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Raymond Williams, Jurgen Habermas, and communicative resources

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2007

RAYMOND WILLIAMS, JURGEN HABERMAS, AND COMMUNICATIVE
RESOURCES

by

Kathleen C. Singleton

Batchelor of Applied Arts, Ryerson University, 1996

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University and York University

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of
Communication and Culture

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007

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Abstract

Kathleen C. Singleton
Raymond Williams, Jurgen Habermas, and Communicative Resources
Master of Arts
Communication and Culture
Ryerson University, Toronto, 2007

Using a concept of humanism taken from the field of philosophy, and using the theory of Jurgen Habermas and Raymond Williams, this thesis explores changes in beliefs about communicative interaction in response to changing social organization. Using a process of historical survey, this thesis focuses on the methods of transmission and reproduction of beliefs about communicative interaction, beliefs that, like ideology, create boundaries and pressures that protect the privileges of some groups in society. It is argued that these beliefs materialize in the lifeworld, but are institutionalized in the education system in capitalist societies. It is also argued that there is a link between an education that supports a humanist approach to communicative interaction and the general propensity for social inclusiveness and openness to change.

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Introduction

Oppositional cultural values are formed and take shape only in the context of their struggle with the dominant culture, a struggle which may borrow some of its resources from that culture and which must concede some ground to it if it is to be able to connect with it – and thereby with those whose consciousness and experience is partly shaped by it – in order, by turning it back upon itself, to peel it away, to create a space within and against it in which contradictory values can echo, reverberate and be heard. Tony Bennett (1996), p. 19

Tony Bennett articulates a problematic in cultural studies that is addressed in various contexts: the development, use, and deployment of “resources” within a culture. The field of cultural studies examines resources created by humans in day to day social interaction, ranging from the aesthetic to the political, and their role in sustaining social organization. Particularly, starting with the largely Marxist forms of analysis associated with Althusser, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, the field of cultural studies has been concerned with the role of communication as a resource and its role in oppressive domination.

Bennett argues that oppositional culture borrows resources from the dominant culture in order to create a space within which contradictory values can be heard. In this thesis, I use the thought of Habermas and Williams to explore how communicative resources can be used to open a space for critique and give voice to contradictory values. I argue that it is not simply a question of locating a free resource in the dominant culture and “borrowing” it. Instead, the resources that must be borrowed are “created” in patterns of thought, belief systems and forms of communicative interaction. The space that is opened

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is first and foremost epistemological, but then practically based in communicative interaction.

To support this argument, I explore particular historical periods, and the patterns of social development that can be seen to be determined by patterns of thought, belief systems, and forms of communicative interaction. I also look to philosophy, and the more specific analysis of different epistemologies that belong to particular philosophical schools, to support the thesis that there are recognizable forms of thought, belief systems, and patterns of communicative interaction that enable oppositional cultures to open a space in which contradictory values can be heard.

Raymond Williams and Jürgen Habermas have two of the most robust and comprehensive theories available at the applied level for understanding social development based in structures of communication. Both Williams and Habermas have identified communicative structures based in specific institutional forms (for example, newspapers and television) that are either emancipatory or repressive. Both have explored the relationship between underlying emancipatory human interests and communicative interaction, and both have argued that particular forms of thought and belief systems can open a space in which oppositional and marginalized voices can be heard. Both have explored the role communication has played in particular historical situations, and how emancipatory forms of thought and belief, and the social interaction they stimulate, are stifled.

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Williams's ideas were developed with his own unique mix of applied theory, which touched on the themes of the dynamics of communication systems, the role of communication systems in society, and the exchanges among the individual, groups, society (historically situated), and communication systems. Williams's ideas included a concept of social communication that evokes Habermas's theory of communicative action: "Whether spoken or written, language is not a medium...but rather a constitutive element of material social practice. More particularly, language is in fact a special kind of material practice: that of human socialityformal meanings function within lived and living relationships" (Milner, 1994, p. 34). Williams's characterization of language as material practice is an early instance, in the field of Cultural Studies, in which language is explored as a field that can be analyzed politically. This is Williams's starting point; from here he explores the way language (or what I would argue is more aptly described, using Habermas's terminology, as communicative interaction) works as a resource and especially how it is controlled.

