we undertake a paradigm

shift from a philosophy of consciousness (or the subject) to a philosophy of communication

(or intersubjectivity or language), and develop from this new paradigm a differentiated

concept of rationality.[33] This reconstructed concept of rationality will then become a new

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[31] I shall discuss Habermas's critical reception of Weber's thought more systematically in next section.

[32] Habermas (1986), p.98.

[33] Habermas considers Weber's work to be useful for developing this differentiated concept of rationality. He also criticizes Adorno and Horkheimer for their inability to incorporate Weber's instructive points in this regard into their philosophical critique of instrumental reason; see *TCAII*, p.333.

ground for social critique. Under this new route of thought, Habermas perceives that modern occidental civilization is highly ambivalent. There are costs to pay for the progress it brings about. There are bad effects to deal with. Yet the rationality potentials evolved from it have not been exhausted. They are still worth preserving. The problems for Habermas now become how to differentiate various dimensions of progress from pathological developments (or regressions) in occidental civilization, and, based on this differentiation, how to provide a framework for separating necessary degrees of social control from excessive social control.[34]

From early on, Habermas followed his predecessors and took the critique of positivism as a central task of his work.[35] Habermas does not want to dismiss positivism altogether. He only wants to say, following a Kantian route, that empirical-analytic knowledge is one type, rather than the typical mode, of knowledge. The two other types of knowledge include historical-hermeneutic knowledge and critical theory. These three types of knowledge are distinguished from each other according to the particular cognitive interests behind them.[36] Habermas later breaks away from this neo-Kantian theory of knowledge, partly because it remains trapped within what he calls the subject-centred

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[34] Here, I shall restrict my focus of analysis to Habermas's view about occidental civilization, though he claims that his thesis is of universal significance.

On the problem of universal significance, Habermas criticizes Weber and Schluchter for their ambiguity regarding the universal significance of rationalization in the Occident; see *TCAI*, pp.178-81. This dispute involves the problem of europocentrism, universalism and relativism. I shall give only a partial response to it in my sections on Habermas's concept of rationality.

[35] See *KHI*.

[36] They are the technical interest, the practical interest and the emancipatory interest. See for example McCarthy (1978), ch.2 which elaborates Habermas's viewpoint about these three cognitive interests.

paradigm and overstresses the importance of epistemology.[37] The idea that empirical-analytic knowledge is merely one type of knowledge is retained and reconceptualized in his later thought.

In his later thought, Habermas shifts from a subject-centred paradigm to a communicative paradigm in his theoretical approach. In this later period of his thought, Habermas develops further his critique of positivism and stresses that positivism ignores the unavoidable participant's stance behind the social sciences (or, more broadly, the human sciences). This participant's stance separates the social sciences from the natural sciences because the natural sciences ultimately assume only an observer's position in relation to their objects of investigation.[38]

This point cannot be confused with a conventional view that the value-ladenness of social phenomena separates the social sciences from the natural sciences.[39] By stressing his point that the social sciences must involve a participant's position, Habermas goes one big step further than this conventional position. He meets the challenge of postempiricist theories of science in understanding the nature of the social sciences. The postempiricists point out that all scientific investigations are inevitably value-laden. Therefore the value-laden character of social phenomena is insufficient for establishing any ground to separate

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[37] See Bernstein (1985), introduction, esp. p.14 for a secondary discussion of this problem.
It can easily be seen that, in *TCA*, Habermas pays much more attention to substantive problems than in his earlier period of thought.

[38] I shall leave behind philosophical and methodological issues related with the natural sciences and concentrate my discussion on the social sciences for the time being.

[39] Symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology are two examples of this conventional viewpoint.

the social sciences from the natural sciences; for both of them assume value positions inevitably.[40] Now, Habermas's point is that the social sciences are not only value-laden. They must assume a participant's stance in relation to the object of investigation as well. By this, Habermas means that the social sciences involve a dialogical (i.e. subject-subject) relationship with the object. This situation, he claims, does not exist in the natural sciences.[41]

Habermas employs Gadamer's philosophical argument about hermeneutic understanding and Giddens's concept of the double hermeneutic to elaborate this point.[42] To Habermas, every understanding of human social phenomena must involve a judgement about the rationality of the social agents in performing their actions in some way or another, or, in the broader sense, about the meaning given by them to their actions. We cannot say that we have understood a social action if we cannot identify the social agents' own understanding of it, although this alone is not sufficient. In this case of understanding in which we judge the rationality of social agents, we construct an explanatory model correlating the agents' rationality and actions with their own context. This in turn must involve implicit or explicit judgements about the validity of their reasons. This case opens up a dimension from which our image of the rational and responsible human being comes

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[40] See for example Quine's, Putnam's and Hesse's postempiricist views about the value-ladenness of the natural sciences in Quine (1953), esp. ch.2; Putnam (1981); Hesse (1980), esp. chs 7&8. This postempiricist argument puts in doubt the traditional distinction between interpretative understanding and causal explanation under which the social sciences are supposed to be inherently value-laden but the natural sciences are not. For it is now argued that even the natural sciences are value-laden. This position is also supported by Rorty; see Rorty (1980).

[41] Bernstein analyzes this point succinctly in Bernstein (1983).

[42] *TCAI*, pp.109-10.

into play with theirs. Here, we take up a participant's perspective and enter a (virtual) dialogue with the social agents.

From this point, it follows that the social sciences are in one significant way different from the natural sciences in their necessary involvement in the judgement of rationality. It also follows that the problem of rationality is central to the social sciences.[43]

Based on this viewpoint, Habermas comments on the neglect of this evaluative dimension by conventional sociologists. In insisting on a subject-object dichotomy, based on which an ambition is set for the social sciences to reflect 'objective reality out there', the conventional sociologists in consequence refuse directly to confront the evaluative dimension already imprinted in their own studies.[44] On the other hand, while accepting this evaluative dimension, Gadamer (according to Habermas's observation) shifts towards a relativist position with regard to a judgement of rationality. For Habermas, a judgement of rationality inescapably involves a judgement about validity. Therefore, in understanding a social action, we not only produce an explanatory model of the agent's own rationality. We also make judgements about the validity of his/her rationality, implicitly or explicitly.[45] Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics emphasizes our learning from others through social investigations (where we enter into a dialogue with them), but the reverse case is also true that they can learn from us. Thus social investigations cannot avoid (virtual) dialogues

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[43] Cf. *ibid.*, p.137.

[44] Cf. *ibid.*, p.125.

[45] Because of the involvement of this moment (i.e. the judgement of rationality) in every understanding, Habermas asserts that
> [w]e understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable.
> (*TCAI*, p.297)
See also Habermas (1985a), p.106 and Habermas (1991a), pp.236-8.

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between subject and object, whereby both sides enter into mutual criticism with each other.[46] In other words, understanding is internally connected with critique.

To conclude this section, let me recall one point here. As I have just argued, for Habermas, understanding social phenomena inescapably involves critique. However, the particularity of critical theory rests not only on its recognition of this evaluative dimension, which is an ineradicable part of sociological investigations. It is founded on a Marxist tradition[47] which takes up the target of consciously incorporating critique into social investigations in the pursuit of human emancipation and social justice. Through this strategy, critical theorists aim at founding their critique of (capitalist) modernity and their struggle for human emancipation on serious, academic grounds.[48]

The theory of communicative action

Habermas perceives a common theme behind Marx, Weber and the early Frankfurt School which make them incapable of dealing with capitalist modernity adequately. This consists in the fact that they are unable to identify the potentials developed in capitalist modernity, which can be harnessed to confront its bad effects. A central problem derives

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[46] *TCAI*, pp.133-6 and Habermas (1985c), pp.204-5.

[47] I am talking about it in a broad sense of the term. Some people may see critical theorists as neo-Marxist.

[48] It is thus not true that critical theorists consciously subsume serious social scientific researches under political ideologies as their propagators, or that they simply give themselves up to the unconscious intrusions of political ideologies. Rather, they want to put their critique on the basis of rationally grounded evaluative positions concerning social justice, human autonomy and human happiness. This is at least true for Habermas. I shall discuss this point in more detail later.

from their reliance on subject-centred models to conceptualize reason and autonomy. With these restricted concepts, they try to explain how the subject (sometimes assumed to be a solitary man) is turned into an object of manipulation.[49]

To avoid these limitations, Habermas suggests that we replace these subject-centred models by a communicative model. We can then develop a more comprehensive and differentiated concept of rationality and a more differentiated critique of capitalist modernity on the basis of this new model. It is in terms of this strategy that we can find a viable solution to the pathologies of capitalist modernity, while retaining its progressive elements.

This communicative model stresses that the use of language in everyday social practice necessarily has an intersubjective character. Even the thought process of a solitary man already presupposes this character.[50] To see why the intersubjective aspect is essential, we must come to Habermas's distinction of communicative action from instrumental action and strategic action, and, behind this distinction, the distinction between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality.

To argue for the superiority of the communicative model, Habermas considers three major models of action. Each of them relates to only one function of language and is therefore incomplete. The teleological model of action presupposes language as a medium

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[49] *Ibid.*, pp.143-5. Under this subject-centred model, Marx cannot do justice to developments in capitalism other than technological advance. Weber and the early Frankfurt School tend to equate rationalization, as it is manifested in capitalist modernization, with the expansion of instrumental reason. So they either assert that we have to live with the paradox of rationalization (à la Weber) or advocate a radical break with the Enlightenment (à la Adorno and Horkheimer).

[50] For another source of justification of this judgement, see Wittgenstein's private language argument in Wittgenstein (1953).

for realizing ends (in the objective world). The normative model of action presupposes language as a medium for actualizing an already existing normative agreement (i.e. sustaining normative order in the social world). The dramaturgical model of action presupposes language as a medium of self-presentation (i.e. asserting or expressing to an audience something in the subjective world, to which the agent has privileged access). Only the communicative model of action takes all these three functions equally into consideration. Also, this model presupposes language as

> a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social, and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation.[51]

This understanding of language, therefore, touches on a dimension more fundamental than that of the other three models, namely communication. In this vein, communication, under Habermas's perspective, cannot be equated simply with any one of the aspects just indicated.

Habermas perceives communicative action as orientated towards reaching understanding and instrumental action and strategic action as orientated to success. In performing communicative action, the agent presupposes a performative attitude towards the object of action, i.e. s/he takes him/her as a partner in communication. In performing instrumental and strategic action, the agent presupposes an objectivating attitude, i.e. s/he treats the object as a means to success. While instrumental action is non-social, strategic action (like communicative action) involves a social dimension. In this social dimension,

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[51] *TCAI*, p.95.

the agent must take the role of a social participant who connects with other people as partners in communication.[52]

The distinction between communicative action and strategic action is central to Habermas's theory of communicative action. In the case of an elementary speech act, both the speaker and the hearer who take an attitude orientated to reaching understanding (i.e. a performative attitude) must appeal to the use of communicative rationality. That is to say, both parties are involved in a negotiation for a common definition of the situation concerned (i.e. a struggle to reach an agreement about how the situation is to be understood), whereby they put forth, and redeem with reasons, criticizable validity claims in order to reach mutual recognition/agreement.[53] So a communicatively reached agreement has a rational base.[54] This mutual recognition (which is communicatively and rationally reached) is considered by the participants as objectively forced on them, and as intersubjectively binding.[55] This latter character of communicative rationality (i.e. the

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[52] An example of strategic action is: through persuading a hearer to do something which is said to be in the hearer's interest, a speaker actually gets the hearer to do it primarily for his/her own interest which is concealed from the hearer. In this case, the speaker enters a communication with the hearer, though strategically. An example of instrumental action is material exchange in the market where (in the ideal case) agents treat each other simply as objects to be manipulated through egocentric calculations.

    In the broad sense, all human actions are linguistic and social, so instrumental action is also social in this sense. Habermas himself talks about the distinction between bodily movement and human action to illustrate this point; see *TCAI*, pp.96-7. So Habermas's distinction between social action and non-social action must be put in context and taken as meaning something else ---- stated briefly here, while a social action directly involves action coordination among members of society, a non-social action does not. I shall return to this point later.

[53] *TCAI*, pp.285-7 and Habermas (1985b), pp.154, 163-4.

[54] *TCAI*, p.287.

[55] Habermas (1985b), p.153.

intersubjective binding force of a communicatively reached mutual recognition) is central to

the problem of action coordination ---- which is a core issue for social theory.[56]

Strategic action also involves the use of communication, but in a way different from

communicative action. Strategic action is orientated to getting people to actualize

something the agent intends (through open or latent strategies). As long as the agent is not

using force to bind people to do something, s/he must resort to the use of validity claims to

mobilize them for this purpose. A central difference of this usage from communicative

action is that the agent only uses the validity claims instrumentally. S/he takes the hearers

as objects for manipulation rather than as participants in a communication. S/he is not

prepared to enter a process of reaching an agreement by the force of better arguments, i.e.

defending his/her own claims with reasons. If s/he does so, s/he is performing a

communicative action.[57]

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[56] See *TCAI*, p.101, where Habermas says,
> [l]anguage is a medium of communication that serves understanding,
> whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another so as to
> coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims. In this respect the
> teleological structure is fundamental to *all* concepts of action. Concepts of
> *social action* are distinguished, however, according to how they specify the
> *coordination* among the goal-directed actions of different participants: as
> the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility (whereby the degree of
> conflict and cooperation varies with the given interest positions); as a
> socially integrating agreement about values and norms instilled through
> cultural tradition and socialization; as a consensual relation between players
> and their publics; or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative
> process of interpretation. [Habermas's emphases]

Tugendhat queries why we have to separate communicative action from strategic
action if all actions are teleological; see Tugendhat (1985). This concerns the problem
about the kind of communication involved in strategic action, which I am going to discuss
here.

[57] Habermas (1985b), pp.157, 169.
Habermas also makes use of Austin's distinction between illocution and perlocution
to conceptualize this distinction in his writings; see for example *TCAI*, pp.293-5. (By an

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Two points are in order to clarify Habermas's distinction. First, though Habermas

defines communicative action as orientated towards reaching understanding and strategic

and instrumental action as orientated towards success, this by no means means that these

two groups of actions are distinguished according to the agent's subjective states such as

his/her attitudes and intentions. They are distinguished rather by their structural

properties.[58] It is also of importance that Habermas does not conceive this distinction to be

merely an analytic one.[59]

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illocutionary speech act, the speaker does something in saying something to the hearer. By
a perlocutionary speech act, the speaker does something through saying to the hearer. The
propositional content of a speech act is termed locution.) For purposes of clarity, I shall
skip this point here. I shall return to the discussion of the relevance of Austin's theory of
speech act for Habermas's theory of communicative action in the next chapter.

I shall also skip the discussion about dramaturgical action for purposes of clarity.

[58] In *TCAI*, p.286, Habermas says that "social actions can be distinguished according to
whether the participants adopt either a success-oriented attitude or one oriented to reaching
understanding among members of a lifeworld". But he also says that these two types of
attitude "should be identifiable on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of the participants
themselves". So the hearers of speech acts are able to identify these attitudes by resorting
to their intuitive knowledge of linguistic competence. In this case, these two types of
attitude are not something purely psychological. They must be related with the structural
properties of speech acts to a significant degree. In his comment on Habermas, Tugendhat
deems that Habermas makes the distinction in question in terms of both attitude and
structure. He suggests that we drop the reference to attitude altogether. (See Tugendhat
(1985), pp.181, 184-5.)

In his reply to Skjei, however, Habermas makes it clear that he "define[s]
communicative action purely by structural properties". Otherwise, we cannot understand
how the speaker of a speech act can use a communicative action (understood from the
viewpoint of the hearer) deliberately and strategically ---- in this case, the speaker considers
it a strategic action but conceals it by putting it in the form of a communicative action. (See
Habermas (1985a), p.108.)

[59] *TCAI*, p.292. The distinction is clearcut. The speaker orientates him/herself to either
reaching understanding or success in a speech act. "[T]he participants in interaction must
intuitively choose between a consent-oriented and a success-oriented attitude." (Habermas
(1985b), pp.173-4) Though, it is certainly possible that s/he intends to realize a further end
through reaching understanding with the hearer. But, insofar as the particular speech act is
concerned, it is orientated to reaching understanding. See also Habermas (1991a), pp.242-
3, 291-2 n.63.

Second, Habermas considers communicative action to be an original mode of the

use of language while strategic action is parasitic. This is for the simple reason that it is

only when an understanding is reached by the hearer that the speaker can produce an effect

on him/her.[60] Because communicative action is the original mode of language, Habermas

infers that language has an inherent telos, and to this extent entails a normative content.[61]

On the validity claims of speech acts, Habermas indicates (from the perspective of

universal pragmatics) that every speech act contains three aspects of a validity claim.[62]

When a speaker is performing a speech act in a communicative way, s/he is making claims

about the truth of its propositional content, his/her rightness to perform it in the particular

normative context, and his/her truthfulness (or sincerity) when s/he is performing it.[63] In

Habermas's words,

> [i]t belongs to the communicative intent of the speaker (a) that he perform
> a speech act that is *right* in respect to the given normative context, so that
> between him and the hearer an intersubjective relation will come about
> which is recognized as legitimate; (b) that he make a *true* statement (or
> *correct* existential presuppositions), so that the hearer will accept and share
> the knowledge of the speaker; and (c) that he express *truthfully* his beliefs,
> intentions, feelings, desires, and the like, so that the hearer will give
> credence to what is said. The fact that the intersubjective commonality of a
> communicatively achieved agreement exists at the levels of normative
> accord, shared propositional knowledge, and mutual trust in subjective
> sincerity can be explained in turn through the functions of achieving
> understanding in language.[64]

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[60] *TCAI*, p.288 and Habermas (1985b), p.169. For example, when I deceive a friend that
I am in urgent need of financial help from him/her by telling him/her that my mother is
seriously ill and that I am running out of money, s/he must understand my message first.

[61] *TCAI*, p.287 and Habermas (1985a), p.109.

[62] *TCAI*, pp.305-19.

[63] Adding to them the claim to comprehensibility, the speaker has to put forth and modify
his/her speech act so that it fulfils the four criteria of a validity claim just mentioned.

[64] *TCAI.*, pp.307-8; Habermas's emphases.

Therefore, in performing a speech act, the speaker is simultaneously making validity claims with reference to states of affairs in the objective world, norms and regulations in the intersubjective, social world of legitimate orders, and self-representations about his/her subjective world (to which s/he has privileged access).[65] Habermas suggests that, from the participants' point of view, we presuppose an objectivating attitude with reference to the objective world, a norm-conformative attitude with reference to the social world, and an expressive attitude with reference to the subjective world in performing speech acts. To reach understanding about something, besides ensuring that they fulfil the criterion of comprehensibility, participants must be prepared to redeem the validity of their speech acts in regard to their reference to each of these three worlds.

Therefore all speech acts are correlated with all three worlds. On the other hand, the speaker can emphasize (or refer explicitly to) any particular world. Constative speech acts emphasize reference to the objective world. Regulative speech acts emphasize reference to the social world. And expressive speech acts emphasize reference to the subjective world.[66] In other words, each of these three types of speech act emphasizes only one function of linguistic communication.

I have now given a brief summary of Habermas's more comprehensive and differentiated concept of rationality (which consists of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality, with its three basic aspects). There remain two problems to be settled regarding Habermas's theory of communicative action. The first problem concerns

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[65] See also *TCAI*, pp.91, 99-101 and Habermas (1985b), p.171.

[66] *TCAI*, pp.308-9.

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the way in which the theory of communicative action is relevant to the critique of modernity, and capitalist modernization in particular. Habermas incorporated Gadamer's and Freud's insights and developed the concept of systematically distorted communication in his early works to reconstruct Marx's theory of ideology.[67] This concept does not rely on an essentialist concept of human nature on the one hand, and does not adhere to the relativist claim that all human nature is contextual in character on the other. Now, under the theory of communicative action, communicative action is distinguished from strategic action where success is achieved by open and/or concealed strategies. And among social actions with concealed strategies, we can also differentiate between conscious deception (i.e. manipulation) and unconscious deception (i.e. systematically distorted communication). So Habermas's earlier idea is incorporated into a larger conceptual framework.[68] Under this conceptual framework, real and undistorted communication and rational consensus can be distinguished from deception, and so on.[69]

The second problem follows partly from a query to the argument just given. Since we cannot avoid the involvement of other factors such as influence, power and other non-rational forces, which continue to affect our reasoning, is real and undistorted

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[67] Habermas (1970).

[68] *TCAI*, p.333, fig.18.

[69] Under the theory of communicative action, a rational consensus is reached by the appeal to the force of better argument alone. So all agreements reached in this way are only provisional by nature. They have to be redeemed through further arguments as long as they are challenged by reasons again.

Furthermore, as a rational consensus is reached by the appeal to the force of better argument, it is self-refuting to accept a relativist interpretation of this consensus from the position of the participant of argumentation. For Habermas, communication proceeds within social contexts, but it has a transcontextual aspect. I shall come back to this issue later on.

communication only an idealization? I shall confront this issue in more detail in the next chapter. For the moment, I shall simply state Habermas's own position in relation to it. Habermas admits that communication is determined by background factors to a significant degree.[70] That is Habermas's reason why the concepts of system and the lifeworld must be incorporated to consider these background factors of communication. This characteristic of communication provides the point of contact between the theory of communicative action and social theory.[71] Social theory contributes to the conceptualization of substantive issues related to communication in concrete social situations. It also helps us grasp the development of rationality by reference to societal development as a whole. This is the issue I shall turn to in the following section.

<u>Societal rationalization and colonization</u>

With the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action, Habermas is now able to develop a more comprehensive and differentiated thesis of occidental civilization as the basis of his critique of capitalist modernization.

Habermas starts his analysis from Weber. For him, Weber has the merit of going beyond Marx in understanding the problem of capitalist modernization. Marx locates the problem in the mode and relations of production, while Weber goes further in seeing the problem as resting on the expansion of instrumental domination. But, on the other hand,

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[70] *TCAI.*, p.335. See also the previous note.

[71] *Ibid.*, p.337.

the way Weber puts forth his critical analysis of this problem is not without problems. This

leaves Habermas the task of reconstructing Weber's insights in a more adequate way.

Now, Habermas's analysis of Weber's work is aimed at a rational reconstruction[72]

which helps the development of a more comprehensive understanding of occidental

civilization.[73] For Habermas, Weber is unable explicitly to conceptualize his comprehensive

understanding of rationality as implied in his own work. Weber tends, therefore, to equate

rationality per se narrowly with instrumental rationality.[74] Part of the reason for this

restricted conceptualization of rationality rests on Weber's reliance on a subject-centred

model to elaborate his action theory and, based on this theory, to work out his

rationalization thesis. A consequence of this is an inability to do justice to the achievements

of occidental civilization and to locate the resources developed in it as means of confronting

the problem of the loss of freedom and meaning.

Weber's originality rests in his analysis of the rationalization of worldviews. He also

observes that the rationalized worldview presented by the Protestant religion has an

important impact upon economic rationalization when it is institutionalized in the economic

value sphere. This view is expressed by what is known as the Protestant Ethic thesis.[75]

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[72] Through rational reconstruction, Habermas takes a critical attitude in interpreting Weber's work. I shall examine the relationship between rational reconstruction and critique according to Habermas in next chapter.

[73] *TCAI*, p.140 and White (1988), p.93.
    Therefore my subsequent discussion will focus on Habermas's use of Weber to develop his own thesis, rather than providing a systematic examination of whether, and to what extent, Habermas's reworking of Weber's work can be regarded as adequate.

[74] *TCAI*, pp.144-5.

[75] *Ibid.*, p.149. See also White (1988), pp.93-4.

Habermas is not interested in disputing the essential connection between religion and capitalism as expressed here. He indeed doubts whether other social strata besides the strata of religious elites have not also been important for the development of the so-called ethos of modern rational capitalism.[76]

In elaborating his viewpoint regarding religious rationalization, and thus the rationalization of worldviews and ethical patterns of life, Weber saw the development of two elements: First, there is the increasing disenchantment of human social life from mythological and religious interpretations ---- expressed in his view of secularization. This leads in consequence to the domination of mechanistic worldviews which divest the world of meaning. Disenchantment also results in value differentiation and value irreconcilability. Second, ethical rationalization (as effected in religious rationalization) leads to the rise of methodical ways of religious life, and ethical life in general; this reflects the domination of purposive rationality even in ethical life.[77]

In his elaboration of the model of rationalization in other value spheres such as the economy and the state, Weber also sees the domination of purposive and formal rationality. This result endangers human autonomy.

However, Weber neglects several features central to occidental civilization. First, in tracing the rationalization of worldviews and its institutionalization in society, Weber

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[76] Habermas (1986), pp.165-6. In this regard, Habermas is in agreement with Elias.

[77] *TCAI*, pp.224-33. So religious rationalization is self-destructing because it results in the domination of an unbrotherly aristocratic form of religious life which instrumentalizes interpersonal relations for the end of personal redemption. But, to Habermas, Weber does not pay enough attention to the universal brotherly religious attitude of ascetic Protestantism, which is in contradiction with its other aspect emphasized by Weber himself (which is an impersonal and aristocratic ethic of conviction); see *ibid.*, p.227.

focuses his analysis mainly on the development of the Christian religion to locate the cultural source of ethical development in the Occident. He does not pay attention to the contribution of non-religious social strata to it.[78] Nor does he analyze in a systematic and differentiated way the contribution of religion as well as other factors to the different dimensions of worldviews, that is, the cognitive, the moral-practical and the aesthetic dimensions.[79] Because of his restricted concept of rationality and his limited understanding of the institutionalization of worldviews, Weber is unable to conceptualize rationalization more adequately from the cognitive, ethical and aesthetic aspects respectively. As a result of this undifferentiated understanding, he is unable to locate the alternative path of modernization through which we can escape the cost of the loss of freedom and meaning. To Habermas, Weber has identified falsely what is actually an alternative path of rationalization (i.e. capitalist modernization) as the only possible route of rationalization. Weber therefore sees the loss of freedom and meaning as a necessary cost of human progress in efficiency. But there is, Habermas suggests, another alternative which can help us combat this loss.

Finally, Weber starts from a theory of action to elaborate his theory of societal rationalization. However, Habermas doubts whether this is an adequate approach at all. Weber correlates market economy and bureaucracy with purposive-rational action too

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[78] *TCAI*, pp.223, 229-30.
    Habermas also argues that there are also other social bearers of capitalism; *ibid.*, p.232 and Habermas (1986), pp.165-6.

[79] Weber does indeed work towards this direction in *RRW*. But I agree with Habermas that he has not yet put his ideas within a more differentiated and systematic framework. To develop such a framework, it certainly requires us to take reference of cultural sources outside religion.

readily. He differentiates them from other value spheres such as the aesthetic and religious spheres. The latter are in turn associated with value-rational action. To Habermas, we must distance ourselves from this parallelism between action type and action system alleged by Weber. Market economy and bureaucracy are not only concerned with action types, but also with the coordination of action consequences which may extend beyond agents' intentions and meanings. The conceptualization of them requires the incorporation of systems theory into social theory.[80]

To avoid the mistakes he detects in Weber, Habermas develops a two-level theory of society which incorporates at its core a more comprehensive concept of rationality. As a result, he is able to give a more differentiated critique of societal rationalization in the Occident. Furthermore, this theory proposes a distinction between system and the lifeworld. This helps us avoid the false parallelism between action type and action system.

Habermas reconstructs Schutz's phenomenological concept of the lifeworld for the first step towards developing his own two-level theory of society. Schutz views the lifeworld as a background of social interaction which contains taken-for-granted beliefs and practical know-how. This view shares a common idea with Heidegger's view of the situatedness of human existence (that our being in this world is constituted by our pre-understanding: fore-having, fore-sights and assumptions) and Gadamer's concept of horizon. In using reason to understand our situations and decide on actions, we have already found ourselves embedded in a lifeworld which is already interpreted with meaning. This immediate, pre-conscious, pre-reflexive and intuitively presupposed background in its

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[80] Habermas (1991a), pp.257-8.

entirety[81] escapes conscious reconstructions. For, in reasoning about one part of our lifeworld, we cannot divorce ourselves from its influences altogether, but must draw upon it as a resource for our examination. The lifeworld not only constrains our thoughts and actions. It also enables them.[82] As a pre-constituted background or framework, the lifeworld makes possible our thoughts and actions.

So, where communicative action comes into play, or, to be more specific, where we have to redeem some pre-established beliefs from criticism, we are constrained to draw upon taken-for-granted backgrounds as our resources for this task. However, this does not imply that Habermas retreats into the relativist (or contextualist) stance explicitly or implicitly implied by hermeneutic philosophy, interpretative sociology, or linguistic idealism that these taken-for-granted backgrounds are final in determining human reason and action.[83] Habermas takes two steps to transcend this standpoint. First, hermeneutic philosophers and interpretative sociologists often ignore, or do not pay enough attention to, the material substratum of the lifeworld. This substratum conditions the development of the structure and content of the lifeworld.[84] This indicates the need to incorporate the

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[81] See for example *TCAII*, pp.124-5 and *PT*, pp.142-3.

[82] *TCAII*, p.135.

[83] See Habermas's own discussion in *TCAI*, pp.124-38 and *TCAII*, pp.148-9. Gadamer has attempted to transcend the dichotomy of absolutism and relativism. It is not fair to say that he intends to support relativism. However, it is another problem whether he has succeeded in this task; see Bernstein (1983), part three for a succinct analysis of Gadamer's work. Since this issue goes beyond my focus of analysis here, I shall leave aside this problem for the moment. It is, however, clear that Habermas charges Gadamer for being unable to transcend this dichotomy ---- in not giving enough weight to self-reflection/reason for its capability to evaluate tradition and horizon, and also its capability to criticize explicit and latent forms of domination and distorted understanding.

[84] Habermas indicates this point very early in his debate with Gadamer where Habermas insists upon a differentiation between language, labour and domination in order to

systems perspective into Habermas's theory of society. Second, for Habermas, the intrinsic

nature of rationality resists relativism. Habermas sees no contradiction existing between

acknowledging that reason cannot find any foundation outside our horizon or the lifeworld

on the one hand and insisting that reason has the power to transcend the determination of

this background on the other. From the perspective of the participant, once we suspend

our agreement upon any particular taken-for-granted beliefs and reconsider their validity,

we have to rely on reason as our final resort (if we do not rely on force or deception at all)

to settle discrepancies and regain certainty and mutual consensus. This attitude (which has

already been thematized by Habermas's theory of communicative action as discussed in the

above section) must be presupposed by every participant in argumentation. Therefore,

relativism, or contextualism, as one version of it, either stops short of raising awareness to

its own rational ground or cannot avoid the fallacy of performative contradiction[85]. Once

we make a judgement about the validity of any particular belief, it is the same for us to say

that this belief is valid for us and simply that it is valid. To Habermas, reason is

simultaneously contextual and transcontextual. For reason has an idealizing character.[86]

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transcend linguistic idealism; see *LSS*, pp.143-75 and Habermas (1970). See also
Mendelson (1979).

[85] That is to say, the arguments supporting relativism are performed in ways which
contradict/refute the ultimate background assumption which makes argumentation itself
possible. In the case here, in arguing for the contextualist stance that everything is trapped
within its own socio-historical or cultural context, one is performing an argument which
assumes a transcontextual validity. But, at the same time, this transcontextual validity is
destroyed by the contextualist arguments themselves. Thus one is contradicting oneself.
    This argument is elaborated by McCarthy in McCarthy (1992), which takes Rorty
and Garfinkel as its targets of attack. To Habermas, Rorty's contextualism transcends naive
relativism, but it cannot escape the fallacy of ethnocentrism in its deconstructive judgement
that everything is limited by its own context; see *PT*, pp.133-7.

[86] *PT*, pp.135-9.

Let me come back to Habermas's reconstruction of the concept of the lifeworld. The structural features of the lifeworld include culture, society and personality.[87] The reproduction of the lifeworld (or the symbolic reproduction of society) concerns cultural transmission where the validity of traditions is sustained, the maintaining of the legitimacy and stability of social institutions, and the securing of the continuity of personality by resources already available to culture, society and personality. These depend on the successful reproduction and renewal of tradition in society and personality through institutionalization and socialization. Loss of meaning, anomie and psychopathologies emerge where symbolic reproduction in any of these aspects fails from these aspects.[88] Symbolic reproduction is, in Garfinkel's terms, the practical achievement of members of society. Its working does not and cannot depend wholly on influence and force. Ultimately, it is done communicatively.

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[87] See *PDM*, p.343, where Habermas writes, and I quote:
   Considered as a *resource*, the lifeworld is divided in accord with the "given" components of speech acts (that is, their propositional, illocutionary, and intentional components) into culture, society, and person.
   I call *culture* the store of knowledge from which those engaged in communicative action draw interpretations susceptible of consensus as they come to an understanding about something in the world. I call *society* (in the narrower sense of a component of the lifeworld) the legitimate orders from which those engaged in communicative action gather a solidarity, based on belonging to groups, as they enter into interpersonal relationships with one another. *Personality* serves as a term of art for acquired competences that render a subject capable of speech and action and hence able to participate in processes of mutual understanding in a given context and to maintain his own identity in the shifting contexts of interaction. This conceptual strategy breaks with the traditional conception ---- also held by the philosophy of the subject and praxis philosophy ---- that societies are composed of collectivities and these in turn of individuals. Individuals and groups are "members" of a lifeworld only in a metaphorical sense. [Habermas's emphases]
See also an earlier similar definition in *TCAII*, p.138.

Habermas employs the concept of system to conceptualize the material substratum of the lifeworld. `System' and `lifeworld' are distinct concepts which refer to the two levels of society respectively. Social integration concerns harmonizing the action orientations of social participants. This belongs to the dimension of the symbolic reproduction of society, i.e. the reproduction of the lifeworld. By contrast, system integration concerns stabilizing the nonintentional interconnections of action by way of functionally intermeshing action consequences. This belongs to the dimension of the material reproduction of society, i.e. the reproduction of system, or of the material substratum of the lifeworld.[89] These two levels of societal integration must be kept analytically distinct,[90] though they are also internally interdependent on each other.[91]

It is by no means true that the lifeworld concerns only communicative action. However, as has been discussed in Habermas's theory of communicative action, communicative action is the original mode of language. So it is the final basis of various types of action in the lifeworld and thus of the reproduction of the lifeworld itself (i.e. the symbolic reproduction of society, or social integration). In contrast, the material reproduction of society (or system integration) is, in the final analysis, related with action consequences rather than action orientations. Viewed from this direction concerning societal integration, communicative action possesses an affinity with mechanisms of social

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[88] *TCAII*, pp.140-3.

[89] *TCAII*, p.150. Habermas has already developed this distinction in *LC*. Now Habermas gives this distinction a more comprehensive treatment under his theory of communicative action.

[90] Habermas (1991a), p.252.

[91] *PDM*, p.322.

integration in the lifeworld, for it is directly orientated to reaching consensus about action orientations. In parallel with this, instrumental action possesses an affinity with mechanisms of system integration, for it is directly orientated towards action consequences.[92]

Corresponding to the distinction between the two levels of society, Habermas calls for a combination of two different perspectives for understanding society. Since I have argued in the above that understanding requires the judgement of rationality, we must presuppose the perspective of the participant (or the performative attitude) to understand the lifeworld. In contrast, we must take the perspective of the observer (or the objectivating attitude) to understand the function of system for material success.[93]

My discussion so far of Habermas's distinctions between instrumental action and communicative action, and system and lifeworld still has not referred to their developmental dimension. I shall discuss this now and next consider how societal rationalization affects the connection between them.

To establish the developmental dimension of his own critical analysis of modernity, Habermas proposes that we perceive social development from the aspect of the evolutionary process of collective learning. This aspect of investigation takes as central the development of rationality potentials which result from social evolution. This collective

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[92] Habermas (1991a), p.258. However, as I have already indicated earlier, this does not itself lend support to the viewpoint that there exists an isomorphism between action type and action system. Habermas's conceptual framework still allows for the case that strategic action (as a type of action orientated to success) is performed in the lifeworld, and that communicative action plays a part in system (though in an important way different from its performance in the lifeworld).

[93] *TCAII*, pp.150-1.

learning process is made visible only by rational reconstruction; it is wrong to conflate it

with history. I shall discuss this point in more detail in the final chapter.

This rational reconstruction made by Habermas of societal rationalization as a

process of collective learning starts from a systematic investigation of a history of theory[94]

including (just take a glance at some major theories which Habermas has come across)

Weber on rationalization, Piaget on cognitive development and decentration, Mead on

linguistically mediated and normatively regulated interaction, Köhlberg on moral

development, Durkheim on the linguistification of the sacred and the transition from

mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, Parsons on the evolution of modern society,

etc.[95] Based on this systematic investigation, Habermas perceives societal rationalization as

involving two aspects of development: from one aspect, society is differentiated both as a

system and as a lifeworld; from the other aspect, these two levels of society develop

increasingly according to their own inner demands:

> [s]ystemic evolution is measured by the increase in a society's steering
>
> capacity, whereas the state of development of a symbolically structured
>
> lifeworld is indicated by the separation of culture, society, and personality.[96]

So we can study societal rationalization from both the aspects of system and the lifeworld

and consider their connections with each other.

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[94] *TCAI*, pp.139-40 and Habermas (1986), p.166. I understand this systematic
investigation as an intellectual dialogue, with a critical intent for human emancipation, with
some major social theorists.

[95] See *TCAII*, chs 5&7; *MCCA*, ch.4 and *PT*, ch.7.

[96] *TCAII*, p.152.

The rationalization of the lifeworld depends on the development of communicative rationality, i.e. communicative rationalization.[97] I have indicated earlier that communicative action depends on the redemption of validity claims from three dimensions ---- truth, rightness and sincerity. Now, under the pressure of rationalization, these dimensions become differentiated from each other. The relationship of speech acts with the three worlds can thus be dealt with separately. As the three dimensions of validity claims become more and more autonomous from each other, they become crystallized into separate forms of communication (and, more specifically speaking, argumentation) and become more and more reflexive and generalized/proceduralized.[98]

This direction of development has important effects upon society at large. First, autonomous forms of communication and criteria of validity claims are institutionalized respectively into the modern scientific enterprise, professional treatments of ethical, moral-practical and legal problems, and the modern artistic enterprise.[99] Each of these institutions takes up one dimension of validity claims and develops its own inner logic. Ideal-typically speaking, the rational resources which have developed separately in these value spheres feed back into the lifeworld and enrich everyday social practices. To this extent, these spheres which have differentiated out are mediated, reconciled and integrated again with each other in the lifeworld.

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[97] And we can see communicative rationalization as the unfettering of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action, and thus in language; see *TCAII*, p.92.

　　　See *TCAII*, pp.145-8 and *PDM*, pp.342-7 for Habermas's detailed analysis of the rationalization of the lifeworld.

[98] See *MCCA*, pp.35-6, where Habermas admits formalism in science but restricts formalism in ethics. He also talks of the move towards subjectivism in art.

[99] *TCAI*, pp.165-6.

Corresponding to this aspect of differentiation, there is also the structural differentiation between culture, society and personality.[100] As a result, states Habermas,

> [i]n the relation of culture to society, structural differentiation is to be found in the gradual uncoupling of the institutional system from worldviews; in the relation of personality to society, it is evinced in the extension of the scope of contingency for establishing interpersonal relationships; and in the relation of culture to personality, it is manifested in the fact that the renewal of traditions depends more and more on individuals' readiness to criticize and their ability to innovate.[101]

As the rationalization of the lifeworld deepens, the reproduction of the lifeworld can be no longer merely routed *through* the medium of action oriented toward reaching understanding, but is saddled *on* the interpretative performances of its agents.[102]

In other words, the lifeworld is increasingly not something `forced' onto social participants. Its reproduction depends more and more on their interpretative cooperation as an active achievement. Developing along this direction of rationalization, form is increasingly separated off from content in cultural reproduction/transformation,[103] general principles and procedures increasingly crystallize out of particular contexts and contents from the social dimension, and the structures of cognitive and interactive competences acquired through socialization are increasingly detached from contents transmitted in this process from the dimension of personality formation.

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[100] *TCAII*, pp.145-6.

[101] *Ibid.*, p.146.

[102] *PDM*, p.342; Habermas's emphases.

[103] So cultural traditions are increasingly divested of their statuses as traditions per se. They must be redeemed through securing social participants' consent by relying on communicative rationality, if they are to secure their authority over everyday social practices.

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There is, correspondingly, the functional specialization of the reproduction process of these three structural dimensions of the lifeworld ---- e.g. science, law and art in cultural reproduction[104]; and formal education in matters of socialization.

There is one point connected with the functional specialization just mentioned which is of particular importance to my discussion of Weber and Elias on the ethical situation of modern society. Similarly to Weber, who sees value differentiation and the increasing independence of science in relation to religion and other value spheres, Habermas perceives the differentiation of science, ethics, morality, law and art, and also their specialization, from the cultural dimension of societal rationalization. However, while Weber sees the danger of value irreconcilability as a result of this differentiation and suggests the ethic of responsibility as a viable path to confront it, Habermas sees a different pattern of ethical development. From this point of view, he perceives that a higher level of integration has developed in parallel with value differentiation. From this aspect, which I shall set forth briefly in what follows, Habermas in some way shares the viewpoint of Elias and his followers concerning interdependency and mutual identification.

From the ethical dimension, Habermas perceives two important phenomena: the differentiation between ethics, morality and law; and the emergence of ethical universalism ---- Habermas perceives discourse ethics as a superior representation of the latter. The differentiation just mentioned makes possible the differentiation between self-determination in interpersonal relationships and self-realization in personal growth.[105] It also makes it

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[104] I have discussed this point earlier in my consideration of the differentiation of validity claims.

[105] PT, p.183. See MCCA, ch.5 for a fuller discussion.

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possible for social participants to deal with these aspects through communicative rationality.

As interpersonal relationships and the internal continuity of personality become less subject to trust in mythical beliefs, traditions and authority and more to scrutiny through the communicative rationality of each individual, they become more and more a risky and burdensome task. But this situation also makes more space for human autonomy ---- in regard to voluntary experiments in self-development and the establishment of interpersonal relationships. In this regard, modernity is highly ambivalent.[106] There are gains, but also costs to bear.

Habermas reconstructs Köhlberg's model of moral development[107] to elaborate his own thesis of ethical universalism. Against Köhlberg and Rawls, Habermas considers that postconventional ethics, which embrace the features of ethical universalism, are not a purely procedural ethics. They are capable of synthesizing the universal with the particular ---- this is an ideal set forth by Hegel and is also what Adorno and Horkheimer, based on their observation of the Enlightenment as emphasizing the universal but suppressing the particular, find pessimistic about its realization in the Enlightenment.[108]

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[106] *PDM*, p.338. See also *PDM*, pp.346-7, where Habermas states that communicative rationalization increases the burden on cultural transmission, social integration and the security of the continuity of personality. But communicative rationality also enhances, and even condenses them. In this way, it stabilizes them.

[107] Köhlberg separates the evolutionary stages of moral development into the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional stages. Each stage is subdivided into two sub-stages. See White (1988), ch.3 for a discussion of Köhlberg's model from a Habermasian perspective.

[108] See Habermas's confrontation of this issue with his thesis of discourse ethics in *MCCA*, chs 3&4.

In the present context, it is more helpful to leave behind this philosophical issue and turn to Habermas's discussion of Mead in order to secure a degree of substantiation of Habermas's viewpoint on ethical development.[109] Habermas uses Mead's ideas about the parallelism between individual development and social development. In individual development, as the child is increasingly socialized into the larger society, s/he identifies him-/herself increasingly with the generalized others in the larger society. His/her value principles expand and become more and more generalized accordingly. As the child becomes more and more mature, his/her value principles have to be justified increasingly, not only in front of the concrete larger national community in which s/he finds him-/herself, but communicatively in front of an unlimited communication community which incorporates all rational human beings. In this case, value principles become fully abstract and universal. As self-determination in interpersonal relationships becomes more and more generalized in this way, the individual's self-consciousness, and thus his/her degree of individuation also increase. So does his/her capability of self-realization. In fact, individuation is just the other side of socialization under the process through which individuals are integrated into the larger human community.[110] Therefore communicative rationality has its function not only for socializing individuals and integrating them into the more and more general human community. It also raises their awareness of themselves as independent individuals who must take control of their own lives, plan their own life

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[109] *TCAII*, pp.87-111 and *PT*, ch.7.

[110] On the issue specifically of the connection between socialization and individuation, see *PT*, pp.186-8.

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projects and correspondingly secure the continuity of their life-histories through their own efforts.[111]

Here, in agreement with Weber, Habermas depicts a social trend in terms of which modern society becomes more and more pluralized. Human interdependency increases greatly. In this situation, social integration becomes more and more generalized. Simultaneously, personality becomes more and more individuated; here, Habermas assimilates Mead's ideas into his understanding of modernity. Unlike Weber, however, Habermas perceives that 'family resemblances', or higher-level universal structures, between pluralized forms of life can still be identified by social participants themselves as the common ground for mutual understanding and securing social integration.[112] So we can say that collective solidarity in modern society has become universalized and proceduralized. Under the pressure through which society becomes more and more pluralized, universal value principles and formal procedures for resolving value conflicts must be accomplished by social participants themselves communicatively so that universality can be preserved without giving up individuality. To stress this point again, both demands must be balanced communicatively in the lifeworld.[113]

Value fragmentation/the loss of meaning (a lá Weber) and totalitarianism/the rise of the total bureaucratic state (a lá Adorno and Horkheimer) are not inevitable outcomes of

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[111] This representation of Mead's ideas is not only concerned with individual development in modern societies. It can also be read from the aspect of the self development of the human species. In other words, Mead's ideas have an ontogenetic as well as phylogenetic aspect.

[112] *PDM*, pp.342-7.

[113] How this is possible belongs to the issue of Habermas's discourse ethics, which is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

modernization, though the danger is high that they will arise in modern capitalism. On the other hand, we must be reminded here that what has just been represented regarding ethical development refers only to a process of collective learning through which the rationality potentials of human beings expand developmentally. It has not yet specified how and to what extent they are institutionalized into society and internalized into personality. Furthermore, this ethical development has not proceeded in a smooth and natural manner. It is the outcome of contingent changes and social conflicts.[114]

Now, let me turn to the rationalization of system. For Habermas, the systems theories of Parsons and Luhmann can make important contributions to conceptualizing the effective pattern of the coordination of action consequences in modern society. However, Habermas is also sensitive to certain limitations of the systems theory of society. It is possible to state briefly Habermas's critique of systems theory without burdening myself with detailed discussions of Habermas's lengthy debates with functionalism and structuralism here.

To Habermas, the analogy of society with an organic system has certain limitations. Among others, we have little difficulty in establishing the boundary of an organic system and identifying its goal state, the most important end of which is maintaining its own survival. However, the case is not so straightforward and even gives rise to irresolvable difficulties in analyzing social systems. For boundary maintenance and societal survival necessarily depend on the sustaining of social participants' own collective identity; though

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[114] See, for example, *LC*, pp.17-24 and Habermas (1986), p.168. See also McCarthy (1978), pp.255-6, Tony Smith (1991), p.180 and Eder (1992) which elaborate Habermas's point.

this alone is insufficient for maintaining social stability. And the sustaining of social participants' collective identity in fact involves, on the part of social participants, a cognitive as well as a normative dimension. On the part of the sociologist who attempts to understand social systems, it involves a hermeneutic task to penetrate into these two dimensions. However, this task is not required in the case of organic systems.

This shows that functionalism encounters difficulties in sustaining its own epistemological status as a purely empirical social science because it is necessary for it to develop on the basis of a hermeneutic or interpretative understanding of society.[115] Social understanding requires that we do not bypass the perspective of social participants themselves as members of the lifeworld, but take it as central to our theory of society.

Based on this critique of functionalism, Habermas makes critical use of Parsons's theory of steering media to illustrate the working of the modern capitalist economic and political-administrative systems. Under Parsons's A-G-I-L scheme, society is carved into four subsystems. Parsons suggests that the coordination of action consequences within these four subsystems is operated through four steering media: namely money, power, influence and value commitment.[116] However, under Habermas's theoretical enterprise which distinguishes between system and the lifeworld, between the coordination of action consequences and the coordination of action orientations, between two perspectives of

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[115] Therefore Habermas suggests that it is more fruitful to replace functionalism as an empirical social science by incorporating functionalism into a programme of ideology critique, i.e. a programme which focuses on the critique of systematically distorted communication. Habermas terms this kind of functionalism a functionalism that is hermeneutically enlightened and historically orientated. See *LSS*, pp.74-88, 186-9 and *TCAII*, pp.225-34. See also McCarthy's elaboration of Habermas's viewpoint in McCarthy (1978), pp.213-32 and McCarthy (1985b), pp.30-1.

[116] *TCAII*, pp.257-8.

looking at society, Parsons's theory of steering media is indeed illegitimate. It is so because it amounts to taking a thoroughly functionalist look at society as a whole. But this thoroughly functionalist theory of society cannot be sustained. As I have just indicated, Parsons ends up with a vital limitation of functionalism in social science.

Habermas claims that it is more suitable to take the observer's perspective (i.e. to take the objectivating attitude) to analyze action consequences (they belong to system), but we cannot avoid the participant's perspective (i.e. taking the performative attitude) to analyze action orientations (they belong to the lifeworld). Mutual understanding and consensus in the lifeworld are reached through the use of language, or, more specifically, communicative rationality. This aspect of human social life cannot be functionalized without distortion. In fact, if we take a thoroughly functionalist look at human social life, we cannot avoid the fallacy of performative contradiction. For can we also functionalize Parsons's and Luhmann's arguments for functionalism? The soundness of the arguments for functionalism depends on our capability to take the perspective of the participants in communication in order to separate what is valid from what is invalid, truth from deception, however hypothetically we express our judgements. It is primarily based on this perspective that we are able to argue for or against anything at all.[117] Therefore it is more appropriate to restrict the application of the theory of steering media to system, and not the lifeworld. Within Habermas's theoretical enterprise, then, the functionalist perspective is subsumed under a two-level theory which takes account of society from the perspectives of both system and the lifeworld.

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[117] See Habermas's criticism of Luhmann for functionalizing reason and language in *TCAII*, pp.263-7, 309-12 and *PDM*, ch.XII and excursus.

Under Habermas's two-level theory of society, the rationalization of system means the differentiation of the economic and political-administrative systems from the lifeworld. To be able to operate under mechanisms independent of the lifeworld,[118] these two systems develop their own steering media (money and power respectively) for coordinating action consequences within them. From now on, social participants need not resort to communication in order to settle disagreements in these two systems. (If we insist that communication still exist in the economic and political-administrative systems, Habermas reminds us that social participants use communication only with reservations within these systems. They orientate themselves ultimately to success. They do not withdraw themselves to the normative questions and so on which we often confront in the lifeworld.[119]) To this extent, we can say that the economic and political-administrative systems have been uncoupled (or abstracted, objectified[120]) from the lifeworld successfully. They become mediatized.[121] In consequence, material reproduction becomes differentiated from symbolic reproduction, and its effectiveness increases.

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[118] This judgement of independence should not be reified. We must put it into context so that we can grasp its real meaning. I shall come back to this point later.

[119] *TCAII*, p.308.

[120] *Ibid.*, p.173.

[121] So Habermas talks about the disburdening effect (*PDM*, p.350), or the deworlding effect (Habermas (1991a), p.258) of the uncoupling of system from the lifeworld.

Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis can be seen as pointing towards the same direction. But he still relies on the action-theoretic perspective for elaborating his point about the differentiation of capitalism from religion and traditional social norms and values. Whereas, Habermas is able to go further than him because Habermas assimilates Parsons's systems theory and expresses this issue in terms of a systems-theoretic framework.

What does 'uncoupling' mean? Does it mean that system no longer depends on the lifeworld? Habermas talks of the relationship between system and the lifeworld as one of mutual interpenetration. They are internally interdependent. They interweave with each other.[122] On the other hand, system has to be anchored in the lifeworld.[123] It is important to realize that Habermas stresses that the rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible, and is a necessary condition for, the rationalization of system. The steering media just mentioned take effect on and within the lifeworld. It is important to stress here the point that societies are different from organic systems in that the lifeworld is primary.[124] And problems arising within the lifeworld cannot be dissolved by transferring them into system without generating social pathologies.[125]

As the lifeworld becomes more and more complex, the burden of reaching mutual understanding and coordinating action orientations among members of society through communication increases. So does the risk of disagreement and conflicts. Market and bureaucracy are relief mechanisms which, under certain conditions, replace communication for action coordination and at the same time reduce its costs greatly.[126] Up to a certain

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[122] *PDM*, pp.322, 326, 355 and *TCAII*, pp.185, 255-6.

[123] *PDM*, p.355. See also *TCAII*, pp.148, 173.

[124] *TCAII*, pp.185-6 and Habermas (1991a), p.257. See also White (1988), p.107 and Baxter (1987), pp.53-4. See *TCAII*, pp.308-11 where Habermas discusses the case of formal organizations.

[125] *PDM*, pp.349-57. Habermas calls this transference the technicizing of the lifeworld; *TCAII*, p.263.

[126] *TCAII*, p.181. Habermas talks also of another route which condenses communication by relying instead on prestige and influence.

limit, the development of the market and bureaucracy is important for societal rationalization.

With this conceptual theme in hand, we can now understand social evolution from the aspect of the rationalization of system. By classifying social evolution into four stages (namely egalitarian tribal society, hierarchical tribal society, politically stratified class society and economically constituted class society), Habermas is able to show how the political-administrative system and then the market economy have become differentiated from the lifeworld.[127]

To conclude this consideration of Habermas's two-level theoretical framework of social evolution, we can perceive social evolution from both the aspect of the rationalization of system and the aspect of the rationalization of the lifeworld.

I have laid out the basic features of these two aspects of rationalization. Now, based on this theoretical framework, we can shed light on Habermas's reconceptualization of Marx's critique of real abstraction and reification, Weber's theses of the domination of means over ends and the loss of freedom and meaning, and Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis on the paradox of Enlightenment. Using these conceptual tools, these thinkers perceive modernity in a totalizing, undifferentiated way. They conflate into one dimension the different aspects of rationality developed in occidental civilization. They then infer from these conflated models denigrating views about occidental civilization. They are, therefore, unable to see capitalist modernization as only a selective pattern of modernization per se, in which some potentials are developed to resolve the pathologies internal to capitalist

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[127] *TCAII*, pp.156-72. See also *LC*, ch.3 for an earlier version.

modernization. Modernization per se does not imply an irresistible paradox in itself.[128] To Habermas, what appears as real abstraction, reification and so on can indeed be conceptualized as a systemically induced reification of communication,[129] or as a reification of the communicative practice of everyday life.[130] This `paradox' appears in capitalist modernization where system is differentiated from the lifeworld and in competition with it. This case is in fact an outcome of imbalanced modernization (i.e. imbalanced societal rationalization). In this imbalanced case of modernization, communicative practices in the lifeworld are gradually mediatized and suppressed by the steering media operating within system. The tendency towards monetarization and bureaucratization is characteristic of capitalist modernization. Habermas coins the term `the colonization of the lifeworld' to capture this phenomenon.[131] Instead of following the early Frankfurt School's critique of instrumental domination, Habermas makes the target of his critique the colonization of the lifeworld.

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[128] See *TCAI*, p.240 for the selective pattern and the nonselective pattern of rationalization. According to this distinction, the actual pattern of modernization manifested in the Occident is only one among other possible patterns. Instrumental domination is not an inevitable result of modernization per se, but a particular pattern of modernization. See also Wellmer (1985), p.57.

Also, Habermas doubts whether we can diagnose the pathologies of capitalist modernization from the action-theoretic perspective alone; see Habermas (1991a), p.259.

[129] *TCAII*, pp.351-2.

[130] *Ibid.*, p.286.

Therefore Habermas has provided a more systematic interpretation, under his theory of communicative action, of the concept of systematically distorted communication which he constructed earlier (see Habermas (1970)).

[131] *TCAI*, pp.342-3; *TCAII*, pp.186-7, 283, 329-31 and *PDM*, pp.355-6.

The thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld provides a more differentiated critique of capitalist modernity than past social thinkers. Under this perspective, Habermas does not take the pathologies resulting from capitalist modernization as necessary costs or irresistible outcomes so readily as those earlier thinkers I have discussed. Now, in advanced capitalism, the lifeworld is rationalized to a high degree. More and more beliefs and value orientations are open to the critical scrutiny of communicative rationality. We also see the differentiation of modern science, modern art and modern law from religious traditions, and their rapid expansion. Modern law, especially, signifies the growth of not only instrumental rationality, but also of communicative rationality in coordinating action orientations collectively. Modern law guarantees basic human rights and mass democracy on the one hand. It is a constitutive factor of the modern economic and political-administrative systems on the other. As for its role in the constitution of these two systems, we can say that modern law is ambivalent in its contribution to social justice and human freedom.