Habermas's theory of communicative action also contains the central thesis that communication is the medium that constitutes social interaction: "Habermas describes communicative rationality as the replacement of a philosophy of consciousness (the objective paradigm) by the mutual understanding between subjects who are competent in language and action (the communicative paradigm)" (Duvenage, 2003, p. 51). Again, this implicates communication as a form of resource. In a more complex reading, it implicates communication as a resource that may not be equally distributed, which is the crux of this

thesis: communication as a resource is connected to “competency” not only in a technical sense, but in the context of forms of thought and belief systems. Some forms of thought and belief systems facilitate communication that can “take ground”, or open a space in which oppressed voices can be heard in the dominant culture, while others promote oppression.

Many of the parallels in the thought of Williams and Habermas are discussed in this thesis. The majority of the parallels exist in what I would characterize as a “middle layer” in understanding communication systems: a relatively abstract level in which the interaction between society and communication systems can be described. Habermas extensively explores the role of communication, from high-level social structures, down to the level of the individual. One of the differences between Habermas’s thought and Williams’s is found at level of understanding the individual: Williams has a quasi-Idealist understanding of the individual (although he rejects philosophical idealism), while Habermas has developed his own theory about the individual. Habermas’s theory, which I discuss in detail, explores the development of the individual in society, and proposes an underlying emancipatory impulse in communicative interaction (McCarthy, 1994). Williams, in contrast, proposes that the emancipatory impulse is intrinsic to the individual (Jones, 2006).

This difference is significant in terms of where the emancipatory human interest arises, and how it manifests. Habermas’s theory provides a “surer” vision of the development of

emancipatory forms of thought and belief, while Williams's theory leaves open more space for variety and complexity. For Habermas, communication involves evoking validity claims, and these validity claims represent human reason at an almost instinctual level (Habermas, 2001). For Williams, language creates sociality, and language, in all its forms, is manipulated in accordance with underlying thoughts and beliefs – and particularly in accordance with the different beliefs of particular groups in society to achieve their aims (Williams, 1973; Williams, 1995). For Habermas, language is implicated in social evolution that produces greater emancipation and equality, while for Williams, it is intrinsic human nature that is implicated. For both, at a deep level, society represents human activities with a purpose or aim – to improve human existence – and this purpose or aim is most visible in communicative interaction. And ultimately both Habermas and Williams argue that a space for oppositional voices opens at a higher level, one in which particular forms of communicative interaction are supported (for example, where different opinions are openly expressed in a public or semi-public setting).

I explore the differences in their arguments, but do not draw a conclusion, as my focus is on practical manifestations of communicative interaction rather than the ultimate source of forms of thought or belief systems. The crux of the comparison of the ideas of Williams and Habermas is the way in which they understand an emancipatory human impulse as it actually manifests in particular historical periods. I explore their similar concept of communicative interaction, which both believe enables different types of

social interaction, influences the way individuals understand society, and even determines the way society changes over time.

Williams was also interested in the process of education throughout his life. He argued that education should be involved in the areas and issues that genuinely affect ordinary people, and particularly, should provide individuals with the tools needed to analyze the communicative structures they encounter in their daily lives (O'Connor, 1989; Williams, 1977). Habermas has not specifically addressed education as a means of emancipation, but has analyzed the failure of democratic systems to involve its citizens, and pointed to a particular theoretical construct – the lifeworld – as the area in which this failure has occurred. The lifeworld is the ensemble of social structures in which individuals freely communicate: historically it has been dependent on a citizenry educated to examine and reflect on the communication systems that inform their understanding of themselves and their society (Habermas, 1989; Nauert, 2006; Toulmin, 1990). Ultimately, Williams and Habermas have a common understanding of the way in which education is a facet of forms of thought and belief systems that enable particular types of communicative interaction, which in turn enable oppositional and marginal voices to be heard.

I take the concept of the lifeworld as a point of departure to explore how different forms of social ontology represent “human interests” in the context of social change that is aimed at advancing the happiness and wellbeing of all members of society. I focus on communication structures that create a positive environment for more open discussion

and appreciation of diversity and difference, and locate them primarily in a form of education that grew out of a “humanist” view of human existence. I start by analyzing the relative positions of Williams and Habermas in their own socio-historical formations, and particularly their positions in academia. Both Williams and Habermas rejected the academic tradition in which they were schooled.