With the differentiation between the private sphere and the public sphere of human social life, the private sphere develops a relationship of interchange with the market economy and the public sphere develops another one with the state bureaucracy. In the private sphere, members of society sell labour power for money and spend it on consumer goods. In the public sphere, they pay taxes in exchange for organizational accomplishments by the government. The government exchanges welfare provisions and other political decisions for mass loyalty. To the extent that these interchanges become more and more extensive, the lifeworld is increasingly structured by the market and the state bureaucracy. Backed up by the expansion of modern law, these two systems increasingly monetarize and

bureaucratize the lifeworld.[132] In various ways, many problems arising in the lifeworld are transferred to system to be resolved as system/steering problems. The side-effects of this treatment are felt as social pathologies emerging from culture, society and personality. Many pathologies related with the family, adolescence, etc can be incorporated under this theme.[133]

In order to criticize this trend towards colonization, Habermas does not resort to a total rejection of what he calls the project of modernity.[134] He is able to provide a criterion for separating the progressive aspects of capitalist modernization from its regressive aspects and for identifying the developmental resources available to resolve these latter problems. The critique of colonization presupposes the possibility of a balanced growth of the different dimensions of rationality and their institutionalization in system and the lifeworld. A balanced model of modernization expresses, then, that a new level of collective learning in system (and its institutionalization in society) has to be coupled with a new level of collective learning in the lifeworld so that means and ends, form and substance, and material and ideal develop in an equilibrium state. Both sides depend on each other. They complement each other so that each side develops in a balanced way with the other.

In correcting Marx's class-specific political orientation from this new direction of struggling for a balance, Habermas perceives the question posed today (which is surely relevant not only to the working class) as being

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[132] See *TCAII*, ch.VIII, section 1, esp. p.320, figure 39.

[133] *Ibid.*, pp.383-91. Fraser follows this perspective and criticizes the bureaucratizing effect of the American welfare system for women (in its domination of women's need interpretation); see Fraser (1989), ch.7.

[134] Habermas coins this term in Habermas (1983a).

> whether a new compromise can be arranged in accord with the old rules of
> system-oriented politics ---- or whether the crisis management attuned to
> crises that are systemically caused and perceived as systemic will be
> undermined by social movements no longer oriented to the system's
> steering needs, but to the *processes at the boundaries* between system and
> lifeworld.[135]

Thus the social struggle against reification is orientated today to securing a compromise

between system and the lifeworld. This task can be accomplished nowadays only by a

continuous watch on system to defend against its intrusion into the lifeworld. The integrity

of the lifeworld today, which has become rationalized and pluralized, can only be secured

by a post-conventional ethic reached through communication between autonomous

individuals on an equal footing. It cannot be secured by the return to tradition and

authority, or by relying on systemic solutions.[136]

Finally, in opposition to Weber's thesis on the loss of (the unity of) meaning, which

arises from value pluralism and value irreconcilability, Habermas proposes the thesis of

cultural impoverishment.[137] Cultural impoverishment is different from the colonization of

the lifeworld, but they mutually reinforce each other.[138] In modern society, the three

aspects of communicative rationality I have mentioned earlier have differentiated from each

other and develop their own inner logics. From now on, these value spheres (as Weber

calls them) retain their commonality with each other only in their structure ---- that mutual

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[135] *PDM*, p.357; Habermas's emphasis. See also *ibid*, pp.364-6 and Habermas (1991a), pp.260-1.

[136] See Habermas's critique of the antimoderns and the postmoderns in Habermas (1983a). See also his excursus to chapter XII of *PDM* for his critique of Luhmann's systems theory of society.

[137] *TCAII*, pp.323-7.

[138] *Ibid.*, pp.325-7.

consensus reached within these aspects of communicative rationality depends on the yes/no question and response between the speaker and the hearer in communication. Also, through this development, each of these aspects becomes professionalized and becomes an expert culture separated from everyday life and mass culture.

Of course, the commonality in the structure of the three aspects of communicative rationality alone is not of any help for resolving tensions and conflicts between the expert cultures which have differentiated from each other. Habermas points out that, while these expert cultures themselves emerge from the lifeworld, they have to be reabsorbed into it to enrich it. Put in another way, they have to put themselves to the test in the reality of everyday life. To this extent, everyday life is the place where differentiated aspects of communicative rationality mediate (or reconcile or re-integrate with) each other. Therefore, value fragmentation and the loss of meaning and orientation are not the inevitable results of value differentiation.[139]

However, it is also true that it becomes a more and more difficult task to re-assimilate the expert cultures into the world of everyday life and to reconcile them with each other there as the expert cultures become more and more differentiated from everyday life and from each other. Therefore the danger that everyday life and mass culture become impoverished increases. More seriously, capitalist modernization has the effect of furthering this process of cultural impoverishment through increasing monetarization and

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[139] See also *PT*, ch.3 where Habermas argues that philosophy can renew its task as not searching for foundation, but developing a theory of rationality, which then help to provide a ground for the mediation in question.

This view is at odd with Elias and his followers' critique of philosophy. I shall discuss this point later.

bureaucratization of human social life. The need for the re-assimilation and mediation in question becomes more and more urgent so that the lifeworld can defend its own integrity and unity before the intrusion of system.

It is important to note here that what Habermas proposes as a solution to cultural impoverishment is a reconciliation of communicative rationality, not a total rejection of it or the replacement of one type of rationality by another. Therefore Adorno's suggestion of aestheticization must be rejected.[140] To conclude, for Habermas, it is only when we leave behind the subject-centred model of thinking and turn instead towards a communicative model that it becomes possible to develop a philosophical project to defend ourselves against the colonization of the lifeworld and effect a reconciliation between the different aspects of rationality which have been differentiated out. For Habermas, his theory of communicative action is an attempt to complete this task by developing a differentiated understanding of rationality and a theory of society based on it. This theory of society can sort out a viable path of modernization which strikes a balance between material growth and human autonomy, and sustains social solidarity without the cost of forsaking the plurality of life forms.[141]

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[140] This criticism is also applied to Foucault; see Habermas (1983a) and *PDM*, chs IX-X.

[141] Habermas (1991a), p.261.

CHAPTER 6

Habermas's Conceptual Distinctions
and His Critique of Capitalist Modernization

In the previous chapter, I have laid out briefly the background of the development of Habermas's theory of communicative action. While sharing some of the ideas of the hermeneutic perspective in the human sciences, Habermas succeeds the tradition of the Frankfurt School and suggests that critique is not only an integral part of understanding. It is one core element which critical theorists articulate consciously in their pursuit of social justice and human autonomy.

As a critical theorist, Habermas wants to distance himself from the early Frankfurt School thinkers in their reliance on unfounded philosophies of history and undifferentiated concepts of rationality as the normative foundations for their social critique. One of the intentions of Habermas's theory of communicative action is to work on an alternative normative foundation for continuing the task of critical theory for social critique while at the same time avoiding the fallacies committed by these earlier thinkers.

Habermas leaves behind what he calls the subject-centred model of analysis committed by these thinkers and works on a communicative model of analysis. This alternative model of analysis points towards the universal-pragmatic condition behind linguistic interactions. This feature of linguistic interaction provides a new ground for Habermas to develop his theory of societal rationalization and critique of capitalist modernization.

This approach in critical theory sheds new light on understanding occidental civilization and its problems. But it is also opened to criticisms in several respects. I shall discuss some major criticisms of Habermas's theory of communicative action. This helps us clarify the real intentions behind his theory and evaluate its merits and weaknesses.

In introducing Habermas's theory of communicative action here, I do not just intend to present an alternative to Elias's understanding of occidental civilization. I also want to develop a dialogue between Elias and Habermas. It is my belief that a fruitful dialogue can be developed between them so that their contributions can be brought together to illuminate each other and benefit our understanding of our present situation. One purpose of the following discussion of some major criticisms of Habermas's theory of communicative action will be to clear the road for this fruitful dialogue.

Instrumental action versus communicative action

I have discussed earlier Habermas's illuminating idea of the necessary involvement of critique in understanding social phenomena. Habermas deems that understanding an action must involve a judgement about the validity of the rationality behind it. Some critics[1] in this regard charge Habermas for conflating understanding with rational acceptance. However, understanding a belief is not the same as accepting it as true.

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[1] See, for example, Giddens (1977), pp.143-4 and Alexander (1985), p.419. Hoy presents a similar criticism; see Hoy and McCarthy (1994), pp.182-3.

This criticism is not justified. To understand social phenomena, we inevitably refer to our taken-for-granted beliefs. We do not normally question the rationality of an action if we consider the action to be natural in its own context by our standards.[2] We ask why the action is performed at all only when we find it to be not natural and therefore requiring explanation. When we come to interpreting a particular action by attributing meaning to it (which we think includes the kind of reasoning the agent does indeed have in mind), this meaning must be understood by us as reasonable itself. We do not consider ourselves as having grasped the agent's rationality in a given situation which we perceive as absurd in terms of our own standard unless we attribute further reasons or causes for his/her rationality which make its absurdity intelligible; or we will come to the conclusion that the agent is irrational.[3] Of course, this does not eliminate the possibility that, in the course of making an action intelligible for us, we touch on the limits of our rationality and have to challenge, correct and expand our standard of rationality in the light of this `absurd' situation so that it does not become unintelligible for us (if we do not simply dismiss it as irrational). In this sense, the investigator inevitably enters a (virtual) dialogue with the social agent(s) under investigation. This is what Habermas has in mind when he links understanding with the so-called judgement of rational acceptance. This case of making an action intelligible does not rule out the possibility of rejecting the validity of the agent's rationality involved in the action (as we understand it). It is precisely the conflation of

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[2] For example, we do not have particular reasons for keeping our habits the way they are. We do not have second thoughts about them in normal situations.

[3] For a similar view, see Putnam's discussion of the principle of charity, in Putnam (1978), lecture III.

understanding an action with accepting the authority of the agent which Habermas finds unacceptable in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. If critique is necessarily built into the act of understanding, we must carefully separate understanding from agreement.

Let me now turn to Habermas's argument about why the participant's perspective must be taken as primary. I have pointed out in the chapter before this that this judgement depends on several reasons. Habermas tries to show that communication among participants is the original mode of the use of language. Other uses are parasitic on it in regard of social action/interaction. Macroscopically, in his critical analysis of functionalism and systems theory, Habermas also shows that societal survival depends in part on social participants' own conceptions because social integration is internally connected with the meanings and collective identity shared among members of society.[4] Methodologically, as I have just shown, Habermas insists upon the inescapable evaluative aspect of social explanation, which involves centrally the critique of rationality (i.e. the judgement of validity). This evaluative aspect shows that, in understanding a social phenomenon, the social investigator cannot avoid taking the participant's perspective and entering a (virtual) dialogue with the social agent(s) under investigation. In this regard, the participant's perspective is basic to the observer's perspective taken by the investigator in his/her explanatory task. More important, although Habermas indicates that every social explanation must involve an evaluative aspect, only critical theory takes this evaluative involvement explicitly into its core. Critical theory takes up the evaluative task of pursuing

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[4] I shall also argue later that Habermas considers the lifeworld as primary compared with system, and social integration as primary compared with system integration.

possible paths of human emancipation. For this intellectual task, critical theory must embed itself in human beings' existential situations in an attempt to understand and evaluate these situations from the participant's perspective. To this extent, critical theorists must integrate the observer's perspective assumed by social explanation with a participant's perspective of human beings pursuing possible paths of emancipation. They must in fact base the observer's perspective on the participant's perspective; though Habermas does not, I believe, reject the possibility that discoveries from the latter perspective may help clarify or improve the former perspective. This separates Habermas from Weber and Elias. I shall elaborate on this point a bit more later.

The argument discussed in the above paragraph shows that we cannot separate the observer's perspective from the participant's perspective. This is especially true when our central targets are the critique of social injustice and the pursuit of human emancipation. But why do we not simply take up a participant's perspective, for the observer ultimately remains a participant in this case?[5] I shall show in the next section that this problem is related with the problem of the relationship between system and the lifeworld. Therefore let me leave this problem here and pick it up again later.

Another critic, Tugendhat argues that Habermas's classification of simple imperatives as one type of communicative action is fallacious. This in effect challenges Habermas's distinction between instrumental action and communicative action.[6] According to Tugendhat's argument, imperatives are employed by the speaker to get the hearer to do

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[5] A similar query is posed by Joas and Misgeld; see Joas (1988), pp.47-8 and Misgeld (1985).

[6] Tugendhat (1985), pp.183-4.

something, but s/he (whether the speaker or the hearer) normally does not appeal to any validity claim;[7] the appeal to legitimate authority as in the case of making commands is but a special case of imperatives. Yet we cannot say that the hearer does not understand the speaker at all. This situation shows that, as one type of speech act within the category of communicative action, simple imperatives are indeed by nature close to the type of strategic action within Habermas's classification. This thus challenges Habermas's distinction between communicative action and strategic action and his view concerning the internal connection of communicative action and validity claims.

One possible response to this criticism, for Habermas, is to categorize simple imperatives as one type of strategic action. But Habermas rejects this alternative. He wants to retain them within the category of communicative action. He wants to re-establish the link of imperatives with the claim to validity.

> It is certainly correct that, in the case of simple imperatives, the binding effect that coordinates actions is provided via a claim to power and not a claim to validity; but it was wrong to analyse the way in which this power claim works by using the strategic influencing of an opponent as one's model. ... In the normal case simple imperatives function entirely *within the frame* of communicative action, because the position of power on which the claim made by the speaker's imperative is based is one that the addressee acknowledges ---- even when this position rests on a purely habitual power relation and not one with an explicit normative authorization. ... [T]here is a continuum between habitual power and power that has been transposed into normative authority. ... [C]laims to power are often linked with fairly remote normative contexts and with diffuse claims to normative validity that are difficult to identify.[8]

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[7] See also Skjei (1985), p.96 where Skjei makes the same charge against Habermas.

[8] Habermas (1985a), p.112; Habermas's emphasis. See also *TCAI*, p.329.

Habermas argues that the normal case of understanding an imperative, like other types of communicative action, involves the hearer's identification of the normative background which authorizes it.[9] Of course, Habermas admits that it is more the case that imperatives are backed up by claims to power[10]. But he insists that their effects are acknowledged by the hearer him/herself.[11]

Habermas argues, from the observer's perspective, that habitual power and power based on legitimate authority form a continuum rather than a sharp distinction. When an imperative is backed up by a claim to habitual power, and not a claim to validity (or normative authorization), the condition of normative validity is replaced by a condition of sanctions.[12] However, this replacement does not mean that the imperative is backed up simply by naked power (which happens only in rare cases). In normal situations, on the part of social participants, it is the connection of habitual power with remote power in normative contexts which grants its influence on the hearer.[13] To Habermas, this type of simple imperative is only a parasitic form of communicative action.[14]

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[9] Habermas (1991a), pp.238-9.

[10] Here, we are discussing the broader issue of power rather than confining ourselves to power as a steering medium of the political-administrative system in modern societies.

[11] See the above quotation.

[12] *Ibid.*, p.239.

[13] To see this case, let us think about, for example, a father who commands his son to get a drink for him.

[14] *Loc. cit.*

The above argument does indeed help to explain Habermas's position more clearly. However, there are indeed imperatives based on `naked' power. Can we consider them simply as extreme cases? And since these cases are more like strategic actions, it is difficult to see their connection with validity claims, or legitimate authority. Take, for example, a bankrobber's demand of a cashier that s/he is threatening to hand over money ---- a case Habermas himself mentions.[15] It is still not clear why an imperative the recognition of which is based on possible sanctions can be considered communicative action at all besides the necessary involvement of the minimal condition of making it linguistically comprehensible.[16]

I do not want to suggest here how this problem might be resolved. In what follows, I shall only trace a possible way to see why the distinction between communicative action and strategic action is so important for Habermas in the case of simple imperatives. I have mentioned Habermas's proposal to treat habitual power and power that has been transposed into normative authority, or the claim to power (which appeals to sanctions ultimately) and the claim to validity (which appeals to rational consent), as, seen from the observer's point of view, constituting a continuum rather than a sharp distinction (in the case of simple imperatives, at least). Now, if the distinction between the two bases of power is also abandoned in favour of a continuum from the participant's perspective, this implies that the hearer of an imperative can no longer separate legitimate uses of power

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[15] Habermas (1991a), p.239.

[16] One possibility is to classify this case as not belonging to the category of simple imperatives, because it ultimately relies on empirical calculations of gains and losses, but not normative validity.

from illegitimate ones (i.e. separating ones that have rational bases from ones that have not) clearly. But this is not Habermas's intention. In fact, social participants do not normally reflect upon the grounds which bind them to follow imperatives. But, following Habermas's logic, when a participant does so in a particular case of simple imperatives (and let us reduce it to the simplest case), s/he can in principle determine whether it is acceptable rationally at all.[17] Then s/he can separate meeting a demand with his/her own rational consent from that which s/he does involuntarily[18] or habitually[19].

This capability is important for the pursuit of human emancipation. For, in Habermas's theory of communicative action, social justice is no longer determined by any objective standard made externally from an absolute foundation or an observer's standpoint outside the lifeworld. It is primarily determined intersubjectively by social participants, who ultimately rely on communications produced on an equal footing among themselves to settle social conflicts. This new interpretation of social justice in turn provides a basis for the critique of systematically distorted communications[20] and social domination. This

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[17] Habermas moves towards this direction in resolving the problem of the ambiguity of his classification of simple imperatives in Habermas (1991a), pp.239-40.

[18] In the case where a cashier has a gun pointed at his/her head by a robber who asks him/her to hand over money to the robber, the cashier has no choice but to comply if s/he does not want to get hurt or killed. S/he is not persuaded by reasons but is bound to do so by force alone.

[19] An imperative supported by habitual power cannot be so supported again once this habitual power is reflected upon by the hearer. Now, for the hearer to continue to acknowledge this habitual power, s/he must retrieve its link with other normatively authorized grounds. That is to say, it loses its habitual nature once it becomes an object of reflection.

[20] I have indicated in the previous chapter that Habermas interpreted the Marxian concept of reification as systematically distorted communication in his early writings. In his theory of communicative action, he further elaborates it as a consequence of the

critique is now directed towards the use of power which is, perceived from the participant's perspective, not based on rational consent.[21]

Let me sum up this latter point before I move on. I do not think that Habermas anticipates an ideal situation of communication which is free from power of any sort. His theory of communicative action is intended only to provide a basis[22] under which social participants can rationally distinguish between legitimate uses of power and excessive, and thus illegitimate, uses of it. There is no point to suppose that the social participants are already totally transparent (or free from the influences of power or any other irrational forces) in making this distinction. According to Habermas, power which is based purely on social participants' rational consent and power which is based purely on empirical exchange, the (potential) use of force and deception form the two poles of a continuum when they are perceived from the observer's point of view. Whereas, from the participant's point of view which is embedded in the lifeworld and a material substratum, they can be in principle clearly distinguished from each other. It is this distinction made from the participant's point

colonization of the lifeworld. It is now conceptualized as a systematically induced reification of communication, or as a reification of the communicative practice of everyday life.

[21] The discussion so far centres on the simplest case of imperatives. Though Habermas is to a certain extent successful in securing the distinction of communicative action and strategic action in this case, it is still not easy to see how the participant can separate claims to validity from claims to power in complex situations which normally involve simultaneous considerations of various aspects. This issue is in some way related with the issue of the relationship between universal moral principles (which come about through purely rational considerations) and prudence and compromise (which also involve the aspect of empirical efficacy and contextuality); see *MCCA*, pp.104-5, 205-7 and Habermas (1990), pp.110-1. Benhabib provides an interesting discussion of this issue in Benhabib (1986), pp.313-4. Since this topic is beyond the scope of my thesis, I shall leave it aside here.

[22] I shall discuss the epistemological status of this basis towards the end of this thesis.

of view which makes possible the critique of excessive social control which avoids the fallacy committed by the early Frankfurt School that I have indicated in the previous chapter.

In fact, some commentators are still not satisfied with Habermas's restriction of the scope of his distinction between the two different uses of power, at the core of which is the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action ---- I have already indicated this point above. They query whether social participants in linguistic interactions do, or can, make such sharp and clear distinctions. Part of Habermas's arguments to support his view that this capability is available on the part of social participants are derived from Austin's philosophy of language; I have briefly indicated Habermas's use of Austin's theory of speech act in the previus chapter. These commentators want to discharge this part of Habermas's arguments and, by doing so, refute his view regarding the distinctions just mentioned.

Let me now go into the details of the arguments. First of all, these critics argue that Habermas's distinction between instrumental action and communicative action is at odds with Austin's theory of speech act because Austin's theory is built upon the idea that saying is one kind of doing. The former can never be separated from the latter. This view implies that we must treat, for example, an act of saying something as a doing so that we can grasp its meaning. Whereas, Habermas's distinction seems to argue that we can make such a distinction between them.[23]

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[23] See Alexander (1985), pp.416-8; Culler (1985), p.137; Rasmussen (1990), pp.39-40.

Second, whereas Habermas wants to establish an absolute distinction between instrumental action and communicative action, the distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts is, for Austin, by no means an absolute one. In the use of language, they are normally combined with each other.[24]

Third, within Austin's distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts, illocutionary acts involve the speaker's consideration of possible effects, and/or his/her intention to achieve them. Whereas, in perlocutionary acts, communications and understanding are also involved in achieving perlocutionary effects. Therefore Austin's distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts does not establish a distinction between the instrumental/strategic use of language and the communicative use of it. Austin's conceptual distinction cannot be taken as on a par with Habermas's distinction between instrumental action and communicative action.[25]

Perceiving these differences between Habermas and Austin, and conceiving that Austin's position is more sound than Habermas's on these issues, Culler makes two points against Habermas. First, Habermas does not gain support from Austin's theory of speech acts for justifying his own conceptual distinction. And even less does he gain support for his view that communication is the original mode of the use of language. Because, as I have shown in the first criticism, it is by treating saying something as an act that we can understand its fuller meaning which is more than what is expressed literally. So saying does not take priority over doing; nor does communicative action take priority over

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[24] See Alexander (1985), pp.417-8.

[25] See Alexander (1985), pp.416-7; Culler (1985), p.136; Rasmussen (1990), p.39.

instrumental/strategic action. Furthermore, if Austin's views which I have just discussed in the three criticisms are correct, then there are good reasons to suspect the validity of Habermas's theory of communicative action, and even to refute it. Therefore, on the whole, the priority that Habermas gives to communication only expresses his own value preference, which is without objective grounds.[26]

These criticisms touch on several important points concerning Habermas's theory of communicative action, but they include some misunderstandings of Habermas's theory. Therefore they are unfair to it in several regards. Let me clarify the relevance of Austin's theory of speech act for Habermas's theory of communicative action. Habermas does not accept Austin's analysis uncritically. His use of Austin's ideas involves criticisms and reconstructions. First of all, Habermas identifies, rightly, I think, Austin's theory of speech acts as an important reference for his own theory because both theories undertake formal and reconstructive[27] analyses of the pragmatic conditions for the use of language.[28] Second, Habermas agrees with Austin's view that saying is one kind of doing, or an act. However, this view does not make the distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts become pointless. Nor does it invalidate the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action. For Austin, the distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts separates between two ways in which a speech act is connected to an effect. Third, Habermas agrees with Austin's view that

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[26] See Culler (1985), p.137 and Rasmussen (1990), p.40.

[27] See, for example, Austin (1975) pp.71-2 for Austin's own understanding of his reconstructive work.

[28] See Habermas's discussion of Austin in *CES*, ch.1 and Habermas (1991a), pp.235-6.

understanding speech acts involves relating them with social conventions. The performance

of a speech act (e.g. making a promise) involves the speaker's commitment to a whole set

of conventional rules (such as that s/he is in an appropriate position to make such a

promise, that s/he is sincere, and s/he is able and is prepared to keep his/her promise, etc).

Therefore understanding a speech act also involves relating it to several dimensions of

validity (not just grasping its literal meaning and examining whether it corresponds with an

external reality). Part of Austin's work is to spell out systematically what these dimensions

are. I have discussed Habermas's own conceptualization of these dimensions of validity in

the previous chapter and shall not repeat it here.[29]

These three points relate us back to the first criticism against him. Habermas's

distinction between instrumental action and communicative action does not imply a

distinction between saying and doing. It is precisely because he sees the fact that saying can

never be separated from doing that he attempts to go beyond simplistic and unidimensional

theories of language and to develop his universal pragmatics to separate out the four

dimensions of validity which are involved in communicative understanding.

Concerning the distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts,

Austin does not express clearly whether he perceives this distinction as an absolute one or

merely an analytic one. He discusses the distinction as if it reflects a concrete reality in his

work,[30] though he suggests explicitly that they normally combine with each other in reality.

Habermas criticizes Austin for his lack of clarity on this issue.[31] Sticking to his own

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[29] See also *CES*, pp.61-7 and Habermas (1991a), p.238-9.

[30] See Austin (1975).

[31] See *TCAI*, p.294. Alexander also realizes this point; see Alexander (1985), p.418.

theoretical perspective in evaluating Austin's theory, Habermas argues that there is a real distinction between these two types of speech acts. The distinction can be perceived in the distinction between (a) `In saying x, I was doing y' or `I did y' and (b) `By saying x, I was doing y' or `I did y'. Both (a) and (b) involve considerations of meanings and consequences. But the consequence `y' is conventionally connected with `x' in (a) while it is not so in (b). In case b, there is not a necessary connection between x and y.[32]

Let us take an example of case a: that a speaker, A, promises a hearer, B, that c. And in promising B that c, A gets B to do d. The focus of attention of this illocutionary act is on A's making the promise. The successfulness of this speech act to achieve the result that A gets B to do d in part depends on the situation that both A and B recognize and are willing to be bound by the conventional rules connected to the act of making a promise. Here, they arrive at a mutual understanding of what A says and does to B. However, the situation of case b is different. If A's sole intention in making the promise is to get B to do d (so, on A's side, making a promise now becomes a perlocutionary act ---- which then takes the form `By promising B that c, A gets B to do d'), the focus of attention of the speech act then is whether A gets his intended result, i.e. getting B to do d. There is no implication in this speech act about whether A is prepared to keep his promise. Also, we can imagine that it is not necessary for A to make such a promise in order to get B to do d. There may be other means to achieve this result. This example shows that the difference between case a and case b is determined by the difference in A's intention, or orientation in performing the speech act.

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[32] See Austin, *op. cit.*, chs 9 & 10 for Austin's own analysis.

Habermas elaborates this difference as a difference between the communicative use

of language and the instrumental/strategic use of language; the more important point for

critical theory is that the latter includes deception and the (potential) use of force.[33]

The above elaboration of Habermas's view helps us to clarify the misunderstandings

behind the above criticisms. However, it still makes sense to query whether social

participants in linguistic interactions are sometimes mixed in intention or orientation in

performing speech acts. Take the above example, A's orientation may be mixed. He wants

to get B to do d. Then he promises B that c. Does A make the promise sincerely? Will he

keep his promise? Is he still prepared to keep it if there is no guarantee that he can get B to

do d? I think, in some cases, even A does not have any clear answers to these questions. Is

it necessary for A to struggle for clear answers for these questions so that he can orientate

himself in his interactions with B or in dealing with his problem(s)? Anyway, in these cases,

we cannot reach a clear decision as to whether the speech acts are illocutionary or

perlocutionary, instrumental/strategic or communicative in their orientations ---- though

sometimes social participants can make such distinctions, and sometimes it may be

important for them to do so.

Culler's point regarding the priority that Habermas gives to communication

indicates another difficulty in Habermas's theory of communicative action. Even though

Habermas may find a way to resolve the above difficulty and therefore his conceptual

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[33] To include the consideration of the effect of a speech act from both the speaker's and the hearer's side, Habermas further develops Austin's conceptual distinction to include the distinction between illocutionary success in the narrow and the broad sense and the distinction between perlocutionary success in these two senses in Habermas (1991a), p.240.

distinction stands, we still do not see why the communicative use of language has a priority over the instrumental/strategic use of it. Austin presents before us the difference between two ways of making a speech act, but we do not see how we can deduce from his analysis the view that illocutionary acts have a priority over perlocutionary acts (and therefore we have a good reason to accept the view that the communicative use of language has a priority over the other one), even though we follow Habermas's interpretation of Austin's concepts. In the preceding chapter, I have shown that Habermas's reason for this priority is that the hearer must first be able to understand the meaning of a speech act before s/he can be mobilized to do something the speaker wants him/her to do. However, this reason is very thin. As we follow Austin's analysis, we see that we cannot understand what the speaker of a speech act says if we ignore what s/he does in/with this speech act. It is not enough just to grasp its literal meaning. It is precisely this point that grants support to Austin's development of his conceptual distinction just discussed ---- to develop a framework to separate between the different uses of speech acts and identify their nature so that we may better grasp the full meaning conveyed in the speech acts. But now, when he tries to justify his point concerning the priority that we are discussing here, Habermas seems to reverse Austin's argument. On the whole, if communication means more than grasping the literal meaning of speech acts, we do not see why the requirement that the hearer must be able to grasp the literal meaning of the speech act before s/he can be mobilized to do something the speaker wants him/her to do implies that communication is primary in linguistic interactions.

The above two arguments directly challenge Habermas's theory of communicative action at its core. So Habermas still confronts difficulties even though he restricts the application of the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action to the perspective of social participants, rather than to the perspective of the observer. However, while seeing these difficulties in Habermas's critical theory, we must not disregard an important insight that Habermas takes pain in securing. In the linguistic exchanges among intellectuals in theoretical and practical discourses (such as what I am doing here), there is very little ground for us to say that we are not orientated towards communicative understanding in which challenging and defending the validity of ones' claims are central; though we take it that our understanding is in part determined by our material conditions and subjective interests. In other words, communicative action must be taken as primary in intellectual discourses. Any one who argues against Habermas's points is committed to a performative contradiction, because it is precisely this pragmatic condition which s/he must presuppose (in order that intellectual discourses become possible) that s/he is attacking. Now, does this also suggest a model through which social cooperation and conflict resolution in the wider society can be understood (reconstructively)?[34] Habermas's answer to this question seems to be positive.

Let me now focus attention to another set of arguments which challenge Habermas's distinction between instrumental action and communicative action, and his distinction between the two uses of power.

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[34] I shall discuss Habermas's point concerning the connection between understanding and reconstruction in the last chapter of this thesis.

First of all, there is a query as to what the positions of sentiment, emotions and the like are in the distinction between power which has rational bases[35] and power which does not rely on such rational bases (or, simply represented, the distinction between reason/communication and power)? To push this query a bit further, there is also the query as to what the positions of sentiment, emotions and the like are in action coordination? Is it helpful to lump these things together as aspects of power (and perceive them as strategic in character) as opposed to reason/communication under Habermas's framework?

Garland has interpreted Durkheim's idea of collective conscience and social sensibility to account for the problem of social order, for example.[36] Giddens has emphasized the link of national identity with routinized and habitual aspects of everyday life.[37] Elias also indicates that affective bonds constitute an important aspect of human interdependence.[38] All of these three sociologists perceive sentiment, emotions and the like as important elements of human beings' self-identity, human social relationships and social integration. Now, Habermas's distinction discussed in the above seems not to give any privilege to these elements in action coordination because of his reliance on reason for this task.

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[35] For power which has rational bases, it is more suitable to perceive the binding effects as coming from the rational bases rather than the power itself. So what really matters is still reason, i.e. the validity of the claims justifying its use.

[36] Garland (1990).

[37] Giddens (1981), pp.192-3.

[38] Elias (1978a), ch.5.

It is surely a problem how Habermas would classify these elements under his own

theory. Anyway, Habermas's position seems to be that he does not reject the fact that these

elements actually play a part in social integration and identity formation in modern societies.

But, agreeing with Weber, Habermas sees them as essentially particularistic and having to

do with concrete life histories. They are in this regard (potentially) exclusionary. Perceived

from the perspective of the participant, they cannot become resources for resolving social

conflicts in modern societies, which are increasingly globalized and in which values are

increasingly pluralized. It is only by resorting to communicative rationality that value

conflicts can be genuinely resolved, because it is only through communication that higher

principles are developed where different value positions are given equal consideration. It is

for this reason that these higher principles are likely to be observed by social participants

voluntarily.[39] So, perceived from the participant's perspective, it is under communicative

rationality that sentiment, emotions, etc can have their place in action coordination.[40] In

this regard, communicative rationality, on the one hand, and sentiment, emotions, etc, on

the other, do not contradict each other. Moreover, the former is more primary than the

latter so far as the problem of social integration is concerned..

Critics may think that this view regarding the relationship between communicative

rationality and sentiment, emotions, etc is too moralistic. By emphasizing the centrality of

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[39] In the previous chapter, I have talked about the Hegelian tone in Habermas's theory of communicative action in respect to his viewpoint that the gap between the universal and the particular is bridged under this theory.

Habermas rejects those postmodern thinkers who favour particular cultures, traditions and life-styles but reject universal principles for various reasons.

[40] I follow Habermas's argument about the distinction ethics and morality in modern societies to deduce this argument here. See *MCCA*, ch.5.

communication, it is thought by these critics, Habermas takes morality (which binds people together universally) as primary in human social life. This implies that other aspects of human social life become secondary. Such is true for rhetorical, playful and creative (or aesthetic) uses of language. [41]

This argument touches on two issues. The first concerns the scope of Habermas's theory of action. The second concerns Habermas's view of the relationship between different aspects of rationality. First, does Habermas really take morality as primary in human social life? Is this criticism built upon a correct understanding of Habermas's viewpoint? To clarify this point, I must recall here that Habermas's conceptualization of action and rationality aims at only a limited task. It is not intended as a comprehensive typology of action and rationality. Habermas's own interest is limited rather to social (inter-)action. So the focus of analysis of his typology becomes mechanisms of action coordination. Habermas does not mean to reject rhetorical, playful and creative uses of language as action types. But the more important issue is that it is not clear how the stress on these aesthetic uses of language, if these uses of language are by nature non-social, is relevant to action coordination if they are divorced from instrumental, strategic and communicative action and are not considered as derivative of them (and therefore cannot be treated as a dimension of them). [42]

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[41] Culler (1985), Raulet (1989) and Joas (1988), p.39.

[42] Habermas (1991a), p.249. See *PDM*, pp.194-5 where, in his reply to Culler, Habermas argues that rhetoric is only a derivative case of the use of language.

As a matter of fact, Habermas's typology of action does indeed include art works and aesthetic experiences and discourses as a third dimension of communicative action. From this dimension, the speaker or agent does not just express his/her subjective experience, which is something uniquely belonging to him/herself. S/he indeed asserts this experience before an audience. In this case, s/he enters a communication with them about his/her subjective states. S/he is obliged to prove before them his/her sincerity and internal consistency.[43]

Now, what then is the relevance of aesthetic experiences for action coordination if they constitute one aspect of communicative action? On this issue, Habermas has involved himself in a debate with some social thinkers who press towards aestheticizing human social life, or tend to do so.[44] Habermas's theory of communicative action does not exclude the aesthetic elements of social action and rationality in regard to action coordination. What Habermas wants to stress in this theory is (opposed to any totalizing view) a differentiated, and thus more balanced, view about action and rationality. This differentiated view expresses (as I have indicated earlier) that, in modern societies where rationality develops in a balanced way, each of the three aspects of rationality develops and realizes its own

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[43] I shall leave aside the problem of the adequacy of Habermas's aesthetic theory here. What I intend to do is just to indicate a point neglected by Culler, Raulet and Joas.

[44] This debate can be found in Habermas's criticism of postmodernists such as Derrida and Foucault in his defence of the project of modernity in *PDM*. See also Habermas (1983a). Since this debate about modernism and postmodernism is well beyond my scope here, I shall do no more than elaborate Habermas's ideas on this issue.

internal dynamics, and at the same time remains mediated with the others.[45] Therefore value spheres such as science, ethics, politics, law and art have to be sustained in a differentiated way in modern societies (which are by nature complex and pluralized). But, whereas Weber perceives value irreconcilability in value differentiation, Habermas suggests that there remains a possibility of reconciling them in the lifeworld, in dealing with existential problems. In this light, we must set limits to the scope of aesthetic rationality in human social life.[46] So, for example, aesthetic experiences can play an important part in self-formation and self-realization. They can also illuminate morality and politics. But they cannot dominate these latter, violate their inner logics (which have been developed in societal rationalization), and take over the tasks of self-determination, maintaining social order and coordinating collective goals.[47] In sum, Habermas struggles to find a way in which aesthetic experiences and rationality are given suitable attention.

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[45] See *TCAII*, p.398 where Habermas asserts that one task of nonobjectivist social sciences (his own critical theory is one example of them) is mediating the different moments/aspects of rationality.

It is central to Habermas's criticism that aestheticization relies on a theoretical perspective which remains subject-centred and totalizing. His theory of communicative action is intended as an alternative which starts out from a communicative and differentiated model of rationality and therefore provides a better understanding of the problem of capitalist modernization and sorts out more adequate and viable solutions to it.

[46] It is interesting to mention here that, under Scaff's interpretation, Weber also criticizes total aestheticization as a flight to aestheticism, a retreat into subjectivism, rather than as a heroic confrontation with the reality of modern rationalism. See Scaff (1989), ch.3.

[47] Following the same vein of thought, Wellmer queries the direct relevance of aesthetic experience for the political dimension of human emancipation ---- the confrontation of human pathos in modern capitalism. See Wellmer (1985), p.65.

Wellmer refers to Adorno's immanent critique of modernity in this comment. He doubts Adorno's capability to develop a political programme of human emancipation under modern social conditions.

Let me sum up the main points I have tried to develop in this section for clarifying Habermas's position. First, in articulating the relationship between the participant's perspective and the observer's perspective in social understanding, Habermas considers the participant's perspective as more primary. Social understanding inevitably involves judgements of rationality; though we can still separate between understanding an idea and accepting it as true. This makes the participant's perspective central to social understanding. The involvement of judgements of rationality is especially important for critical theory because it is the conscious articulation of this kind of judgements which constitutes its own particularity, and which effects the mediation just mentioned. For this reason, critical theory has an inherently evaluative/critical aspect.

Second, for Habermas, rational communication is not free from the determination of power from the observer's perspective. However, from the participant's perspective, they are distinguished from each other. In other words, from the participant's perspective, communicative action and rationality are the final bases for separating legitimate uses of power from illegitimate ones.[48] This viewpoint is widely disputed, but it carries an important insight about theoretical and practical discourse which no one (including critics of Habermas's critical theory) should neglect.

Finally, Habermas's theory of communicative action is not intended as a comprehensive typology of action, but rather for conceptualizing the bases of action

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[48] Similarly, Honneth talks about the difference between the actual degree of institutionally demanded repression and the degree of repression that is necessary at a given level of the forces of production in Honneth (1991), pp.272-3. Within the theory of communicative action, this difference between the two degrees in question is determined communicatively by social participants themselves.

coordination. For the function of action coordination, Habermas considers that communicative action and communicative rationality are primary, and other types of action and rationality are parasitic upon them.

This viewpoint is rationalist/cognitivist, but not in the sense that emotions, sentiment and so on are eliminated as unimportant. These elements of human social life must be subsumed under the guidance of communicative action and rationality in action coordination. Moreover, it is not moralistic. For Habermas, communicative rationality is a differentiated concept which includes three aspects. Habermas does not want totally to moralize it. Nor does he want totally to aestheticize it.

System versus lifeworld

Let me now come to Habermas's two-level theory of society. Habermas perceives society as being composed of system and lifeworld. To express his idea more accurately, Habermas suggests that it is useful to perceive society from the aspects of symbolic reproduction and material reproduction respectively. From the latter perspective, we perceive society as a system. And it is more adequate to adopt an observer's perspective in understanding it (as a system). From the former perspective, we perceive it as a lifeworld. In this case, we cannot avoid taking a participant's perspective to make the meanings embodied in it accessible for us. So it is our conceptualization of society which makes system and the lifeworld separate aspects of society. They are not distinct entities. It is important to mention here that this strategy of conceptualizing society is not arbitary at all.

It depends on the understanding of society I discussed in the previous chapter. According to this understanding, Habermas suggests that, while system and the lifeworld are not two separate entities in reality, we must keep them distinguished from each other analytically because they reflect different logics.

I have already indicated in the above chapter that Habermas does not suggest that there exists an isomorphism between action types and action systems; in other words, between instrumental action and system, and communicative action and the lifeworld.[49] However, because the lifeworld relies on communication for maintaining itself (that is to say, social integration relies on communication in the final analysis), it has a close affinity with communication.[50] The same holds true for system. System integration is basically constituted by non-intentional mechanisms of coordinating action consequences, so it has a close affinity with instrumental action.[51] Therefore, while the isomorphism in question does not exist in Habermas's critical theory, and therefore the distinction between system and the lifeworld cannot simply be perceived as a repetition (or extension) of the distinction between instrumental action and communicative action on the level of the theory of society, it is apparently true that the soundness of the former distinction depends on the soundness

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[49] See, for example, Joas (1988), pp.39-40 where Joas argues that Habermas perceives an isomorphism existing between them.

Habermas admitted that he was mistakenly committed to this isomorphism in his earlier writings in Habermas (1991), pp.250-1.

[50] It is because, for Habermas, the sustaining of beliefs, traditions, norms and values, etc depends on their capability to bind social participants through communicative rationality in the final resort.

[51] Communications within system operate only under standardized (or objectified) conditions, contexts with built-in structures; see Habermas (1991a), p.258.

of the latter distinction. It is not clear how far Habermas's two-level theory of society, or a modified version of it, stands if his theses that communicative action is logically distinguished from instrumental action and that the former is primary in the use of language are rejected.

For Habermas, the lifeworld also includes institutional elements such as scientific enterprises and other cultural and social institutions. It is wrong to suggest that, because it concerns meaning and intention, it corresponds with the micro-aspect of society. It is, therefore, also wrong to perceive system as representing the macro-asepct of society, in contrast to the lifeworld. In other words, the relationship between system and the lifeworld is not one of the micro- and macro-aspects of society.[52]

With the conceptual framework of system and lifeworld, Habermas is able to go beyond Weber in accounting for the nature of the market and the state bureaucracy. For Habermas, they cannot be conceptualized adequately with the concept of instrumental rationality alone. We must incorporate systems concepts for this task, because the market and the state bureaucracy are indeed non-intentional mechanisms of coordinating the consequences of action. So, as I have pointed out earlier, Habermas perceives that the problem of late capitalism cannot be simply conceptualized as the domination of exchange value over use value (à la Marx), or means over ends (à la Weber), or the domination of instrumental rationality (à la Adorno and Horkheimer). It is in fact the problem of the colonization of the lifeworld.

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[52] Habermas (1991a), p.262.

Still, while Habermas's two-level theory of society is highly illuminating, it gives rise to several queries. First, Habermas conceives that the lifeworld is primary in comparison with system, though they depend on each other. So social integration is primary in comparison with system integration. Why do we not simply perceive society as a lifeworld? Why do we need systems concepts to conceptualize society at all? Also, what gives Habermas the right to see the lifeworld as primary? Given Habermas's own criticism of functionalism, does his use of systems concepts to conceptualize the material reproduction of society commit him to the same fallacy he himself has criticized? Habermas argues that we can look at social phenomena from the participant's perspective or the observer's perspective. And he relates this distinction in perspective with the distinction between system and the lifeworld. This invokes queries concerning the relationship between these two perspectives, and the relationship between this distinction in perspective and the distinction between system and the lifeworld. Also, why must we keep system and the lifeworld distinguished from each other while they are not so in reality? All these problems become more complicated when related with Habermas's conception that the lifeworld has a more primary status in comparison with system.

To respond to this whole set of complex problems, I shall do no more in the present context than is enough to start a dialogue between Elias and Habermas.

Let us examine Habermas's reasons for the primacy of the lifeworld. From a sociological perspective, Habermas argues that societies are different from organic systems. They can only be constituted symbolically. In this regard, social survival cannot be separated from the conceptions of social participants. All social phenomena must be

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initially understood in terms of social participants' own conceptions. So we come up against the limitations of functional and systems analysis here. We cannot avoid taking the participant's perspective for this hermeneutic task of interpreting social participants' own conceptions. Within this context, Habermas believes that the analysis of the lifeworld has a methodological primacy over the analysis of system.[53]

Moreover, in his account of what he calls the uncoupling[54] of system from the lifeworld as an aspect of societal rationalization, Habermas does not mean that, from now on, social activities within the economic and political-administrative systems do not observe meaning and normative principles within the lifeworld for their support any more. Rather, for these two systems to operate effectively, they must be grounded on clearly defined and institutionalized laws, institutionalized practices of contract making and social rules. Now, these grounds are employed to define the standard situations within which social participants are said to enter these two systems. Social participants do not question the legitimacy of these grounds as long as the two systems function well. System is not like a machine. It does not function totally independently of the lifeworld.

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[53] Habermas (1991), p.254.

[54] This concept of uncoupling has the methodological implication that we must incorporate both the systems-theoretic perspective and the action-theoretic perspective to conceptualize societal development ---- particularly the differentiation of system from the lifeworld, the competition between them and the colonization of the lifeworld by system. And there is a methodological complement between both perspectives. But, because the lifeworld is primary, the action-theoretic perspective is also primary.

The systems-theoretic perspective primarily assumes an observer's attitude in social investigations while the action-theoretic perspective primarily assumes that the participant's attitude is central to it. It is an important topic how these attitudes are linked with each other. I shall discuss this below.

Misgeld agrees with Habermas's judgement on the primacy of the lifeworld. To develop this point further, he emphasizes the phenomenological aspect implied in the critical theory of society (which is an analysis which is deeply embedded in and focuses centrally on social participants' orientation towards emancipation from particular aspects of their own life situations). From this phenomenological aspect, critique and emancipation are effected from and in the lifeworld. The evaluative task of critique and emancipation are no doubt based on social participants' observations and understanding of their own life situations. These latter tasks are, however, performed within the lifeworld. In this situation, the observer's perspective which those social participants take in social understanding is subsumed under (or included within) the participant's perspective they take in their social practices and concerns in the lifeworld. In this vein, Misgeld queries why Habermas still needs the observer's perspective which is *distinguished from* the participant's perspective and conceptualizes society systematically and comprehensively as system and the lifeworld if the perspective of social participants is primary.

Misgeld's point is not whether we can adopt an observer's perspective. For him, social participants do adopt this perspective, but this perspective is directly related with their practical life situations and pragmatic interests. Now, it is difficult to see how the systems-theoretic framework which Habermas employs in elaborating what he sees as an appropriate theoretical framework for conceptualizing society from the observer's perspective can maintain this direct connection at all. This connection is very important for critical theory, for it is this connection which makes theory useful for human emancipation. So why do we need systems concepts to conceptualize the economic and political-

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administrative systems in modern societies and the social pathologies within them from this

observer's perspective which employs systems concepts (instead of theorizing them from

the perspective of the participants who are situated in the lifeworld and produce

understandings of society which are inescapably partial and guided by pragmatic interests,

to use Schutz and Garfinkel's terminologies)?[55]

There are some problems in this criticism of Habermas's two-level theory of

society. First, Habermas admits that the participant's perspective is fundamental, no matter

whether we articulate it explicitly or not. And this perspective is essentially socially and

historically situated in the lifeworld.[56] But Habermas believes that this does not in itself rule

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[55] See Misgeld (1985) for this criticism. See Misgeld (1986a) and Misgeld (1986b)
which develop this phenomenological perspective further. Misgeld calls this a critical
hermeneutic perspective, which is derived from Habermas's early writings; see Misgeld
(1985), p.57.

     This phenomenological approach to the theory of society, as it has been represented
so far, cannot be seen as idealistic. For it can recognize the existential limitations of the
participant and see him/her as embedded in his/her historical and social conditions. These
conditions may in turn reflect his/her material situation. Habermas, too, sees the charge
that a social theory focusing on social participants' orientation towards human emancipation
is inherently idealistic as unfounded; see Habermas (1991a), p.245.

     In his essay, Misgeld also criticizes Habermas's two-level theory of society as
primarily assuming an observer's perspective; see Misgeld (1985), section 2. I do not see
how Misgeld's argument stands, given Habermas's viewpoint which I have argued for
throughout this and the previous chapter, namely that communication is the original mode
of language, that the participant's perspective is primary in social investigation, and that the
lifeworld is primary compared with system. One can argue that precisely these assertions
are made from an observer's position. But Habermas's point is that all social understanding
presupposes a hermeneutic element. In this sense, the participant's perspective is primary.
While Habermas burdens himself with systematic analyses of all sorts, he does not ignore
the hermeneutic character of his own studies. This point is more explicitly expressed in his
arguments on foundationalism and relativism. I shall come to this point briefly in the
following chapter.

[56] In fact, for Habermas, not only the social participants under investigation are socially
and historically situated in the lifeworld, this is also the case with the observer him/herself.

out the possibility of a reference to society as a whole as a means of putting social participants' interests and values within a wider social context and pressing towards understanding their social conditions more comprehensively.[57] There is no contradiction between these two positions. The strategy, which seems to be implied by Misgeld's criticism, of giving up this latter task in favour of understanding society solely from the perspective of socially situated actors with pragmatic interests is unnecessarily self-restricting. It may even mean a decision to collapse the scientific enterprise which has achieved a degree of relative autonomy and expertise in societal rationalization.[58] To determine an adequate strategy for human emancipation, Habermas instead proposes a strategy of mediation/reconciliation. Under this latter strategy, a mediation is attempted between different aspects of rationality, and between professional/elite cultures and mass cultures.[59] This mediation is approached in such a way that the inner unity of different fields (which have differentiated out from each other in modern societies) is still respected. Habermas insists that we carry out the mediation without relapsing into scientism, moralism or aestheticism.[60] Put in a way which responds directly to Misgeld's concern, Habermas proposes the strategy of mediating the observer's perspective with the participant's

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[57] See McCarthy's argument in Hoy and McCarthy (1994), pp.220-1.

[58] Also, this does not rule out the possibility that scientifically established understandings of society can feed back into society to become part of social participants' understanding. It is precisely this link that makes critical theory useful for re-shaping society.

[59] Thus a mediation is attempted between lay knowledge and professional knowledge. I have outlined it briefly at the end of the previous chapter.

[60] Habermas (1985c), pp.208-10, 229-30 n.23.

perspective rather than assimilating the former into the latter. I believe this to be what

Habermas is arguing for in proposing a non-objectivist approach to social science.[61]

On the charge against Habermas's use of systems theory, it is useful to recall

Habermas's argument here. Habermas admits that unintended consequences exist in the

lifeworld. However, while we can use lifeworld concepts (and thus assume a participant's

perspective) to conceptualize (intended as well as unintended) action consequences and the

non-intentional mechanisms coordinating them, they soon come up against their limits.

Habermas judges that systems concepts afford the greatest explanatory potential for

conceptualizing unintended consequences of action.[62]

Now, McCarthy and Baxter argue that the recent trend suggests that the action-

theoretic perspective is superior to the systems perspective in the theory of formal

organization.[63] McCarthy goes further and doubts whether Habermas's use of the systems

perspective avoids the fallacy he himself has indicated earlier.[64]

Whether McCarthy and Baxter's arguments are correct or not, we certainly have to

admit one point. We cannot neglect the action-theoretic aspect of formal organizations.

The same holds true for systems in general. As I have clarified earlier regarding his view

about the uncoupling of system from the lifeworld, Habermas does not perceive that

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[61] See *ibid.* and *TCAII*, pp.396-403. I shall discuss this issue in more detail in the section
on rational reconstruction in the final chapter below.

[62] Habermas (1991a), pp.253-4.

[63] See McCarthy (1985b), pp.32-4 and Baxter (1987), pp.62-6. See also Mouzelis
(1992), pp.274-7 and Joas (1988), pp. 44-5 for some similar arguments.

[64] See McCarthy's query in McCarthy (1985b), pp.29-34.

elements of the lifeworld are totally irrelevant to system. So, to understand the actual

situation of any particular system (whether the economic system or the political-

administrative system of any particular modern society), we must undertake a hermeneutic

task to interpret the conception of the participants of this system, just as we do in the case

of understanding the lifeworld. However, one important difference separates both cases

from each other. To Habermas, the lifeworld is reproduced communicatively in the final

analysis. So the problem of legitimacy/validity is internal to the reproduction of the

lifeworld. Whereas, this problem of legitimacy/validity is only marginal or even external to

the reproduction of system, though it is not totally irrelevant for it. As I have indicated

earlier in this section, system integration is only related with this problem in an indirect way.

This is a relatively minor problem in system integration.[65] The vital elements of system are

in fact its non-intentional mechanisms for coordinating the consequences of actions, and the

degrees of effectiveness of these mechanisms in performing this task. This feature justifies

Habermas's choice of the observer's perspective of systems theory to account for them. So,

while we can investigate system from both the participant's perspective and the observer's

perspective, only the latter accounts for the functions particular to system itself.[66]

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[65] I have pointed out in note 51 above that, for Habermas, communications within system operate only under standardized (or objectified) conditions, contexts with built-in structures.

[66] It is possible to look at the lifeworld with an objectivating attitude, i.e. from the observer's perspective. But it inevitably involves an evaluative/critical dimension ---- for all social understanding involves judgements of rationality. Here we come up against the limit of this perspective. This view challenges the positivist doctrine of the logical distinction between theory and practice. Similarly, it is possible to look at system from either the observer's perspective (which tries to grasp its mechanisms for coordinating the consequences of actions directly) or the participant's perspective (which touches on its interpretative and normative dimension).

Despite his argument above, Habermas's use of systems concepts to account for action consequences is a point which still deserves further scrutiny. Habermas argues that we must move beyond the participant's perspective and take the observer's perspective to look at non-intentional mechanisms of coordinating action consequences in society. But this does not logically imply that we must use a systems-theoretic perspective for this task. (Of course, this query also challenges the conceptualization of the so-called material substratum of society as a system.) So far, Habermas's most explicit reason for his preference for systems theory has been its superiority in accounting for action consequences. In his magnum opus, he argues against Mead, Schutz, Garfinkel, etc and favours Weber, Durkheim, Parsons and Luhmann in perceiving the limitations of lifeworld concepts to account for action consequences.[67]

I shall leave open, and I consider it more adequate to do so, the adequacy of Habermas's judgement here. To be more open about this issue, what he writes is still inconclusive concerning the superiority of systems theory. Other alternatives have developed recently. Under these alternatives, our choice is not restricted between

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However, Habermas defines nature as part of the objective (or non-social) world which is grasped by human beings primarily from the observer's perspective. Having doubt about this restricted viewpoint towards nature, McCarthy questions why it is not possible to look at nature from the participant's perspective; see McCarthy (1985a), pp.189-90. Joas also suggests that Habermas's theory must take into account non-teleological forms of dealing with objects in non-social situations; see Joas (1988), p.39.

Habermas has doubts about this and other possibilities of dealing with nature under a non-objectivating attitude; see Habermas (1985c), pp.208-9 where Habermas sees this as a problem of the mediation between different aspects of rationality; see also Habermas (1986), p.177. In this way, Habermas retains a technocratic position towards human beings' relationship with nature and gives up Marx's ideal of reconciliating with nature; see McCarthy, *ibid.*

[67] *TCAI* and *TCAII.*

interpretative theories and systems/functional theories. Elias's work is one example of such alternatives; Giddens's structuration theory is another. These alternatives attempt to give unintended consequences, or the non-intentional character of action consequences, their due, while (as does Habermas) avoiding identifying society with biological systems. Up till now, I am not saying that Elias's work, or Giddens's, is superior for the task in question. I am saying only that there have developed competing models for accomplishing the task. An open dialogue with them is all the more vital in future.[68]

Honneth argues that Habermas's distinction between system and the lifeworld has produced what he calls a `double-fiction' of norm-free organizations of action and power-free spheres of communication. That is to say, for Honneth, Habermas's theory implies that there (possibly) exist organizations of action which need not observe any shared meanings and normative rules, and spheres of communication which are free from any domination.[69]

To Habermas, this criticism is based on a wrong understanding of the conceptual distinctions which I have discussed above.[70] First, Habermas rejects any isomorphism between action type and action system. So, while admitting that his conception of system has a close affinity with instrumental action, this does not imply that all activities within it involve only instrumental rationality. The same is true for the lifeworld. While the lifeworld has a close affinity with communicative action, this does not imply that all

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[68] I cannot enter into this dialogue here; let alone the implications for Habermas's critique of capitalist modernization if the systems dimension of his theory of society is to be amended as a consequence of this dialogue.

[69] Honneth (1991), p.298.

[70] See Habermas's reply in Habermas (1991a), pp.257-60.

activities within it are communicative by nature. What Habermas stresses in his theory of communicative action is only that action coordination in the lifeworld depends on consensus formation through linguistic communication from the participant's perspective, whilst action coordination in system takes the form where action consequences are regulated by non-intentional mechanisms in the final analysis. From the observer's perspective, linguistic communication is not separate from material conditions, and vice versa. They depend on each other. On the other hand, the system/lifeworld distinction is of central importance for making possible the critique of social domination. As I have argued above, this distinction is a constituent part of Habermas's theory of society. Habermas relies heavily on this distinction to conceptualize capitalist modernization as the colonization of the lifeworld[71]. Therefore the target of attack of Honneth's double-fiction is only a straw-man. It is based on a misinterpretation of Habermas's theory.