For Williams, as an outsider and a liberal humanist, his rejection of the academic tradition that he encountered as a student was politically motivated, as he identified it as part of a general oppressive class system (O’Connor, 1989). Habermas’s rejection of the Frankfurt School can be seen as more of an intellectual disagreement, although Habermas’s criticism of Weber’s thought suggests he may have been, at some level, disagreeing with the political/ideological position they represented. What is significant in what occurred for both Williams and Habermas is that, after questioning the values and norms of the intellectual tradition they were taught, both ended up exploring the impact of communicative structures on society.

I then examine Williams’s ideas of the individual and agency, and argue that he draws on Hegel for a view of the individual situated in history. Williams also looked to Marx for some of his understanding of the individual, particularly in his views of the transcendental potential of the individual to want, and to create, an equitable society. However, Williams’s thought on the individual, and how the individual stands in relation to society, is relatively underdeveloped. Habermas, in contrast, devotes a significant

effort to creating a theory that deals with this issue (McCarthy, 1994). I explore Habermas's theory of the relationship between the individual and society in depth as a way of introducing a theoretical basis for the discussion of hermeneutics which follows.

Habermas's theory of the development and rationalization of the lifeworld has close correspondences to the thought of Williams on the potential for artistic activities to expand the range of possible "lives" that can be lived in a society. While they diverge at the level of the individual and on the role of aesthetic experience as a form of rationality, they both argue that art and aesthetic experience holds a potential for emancipation. As many critics have commented, however, Habermas is relatively unspecific in how aesthetics influences the lifeworld (Jay, 1985, McCarthy 1985).

I argue that the key lies in the way Habermas characterizes the body of knowledge that accumulates in the aesthetic sphere, "production of knowledge that is differentiated according to validity claims and rendered cumulative" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 179).

Habermas's emphasis on the significance of the *cumulative* nature of aesthetic knowledge ties in with Williams's theory of structures of feeling, in which social understanding includes an affective dimension, which emerges from slow accretions of experience and knowledge (Williams, 1973). Williams believes that the affective dimension of society can be very different for different people, and it is when the affective dimension is apprehended and interpreted by individual artists, from their unique social position, that the emancipatory effect occurs, either as aesthetic experience or as direct communication.

Habermas, in contrast, argues that it is only in the discursive processes that surround artistic expressions that the emancipatory potential of the aesthetic dimension is actually expressed (Jay, 1985; Duvenage, 2003)

Ultimately, if we recognize the emancipatory dimension of aesthetic experience from the perspective of Williams (and the Romantics), or Habermas (and the Pragmatists), how new forms of knowing (or, following Habermas to the thought of Benjamin, old forms of knowing, see Duvenage, 2003) emerge and become socially significant, and how they are treated discursively is the issue I address in this thesis. It is at this level that particular practices associated with humanist thought are clearly associated with aesthetic ways of knowing and patterns of belief and behavior. I argue, however, that the emancipatory potential in aesthetic ways of knowing is made available in patterns of taught understanding, and particularly, those which contribute to critical discussion.

Williams, writing towards the end of his career, argued that cultural theory is: “at its most significant when it is concerned precisely with the *relations* between the many and diverse human activities which have been historically and theoretically grouped in these ways [*on one hand, the arts and, on the other hand, society*], and especially when it explores these relations as at once dynamic and specific within describable whole historical situations which are also, as practice, changing and, in the present, changeable” (Williams, 1989, p. 164). In this thesis, I explore how social development in particular historical periods is influenced by an ontology in which society is more open to the arts

and the individual is empowered to view difference as positive and offer a critical response to the communication structures she or he encounters.

Raymond Williams

Literary Criticism

Raymond Williams was the product of a particular moment in history, a time when the previously elite institutions of higher education were being opened to all economic sections of society through public funding. Williams entered Cambridge as one of the earlier cohorts of working-class children who took advantage of the new system (Inglis, 1995). The English Literature department at Cambridge, in common with other UK universities of the time, was dominated by the criticism of F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot. As Richard E. Lee has described, the version of “culture” propagated by Leavis and Eliot had its origins in repressive ideology of the 18th and 19th century: “*Culture* was the code word around which the notions of Authenticity, Tradition, and the Organic Community had coalesced over a century and a half, in opposition first to revolution, then to laissez-faire liberalism, and finally to the reformist progress of social engineering” (Lee, pp. 35-36).