Let me now turn to Habermas's diagnosis of the problems of capitalist modernization. Let me recall Habermas's main viewpoints very briefly here. With his mode of conceptualization, Habermas asserts that system has not only uncoupled itself from the lifeworld increasingly in modern capitalist societies. It has in turn colonized it. By colonization, Habermas means that systems principles are not only differentiated from lifeworld principles. They also intrude into the lifeworld and gradually replace the principles internal to it. So what have relied on communicative rationality for their reproduction (e.g. beliefs, norms, values, mores, customs, etc) are now mediatized through the steering media developed in system (i.e. money and power respectively). To this

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[71] Habermas clarifies this point in Habermas (1991), p.247.

extent, while it is undeniably true that this development has also brought about progress to human social life from other aspects, Habermas perceives capitalist modernization as leading to its growing monetarization and bureaucratization. Modern capitalist societies resort more and more to system for their reproduction. In this way, and beyond a certain limit, their development is imbalanced and pathological.

A number of interpreters express doubts as to what uncoupling means to Habermas. For the understanding of this term in its literal sense seems to contradict Habermas's own view about the primacy of communicative rationality and the lifeworld on the action and societal levels respectively.[72] This point is crucial to Habermas's thesis on colonization. For what does he mean by the differentiation of system from the lifeworld (which then colonizes it)? To what extent can we say that system becomes independent of the lifeworld at all?

As I have just indicated, Habermas contends that system cannot exist independently of the lifeworld. The rationalized system still relies on the lifeworld in modern societies. System still depends on resources in the lifeworld to define and communicate its internal working to social participants. Partly because of this reason, social systems are in a very important sense different from organic and mechanical systems. So Habermas means by the uncoupling, or differentiation, of system from the lifeworld only that the norms governing activities in system are standardized and no longer need resort to communicative rationality for sustaining them as far as system is able to mobilize its internal resources to sustain itself. In this way, the material reproduction of society is greatly enhanced.

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[72] See Berger (1983), Baxter (1987) and Honneth (1991), ch.9.

Material constraint becomes less and less a condition of symbolic reproduction. To this extent, we can say, the analytic distinction between system and the lifeworld becomes to a certain extent real. But this should not make us neglect that they always require each other as a basic condition for their reproduction. They are interdependent. There is a limit to the differentiation between them. And there is no point in reifying Habermas's conceptual distinction of system and the lifeworld.[73]

Finally, before closing this section, let me come to a criticism concerning Habermas's neglect of problems internal to system. Some critics comment that Habermas's thesis of colonization centres on the competition between system and the lifeworld as the central problem of late capitalism. In this way, Habermas leaves behind a Marxian critique of capitalism which centres on the structural problems of market economies which generate destructive impulses in the long term. He thus leaves behind self-destructive problems internal to the market and state bureaucracy and seems to assume that they can survive without much difficulty. But it is still inconclusive whether this assumption stands on any firm ground at all.[74]

This criticism is important because it highlights an important difference between Habermas's position and orthodox Marxism. In his thesis of colonization and his proposal for a re-balancing between system and the lifeworld through the struggle of members of society to defend the boundary of the lifeworld, it is clear that Habermas no longer thinks that it is a viable solution to the problem of late capitalism to overthrow the market and the

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[73] Bohman also reminds us about this point; see Bohman (1989).

[74] See, for example, Berger (1983), pp. 202-3 and Roderick (1986), pp.165-6.

state bureaucracy (and even any type of expertise). To this extent, the class struggle of the proletariat has lost its dynamics for social evolution.[75] Marx's vision of communism must be greatly revised.

Furthermore, Habermas is not insensitive to problems internal to system. Some positive evidence can be found in his earlier thesis about the four crises of late capitalism[76] and his reconceptualization of this thesis under the new framework he develops later in his theory of communicative action[77]. Habermas shows that the market and state bureaucracy do not function without generating any deficiencies.[78] However, on the whole, the central problem of late capitalism is that

> crises that arise in the area of material reproduction are intercepted at the cost of a pathologizing of the life-world.[79]

Let me draw together the threads of this section. First, we should not reify the concepts of system and the lifeworld in Habermas's two-level theory of society by taking them as real entities. They constitute only an analytic distinction which manifests two complementary ways of perceiving society. In this theory, we can perceive society from the

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[75] This does not imply that working class movements have lost their effects for improving the living conditions of workers within capitalism.

   See Habermas's own discussion of the issue in an interview in Habermas (1986), pp.116-24.

[76] See *LC*.

[77] See *TCAII*, ch.VIII, especially section 2.

[78] Habermas (1991a), p.260.

[79] Habermas (1986), p.117.

aspects of symbolic and material reproduction respectively. For Habermas, these two aspects are interdependent. We should not reduce them to each other.

Second, there is no isomorphism between the action types, instrumental action and communicative action, on the one hand, and the action systems, system and the lifeworld, on the other. Nonetheless, system has a close affinity with instrumental action; so does the lifeworld with communicative action. So there are no such fictive existences as norm-free organizations of action and power-free spheres of communication (à la Honneth).

Third, Habermas conceives that the problem of capitalist modernization cannot be simply represented in terms of an action-theoretic conceptual framework. Habermas's two-level theory of society incorporates an action-theoretic framework with a systems-theoretic framework. It can then conceptualize the problem of capitalist modernization more adequately as the colonization of the lifeworld.

Fourth, though `system' and `lifeworld' are complementary concepts, the latter has methodological primacy over the former. For society is unlike biological systems. It must involve an aspect of meaning and social identity which can only be grasped by lifeworld concepts.

Here, contends Habermas, we come up against the superiority of systems theory as well as its limits. Systems theory has its limits in accounting for meaning and social identity. Its superiority rests in the way it conceptualizes non-intentional mechanisms of coordinating the consequences of actions. I contends that this latter judgement is disputable. There are competing frameworks for this task.

Finally, in distinguishing between the participant's perspective and the observer's perspective and granting primacy to the former, Habermas does not want to subsume the observer's perspective under the participant's perspective as being part of it (à la Misgeld). To sustain the function of critical theory as a serious, academic discipline, Habermas targets the conscious reconciliation/mediation between scientific truth and moral and aesthetic values, and between expert cultures and mass cultures, rather than conflating them.

I shall leave the discussion of the relevance of these remarks for the dialogue I am developing between Elias and Habermas for the remaining part of this thesis.

The ambivalence of modernity and a dialogue between Elias and Habermas

Let me draw out the merits of Habermas's theory for understanding the present situation of occidental civilization to facilitate the dialogue I am developing between Elias and Habermas.

Several points of convergence between Elias and Habermas can be detected in their works. In the first place, Elias has always been critical of the *homo clausus* image of human beings. He insists that we see human beings as living in figurations. The image according to which we can in some situations become isolated internally from other people who exist `outside' us is indeed the product of a particular figuration, and is thus a wrong expression of social reality. Habermas, too, rejects what he calls the subject-centred model, in favour of a communicative model of human action and society. So, in this regard, both Elias and Habermas reject the Cartesian distinction between subject and object. Moreover,

both of them reject the essentialist conception of human nature for the same reason. They see human nature as not static and fixed, but dynamic and subject to development.[80] They, therefore, do not conceptualize human autonomy and power in any romanticizing way. In any case, they do not take human autonomy simply as the opposite to constraint.

Both Elias and Habermas reject the narrowness of the Protestant Ethic thesis for understanding the development of occcidental civilization. A more adequate understanding of occidental civilization, and of the significance of the Protestant ethic for it, must be put within the wider context of social and cultural structural changes. More important, it is through this kind of study that we can understand more adequately the gains and losses of occidental civilization. Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer have taken long-term developmental perspectives for this task. But they are unsuccessful partly because they are committed to a *homo clausus* picture of human beings (à la Bogner), or a subject-centred model of human beings (à la Habermas). Therefore they are unable to understand occidental civilization in the differentiated and balanced way which is essential for grasping its ambivalent character.

Central to Elias's sociological investigation of occidental civilization are the features of the increase in human interdependence and the increasing differentiation of social functions. These non-intentional but structured[81] trends of social development have great survival value for human beings. At the same time, these developmental trends are

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[80] See Habermas's criticism of the essentialist conception of human nature implied in Freud's classical metapsychology, in Habermas (1985c), pp.211-4.

[81] Here, I mean that, as Elias perceives it, structures are manifested in social developments. I do not assume a deterministic view of social development.

accompanied by processes of social de-differentiation (or social integration). That is to say, a higher level of social differentiation is counterbalanced by a higher level of social integration. Since the 1930's, Elias has seen the next higher stage of social integration as moving towards the global level, which includes humankind as a whole.

This whole process of differentiation-cum-integration proceeds in parallel with changes in personality structure as well as in the forms of human community. From the aspect of personality development, the development of higher levels of social integration goes hand in hand with individualization. The present stage of individualization can be represented by the concepts `controlled decontrolling of affects and behaviour' and `informalization'[82] (which express the idea that the increase in individual freedom remains tied to and conditioned by the increase in the degree of mutual dependence between human beings from different social strata, localities, communities, etc). Anyway, these concepts signify the diversification of behaviour patterns, affect control and lifestyles among people. They also signify diminishing power differentials. Elias paints a picture of diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties in behaviour patterns, affect control, etc. Within this developmental situation, social relations become more and more fluid and open to experimentation. People have to negotiate with each other in non-violent ways.[83] Put very briefly, as human interdependence increases and social pressures spread more widely and

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[82] The concept of controlled decontrolling is used by Elias and Dunning; see Elias and Dunning (1986), esp. pp. 43 and 49. The concept of informalization is proposed by Elias and used extensively by Wouters.

[83] I have argued in chapter 4 that this is a general trend of development in the civilizing process in the Occident. This trend continues at different speeds in different societies. Also, counter-spurts of decivilization may occur, and they do occur, in some situations.

evenly across the whole society, and also because of the state-centralization of violence, the demands for mutual consideration and mutual incorporation increase correspondingly. As the processes extend and develop further, these pressures and demands are internalized (or psychologized) to become an integral part of people's personality structures. They therefore manifest themselves automatically in people's affects and behaviour patterns. The mutual identification among different social groups is thus established firmly in people's psychological make-up (or habitus).

This social condition alters the balance between constraints and opportunities for enjoyment, and control and relaxation, that prevailed in the middle ages. This alteration in effect makes human social life more burdensome, but also more enjoyable. Human social life can and must become more flexible.[84] Here, the growth of human autonomy goes hand in hand with the growth of social constraints and self-restraints; this casts doubt on the zero-sum model of power ---- though power may to a certain extent be zero-sum.

Elias indicates succinctly that this direction of developments in personality and social relationships has to be seen as, to recall a point mentioned above, grounded in the macroscopic process of state formation and the emergence of a market economy.[85] State formation, which develops within networks of intra-state and inter-state tensions and conflicts, results in a decrease in power differentials among different social strata, internal pacification and a shift in state control from private monopoly to public monopoly in the

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[84] This does not mean that it becomes less principled. The need for securing the internal coherence of the human self increases correspondingly.

[85] The growth of the monetary system and the market and the formation of modern nation-states are in turn aspects of the long-term extension of human interdependence. Elias pays more attention to state formation in Elias (1982).

long term. This provides a favourable condition (notably relative internal peace and stability) for further extensions of human interdependence and other social developments which follow from this.

Elias's sociological framework is sensitive to the close connection between intra-state and inter-state tensions and conflicts. So changes within states are closely connected with changes in the relationship between states. With this concern in mind, Elias's analysis of social differentiation-cum-integration applies to both the intra- and inter-state levels. It is hard to find parallel analyses in Habermas's work. Habermas's understanding of occidental civilization starts out from the concept of societal rationalization, which seems to be very different from Elias's concepts of figuration, human interdependence, etc. Still, we can find ideas in Habermas's work which are compatible with (and indeed parallel with) many aspects of Elias's main ideas I have just summarized in the preceding paragraphs. To list some of them briefly here, Habermas affirms the technological progress of occidental civilization. Unlike many Marxists and other members of the Frankfurt School, Habermas shows a more balanced, and thus comparatively a more positive, attitude towards social differentiation, the rise of the market, state bureaucracy and modern law. These modern social institutions which have differentiated from each other lock together in a way functional to societal survival. It is strictly impossible in his view for modern complex society to survive without them. For Habermas, societal rationalization not only affects social institutions. On the deeper level, it also mobilizes changes in the rationality potentials of the lifeworld, from the aspects of culture, society and personality. Elements of generalization and individualization can be found in these aspects. For him also, the trend

towards generalization in the transformation of social integration does not imply the elimination of social tensions and conflicts. Rather, they are contained (or absorbed) within higher levels of mutual consensus. And, as society becomes more rationalized, the development of these higher levels of mutual consensus depends more on rational communications among members of society. It is thus more difficult and costly to achieve mutual consensus on these higher levels. While this consensus on the higher levels among members of society cannot be replaced totally, relief mechanisms such as the market and bureaucracies function to reduce, up to a certain limit, the burdens of securing it.

I do not intend to exaggerate the convergence between Elias and Habermas in developing a dialogue between them here. There are limits to it. A major limit rests on the difference in their epistemological positions. This concerns the difference between them on the relationship between theory and practice. This difference is, to a large extent, responsible for the difference in their strategies and foci of concern for understanding occidental civilization and its present situation. Let me substantiate a bit the difference between Elias and Habermas on their images of occidental civilization and discuss the issue of theory and practice related with it.

Seeing the inherently ambivalent character of modernity in the Occident, Elias claims that he is only attempting to reveal its socio-historical background through developmental studies of the past. But we must not be misled by this remark. The significance of Elias's work is more than this. I have pointed out that Elias's studies do indeed convey a practical concern to illuminate the contemporary human social condition.

To what extent are these studies relevant to a social critique of modernity? Do they show sufficient sensitivity to the `scars' of civilization (to borrow Lasch's term here)?

I have indicated before that Elias does not perceive his own work as irrelevant to social critique. Rather, he suggests that we must take a more detached understanding of the real situation before we make any evaluative judgement about it. It is only when we can detach ourselves more from emotional involvement and the instant need for decisions and actions[86] that we can have more reality-congruent and more comprehensive knowledge of the situation and free ourselves more from the constraint of our wishful thinking, fantasies and ideologies which can blind us and lead us astray. And it is only when our knowledge of the situation is more reality-congruent and more comprehensive that the hope will be higher that our judgements and decisions are more adequate and realistic. Then the chance of success of our actions will be higher. Therefore science must be kept relatively autonomous in relation to disputes about political ideologies and other evaluative judgements.[87] This separation between theory and practice in turn helps us sort things out realistically and adequately, or, in Elias's terms, in reality-congruent ways. It is the congruence with facts that makes judgements and actions work, not fantasies and ideologies. So, for Elias, knowledge and social diagnosis on the one hand and evaluation, critique and therapy on the other stand in a complex relationship with each other. They are distinguished as well as not distinguished from each other, depending on the aspects we are talking about. Elias shares Weber's view that knowledge growth belongs to the role of

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[86] Elias calls this a detour via detachment; see Elias (1987), esp. Part I.

[87] See for example Elias (1987), pp.lxviii-ix and 16.

social scientists, whereas moral and political decisions and actions belong to the role of social participants.[88] But, in the final analysis, it is the interest in the latter which provides motivations for the former, and it is the reality-congruence of the former which guarantees the success of the latter (rather than the other way round).

In this vein, we can say that, for Elias, the intention to develop more reality-congruent knowledge does not eliminate the possibility of social critique; rather, it facilitates it. There are ways in which knowledge is relevant to critique.[89] Knowledge with higher degrees of reality-congruency certainly supersedes or corrects false beliefs. Not only that. In correcting our false beliefs, it sometimes also helps to reshape our plans, actions and social practices. Even more, some false beliefs are indeed illusions which function to sustain certain social practices and institutions which are in the interests of particular social strata, or function to secure the privileged statuses of these strata, at the expense of the interests of other socia strata. They perform this function by concealing these interests and privileges through misrepresenting them as natural facts of life or generalized interests. To this extent, these beliefs are not only false (in the sense that they are less reality-congruent and based more on fantasies and subjective imaginations). They are ideological in character.[90] Knowledge with higher degrees of reality-congruency can then function as

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[88] See Dunning (1992), p.255, who alludes to this similarity between Weber and Elias.

[89] Here, I take cognizance of Giddens's categorization of four different types of critique (which include intellectual critique, practical critique, ideological critique and moral critique) in his reply to Bernstein's criticism of his structuration theory, though this categorization is not intended by Giddens himself to be comprehensive. See Giddens (1989), pp.288-93.

[90] It is unnecessary to restrict this situation where certain practices or institutions are secured by certain ideological beliefs to the case where these beliefs are intentionally (and therefore conspiratorially) created and mobilized by privileged social strata themselves.

ideological critique to the extent that it reveals the illegitimacy/falsehood of these illusions, the reality behind them, and perhaps also the social conditions generating them.

Elias has never expressed himself systematically in this way concerning the practical concerns or relevance of his studies of occidental civilization. In fact, Elias suspects that, at its present state of development, human knowledge is still not adequate enough for guiding our pursuit of practical ends. Moreover, for him, while social actions are/can be planned, social processes proceed in ways which are unplanned and beyond our control ---- to this extent, they are blind processes. This implies that there are always gaps between theory and practice.[91] However, I think that there is no point to push this argument to the extreme that keeps theory and practice largely or even totally separate from each other. At least, the above categorization of the ways in which knowledge becomes useful for critique helps to clarify the ways in which Elias's studies are relevant to the task of evaluating occidental civilization.[92] It is based on the reality-congruence of Elias and his followers' own studies that they are able to suggest with rational grounds that the development of human interdependence is anything but smooth and that there are gains and losses in occidental civilization. It is also based on the reality-congruence of their studies that they are able to provide rational grounds for rejecting one-sided progressivism/optimism as well as one-sided regressivism/pessimism, correcting their false understanding of the actual situations of occidental civilization and pointing towards developments more deeply embedded in it that

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[91] See, for example, Elias (1978a), pp.68-9, 95; Elias (1984a), pp.282-3; Kilminster (1993), pp.83, 98-9; Mennell (1989), p.269.

[92] Elias does indeed talk about the function of knowledge for destroying myths and correcting false beliefs; see, for example, Elias (1978a), p.160; Elias (1984A), PP.265-7; Mennell (1989), p.268.

escape the sight of these two extreme viewpoints. More generally speaking, these (Eliasian) studies contribute to the correction of beliefs and hopes which have no real bases and the accumulation of insights as to what space is open and what resources are available for human will and action. All these are surely relevant for social practice and social critique.

Nevertheless, there remains a dimension of social critique in which Elias and his followers do not want to engage themselves but which is worth investing our effort. This kind of critique requires us consciously to incorporate an evaluative/normative ground into the understanding of the social phenomena under critique. In consciously incorporating an evaluative/normative ground, this kind of critique confronts directly and rationally not only the problems of reality-congruence and empirical efficacy, but also the legitimacy of evaluative/normative judgements. It brings both the explanatory and evaluative/normative dimensions internal to each other; the evaluative/normative dimension becomes a constituent part of the explanatory dimension.[93]

It seems to me that, for Elias, the evaluative task in question belongs to the role of social participants. Sociologists have only an indirect role in it. Their role is to give recommendations about facts to the social participants concerned. They assume ultimately an observer's position (or, the detached position of the sociologist, who takes a third-person perspective towards social phenomena) for this matter. Indeed, Elias perceives this observer's position taken by the sociologists as having the merit of helping the sociologists themselves to get more detachment from social participants' immediate involvement in

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[93] Giddens calls this kind of critique moral critique; see Giddens (1989), pp.290-1.

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existential problems. This detachment, therefore, makes it easier for them to keep their brains `cool' in perceiving these problems. This is an important precondition for getting more reality-congruent understanding of social phenomena. However, this Eliasian viewpoint on detachment and understanding may in effect expel the problem of validating evaluative judgements as external to the proper task of sociologists, because, according to this viewpoint, sociology directly concerns the validity of explanations of social phenomena (though it is not denied that these explanations are in various ways relevant for social critique). The question of whether the evaluative ground of social critique is right or wrong, or good or bad, is to be ultimately dealt with by social participants, not sociologists.[94]

Now, it is here that Habermas's critical theory claims its particularity. Habermas's critical theory does not claim that we can relegate serious scientific studies to a position where they are seen as simply serving to rationalize political ideologies, or that sociologists can take over the evaluative task of social participants for decision making in various

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[94] On this point, I am not implying that Elias is committed to a logical positivist position which holds a strict distinction between facts and values, and theory and practice. (This position is also not shared by Comte, who is a major figure in positivist sociology; see Elias (1978a), ch.1.) In fact, as I have indicated in chapter 3 and 4, Elias explicitly rejects this kind of conceptual distinction. For him, sciences can never be value free. But it has to struggle against the intrusion of social and political ideologies into its activities in order to defend its own integrity and, therefore, secure its potentials for the development of reality-congruent knowledge.

In this connection, Elias suggests that we should pursue a differentiation between autonomous valuations and heteronomous valuations, no matter whether in the natural or the social sciences. That is to say, we should distinguish as much as possible between values shared within/committed by the scientific community and social and political ideologies produced outside it. The difference between Elias and Habermas precisely lies in this point, rather than the issue whether science is/should become value free. See my discussion of this point in chapter 3.

dimensions of human social life. It only asserts that there is one way in which sociologists, or social theorists, can deal rationally with both scientific explanation and social critique.[95] The need to do so becomes explicit when our task is to sort out a possible way of securing human emancipation from excessive social control. This latter must consciously incorporate both an explanatory and an evaluative task, because it involves judgements as to what resources are available, what choices are feasible as well as what choices we make. In other words, it concerns both means and ends.

Let me make more explicit the reason for incorporating both an explanatory and an evaluative task in the pursuit of human emancipation. The understanding of the reality of excessive social control does not stay only with the explanation of facts. It points towards, and must indeed presuppose, an alternative where this excessive degree of control is relieved. It is from the viewpoint of this alternative state where we derive a standard to assess a particular situation as involving excessive social control, which is unacceptable, or unjust and requiring amendment. The alternative state, in comparison, is seen as a normal, anticipated or ideal state.[96] In other words, this direction of understanding must involve an

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[95] Indeed, this assertion can be put in a stronger tone. For Habermas, every social explanation inescapably involves an evaluative aspect because it must include a hermeneutic task of understanding and judging social agents' rationality. I have discussed this issue in this and the previous chapter.

[96] If the sociologist can assume only an observer's position in social understanding of this sort, and if evaluation is to be made by members of society alone, values must be seen simply as facts to be interpreted/understood hermeneutically (in the epistemological sense of the word; here, the participant's position in hermeneutical understanding is used only instrumentally to facilitate sociological explanation) by the sociologist when s/he attempts to explain social phenomena. The same is true for the normal state I am discussing in the text. The evaluative judgement of what is a normal state is to be a privilege of members of society. As a sociologist, s/he has no share of discussing them rationally. This position is indeed shared by Weber and Elias.

evaluative dimension. The sociologist who understands social reality from this direction tries to understand why and how a particular social phenomenon comes about and to evaluate it by taking a distance from it simultaneously. S/he does not take it for granted simply as something given, but as an historical situation which can potentially be reshaped. These two aspects cannot be taken as two stages in which the one follows the other. We cannot understand a social phenomenon as problematic without at the same time evaluating it.

I have shown in the previous chapter that Habermas's critical theory is an attempt to mediate theory with practice, explanation with evaluation, through consciously incorporating into it a normative ground. It is through this mediation that social critique (and more specifically, normative critique) constitutes a dimension internal to Habermas's critical theory. Therefore this theory confronts two tasks simultaneously: the validation of its empirical/explanatory claims, on the one hand, and its normative claims and critique, on the other.

In what way does Habermas's critical theory complement Elias's studies of civilization? I have made the comment that the task of explicitly conceptualizing the standard through which we can separate necessary degrees of social control from excessive social control has not been attempted by Elias and his followers. Although many aspects of Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer and Weber's social diagnoses are widely criticized as inadequate, as too narrow and so on, their contributions cannot be bypassed altogether. The social and cultural problems they identify and attempt to conceptualize are still very real and substantially felt today. This points towards the need to confront their works

constructively to develop a more adequate conceptual framework to account for these problems; as I have just indicated, this account involves both an explanatory and an evaluative aspect.

Now Elias and his followers may argue, and I agree with them, that they have developed some ideas similar to this. In talking about involvement, detachment and reality-congruency, Elias asserts that involvement and detachment do not constitute a dichotomy. This does not only mean that they mix together in reality and so cannot be separated from each other. Saying more than this, Elias perceives that some degree of involvement is required in social understanding. Dunning suggests that Elias coins the term 'secondary re-involvement' for this kind of involvement.[97]

Why is this kind of involvement required in social understanding? Elias suggests two reasons for this. First, it is from the sociologist's status as an ongoing participant in society that s/he is able to develop an interest in investigating problem areas and resolving puzzles. The second reason is that it is by assuming a participant's viewpoint (i.e. an 'I' or 'we' perspective) that the sociologist is able to understand what his/her object(s) of social investigation think(s) and experience(s).[98] In these two ways, the participant's viewpoint is closely connected with the observer's position (or the 'they' perspective) taken by the sociologist. Given this, Elias reminds us, as I have already indicated above, that, notwithstanding these two aspects of secondary re-involvement, the sociologist must also

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[97] Dunning (1992), p.254.

[98] See Elias (1978a), pp.127-8 and Elias (1987), p.16. See also Dunning's brief discussion of this point, (1992), pp.251-2. This belongs to the task of hermeneutical understanding, or *verstehen*.

sustain a role differentiation between the participant's position and the observer's position to maintain the relative autonomy of the social sciences, which is extremely important for achieving high degrees of reality-congruency in their findings. This way of perceiving the relationship between fact and value, and theory and practice, is on a par with Weber's thesis of value-relevance which I have discussed in the preceding chapters, though Elias's realist position separates him from Weber (who deduces his theory of ideal type from his thesis of value-relevance). It remains that values play an essential part in constituting the problem issues of social scientific investigation, but they are a disturbing element which potentially endanger the objectivity of social scientific investigation and therefore have to be kept apart from the latter as much as possible. Values remain in the background of social scientific investigation, but cannot be dealt with directly and rationally.

In the final analysis, Elias assumes that, just like the pair-concepts of involvement and detachment, reality-congruency on the one hand and short-term interests, ideologies, imaginations, fantasies, etc on the other form the poles of a continuum. The increase on one side goes in parallel with the decrease of the other. This realist position still misses the point of my argument for Habermas in this section. Elias is unable to deal with Habermas's problem of how we can consciously mediate facts with values, and theory with practice, in developing one type of explanation the direct function of which is social critique. Maybe Elias's concept of secondary re-involvement is intended to convey more meaning than has

been expressed in the two aspects just mentioned. What more Elias wants to express remains not clarified explicitly.[99]

I have argued earlier that Elias lacks an explicit conceptualization of excessive social control.[100] I have argued that this task requires us to integrate theory more closely with practice. The understanding of the reality of excessive social control points towards, and in fact must presuppose, an alternative state where this excessive degree of control is relieved. Now the point is that the problem whether this is a real alternative does not just involve an empirical question about its feasibility, it simultaneously involves the question of its desirability. This kind of social understanding concerning the critique of excessive social control necessarily has an evaluative aspect internal to it.

I am not intending to bypass the contribution of Elias's work in stressing this point again and again. Rather, I want, as I have said, to develop a dialogue between Elias and Habermas. Under this intention, I suggest here that Habermas's critical theory can complement Elias's work by his attempt to mediate between scientific explanation and social critique. This attempt gives us a powerful example of developing an evaluative

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[99] It may be true that the difference between the Eliasian perspective and that of the Frankfurt School concerning fact and value is just a matter of degree; see Dunning (1992), p.255 where Dunning states,

> it is our view that the `scientific' and the `critical' traditions in sociology need not necessarily be quite so incompatible as they are sometimes supposed to be.

For both Elias and Habermas attempt to mediate both traditions.

[100] This is also true for some other Eliasian studies. I have mentioned Dunning's discussion of social domination in gender relations in an earlier note. This aspect of gender studies is certainly illuminating.

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ground for conceptualizing the standard separating between necessary and excessive degrees of social control.[101]

Habermas's critical theory has merit regarding the issue of excessive social control because it gives a more important position to values in his critical theory than the two aspects of secondary re-involvement identified by Elias. In doing so, as I have said, Habermas does not place scientific explanation in the service of rationalizing and propagating political ideologies consciously or unconsciously. He does not want to conflate facts with values, nor to replace reality by wishful thinking, fantasies, etc. Rather, he wants, through one way of mediating fact with value, explanation with critique, and theory with practice, to put forth a fruitful way of understanding occidental civilization.

Communicative rationality and the critique of capitalist modernization

Let me draw together the threads of my analysis of Habermas's work to show briefly how the internal integration of understanding and critique is accomplished. Habermas sees the theory of rationality as central to social theory. But he distances himself from what he calls the subject-centred model of rationality and develops a communicative model to replace it. This communicative model of rationality is expected to become the new normative foundation of critical theory. There then arise several arenas of debate surrounding this communicative theory of rationality, none of which can be separated from the others. Under the theory of communicative action, it is claimed that communication is

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[101] I shall indicate how this is effected in the next chapter. This also indicates one way in which Elias can illuminate Habermas's work.

the original mode of language. I have already discussed what this means for Habermas and

how he justifies this point. According to Habermas, no user of language can avoid his/her

commitment to the pragmatic presupposition that, besides making his/her speech act

intelligible to the hearer(s), s/he is obliged to defend his/her validity claims before him/her

(or them).[102] Therefore the ideal speech situation where mutual consensus between social

participants reached through communication on an equal footing is already built into the

use of language itself as its universal-pragmatic condition.[103] Habermas does not say that

this pragmatically presupposed condition is already fully institutionalized in society.

Working on a theory of societal rationalization, Habermas tries to show developmentally

how rationality develops and is gradually institutionalized. As I have already shown,

Habermas's theory of societal rationalization covers the aspects of personality, social

institutions and culture. Through integrating this social theory with his philosophy of

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[102] I have discussed Habermas's justification of this position by referring to his view that there is a distinction between communicative action and strategic action and that the latter is parasitic on the former. I have deliberately left out any systematic analysis of the philosophical argument concerning what Habermas calls the universal pragmatic presupposition of the use of language, the pre-theoretical `know-how' of the communicative competence of social participants. I have only touched on it very briefly in my discussion of Habermas's argument on the fallacy of performative contradiction above. I shall come to this topic now, and shall come back to it again in greater detail in the next chapter, just for the purpose of clarifying Habermas's intention behind his use of this concept. I shall relate this concept with Habermas's viewpoint on foundationalism and relativism. Other complex philosophical issues related to it are outside the focus of this thesis and will therefore be skipped.

[103] See Habermas (1991a), pp.237-8, 243-4. This concerns the essential features of communicative competence.

Since this argument is put only on the pragmatic condition presupposed universally by all social participants of linguistic interaction, it is justified from the perspective of the participant, i.e. the performative attitude of the participant. Habermas does not think, from the observer's perspective, that communication on a totally transparent and equal basis actually exists at all.

language, Habermas intends to show that the rationality potential of conflict resolution and securing social integration through communication between participants on an equal footing, which is (as has been said) built into the use of language, has become available in the rationalized lifeworld of modern occidental societies. This rationality potential has become an integral part of the lifeworld and cannot be suppressed without generating pathological effects in personality, society and culture.

With this theoretical framework which is developed on the basis of the theory of communicative action, Habermas is able to provide an understanding as well as an evaluation of capitalist modernization. Habermas is able to go beyond Weber's pessimism concerning rationalization in the Occident. Through reconceptualizing the problem of capitalist modernization with which Weber and so many other social theorists concern themselves, Habermas provides a new direction for understanding this problem and shows that occidental civilization has not yet become drained of its internal potential to dissolve conflicts arising from the tensions between material reproduction and symbolic reproduction, and the tensions generated within the latter. This in turn points towards a new direction of human emancipation.[104] Specific to this latter topic, Habermas is involved in debates in the philosophy of language (concerning universal pragmatics specifically), moral theory and political theory; since the latter two are outside my own focus of concern, I shall leave them aside here.[105]

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[104] This does not mean at all that the conceptual framework is designed to explain every kind of social problems. It targets only problems which are developmentally relevant to capitalist modernization. See Habermas (1979).

[105] These areas belong to Habermas's defence of the discourse ethics, which became a major focus of interest in his intellectual development after the publication of *TCAI* and

What has just been summarized about Habermas's intellectual enterprise indeed leaves him with the burden of justification in these areas, some of which I have already dealt with. We should be reminded that, to confront this difficult task from the position of critical theory, Habermas does not only deal with a scientific explanation of occidental civilization. This explanatory task cannot be separated from the practical task of evaluating it. Therefore he must justify his theory on these two fronts simultaneously.

I shall argue later that Habermas's view regarding how these two tasks can be carried out simultaneously has not yet been well clarified by a long chalk. But a brief discussion of Habermas's dispute with Luhmann will help us to grasp Habermas's idea about this a bit more clearly, because it is in relation to this critical position that Habermas is involved in a dispute with Luhmann on the problem of the colonization of the lifeworld. Habermas is well aware that the description of the lifeworld as being colonized essentially involves an evaluative dimension. The meaningfulness of Habermas's judgement of the present state of capitalist modernization in the Occident as pathological (because the lifeworld is increasingly colonized by system) is based on an image about a future/anticipated state. It is based on this image that the present situation is conceptualized as problematic but at the same time as having the potential to develop into an anticipated state where the problems are resolved; I have argued this point several pages earlier. And

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TCAII. The discourse ethics are surely relevant to Habermas's critical analysis of the public sphere and democratic will-formation in politics.

In a recent interview, Habermas denies that his recent interest in moral theory reflects his need to clarify the normative ground of his theory of communicative action. His normative ground is rather the more general issue of the theory of argumentation; see *JA*, p.158.

while the potential for the realization of this future/ anticipated state is already present at the present stage of societal rationalization (i.e. capitalist modernization), this state is something to be pursued by social participants rather than a necessary, natural historical product. The justification of this future state as `better' (or as `healthier') than the present one and thus as worth pursuing is an evaluative and rational task.[106]

Luhmann has tried, argues Habermas, to conceptualize the same phenomenon from what he sees as a value-neutral, functionalist perspective. Thus what Habermas perceives as traces of the colonization of the lifeworld are subsumed within this functionalist perspective and re-conceptualized as part of the positive gains of the whole evolutionary trend of functionalization. Through transferring more and more social functions previously assumed by the lifeworld to other subsystems, the cost of the boundary maintenance of the societal system is reduced. The differentiation of the economic and political administrative systems and their becoming increasingly immunized from the burden of legitimation can be seen as part of this evolutionary process. As a corollary of this conceptualization, the critical power of Habermas's diagnosis of modernity is substantially neglected. What has been perceived by Habermas as pathological is now seen by Luhmann as evolutionary gains.[107]

I have discussed Habermas's criticism of functionalism before. In fact, this argument brings charges against the functionalizing of the lifeworld on two fronts. One is connected with its explanatory position, and the other is connected with its evaluative one.

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[106] See Benhabib (1986), p.277.

[107] See *LC*, part III, ch.5; *TCAII*, pp.307-12 and *PDM*, pp.353-4, 368-85.

I have shown earlier that Habermas's argument regarding the primacy of the lifeworld does not imply that we must abandon systems theory altogether. It only concludes that systems theory has its limits of application in explaining social phenomena, because society does not exist independently of social participants' own conceptions of it and their positions in it.

Habermas's charge against Luhmann's functionalism does not only concern its claim to empirical adequacy in the explanatory task it sets for itself. Habermas also rejects the evaluative stance linked with (or hidden in) Luhmann's theory. For Habermas, reason, meaning and identity belong to a category which cannot be translated into functionalist terms without any residue. As has been argued earlier, understanding social participants' rationality has an inescapable dimension involving judgements of the validity of their rationality. The sociologist undertaking the task of social understanding must also assume the perspective of a participant in making these judgements about its validity. When one radically functionalizes reason, meaning and identity, one only looks for their consequences for the pattern maintenance of a given system instead of directly confronting their validity. If one goes so far as to admit that what is significant or meaningful in them rests only on these consequences, one is in effect taking the force of reason as on a par with irrational influences. One is thus committed to the fallacy of performative contradiction in justifying this functionalist standpoint.[108] One is indeed unable to face one's own unavoidable evaluative commitment in one's act of social understanding. Saying that something is

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[108] It is so because, in providing reasons to justify one's position of functionalizing reason, one is performing an assertion/argument which contradicts the basic condition which makes the performance possible ---- the pragmatic presupposition that, in argumentations, mutual agreements are reached by the force of reason, i.e. the force of the better arguments.

rational or valid is more than just saying that it happens that we accept it or that we accept it because of certain influences. In giving up the difference between these two cases, one relegates one's own standpoint to be a sort of irrationalism.[109]

Furthermore, it is not only that this radical functionalism is empirically inadequate and self-contradictory, it has as a political consequence the technicizing of human social life, through contributing itself to further the social trend towards instrumental domination. For it recognizes only the functional, or instrumental, aspect of reason and leaves aside its communicative aspect. In effect, the communicative aspect of human social life (particularly discourses in the public sphere and all sorts of political will-formation) is reduced to becoming part of the instrumental aspect of it. It is this suppression of the communicative rationality of human social life against which Habermas fights so strenuously. From the evaluative standpoint which defends communicative rationality as remaining a core determinant in human social life, reason, meaning and identity cannot be technicized, or instrumentalized, beyond a certain limit, without generating pathological consequences.[110]

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[109] This is also a core argument in Habermas's criticism of Foucault; see Habermas (1986b). It is a central task of Habermas's theory of communicative action to provide a criterion, from the participant's position, for separating rational persuasion from acceptance based on irrational influences, material exchange or force. And this criterion becomes the normative ground of Habermas's critical theory.

[110] The term `pathology' has a very narrow scope of application under the functionalist perspective. It concerns only societal survival, and equilibrium and disequilibrium in relation to this goal. (Let us not query the clarity of the concept of societal survival for the moment.) The use of the term `pathology' in its original (and therefore richer) sense must presuppose a participant's position.

It is now clear that the thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld is not intended to be just a piece of self-detached scientific work. It is intended as an achievement in simultaneously providing a more appropriate explanation of the problems internal to capitalist modernization and defending a human self-image which is perceived by Habermas as having the potentials of dissolving these problems. This human self-image is embedded in Habermas's theory of rationality, which is the core of his theory of communicative action. In this light, Habermas's theory can be seen as carrying an intention to contribute efforts to the reconstitution of society through effecting some changes in our rationality (more specifically, our conceptions of ourselves and society).[111] In the present context of capitalist modernization, human emancipation is pursued through enlightening human understanding through revealing the ideological conceptions of the human self-image, social relationships and social institutions implicated in capitalist modernization.

A dispute emerges in this context. As I have indicated before, the core of Habermas's theory of communicative action rests in his assertion that communicative action is primary in the use of language. This conception becomes the basis of Habermas's theory of society, because making clear the structural features of communicative rationality helps to clarify the final basis of action coordination in collective social situations. And the rationalization of the lifeworld centrally involves communicative rationalization. I have

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[111] To this extent, Habermas's conception of critical theory conveys a concept of critique much stronger, or much more specific, than the conception of social science as critique expressed in Giddens's concept of the double hermeneutic. I have already indicated the critical intent of critical theory. In contrast to Habermas's case, the concept of the double hermeneutic is only intended to point out the practical interpenetration between social scientific understanding and lay understanding, and thus the practical influence of social theory upon the constitution of society.

discussed earlier the merits and weaknesses of this theory, which puts so much stress on

communicative rationality. Now, some commentators question whether it is adequate for

Habermas to draw the dynamic of modernity from lanaguage and to see the basis of social

consensus and conflict resolution as being embedded in language itself.[112] More

specifically, Bubner queries whether language per se implies an ideal speech situation, and

thus implies a utopia, a telos.[113]

To be sure, Habermas does not perceive language purely from the perspective of its

being used as a means of information storage and transfer. To him, its use for

communication is primary. Therefore, either Bubner's criticism misses Habermas's point

which stresses the internal connection between language and communication. Or, Bubner

may in fact see this point but still find a disagreement with it and want to challenge it

directly. I have already made my analysis of this latter position earlier and shall not recall it

here.

In making connections between language and modernity, Habermas implies that the

structural features of modernity I have discussed in the previous chapter are already

embedded in the human use of language for coordinating different aspects of social life.

These structural features have become more and more explicit and increasingly

institutionalized in culture, society and personality in recent centuries as a consequence of

societal rationalization. The validity of this connection in part depends on the validity of

Habermas's arguments about the distinction between instrumental action and

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[112] See, for example, Zimmermann (1984), pp.153-5 and Rasmussen (1990), p.42.

[113] Bubner (1982), p.49.

communicative action, and the telos of linguistic communication (which is expressed in the structural features of communicative rationality). It also depends on its adequacy for guiding social developmental studies of occidental civilization.

I have already discussed Habermas's viewpoint regarding the telos of linguistic communications (i.e. his view that communication is primary in linguistic interactions) and the problems which he confronts. I shall not rehearse my analysis here again. However, it is clearly the case that Habermas does not intend to infer a telos of civilization from the telos of linguistic communications. Habermas explicitly rejects the idea of the telos of civilization, no matter what form it takes; further discussion will be given on his distinction between evolution and history in relation to this problem of telos in the next chapter.

To Habermas, the egalitarian modern society modelled on the theory of communicative action points to a democratic way of conflict resolution and securing social integration. But it is still conflict-ridden. It does not preclude the plurality of the forms of life.[114] The theory of communicative action in no way implies in itself a utopia which is

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[114] Habermas (1986), p.176.

In Alexander (1985), pp.414-5, Alexander attacks Habermas's theory as having an ideological intent for achieving unconstrained and cooperative human relationships in society. But communication in itself does not imply agreement and cooperation.

I have analyzed the extent to which understanding can be seen as implying agreement in the earlier part of this chapter. To this extent, we can also say that communication implies solidarity. For agreements reached through communication express commonly shared judgements among the parties involved in it. They can be seen as the basis of action coordination and conflict resolution. To this extent, communication implies solidarity.

However, it is also important to see that, for Habermas, this commonly shared basis has its limits in modern pluralist societies where the problem is how to strike a balance between universally binding principles and particular forms of life rather than subsuming the latter under the former. In this pluralist context, Habermas perceives that it is important to defend the distinction between morality and ethics.

conflict-free and pre-determines the direction of social development. In any case, in an open and egalitarian, but also pluralist society which maximizes the space for autonomous social actions, action coordinations must in principle be negotiated by social participants through communicative actions; this of course does not preclude the possibility of the use of deception and force in actual situations. The merit of Habermas's theory is that it provides the most persuasive account by far which draws upon our best intuition to delineate and confront the problem of self-determination in moral and political life in the modern pluralized society.[115]

Some commentators point out that scientific discourse and truth, on the one hand, and political discourse and consensus, on the other, have become differentiated from each other in modern societies. It is doubtful whether language, or communication, to be more specific, is so all-encompassing that it can subsume both of them under the same heading (i.e. communicative action and rationality).[116]

I shall leave aside the debate about whether scientific truth can be identified with consensus in scientific discourse for the moment. The query just presented helps to bring out one point I have discussed in the preceding chapter. According to Habermas's differentiated concept of rationality, communicative rationality embraces three aspects: cognitive, moral-practical and aesthetic rationality. They are increasingly differentiated

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[115] I shall not go through Habermas's argument against Rawls's procedural theory and neo-Aristotelianism in ethics and politics here; see Habermas's brief articulation of his own view in Habermas (1990).

See Habermas's argument for the distinction between morality and ethics in *MCCA*, ch.5.

[116] See Zimmermann (1984), pp.158-60 and Rasmussen (1990), pp.43-4.

from each other and develop their own inner dynamics in the rationalization of the lifeworld. On the other hand, discourses in these aspects share one common structural characteristic ---- validity claims made within them have still to be defended with reasons alone. Besides this, the three aspects of communicative rationality which are differentiated from each other have to be mediated and reconciled with each other in everyday life practice. So the above criticism is beside the point as far as Habermas's argument is concerned. The point concerns the problem of differentiation-cum-mediation ---- with mediation as one form of integration. Habermas does not try to conflate scientific truth with political consensus at all.

CHAPTER 7

Theory Validation and Evaluation:
The Case of Occidental Civilization

Habermas's critical theory and conceptual distinctions

I have argued earlier, on Elias's side, that Weber's analytic approach (with regard to
his viewpoint that ideal types are intended, according to their relevance for certain value
concerns, to provide artificial models for extracting features of social and historical reality
for sociological explanation) is a central source of his mistakes in grasping the dynamics of
social reality and of his inability to go beyond his pessimistic view about value
irreconcilability. From the methodological aspect, Weber's dichotomizing and
decontextualizing mode of theorizing is unable to account for the dynamics emerging from
the interactions in and between different dimensions of social and historical reality. From
the aspect of social diagnosis, Weber does not pay enough attention to the development of
resources for more complex and higher levels of social integration in modern occidental
culture. Therefore he is unable to perceive the potentials which are still available for
conflict resolution.

Given this comment, I have on the other hand tried (in the preceding two chapters
and I will take such arguments further in the present one) to level some criticisms at the
major conceptual distinctions made by Habermas, which include the distinction between
instrumental and strategic action and communicative action, and the distinction between

system and the lifeworld. I have argued that, while the distinction between system and the lifeworld cannot simply be perceived as an extension of the distinction between instrumental action and strategic action on one side and communicative action on the other, the soundness of the former depends on that of the latter. And, while there are arguments against the distinction between instrumental action and strategic action and communicative action, this conceptual distinction captures an important insight about theoretical and practical discourse which should not be bypassed.

Now, are these two stances concerning dichotomization, one showing a negative attitude to Weber's commitment to this mode of thinking while the other shows a sympathetic attitude to Habermas's commitment to a somewhat similar mode of thinking, contradictory? Does Habermas duplicate Weber's mistakes?[1]

To answer these two questions, let me recall my earlier discussions on the major conceptual distinctions made by Habermas. Habermas points out the imbalance of Weber's social diagnosis which views modern occidental culture as inherently pluralistic and internally fragmented. The first thing Weber neglects is that social differentiation resulting from societal rationalization includes something much deeper than the differentiation of value spheres. Differentiation extends onto the level of rationality. Weber also neglects the point that we must not equate societal rationalization with value differentiation, or even the differentiation of rationality into different relatively autonomous aspects alone. Together with these levels of differentiation, there also develops the potential for higher levels of

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[1] The Eliasian critique of dichotomization is indeed a disturbing issue in my understanding of Habermas's thought.

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social integration. Habermas thinks that the different aspects of rationality which have been differentiated from each other have to be, and indeed can be, mediated in the lifeworld.[2] On this point, Habermas is not just making an empirical judgement that the different aspects of rationality still facilitate or interfere with each other's development in reality. He is putting forward this judgement as an evaluative stance which becomes his basis of social critique.

Habermas proposes the pair-concepts of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality, and system and the lifeworld to substantiate this social diagnosis as an alternative to Weber's. He then involves himself in sorting out on what level these pair-concepts are distinguished from each other and on what level they intertwine with each other. I have argued that this particular approach in conceptualizing social development not only produces an alternative social diagnosis of capitalist modernization, it also points towards an alternative direction for the pursuit of human emancipation. For Habermas, neither part can be separated from the other; I have touched on this point before, and shall discuss it in more detail below.

This brief summary draws our attention to the point that Habermas is not committed to any naive form of dichotomization. His conceptual distinctions rely on and indeed also illuminate a particular understanding of a sort of differentiation-cum-integration associated with societal rationalization in the Occident. Let me draw on three points I have made earlier to clarify further the nature of these conceptual distinctions. First, Habermas is certainly not committed to any naive form of distinction between the rational and the

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[2] Habermas also thinks that philosophy can do something about it; this topic belongs to my discussion of Habermas's conceptions of rational reconstruction and the reconstructive sciences in what follows.

irrational. As I have argued before, Habermas does not want to commit himself to an idealism concerning the development of rationality. He does not think that, from the perspective of the observer, rationality develops independently of material conditions or other contextual elements; the contrary is the case. However, from the participant's perspective, we have to differentiate them from each other. Otherwise we cannot avoid becoming self-refuting.[3]

Second, the intention behind Habermas's critique of power is not to make an absolute distinction between reason and power, but to separate, from the participant's standpoint, the legitimate use of power from the illegitimate use of it. Of course, this separation between the two uses of power is not incorrigible even from the participant's perspective. It does not rule out the possibility that we may later on improve our understanding of the actual situations of the involvement of power and discover that some uses of power which we have formerly regarded as legitimate are indeed illegitimate, or the opposite.

This issue of distinguishing legitimate uses of power from illegitimate ones is closely related with Habermas's conception of critical theory. I have pointed out earlier that Habermas's critical theory can be conceived as constituting an attempt at developing a nonobjectivist approach in social science which consciously mediates the explanatory account of social phenomena with the evaluative account of them. The mediation of the

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[3] In other words, we are committed to the fallacy of performative contradiction. See my discussion in the previous chapter.

observer's perspective with the perspective of social participants[4] (i.e. the mediation of an understanding of the use of power and its effect from the observer's perspective and an evaluation of its legitimacy from the participant's perspective in this case) is a central part of this mediation of explanation and evaluation, and is therefore of central importance for critical theory. This latter mediation is assumed (not only assumed, but insisted on) in Habermas's conceptualization of rationality and the problem of validity related with it, and the criteria of legitimacy of the use of power and the critique of illegitimate (and therefore unnecessary) uses of it. The problem of the legitimacy of the use of power is, as I have said, a core part of the ambition of critical theory to make contributions intellectually to the pursuit of human emancipation, to the elimination of social injustice. It is in this light that we can grasp the real point behind Habermas's conceptual distinctions.

Third, the criteria for distinguishing legitimate uses of power from illegitimate ones is built upon the distinctions Habermas makes between instrumental action, strategic action and communicative action and his distinction between reason and power, which are derived from them.[5] All these elements constitute the normative ground of Habermas's critique of capitalist modernization. Also, it is clear, from the discussion so far, that these distinctions cannot be rejected in any straightforward way by showing the fact that these distinctions do

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[4] To give an instance of this mediation here, Habermas argues that understanding social phenomena necessarily involves judgements of rationality, which in turn must involve the perspective of social participants. The explanation of certain social phenomena as problematic, pathological, or as leading to social injustice is another such instance. For, as I have argued before, the criterion for identifying something as problematic, pathological or leading to social injustice involves an evaluative dimension.

[5] And so are the distinction between the objective, the social and the subjective world, and the distinction between social evolution (i.e. societal rationalization) and history (i.e. the actual course of western history).

not strictly follow in reality `socio-historically'.[6] Habermas already admits the existence of this situation.

Now, how should we judge the validity of these distinctions? Are they empirically relevant at all? If they are, in what way? I propose that we can bring in Habermas's concept of rational reconstruction, or of the reconstructive sciences, here to answer these questions. I agree with some critics' comment that the concept of the reconstructive sciences is rather ambiguous.[7] And Habermas uses the concept for this purpose in a not very well-defined and systematic way. This sometimes leads to misunderstandings and internal inconsistency. Nevertheless, Habermas does make several points which are important for confronting the problem of validating his critical theory. Clarifying this latter problem indeed helps us get one direction for developing a fruitful dialogue between Habermas and Elias. In what follows, to avoid sidetracking, I shall concentrate my discussion on Habermas's viewpoint that his theory of communicative action includes a dimension which belongs to the reconstructive sciences. That is to say, I shall leave aside the broader debate about Habermas's conception of the reconstructive sciences per se but discuss Habermas's explication of the epistemological status of his theory of communicative action by bringing in the concept of the reconstructive sciences. I shall elaborate on how that concept illuminates Habermas's understanding of the nature of critical theory (and his

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[6] This is not the same as saying that Habermas's theory cannot be refuted empirically, or that it does not concern facts at all.
    I shall indicate more explicitly why those distinctions do not strictly follow in reality `socio-historically' (and why I put this word in quotation marks here) later on.

[7] See, for example, Hesse (1982) and Alford (1985).

theory of communicative action in particular) and its problem of validation. I shall also

discuss the problems that the concept generates.

For Habermas, one of the main themes of the theory of communicative action aims

at developing a theory of rationality through systematically reconstructing the intuitive

knowledge, the pre-theoretical know-how, of the competent human subject participating in

social interaction (to be more specific, linguistic communication). This intuitive knowledge

of the competent subject is a necessary condition which the subject cannot avoid when s/he

communicates with others. In this sense, this intuitive knowledge is indeed a transcendental

condition (or, in Chomskyan terms, a deep structure) of all human linguistic

communications. It is in this regard universal.[8]

From the aspect of a reconstructive science which attempts to illuminate the nature

of human communication through explicating its transcendental condition, the theory of

communicative action is different from the ordinary empirical sciences mainly in terms of its

procedures of exploration and validation. First of all, for Habermas, this theory proceeds

through transcendental reflexions on the features of communicative competence and its

development rather than through empirical observations of actual performances of linguistic

communication.[9] Through reflexions, it explicates explicitly the intuitive knowledge

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[8] Let me recall here that I have discussed in the previous chapter some criticisms of Habermas's distinction between instrumental action and communicative action and his view that communicative action is the original mode of linguistic interactions. These criticisms are to certain extent sound. However, we have to remember one point: Habermas's view captures one important insight regarding theoretical and practical discourses which cannot be bypassed. We cannot reject Habermas's view and at the same time avoid the fallacy of performative contradiction.

[9] Habermas owes the idea of this distinction to Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance in linguistics; see Hesse (1982), p.111. See also *CES*, pp.11-

already implicitly presupposed by the competent subject which makes possible his/her communication with others.[10] Also, unlike the ordinary sciences which primarily assume the perspective of the observer to objectivate data and establish explanations of these data, the reconstructive sciences remain tied in a particular way to their data.[11] They remain so because their object of explication is a reality which is already preinterpreted by social participants, i.e. it is symbolically structured by them. There is therefore an unavoidable hermeneutic aspect to the explication, an aspect from which the investigator has to respect the speakers/actors under investigation as subjects and partners in a dialogue. The investigator cannot simply take the position of a detached observer for explicating the meaning conveyed in their speeches and actions. (I have argued this point in my discussion of Habermas's view about understanding above.)

Now, in the present case of reconstructive science, as a social reality under explication, human communication is already preinterpreted by social participants. It is in

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2, 15 on the distinctions between rule and content, know-how and know-that, and first-order and second-order know-that, all of which point towards this direction. While the reconstructive sciences target the former part of these distinctions, the empirical sciences investigate the latter. Habermas detects a similar distinction in Piaget's psychology of cognitive development; see *ibid.*, p.20.

See McCarthy (1978), pp.277-8 for McCarthy's discussion of Habermas's use of Chomsky's insight that the reconstructive sciences proceed through reflexions on competences rather than direct observations on performances.

[10] This procedure is shared by Chomsky in linguistics; see *CES*, ch.1, esp. pp.13-24, also *KHI*, pp.378-9. See also Hesse (1982), p.111.

[11] Assuming a subject/object distinction and a primarily observer's perspective in explaining data, the ordinary sciences (the physical sciences being a typical example of them) interpret data and attribute meaning to them based on their theoretical backgrounds. The interpretation of data is ultimately theory-dependent. The correction and refutation of theory directly lead to changes in the interpretation of data.

part constituted by the interpretation of social participants themselves. Given this point, it is impossible that all parts of their interpretation can be bypassed or considered wrong in our explication of human communication. Therefore we can say that their interpretation is to a certain extent incorrigible by the theories explicating it; or, rather, the reconstructive sciences do not correct the interpretation of data in the same way as the ordinary sciences. Now, since the intuitive knowledge which makes human communication possible is already presupposed by the competent subject him/herself and is a constituent part of his/her communication with others, what the reconstructive sciences seek to do is not to reshape it. Rather, they explicate it.[12] To this extent, their explications produce essentialist claims, i.e. claims about real existences and their essential features, because, instead of attributing meaning externally to human communication, they attempt to make explicit something already deeply embedded in it, which is also a constituent element implicitly shared among social participants as a core part of their intuitive knowledge.[13]

To draw together the implications of the above argument, Habermas's concept of the reconstructive sciences is useful for clarifying the epistemological status of his theory of communicative action in several regards. In my view, with this concept, Habermas is able to show that his critical theory centres around a theory of rationality as its normative basis. This theory of rationality is not intended by Habermas as a purely empirical theory; rather, it develops through a rational reconstruction of the transcendental condition which makes human communication possible. While this transcendental condition of human

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[12] This point is made explicitly in *KHI*, postscript and *CES*, ch.1.

[13] *CES*, p.16.

communication is perceived by Habermas as universally shared among social participants, it does not enjoy independent existence like physical objects. We can only explicate it through reflexion rather than identifying it through direct observation and empirical generalization. And this kind of explication centrally involves a hermeneutic aspect.

Problems emerging from the concept of the reconstructive sciences

I have not yet touched on the issues of what explication exactly is and how it is related with the explanation-evaluation problem I have been discussing so far. I have also not yet explained how the concept of the reconstructive sciences illuminates the problem of validating Habermas's critical theory. I shall now discuss several attacks on Habermas's strategy of incorporating the concept of the reconstructive sciences to indicate the particularity of his critical theory and confront its problem of validation. I think that Habermas's position on these two issues will become clearer by going through the following discussion of these criticisms.

In the first place, there is the criticism that Habermas's distinction between the ordinary sciences and the reconstructive sciences is built onto a positivist interpretation of the natural sciences, and this interpretation is mistaken and has already been rejected by many philosophers of natural science recently.[14] Second, the essentialist stance behind

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[14] See Hesse (1982), especially the first half of the essay. See also Alford (1985), pp.324-9.
    Positivism is not at all a coherent thesis. Generally speaking, according to the positivist reading of the natural sciences, theory refers to an objectively given reality. A subject/object distinction must be kept between theory and reality. And therefore evaluative questions must be kept outside the realm of scientific explanation to secure the

Habermas's concept of the reconstructive sciences is open to the attack that it falsely implies that there is something given out there ---- the intuitive knowledge of the competent subject participating in human communication in the present case. Therefore there can only be one correct interpretation of it. The reconstructive sciences must take a value-neutral position (and must therefore separate scientific explanations of facts from evaluative judgements) to depict this external reality. Being perceived as assuming this view, Habermas's concept is judged as replicating the mistake of the correspondence theory of truth, which he himself rejects.[15]

The third charge is raised by McCarthy.[16] It concerns a more fundamental issue. As I have pointed out above, the pre-interpreted character of situations of human communication is a major point for supporting Habermas's separation of the reconstructive sciences from the ordinary sciences. It is this character that justifies a way of social investigation which is different from the ordinary sciences where the objectivating attitude is central. Now, a confusion emerges as to whether, for Habermas, the social sciences belong to the category of the ordinary sciences or the reconstructive sciences. For the social sciences have both an empirical and a hermeneutic character.

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objectivity of the latter. In contrast, according to the post-positivist position, descriptions of reality are theoretically relative. To this extent, data do not exist outside theory. Scientific explanation is essentially value-laden. It necessarily involves a hermeneutic dimension for interpreting theories and data just as in the social sciences.

[15] Hesse, *op. cit.*, pp.112-3 and Alford, *op. cit.*, pp.331-3.

[16] McCarthy presents this criticism in McCarthy (1985), pp.183-6.

To stick to my specific purpose for discussing Habermas's concept here, I shall leave aside the first charge (which concerns the natural sciences).[17] Because a clarification of Habermas's stance in relation to the third charge would help me set the background for my discussion of the second charge, let me turn to the third charge first.

Let me clarify the issue of this charge. It is Habermas's view that social phenomena convey meaning. They are pre-interpreted. Understanding them is a hermeneutic task which unavoidably involves judgements of rationality. This whole task puts the investigator in a participant's position to enter into a (virtual) dialogue with the social actors s/he is attempting to understand and reconstruct their rationality. That means, all social sciences --- because their target is understanding social phenomena ---- also have the unavoidable hermeneutic and reconstructive character which is intrinsic to the reconstructive sciences. They can never be taken properly as ordinary sciences (as they are conceptualized by Habermas).[18] It then seems straightforward to classify the social sciences as reconstructive sciences.

However, this classification trivializes Habermas's concept of the reconstructive sciences. If all social sciences are themselves reconstructive sciences, then what is the particularity of the reconstructive sciences? In fact, for Habermas, the reconstructive sciences aim not at describing and explaining social phenomena, though they provide

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[17] Habermas himself rejects this understanding of his viewpoint of the natural sciences in his reply to Hesse's criticism in Habermas (1982), pp.274-6. In his theory of communicative action, Habermas is only offering a minimal and procedural concept of truth in the ordinary sciences. This concept of truth makes space for a nonpositivist standpoint on the natural sciences.

[18] Habermas takes the physical sciences as the exemplary case of ordinary science in *KHI*, Postscript and *CES*, ch.1.

general frameworks to facilitate these tasks. Apparently, the reconstructive sciences target universal, and indeed transcendental, issues related to these social phenomena.[19] This classification, which conflates both sciences together under one category, contradicts Habermas's intention to differentiate his theory of communicative action from other theories in social science which deal with substantive issues of social explanation.[20] Therefore the difficulty about the epistemological status of the social sciences is that they are not ordinary empirical sciences; they are not reconstructive sciences, either. But, on the other hand, as the social sciences are empirical in character and necessarily involve a hermeneutic and reconstructive aspect, they are both ordinary empirical sciences and reconstructive sciences to a certain extent. This understanding leaves the social sciences in a very ambiguous situation.

Habermas did not reply to McCarthy's query directly in his response to the commentators on his theory of communicative action.[21] But Habermas did two things there which I think are relevant to this query (though they in no way give any satisfactory

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[19] This separation is apparent in Habermas's contrast between empirical psychology and developmental psychology (such as Köhlberg's theory of moral development) in *MCCA*, ch.2 and empirical linguistics and transcendental linguistics in *CES*, ch.1. Under this contrast, it seems clear that Habermas conceives the social sciences, or at least part of them, as a kind of ordinary empirical sciences.

However, this conception of the social sciences as a kind of empirical science is also problematic because, for Habermas, the ordinary sciences do not have the hermeneutic element which is assumed by tthe social sciences.

[20] Habermas also differentiates his theory from critical reflection, or self-criticism. The former refers to the normative base of social critique and other related general issues. The latter refers to substantive criticisms of social phenomena. See, for example, *KHI*, pp.377-8 and Hesse (1982), pp.110-1.

[21] Habermas (1985).

solution to it). For the first thing, Habermas reaffirmed that his intention of introducing the

concept of the reconstructive science is to defend a nonobjectivist perspective in social

science and to specify how value is involved in understanding social phenomena. He

reminded us that, by bringing values centrally into social investigation, his intention is not to

abandon the pursuit of truth altogether. Rather, he suggests a perspective to this pursuit

which, while it recognizes the hermeneutic character of knowledge, takes seriously the

transcontextual aspect of our validity claims. Accepting the evaluative character of

knowledge does not imply that this transcontextual aspect is eschewed automatically. In

this way, this perspective distances itself from both foundationalism and relativism. I shall

return to this point in the next section.[22]

The second thing Habermas did in his reply to the commentators on his theory was

that he reminded us that, partly as a corollary of the above point on the nonobjectivist

perspective in social science which seeks to build a bridge between fact and value, and

explanation and evaluation, one of the intentions of his theory is to suggest that mediation

still exists between truth, ethics and morality, and art in modern occidental culture.

Habermas's critical theory precisely provides an exemplary case of this attempt at

mediation.[23] As I shall point out below, the concept of the reconstructive sciences is

helpful for showing how explanation is mediated with evaluation, how truth is mediated

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[22] *Ibid.*, pp.205 and 229-30 n.23.

[23] *Ibid.*, p.209.
    I have also earlier exposed Habermas's understanding of communicative rationalization in the Occident. Habermas argues that, in this process of development, different aspects of reason are increasingly differentiated from each other. At the same time, there still remain areas where these aspects can be mediated with each other again. This understanding provides a further reason for Habermas's own attempt at this mediation.

with ethics and morality ---- particularly in critical theory. This in turn suggests one direction for tackling the problem of validating Habermas's theory of communicative action. I shall also indicate the limits to this direction towards the end of this section.

We have to admit that these two re-assertions of Habermas's own position do nothing to confront the confusion regarding the relationship between the social sciences and the reconstructive sciences. To this extent, McCarthy's criticism is legitimate.[24] However, they do indeed make more explicit the intentions behind Habermas's suggestion regarding the concept of the reconstructive sciences ---- which I have just discussed.

Now, let me turn to the second attack on Habermas's distinction between the ordinary empirical sciences and the reconstructive sciences. The charge against Habermas's internal inconsistency in his critique of positivism is in one sense sound. It is so because, in responding to charges on this point, Habermas has not actually made explicit what he means by explicating the intuitive knowledge which makes human communication

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[24] I have no intention here to solve the problem of the relationship between the social sciences and the reconstructive sciences, but it may be useful to suggest one possible direction to resolve it. Habermas claims that all social sciences unavoidably involve judgements of rationality, and that the latter involve a reconstructive task. On the other hand, it is apparent that the reconstructive task is not the central target of the social sciences. The focus of the social sciences is making sense of social phenomena. So, it appears that there is a shift in concern between the social sciences and the reconstructive sciences; it is the matter of concern, or the orientation behind them which separates them from each other. This suggests that an intellectual division of labour exists between both sciences.

This modification in Habermas's distinction may still evoke disputes. But I think that it makes the best sense of Habermas's distinction. One thing is clear in this suggestion: the distinction between the two sciences is not a clear-cut and sharp one, because they overlap and interweave with each other to varying degrees. Pure types of them constitute the poles of a continuum where these pure types do not exist in actual intellectual practices.

possible.[25] Does the social investigator take only an observer's position in explicating this intuitive knowledge? Or, must s/he also take an evaluative stance in this explicating task? If s/he must (as I have just pointed out), then what point does Habermas want to make in using the term `essentialist'?

These questions concern the problem of the extent to which we can say that the intuitive knowledge which makes possible human communication *really exists*. I have said that, as part of the universal underlying structure of human interaction, this intuitive knowledge which must be presupposed pragmatically by all participants of human communication has to be revealed through a task of explication, but not depicted as an independent reality. Let me now expand this point.

To be sure, this intuitive knowledge does not have the status of an existence like a physical object. It does not follow mechanistically that this intuitive knowledge will have its effect whenever human subjects participate in communications with one another. It can be violated, and therefore may not be realized in some situations. The task of identifying it requires us to indicate typical (or standard/normal) cases where this necessary element of communication becomes realized and to separate them from deviant cases where it is lacking, such as in cases of deception.[26] For Habermas, this intuitive knowledge is deeply

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[25] Habermas has not yet done this though he has already put forward his viewpoint on the nature of human understanding and the internal connection between understanding and critique in other contexts of debate.

[26] To be sure, the contrast between the normal or typical state and the deviant state must be put into the context of Habermas's contrast between the actual situation of capitalist modernization and an anticipated state where the rationality potentials already developed are realized and pathologies generated within capitalist modernization are resolved. The contrast between the normal and the deviant must not be simply understood in statistical

embedded as a potential, a resource, in our rationality (or, more narrowly speaking, in the rationality developed in the Occident). It does not follow from this situation that this potential will always become realized in human communications. Now, this whole task is itself a reconstruction of actual cases of human communication rather than strictly a generalization of observed features of them. It involves a procedure of categorizing these features as typical/standard/normal and deviant cases of communication according to some given standard or principle about levels of learning processes and developments of rationality potentials. This procedure is in turn a reconstructive task which must involve an evaluative aspect which fits in with the social investigator's own rationality, at least by the fact that social understanding must involve judgements of rationality. As I have argued before, this need not simply be a projection of the investigator's value position in judging these cases, but can involve a (virtual) dialogue and mutual critique between subject and object.[27] Here, a participant's perspective is assumed from both sides. In other words, the investigator must mediate a participant's perspective with his/her observer's perspective in the categorization just mentioned.[28]

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terms. I have discussed the real meaning Habermas wants to convey by these terms in the preceding chapter.

[27] *MCCA*, pp.31-2.

[28] This does not in any way imply that the incorporation of an evaluative aspect, and therefore a participant's perspective, injects a noncognitive or irrational element into scientific explanations of facts. Habermas does not think that reason does not play any part in evaluative judgements. There is a cognitive aspect to them. In modern societies, rationality has differentiated into three relatively autonomous but still interrelated aspects. The present case of the reconstructive sciences represents a particular way in which these aspects of rationality are mediated with each other.

We can now conclude that the kind of essentialism Habermas puts forward here does not imply a retreat to a positivist stance in his conceptualization of an aspect of his critical theory as a reconstructive science. The target of the reconstruction of the reconstructive sciences is, as I have just clarified, something real in a specific sense. Through explication, the intuitive knowledge constitutive of human communication is identified as a kind of potential rather than a strictly empirical reality. The realization of this potential produces typical (or standard, normal) cases of communication. But this does not rule out the possibility of deviant cases where the potential is not realized. In this situation, we can say (seemingly paradoxically) that the potential for real communications both exists and does not exist in reality. It does not exist because it is not realized in these situations of communication. Nevertheless, it still exists (and can be identified ---- and Habermas is precisely attempting to do this job) as a potential embedded in these deviant cases.[29] The identification of this potential in deviant cases of communication is of central importance for Habermas's critical theory because it is precisely here that his theory of communicative action can perform the critical function through which these situations are described as deviant and, parallel to this, an alternative to them can be constructed as an anticipated state where relevant potentials developed in rationality are realized and social pathologies are resolved.

Now, Habermas also shows that, just as has critical theory, theories in reconstructive science have an internal connection with the intuitive knowledge they

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[29] I owe this idea to Kilminster though I do not personally share his comment on Habermas's position; see Kilminster (1991b), pp.93-4.

attempt to explicate.[30] The point here is that the explication in question in fact has an impact upon social participants' own awareness and conception of this intuitive knowledge. In this way, the explication can play a part in the (re-)constitution of this knowledge itself and its place within actual communications.[31] It performs a constructive function here. This sort of internal connection between theory (i.e. theories in reconstructive science) and data (i.e. social participants' intuitive knowledge) manifests a critical function of the reconstructive sciences which does not exist in the ordinary sciences, and indeed also not in the natural sciences.

It is worth recalling here and developing further a point which I have just made concerning the incorporation of the concept of the reconstructive sciences to illuminate the nature of Habermas's critical theory and its problem of validation.   The constructive function I have just mentioned of the reconstructive sciences in categorizing and systematizing typical cases, and its critical role because of this function, is a feature commonly shared among many branches of studies such as Chomsky's linguistic theory, Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Köhlberg's theory of moral development. But these theories cannot be properly called critical theories, though they do indeed illuminate the latter. What particularity does Habermas's critical theory claim to separate it from these other branches of reconstructive science?

Here we come up against the limits of the strategy of incorporating the concept of the reconstructive sciences to illuminate critical theory. Indeed, critical theory has two

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[30] Habermas (1982), p.278.

[31] It is of course true that the acceptance of this explication by different social strata and the institutionalization of it in daily social practices depend on material conditions.

central features which distinguish it from the reconstructive sciences. Let me discuss them in some detail now. First, no matter whether other branches of what Habermas calls the reconstructive sciences share his ambition or not, the central intention behind Habermas's critical theory is (and let me recall it briefly here) the critique of social injustice and the struggle for human emancipation in the context of capitalist modernization. To realize this end, Habermas integrates the observer's perspective assumed by the social sciences with a participant's perspective to develop a theory of rationality (which is his theory of communicative action) through a reconstructive task of the communicative competence of participants in social interactions;[32] and it is here that Habermas establishes his stance on the distinction between instrumental, strategic and communicative action. This theory of rationality is not intended by Habermas to be a comprehensive characterization of human rationality. It only presents a minimal conception of human rationality which describes an element fundamental to human rationality, which is necessarily shared among participants in social interaction. In presenting a minimal conception of rationality, this theory does not exclude other attempts to further characterize additional features of it. More importantly, for Habermas, while this minimal conception of rationality is a product of reconstruction which integrates both the observer's and the participant's perspective, the participant's

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[32] For Habermas, this communicative competence does not remain unchanged throughout human history. It has a developmental/ diachronic aspect. (See for example Honneth (1991), p.282 and Bohman (1991), pp.140-1.) This aspect is accounted for in Habermas's analysis of communicative rationalization. For Habermas, communicative rationalization represents a process of collective learning through which human beings' rationality potentials expand.

This developmental viewpoint does not imply an uncritical and overoptimistic view towards human social development. Habermas is aware that new levels of evolutionary gains couple with new sorts of problems. See *CES*, p.164 and Benhabib (1986), pp.270-1.

perspective has a central part in it. It starts from a participant's perspective to reconstruct

the condition that competent participants of human communication cannot violate. In this

way, a theory of rationality is provided as a sound normative base for Habermas's critical

theory while the centrality of the participant's perspective is still sustained.

This minimal conception then becomes the basis for separating

typical/standard/normal cases of human communication from deviant ones. If my

interpretation of the connection between the different dimensions of Habermas's work is

correct, then we can see that this separation between typical and deviant cases of

communication is important for Habermas's social critique. As I have argued before, it

provides the basis for developing a whole set of conceptual distinctions employed in his

theory and his concepts of universalizable human interests and systematically distorted

communication, and for elaborating how systematically distorted communication appears

on different levels of human social life.[33] For Habermas can then conceptualize

universalizable human interests as outcomes of real communications where their legitimacy

is checked, challenged and defended among social participants. Conversely, some

particular interests are disguised as universalizable, and this disguised form taken by

particular interests may be systematically stabilized in human understanding and

communication, social institutions, norms and values and so on. This whole situation subtly

generates a particular sort of social injustice which Habermas's critical theory aims at

uncovering.

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[33] See Bohman's elaboration of this point in Bohman (1991), pp.211-7.

Within this direction of social critique, Habermas abandons the one-sided

philosophies of history developed by Marx, Lukács, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse.

He also reconstructs Weber's concept of societal rationalization which then equips him with

a perspective which views occidental civilization from the direction of the development of

human rationality and communication and their embodiment in social institutions[34].

Habermas is therefore able to perceive historical reality from the direction where we can

question what rationality potentials have developed historically in the Occident and whether

they are actually fully realized or are only realized in an imbalanced way. He can also

identify how this imbalanced embodiment (or institutionalization) of rationality potentials

results in social injustice and other social pathologies.[35] Through this procedure, a gap is

identified between the ideal construct of the balanced development of rationality potentials

(i.e. the balanced development of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality)

and their institutionalization on one side and the historical reality of their imbalanced

development and institutionalization as it is manifested in capitalist modernization (i.e. the

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[34] Here, let me recall a point I have posed in the previous chapter. Habermas's distinction between instrumental, strategic and communicative action applies to the level of human rationality and interaction. But this distinction cannot be applied directly to the social institutional level. Social analysis on this level must be related back to Habermas's distinction between system and the lifeworld. I have also discussed the relationship between these two levels.

Habermas claims that he goes beyond Weber in suggesting this two-level theory of modernization, whereas Weber lacks adequate terminologies for analysis on the institutional level.

[35] It is under this perspective that Habermas suggests the pair-concept of selective and non-selective patterns of societal rationalization to reconstruct Weber's theme for understanding occidental civilization. See *TCAI*, ch.II and *TCAII*, ch.VIII, section 1. See, for example, Habermas (1986), pp.110-1 where Habermas spells this out as one direction for developing his own theory.

colonization of the lifeworld and cultural impoverishment) on the other. This gap suggests

a space for social critique in Habermas's critical theory. And the ideal construction in

question and the description of the historical reality are the twin products which grow out

of Habermas's work on rational reconstruction. The distinction between typical and deviant

cases of human communication and the distinction between balanced and imbalanced

societal rationalization is in this way interconnected. Therefore the description of historical

reality already includes an evaluative aspect here. It is not a value-neutral description of an

independent historical phenomenon. Indeed, my elaboration of the connection between

different aspects of Habermas's whole project here shows that critical theory does not only

recognize the existence of an inescapable evaluative aspect. This aspect plays a more

central part in it.[36] It provides an evaluative bearing for the other parts of Habermas's

research programme ---- so that we can trace their relevance for the pursuit of human

emancipation. Not all works in reconstructive science would raise this evaluative aspect to

such a level of significance.

The second distinct feature of critical theory is its self-reflexive character.[37] As I

have argued before, Habermas is well aware of the contextuality of his own understanding.

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[36] Misgeld always re-asserts this point in his comments on Habermas's work; see Misgeld (1985).

[37] In *TCAII*, p.401, Habermas writes,
    ... critical social theory is to become conscious of the self-referentiality of its
    calling; it knows that in and through the very act of knowing it belongs to
    the objective context of life that it strives to grasp. The context of its
    emergence does not remain external to the theory; rather, the theory takes
    this reflectively up into itself ...
See also Benhabib's discussion of this point in relation to Habermas's concept of the
reconstructive sciences and his critique of foundationalism in Benhabib (1986), p.281.

To a certain extent, Habermas shares Gadamer's argument for hermeneutics. But he does not want to stop at this point. He does not just acknowledge the contextual limitations of knowledge, and his own critical theory in particular. For him, there is a strong reason to go beyond Gadamer.[38] There is one further step that critical theory can take ---- the attempt to account for how socio-historical contexts condition their own understanding of the development of rationality and capitalism in the Occident. As a theory which aims at rationally reconstructing rationality and its historical development (i.e. as human reason's accounting for its own nature and development), Habermas's critical theory unavoidably and indeed consciously constitutes an attempt to account for its own emergence. Habermas's critical theory is therefore explicitly self-referential and brings itself under its own scrutiny.[39] In this way, while it acknowledges its own contextual character, and while it still makes claims about the universal features of rationality (which are transcontextual in character),[40] critical theory functions simultaneously to pursue self-reflexivity and self-enlightenment through this kind of self-referentiality. This self-reflexive and self-enlightening character of Habermas's theory of rationality which results from self-referentiality and self-critique is essential for critical theory to maintain openness and a

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[38] There are other reasons, too. I have already discussed them before and shall not rehearse them here again.

[39] This does not imply that it is possible to achieve total self-transparency and that this self-account is complete.

[40] I have argued this point several pages earlier.

dialogical (and thus participant) relationship with its objects.[41] It does not assume purely an

observer's perspective for its social critique.[42]

The problem of validating critical theory

Let me follow on the discussion of the connection between the rational

reconstruction of rationality and its development and the normative base of critical theory.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the rational reconstruction of the historical

reality of capitalist modernization performs two functions simultaneously. It provides an

explanation as well as an evaluation of it. This dual task is performed through a distinction

between rationality potentials and historical reality, which I have just indicated. This former

task is related to, and indeed built upon Habermas's own understanding and evaluation of

human rationality and its historical development (its particular reference being the

Occident).[43]

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[41] I take it that openness and dialogue are two core elements of Gadamer's hermeneutics
which are shared by Habermas. This kind of openness is partly substantiated in the self-
reflexivity effected by the social investigator him/herself in making judgements of rationality
which, as I have shown, are inescapable in understanding social phenomena. Here, self-
understanding is achieved through understanding others. In this way, understanding
becomes dialogical.

[42] Benhabib points out that Habermas contextualizes the self-reflexive character of his
critical theory in the emergence of the post-conventional stage in communicative
rationalization in Benhabib (1986), ch.7, esp. pp.261-2, 264, 268, and also pp. 281-2.
Here, Benhabib reveals the participant's stance (or the internalist's perspective, in Benhabib's
own terms) in Habermas's theory of rationality.

[43] Following this mode of thinking, historical reality is perceived from the aspect of the
institutionalization of rationality potentials. Of course, to say it again, this does not imply
an idealist perspective on social development.

This elaboration of Habermas's theory, therefore, points towards the complex situation that the whole project of Habermas's critical theory moves along several dimensions from which he makes conceptual distinctions and validity claims. These distinctions and claims in turn leave him with the burden of defending their validity. And all these aspects of validation indeed interweave with and support each other.[44] To be fair to Habermas, we must place the distinctions put forward by him within the context of his critical theory as a whole in order to evaluate their adequacy. We can say that, by virtue of this interweaving between the different levels of conceptual distinction included in Habermas's critical theory, we must treat these conceptual distinctions holistically. Again, the task of validating these aspects of Habermas's theory involves both an explanatory and an evaluative aspect.

Let me make a short digression which I think may help clarify further this issue of validation. Habermas considers that his own approach in developing critical theory[45] indeed constitutes a breakthrough in the western philosophical tradition.[46] By

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[44] For example, the distinction between instrumental, strategic and communicative action, the distinction between the objective, social and subjective world, and the distinction of system and the lifeworld support each other in different ways for their validation, though the first one is more primary compared with the other two.

[45] Habermas himself characterizes it as a hermeneutic reconstructionism in *MCCA*, p.28.

[46] As Habermas conceives it, hermeneutic reconstructionism transcends the dichotomy of foundationalism (or objectivism) and relativism. Under this perspective of hermeneutic reconstructionism, philosophy still preserves for itself a relatively autonomous status in relation to the empirical sciences and is not totally superseded by them; thus this perspective opposes the positivist standpoint. Philosophy still concentrates itself on transcendental and universal issues. However, this does not imply that it is totally immunized from challenges from the empirical sciences. Incorporating a hermeneutic dimension into itself, philosophy is aware of its own contextuality and injects more empirical elements into itself. Philosophical claims on transcendental and universal issues are thus only fallible hypotheses. These hypotheses are checked and corrected by empirical tests. In this way, an indirect

incorporating into it the aspect of a reconstructive science, he considers that his critical

theory breaks away from the foundationalist tradition in philosophy, and indeed social

science. Typically, philosophers of knowledge sharing this tradition want to ground human

knowledge on a vantage point which transcends all socio-historical constraints.[47] For them,

this vantage point provides a basis for us to justify transcontextual (or unconditional,

universal) knowledge claims towards natural and social reality. In a way, this vantage point

is a guarantee of the objectivity of these knowledge claims.

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relationship is maintained between philosophy and the empirical sciences. Thus philosophy
no longer enjoys the sort of an absolute status assumed by transcendental philosophy, and
traditional philosophy in general. See Habermas's argument in *TCAII*, pp.398-400 and
MCCA, ch.1.

      Habermas's view suggests a new direction for the development of philosophy under
which philosophy has a more empirical character. However, this view still contrasts with
Kilminster's Eliasian perspective on the genesis of philosophy as an academic establishment.
Kilminster takes a relatively much more denigrating standpoint towards philosophy. He
perceives it as now in a state of defending itself against the dominant trend of its demise.
However, on the other hand, he also suggests a direction for the further development of
philosophy which is in some way similar to Habermas's viewpoint just mentioned above and
which retains some hope and meaning for itself. See Kilminster (1989).

      Since my discussion of the concept of the reconstructive sciences is intended only
to understand the features particular to Habermas's critical theory in relation to the
empirical sciences, and since this complex issue of philosophy is accordingly outside my
focus of analysis, I shall not go any further in discussing it here.

[47] It does not matter here whether this vantage point comes from the character of facts as
objectively given, the theory- and value-neutrality of observation, or the innate and
transhistorical character of the human faculty of cognition.

      I quote White's interpretation of foundationalism for reference here:
      A foundationalist position in philosophy is one which claims that philosophy
      can, by some method, demonstrate the absolute, universal validity of some
      conception of knowledge or morality. This view that there are ahistorical
      conceptual or moral frameworks existing, as it were, above the heads of
      concrete historical actors, is one which has increasingly fallen into general
      disrepute. (White (1988), p.129)

There is a reason for this. The pursuit of a vantage point in understanding in fact expresses the hope to establish a firm distinction between the subject and the object. Under this distinction, the subject is in the position of an observer detached from the object. This secures the neutrality of the subject in relation to the object, and this is extremely important in order to maintain the objectivity of his/her understanding ---- because, under this situation, the object has the final say about its truth and falsehood.

Habermas shares the postpositivist and hermeneutic viewpoint that the vantage point assumed by the foundationalists does not exist at all. We must recognize that the subject does not enjoy any neutral position in the production of knowledge. All parts of human knowledge are contextually conditioned, and therefore inescapably include evaluative elements. All parts of them are fallible claims. The assumption of the vantage point must be abandoned. We can no longer assume the perspective of a detached observer in understanding social phenomena. We must recognize the unavoidable involvement of the participant's position (because all knowledge is contextual and is therefore not value-neutral) and the nonexistence of any absolute distinction between fact and value, and theory and practice in human understanding.

However, for Habermas, the rejection of foundationalism does not logically imply relativism in our epistemological position. It does not in itself eschew the possibility of making transcontextual (or unconditional, universal) claims about features of human social life as relativists think. While relativists recognize the contextual character of knowledge, while they recognize that knowledge is socio-historically and culturally situated, they tend to push this point to an extreme and eschew any possibility of searching for truth and

objectivity. For them, our validity claims represent only truth for us, truth for them, etc, but

not truth per se. To admit the existence of the latter is to admit the possibility of making

transcontextual claims about reality. Habermas wants to avoid this extreme position.[48] For

him, the lesson we learn from the fallacy of foundationalism is only that we can no longer

take claims to transcontextuality as having the kind of certainty and objectivity which

foundationalists suppose them to have. We must take a non-foundationalist position on

claims to transcontextuality.

As I have pointed out before, Habermas supposes that understanding is both a

hermeneutic and a reconstructive task. To understand a social action, we cannot avoid the

task of reconstructing social participants' rationality and judging its validity. Therefore truth

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[48] McCarthy expresses this view succinctly in McCarthy (1992). On p.251, on the contextuality of knowledge claims, he writes:

> If the subjects of knowledge and action could no longer be viewed as solitary, disengaged, and disembodied, and if the structures of reason could no longer be viewed as timeless, necessary, and unconditioned, then the transformation required would take the self-critique of reason in the direction of sociohistorical inquiry ...

This is what Habermas actually does in substantiating his theory of communicative action in his critical analysis of societal rationalization. On p.258, McCarthy also writes:

> We can and typically do make contextually conditioned claims to unconditional truth ...

The recognition of the contextuality of knowledge does not in effect restrict its claim to transcontextuality.

For the same reason, Habermas is involved in a dispute with Rorty, who, according to Habermas, eschews all possibilities of laying claims to transcontextuality. He charges Rorty with abandoning all claims to truth and reason because of this mistake. This is seen by Habermas as self-refuting; see *MCCA*, p.3. Following up Habermas's argument, McCarthy charges Rorty with being committed to a kind of ethnocentrism (or logocentrism). This ethnocentric position takes only an observer's standpoint in discussing the issues of truth and reason while neglecting the unavoidable participant's perspective inevitably presupposed in claims to truth and the use of reason. From this participant's perspective, reason and truth have a transcontextual dimension inherent in them; see McCarthy (1992), esp. pp.247-52, 258-9.

is an aspect which we must confront when we try to make sense of any beliefs and actions. Admitting this aspect of understanding, this argument in effect suggests one way to secure a position for the problem of truth and objectivity in social science which also takes seriously the contextuality of understanding.

Now, let me relate this issue back to that of Habermas's critical theory as incorporating the aspect of a reconstructive science, and push a bit further the point I have just made on Habermas's pursuit of a non-foundationalist approach to claims to transcontextuality. From the above argument, I think that it is precisely by incorporating the concept of the reconstructive sciences that Habermas's critical theory is able to take seriously the contextual character of human understanding (including that of critical theory itself) while retaining the capability of addressing arguments about transcendental issues of human social interaction and rationality, i.e. the universal features which make human communication possible and which are indeed also features central to human rationality. While these arguments are transcontextual in their scope, they are recognized as embedded within and constrained by socio-historical conditions. In other words, these arguments emerge from our cognitive capacities which are by nature finite and fallible. Therefore they take only hypothetical forms and are open to further validation and revision as they are open to scrutiny about their adequacy within different contexts. And there is of course no reason why the empirical adequacy of these arguments should be excluded as irrelevant or unimportant; the contrary is the case. To this extent, we can say that they are empirical

theories addressed to transcendental (and thus universal) issues of human interaction and

rationality.[49]

Returning to the problem of validating Habermas's critical theory, I have so far only

indicated how Habermas establishes his point that his critical theory involves both a

reconstructive and an evaluative aspect with the help of his concept of the reconstructive

sciences. This helps us to establish the point that his critical theory is simultaneously

explanatory/empirical and evaluative; therefore we must touch on both aspects when

validating it. It remains a difficult problem to specify *how* these two aspects (i.e. the

explanatory and the evaluative) interweave with each other in validating Habermas's critical

theory.[50] To confront this latter issue, I shall follow Habermas's strategy of transferring it

into the issue of the validation of the reconstructive sciences.

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[49] For both reasons, Habermas perceives them as empirical theories with strong universalistic claims; see *MCCA*, p.15. Because these theories are addressed to transcendental issues, Habermas sometimes perceives them as weak transcendental or quasi-transcendental arguments. But they do not convey the foundationalist tone which Kant's transcendental arguments do.

     Of course, the empirical character of Habermas's critical theory, and the reconstructive sciences in general, is to a certain degree distinguished from that of the empirical sciences. I have gone through Habermas's argument about the difference between them above. A major difference between them rests on the former's concern with universal and indeed transcendental issues. Another difference central to critical theory is its conscious incorporation of both an explanatory and an evaluative task. So its validation involves the intertwining of both tasks.

[50] Habermas says that a complementary relationship, or mutual fit or interplay (of a nonrelativist Lakatosian type), exists between them; see for example *TCAII*, p.399-400, Habermas (1982), p.258-9, *MCCA*, p.32, 34, 39 and Habermas (1985), p.196. There does not exist any hierarchy between them; see Habermas (1991a), p.230-1.

Now, what must be involved when we select among competing reconstructive theories?[51] Critical theorists cannot avoid the situation where they have to compete with others regarding their reconstruction of the universal features of human interaction. Dispute can also appear in another way. It is true that the reconstructive sciences concern themselves with universal features of human interaction, but it is not true that they are totally separate from the task of explaining particular social phenomena. Rather, they provide theoretical frameworks for it. This is specifically true for Habermas's critical theory. I have shown how the theory of communicative action links the level of analysis concerning human rationality with the level of analysis concerning societal rationalization and its problems. This latter certainly provides a direction for tackling more specific issues related with it in more specific contexts of modernization. All of these levels of analysis can be open to challenges and disputes. And they are locked into each other. Therefore challenges to the adequacy and usefulness of critical theory on the level of explaining particular social events may also mean indirect challenges to the level of its reconstruction of human rationality. The latter are in no way sealed off from the former. Competitions between critical theorists and theorists who do not share their perspective on the

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[51] Habermas says at one point that, in the reconstructive sciences, part of the appraisal of competing theories involves going back to gathering and selecting data, just as we do in the empirical sciences; see CES, p.25. I would like to emphasize one point here again. I do not think that Habermas would think that data exist independently of theory, are objectively given, and therefore are the ultimate source for judging the validity of theory. Rather, an interweaving relationship exists between theory and data.

Also, Habermas claims that there is some difference between the reconstructive sciences and the empirical sciences in their connection with data. If this claim stands, it would then be wrong to suggest that Habermas finally resorts to a positivist standpoint for appraising competing reconstructive theories. Of course, as I have pointed out above, Habermas still faces difficulties in defending this claim.

interpretation of particular social events may lead to disagreements on the aspect of rational

reconstruction regarding human interaction. Conversely, challenges to critical theory

regarding its rational reconstruction of human rationality normally lead to disagreements on

its usefulness for providing a theoretical framework for explaining particular social events.

Critical theorists have to justify their own cases before others in these situations of

competition with other viewpoints. So far the only point Habermas makes explicitly on this

problem of validation is when he writes that

> [t]he empirical theory presupposes the validity of the normative theory it
> uses. Yet the validity of the normative theory is cast into doubt if the
> philosophical reconstructions prove to be unusable in the context of
> application within the empirical theory.[52]

This quotation suggests that some kind of mutual fit exists between empirical theories and

reconstructive theories. By the term `mutual fit', Habermas seems to suggest that, besides

the requirement to fulfil criteria of coherence,[53] the reconstructive sciences are subject to

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[52] *MCCA*, p.39. Habermas does not make himself clear what the category of normative
theory includes. He often refers to philosophical theories. But he sometimes also takes
reconstructive theories as examples of this category, such as Kohlberg's theory of moral
development. He talks of them as involving a normative dimension. So the scope of this
category is quite flexible, or, we may say, ambiguous. Does Habermas want to differentiate
between three levels: philosophical reconstructions, the reconstructive sciences and the
ordinary empirical sciences? Or, does he just want to contrast very broadly between
reconstructive theories and empirical theories, and thus takes philosophical reconstructions
and the reconstructive sciences as roughly belonging to the same category? I do not have
any answer to these questions here.

[53] Habermas does not clarify further what content the criteria of coherence include. I
suggest here that we can take these criteria broadly as including two aspects. The first
aspect concerns the logical structure of reconstructive theories; this is rather
straightforward. The second aspect concerns the mutual support and conflict between
reconstructive theories. In the reconstructive sciences, we do not always resort to
empirical evidence. Sometimes we draw on the support of other generally accepted
reconstructive theories.

indirect confirmation by the empirical sciences.[54] Conversely, the former give the latter

directions, scopes and conceptual frameworks for their development.

We can then infer that Habermas supposes that the reconstructive sciences, and his

own critical theory in particular, are constrained by the requirements of criteria of

coherence[55] and indirect confirmation by the ordinary empirical sciences[56] to secure their

validity. We can make a speculation here that these requirements demand our best

intuitions and insights (i.e. drawing on our rationality potentials) as well as rich empirical

observations. An integration of the observer's perspective and a participant's perspective is

expected here.

Have we got a clear conception regarding the problem of validation of critical

theory here? Certainly not. What we have is only a clarification of some major issues

central to this problem. We have not yet been given a clear standard or procedure of how

the validity of a critical theory can be decided. There are still problems to be solved. For

example, what exactly is indirect confirmation? When can we say a reconstructive theory is

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[54] See *TCAII*, pp.399-400, Habermas (1982), pp.258-9, *MCCA*, pp.32,39 and Habermas (1991a), p.231.
    In a context where he discusses the relationship between philosophical ethics and developmental psychology, Habermas mentions the criteria of coherence and indirect confirmation again; see *MCCA*, pp.118-9. Habermas also mentions a similar situation existing between formal pragmatics and empirical pragmatics in linguistics in Habermas (1991a), p.245.

[55] So there are mutual checks and support between accepted/warranted theories in the reconstructive sciences. Of course, internal coherence is also a vital criterion which these theories must fulfil.

[56] On the other hand, the reconstructive sciences supply perspectives and conceptual frameworks for the empirical sciences to conceptualize their problem-issues, to consolidate new insights and so on.

indirectly confirmed by empirical evidence?[57] It is normally a matter of degree that a theory fulfils the criteria of coherence. Up to what degree can we say that a theory fulfils these criteria satisfactorily? Also, criteria of coherence and indirect confirmation do not always fit in with each other perfectly. Sometimes one revision in a theory strengthens its degree of indirect confirmation while simultaneously forsaking some degree of internal coherence, and vice versa. How do we decide in this situation? And we can have a long list of similar sorts of problems in Habermas's viewpoint.

I admit that Habermas's solution to the problem of validation remains controversial at many points. More efforts have still to be invested to further develop this issue. On the other hand, I think that so far Habermas has done more than anybody else on this task. But in fact one can easily commit a mistake in attempting this task. When pursuing this problem of validation further, one may easily identify one's target as building up a clearly defined procedure or logic of theory validation. But can we have such a clearly stated, objective standard or procedure of theory validation?[58] Or, should we ask for this standard at all? Do we fall back into the fallacy of positivism (to establish a foundation of

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[57] Of course, Kuhn, Lakatos and others who take similar holistic positions also face the same problem. The problem is that, after abandoning the formalistic procedure of positivism for theory choice, Kuhn and Lakatos now resort to the agreement reached within the scientific community as the ultimate criterion of the decision. But there is no guarantee that such agreement can be reached.

[58] Raymond Geuss seems to charge Habermas for lacking this clear standard, while on the other hand Habermas's critical theory rejects positivism and its logic of justification; see Geuss (1981), ch.3, esp. section 2.

knowledge on the basis of a method of scientific investigation or a logic of justification) if we do so?[59]

Critics may react to Habermas's point by indicating that this view expresses the idea that the validity of critical theory depends more directly on philosophical intuitions than on empirical evidence, because the latter is viewed as only of indirect relevance to the reconstructive sciences. These critics may even take Habermas's work as an example of this tendency of imbalanced emphasis. They can point out that, although Habermas refers to empirical theories from different fields of study such as sociology and psychology in his works, his own focus of concern rests rather on highly general, conceptual and philosophical problems.

I think that the first charge can easily be resolved by pointing out that Habermas's conception of the relationship between theory and research, and theory and data is of a nonrelativist, Lakatosian type.[60] Under this nonpositivist and holistic conception, theory and research, and theory and data maintain a dynamic and complex relationship with each other. On the one hand, data do not have any theory-neutral status. Descriptions of data are theory-dependent. On the other hand, theories (or research programmes) enjoy a somewhat nonreductive status in relation to data. They are rejected only when a significant amount of anomaly cases are accumulated.[61]

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[59] See Bohman's criticism of Geuss from this direction in Bohman (1991), pp.227-30. Bohman wants to support a certain degree of indeterminacy in theory validation.

[60] I have pointed this out in a footnote above. See White (1988), ch.1 where White elaborates Habermas's point.

[61] This dynamic relationship is elaborated succinctly in Quine (1953) and Lakatos (1978).

The charge against Habermas's focus of concern cannot be seen as a big challenge to Habermas's critical theory. It has always been Habermas's ambition to develop an intellectual programme for social critique which embraces more empirical elements in it than traditional philosophy and earlier critical theories. This direction of theory development helps Habermas to transcend foundationalism. Nevertheless, it is also Habermas's ambition to put his effort more into laying the philosophical foundations of this programme than in directly involving himself in empirical social research[62] and social action. I do not see how this personal commitment can weaken the force of persuasion of the arguments of Habermas's critical theory.

The search for a deeper and more systematic dialogue between Elias and Habermas

Let me go back to a central issue of my thesis. What contribution can we make by bringing Elias into a dialogue with Habermas? I have pointed out some points of contact between Habermas and Elias in this and the previous chapter. Several more points can be given to facilitate this issue of dialogue here.

As in the usual practice of the comparison between different perspectives in social science, bringing Elias and Habermas into dialogue with each other has the advantage of pressing us towards fruitful mutual clarification between these two perspectives. There can be mutual checks on their conceptual clarity and empirical adequacy. This goal is indeed a

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[62] Habermas (1986), pp.108, 130. We should not ignore the fact that Habermas has kept a close connection with many of his colleagues and followers like Offe, Eder and Jean Cohen who develop empirical social researches in different disciplines of study on the basis of his theoretical programme.

major theme for my exposition of Elias and Habermas's works in the preceding chapters; of course, what I have achieved is only a preliminary attempt in this direction.

I have, first, laid out Elias's criticism of the sorts of conceptual distinctions commonly accepted or assumed among social theorists and social scientists, particularly his criticism of Weber on this point. On the other hand, I have also elaborated how Habermas conceptualizes and argues for the two conceptual distinctions central to his critical theory, i.e. the distinction between instrumental and strategic action and communicative action, and that between system and the lifeworld. To see how Habermas defends his conceptual distinctions, I have set an agenda for discussing how Habermas stands up to the kind of criticisms Elias produces, though Elias seldom charges Habermas directly.[63] This strategy helps us to understand better the scope and strength of Elias and Habermas's arguments and the aspects where there are agreements and real contradictions between them.

There is a second aspect of contact and constructive dialogue between Elias and Habermas which I want to bring out here. I have shown how Habermas integrates an aspect of reconstructive science into his theory in order to renew the task of social critique of critical theory. This point is important for determining the validity of Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization. Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization is, as I have said, built upon his own rational reconstruction of the universal features of human communication. With the typologies of human action and rationality he develops from this reconstruction, Habermas provides a theoretical framework for looking at occidental civilization from the aspect of the rationalization of the two dimensions of rationality (i.e.

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[63] Elias once makes a reference to Habermas in Elias (1989), p.172.

instrumental rationality and communicative rationality) and their institutionalization in society. This framework provides a basis for identifying and accounting for the pathologies emerging from the selective pattern of societal rationalization in the Occident.

It is worth stressing here again that this thesis of societal rationalization is developed from a reconstruction of occidental history. Here, we should not confuse societal rationalization with history itself. The former indeed refers to the developmental stages through which aspects of human social life are rationalized, while the latter refers exhaustively to the actual course of occidental history. This differentiation between societal rationalization (seen as a developmental path) and the actual course of history (which Habermas himself refers to as the distinctions of evolution and history[64] and logic and dynamics[65]) has the merit of avoiding the wrong thesis of historical inevitability implicated in Marx's philosophy of history and other similar perspectives on social change.[66] To Habermas, historical trends are multilayered and are by no means linear. The differentiation between evolution and history admits that not every moment of human history is significant for progression or regression from the perspective of social evolution or development. It is a contingent matter whether history follows on or reverses the track of societal rationalization.[67]

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[64] *CES*, pp.121-3 and Habermas (1979).

[65] See, for example, Habermas (1982), p.253.

[66] This distinction is important for Habermas's critical reception of Marx and Weber. I have indicated how this is so in chapter 5 above.

[67] Habermas (1991a), p.259.
    Elias shares a similar stance on this issue. I shall discuss Elias's view a few pages later in this section.

Therefore, Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization provides only a partial explanation of the actual course of occidental civilization, because it only focuses attention on aspects of history which are relevant to the development of rationality potentials.[68] In this regard, it is different from historical explanation.[69]

As I have argued earlier, this kind of explanation effected through a contrast between an ideal construct representing the direction and stages of societal rationalization and the actual course of history (the focus here being capitalist modernization in the Occident) as a selective pattern of societal rationalization plays a particular role in Habermas's social critique. The conceptual distinction between societal rationalization and the actual course of history helps us to differentiate between rationality potentials embedded in the modern occidental culture and the state of their realization in society. In this way, the former provides a standard for evaluating the latter. At the same time, in this evaluation, alternatives can also be located.[70]

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[68] *CES*, pp.160-3 and Habermas (1979), pp.15-6, 38-9. See also McCarthy (1978), pp.253-71 for McCarthy's discussion.

[69] Habermas discusses this point throughout Habermas (1979). There, he argues that the shift in focus between evolutionary explanation and historical explanation involves a shift in perspective.

Habermas does not think that evolutionary explanation is totally irrelevant to historical explanation, or vice versa. The former provides a direction for the latter to account for the relevance and significance of particular historical events for social progress and regression (or, to put it more simply, social evolution). The latter is important for checking the validity of the former, because, though the former is only partially relevant to the latter and vice versa, any inconsistency existing between them indicates that there must be mistake(s) somewhere within them; see *ibid*. Here, once again, the problem of the relationship between the ordinary empirical sciences and the reconstructive sciences emerges in another fashion.

[70] This strategy of critique helps us to transcend the overly pessimistic views implied by Marx and Weber's diagnoses of capitalist modernization. To Habermas, their mistake rests in their conflating capitalist modernization with modernization per se.

Now, it becomes clearer that the historical account of what factually happens and why it happens is less important as a concern of Habermas's project than the identification of problems, their nature and causes, and solutions. As I have argued before, this undertaking involves both an explanatory and an evaluative aspect, which cannot be separated from each other. This dual task is performed by identifying potentials embedded in but not exhausted by the actual course of history and simultaneously evaluating this course of history with reference to the potentials identified. The potential and the actual illuminate each other in a specific way. So, in putting forward his thesis on societal rationalization, Habermas is defending an understanding of the past and present of occidental civilization which concerns not only what happened but also what can happen and what ought to be done (especially in relation to social injustice and human emancipation). And this understanding is in turn related to, and indeed based upon, Habermas's own understanding of the nature of human rationality and action represented by his theory of communicative action.

Now, the above discussion on validation in reconstructive science gives us an idea of what the validation of Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization involves. Precisely, Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization is open to checks by criteria of coherence and indirect confirmation in a way similar to his theory of communicative action.[71] So, while

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[71] For this task, Habermas has selected the path of generating a dialogue with social theorists and social scientists such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead, Piaget, and Parsons; see *TCAI*, pp.138-40. To him, they are also doing reconstructive works to illuminate social reality. And in his dialogue with these great figures, Habermas concerns himself with both theoretical and substantive issues, and both explanatory and evaluative issues. To a certain extent, we can say that Habermas builds up his own magnum opus (*TCAI&II*) through a critical synthesis of the works of these people; cf. *ibid.*, p.130.

Habermas's thesis of societal rationalization cannot be directly refuted by facts, it is indirectly confirmed or disconfirmed by them.

As to Elias's part, he puts all his effort into keeping work empirically orientated. His work is orientated as much as possible to improving the degree of reality-congruency in explaining facts, while he keeps in mind that his work is relevant to social and political practices. Let us leave aside the problems related with this orientation for the moment. Here, we can see one way in which Elias's work becomes relevant to validating Habermas's critical theory. The rich insights and discoveries Elias made can become important sources which directly enter a fruitful process of mutual checking with the factual/explanatory accounts of Habermas's theory.[72] They also have a role to play in the indirect (dis-)confirmation of the core part of the reconstructive aspect of Habermas's critical theory ---- such as his distinction between instrumental, strategic and communicative action, that between system and the lifeworld, and that between the selective and non-selective patterns of societal rationalization. The above chapters are an attempt at an interfertilization between Elias and Habermas from these two directions.[73]

However, in so far as all social sciences inevitably involve a hermeneutic task, and thus inevitably involve an evaluative stance, and in so far as we can consciously incorporate this evaluative stance (as Habermas does in his theory) into social critique, Elias's work is

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[72] This part is important for knowledge growth, provided the fact that no human being on earth ever gets a God's eye point of view which allows an innocent reading of human history to determine the correctness of competing theories of human development.

[73] I have already elaborated on these two kinds of interfertilization between Weber and Elias in chapter 4.

open to one fruitful reception which has not yet been attempted by interpreters. This reception of Elias's work can start with making Elias's evaluative stance (however thin it may be) explicit and extend the orientation/implications of his work beyond reality-congruent explanations of facts. This task points in turn towards the further task of justifying this evaluative stance; therefore one further dimension is openned up where a dialogue can be developed between Elias and Habermas on the validity of their evaluative stances. This aspect of a dialogue between Elias and Habermas will certainly illuminate, and will also be illuminated by, the explanatory/empirical aspect of the dialogue between them.

To explore more into this third aspect of contact and dialogue between Elias and Habermas, let me discuss the extent to which the recognition that all social sciences have an unavoidable hermeneutic and evaluative aspect to them can enrich our understanding of Elias's work.

Here, I shall only outline some ideas which I believe to be significant for this issue. I have discussed the major ideas of Elias's exposition of what he calls the civilizing process before. In this exposition, Elias does not mean that occidental history progresses in a uniform and unilineal manner in the direction of a civilizing process (or, more accurately, civilizing processes). Elias does not put forward any simplistic model of social development like this. Rather, under his observation, the actual course of the civilizing process in the Occident is multidimensional. It contains spurts and counter-spurts on different levels. And the empirical adequacy of Elias's viewpoint rests in its congruence

with the long-term pattern of social development actually taking place in the Occident, rather than just short-term ups and downs.[74]

Now, the contrast between history and the general trend of the civilizing process is parallel with the contrast between long-term progressions in the direction of the civilizing process and short-term digressions and regressions.[75] What meaning does the latter contrast convey? Bogner suggests that Elias's model of social development is established as a kind of contextual reconstruction.[76] By suggesting the concept of contextual reconstruction to describe the epistemological character of Elias's work, Bogner rightly argues that the general model of the civilizing process which Elias has established does not simply have an epistemological status as a law-like generalization of observable historical events.[77] This model does not just target regularities of social and historical events. It represents something more structural in nature, something which Elias perceives as an order (or structure) of change.[78] The work of developing this model of the civilizing

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[74] It is also true that Elias shows his awareness of these short-term ups and downs in his work.

[75] For history includes both progressions and digressions and regressions.

[76] Bogner (1992), esp. pp.32-6. See also Goudsblom and Mennell's discussion of the problem of `phaseology' in Elias's work in Goudsblom (1989a) and Mennell (1990b), esp. pp.59-64.

[77] *Ibid.*, p.38. For this reason, I have some reservations about regarding Elias as a sophisticated empiricist.

[78] However, that this model represents something structural does not imply that what it represents (as an order, or structure, of change) has an epistemological and ontological status outside agency and particular historical events. Under Elias's process-sociological perspective, structure and agency, and development and history, form an integral part of each other. We commit the fallacy of process-reduction if we perceive the relationship between them in any dichotomous fashion.

process as expressing an order of change requires *a reconstructive task* to classify and connect particular historical events which appear to be discrete at the time we start to investigate them.[79]

While I shall not bother about the methodological elements included in this reconstructive task here, I propose that such a reconstructive task must involve an attempt to answer the question why the civilizing process emerges in the long run. In turn, this answer partially provides a theoretical framework for tackling the issue of why short-term digressions and regressions appear in civilizing processes.[80]

At the moment, I am still open regarding the fruitfulness of bringing Elias's attempt at contextual reconstruction parallel to Habermas's reconstructive work on societal rationalization so that both can develop closer intellectual cooperation and more mutual fertilization in this regard. But I am in strong agreement with Habermas that any explanation (beyond empirical generalization of social regularities) of progressions and di-/regressions in the civilizing process inevitably involves the task of interpreting social agents' rationality.[81] This latter task in turn includes an unavoidable (virtual) dialogue with the social agents and judgements about the validity of their rationality ---- this is also a reconstructive task. Precisely at this juncture, this kind of explanation has an evaluative aspect internal to it.

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[79] As I have argued earlier, Elias opposes Weber's view that the goal of reconstruction is the construction of ideal types of social reality. For Elias, the goal is rather that of real types.

[80] Mennell's discussion of decivilizing processes is a good example of this; see Mennell (1990a).

[81] As I have argued before, the suggestion that this hermeneutic task is inevitable does not logically imply an idealist position in social science.

To the extent that our intellectual orientation is focused on understanding social reality[82] (as is Elias's), we must avoid letting social and political ideologies disrupt our explanations of facts. To this extent, we must keep our evaluative stance to the minimum. However, this is not the same thing as saying that we can free ourselves from making evaluative judgements in our understanding, because social understanding must involve a reconstruction of rationality ---- I have already discussed the rationale and insights of this point. Indeed, this point indicates one way of social understanding in which science is consciously mediated with values. This conscious mediation between science and values directly serves the functions of social critique and the pursuit of human emancipation. This critical approach in social understanding requires us, as I have just said, to make our evaluative positions explicit and justify/validate them before others; this is precisely the strength of Habermas's argument in his theory of communicative action. A source of the obstacles which block the fruitful dialogue between Habermas's critical theory and other social and sociological theories lies in the latter's neglect or misunderstanding of the point of this approach.

If the argument I put forward in the above paragraph is sound, then it is not without point to say that Elias's contextual reconstruction includes a (however minimum) reconstruction of rationality. It is also possible to incorporate Habermas's concepts of

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[82] To my understanding, Habermas claims only that all social explanations have an inevitable evaluative, and therefore a critical, aspect to them. He does not mean that all social sciences must be critical theories, i.e. that all works in social science must be directly orientated to social critique. Otherwise, there is no point for Habermas to differentiate between critical theory, the reconstructive sciences and the ordinary empirical sciences. (Let me stress again here that this differentiation is not intended as a clear-cut one.)

societal rationalization and collective learning process to work out a model of the civilizing process which includes a criterion for separating between cases where social agents harness maximum rationality potentials developed within their socio-historical conditions for social actions and cases where they do not do so.[83] This model in part helps us to separate progressions from digressions and regressions in civilizing processes.

In this thesis, I have used Weber's work to set the stage for a dialogue between Elias and Habermas. I start with Weber's analysis of occidental civilization and its paradoxes at its present stage. I then present Elias's and Habermas's arguments as two alternative understandings which do better jobs than Weber's analysis. Following this line of argument, I attempt to start a comparison between Elias and Habermas and suggest a direction of interfertilization between them. In fact, my hope is that a constructive and fruitful dialogue can be developed between Elias and Habermas. This dialogue will certainly enrich, and indeed deepen, our understanding of occidental civilization and the present socio-cultural situation of modern human beings.

I do not think that Weber will be superseded after setting the platform for a dialogue between Elias and Habermas. His arguments certainly come in as relevant topics of argument. On the other hand, the situation is that, while there have already been some discussions on Elias's and Habermas's reception of Weber and its adequacy, not very much

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[83] Of course, this distinction is just a matter of degree.

Also, I take it that agency and rationality are enabled as well as constrained by socio-historical conditions; see Giddens (1984), pp.25-8, 169-74. Or, in Elias's terms, they develop within the dynamics of human figurations. I do not see why Habermas does not also accept this point.

has been done on the direct comparison between Elias and Habermas.[84] And we can hardly

ever find any direct responses made by Elias and Habermas to each other. This justifies my

somewhat imbalanced treatment of the dialogue between Weber, Elias and Habermas. It is

my hope that what I have done will provide a foundation on which further fruitful work of

this kind can be carried out.

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[84] I do not want to belittle the works done by Buck-Morss, Joas and Honneth here. The works of Bogner and de Swaan are not extensive enough for a comparison.

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