In Leavis and Eliot, the elements of political discourse that had been found in earlier literary criticism were eliminated. Literary criticism was sanitized, and the terms on which the discussion could be conducted, and the “relevance” of the debate were severely restricted. Lee notes first the authentication of English literature and literary criticism as a process:

During the second half of the [19th] century the conspicuously political role of the critic was subtly undermined from within. Social criticism was carried forward and solidified in pursuit of order (culture) and in opposition to radicalism (anarchy)... As the century closed, art lost its social referent and criticism slipped into aestheticism. With popular politics increasingly out of its purview, English studies did service to the war effort, underwent technical development, and was effectively institutionalized as an anchor to national identity. (Lee, 2003, p. 36)

Clearly, the transfer of power from an exclusive elite down to lower levels in society was supported by literature, particularly as literacy became more common. Lee (2003) argues that literary criticism was “excluded” from the realm of politics by deliberately moving its mode of analysis from a general engagement with a text in a social context to an engagement limited to the aesthetic.

Lee describes the depoliticization of literary criticism between the 1820s and 1860s as concurrent with rising levels of political agitation and radical politics. At the same time as literary criticism was being depoliticized, Lee notes that English literature as a subject was being institutionalized. In addition, schooling was being introduced on a fairly universal basis throughout England. A more universal education was combined with the study of specific types of literature, inculcate the appropriate attitude to literature (and by implication, culture and society). The institutionalization of English, and the associated attitudes to literature and culture, was not only happening in England; as Lee notes, it also occurred throughout the British Empire: “In 1855, the India Civil Service opened

posts to competitive examinations with English studies as one of the subject matters” (Lee, 2003, p. 51).

Collectively, the changes Lee describes can be characterized as a systemization of a field (literature) and the imposition of structural constraints that are designed to limit the reception and interpretation of its products. The same process has been identified at other historical points in relation to new literary products. For example, Paul Starr (2006) notes the changes in access to literature in the period between 1450 and 1650: first, a general increase in access to text (through new technologies that made printed materials cheaper, and also through a significant increase in public literacy), and then, between 1550 and 1650, a reorganization that consolidated and centralized power, which served to create restrictions on what could be printed and therefore disseminated to the consuming public.

Terry Eagleton also notes the same process of “academicization” and political disengagement in literary criticism in the historical period Lee discusses:

Modern criticism was born of a struggle against the absolutist state. It has ended up, in effect, as a handful of individuals reviewing each other’s books....In the early eighteenth century, to risk an excessive generalization, criticism concerned cultural politics; in the nineteenth century its preoccupation was public morality; in our own century it is a matter of “literature”. As Robert Weimann complains, “academic critics have largely abandoned the broadly civilizing function of criticism” (Eagleton, 1984, p.107).

Given that Williams could have benefited immensely from the hermeneutically sealed but financially secure role as a university lecturer in English Literature, it would have been easy for him to accept the repressive ideology represented by Leavis and Eliot. He didn't, and instead, created a methodology to critically examine concepts and the relationship they supported between classes. As the son of a Welsh railway switchman, Williams was exposed to socialist ideas in his childhood through his father's involvement with trade unionism in the 1920s and 30s (Inglis, 1995). He also had a life-long involvement with the socialist movement in the U.K. (Dworkin, 1997; O'Connor, 1989). Williams's criticism continues to provide valuable leverage in the field, in opposition to elitist views of "culture" (Eagleton, 1984, pp. 108-113).

Milner argues that Williams, like Hogart and Thompson, was in a unique position to identify the ideology of "culture" represented by Leavis and T.S. Eliot: "The realities of class difference are often readily apparent in British culture, and no more so than to those who have been socially mobile from one class to another" (Milner, 1996, pp. 31-23). But, while Williams made his opposition personal (for example, in his essay "Culture is Ordinary") ultimately, his approach was based on a profound theoretical insight: that all artistic production is formed from shared communicative interaction in a society (Milner, 1994).

Class and Education

Raymond Williams's first political involvement was with the Communist party, and some of the concepts he found there stayed with him throughout his life, in particular, the significance of class. After having been a Communist party member during the late 1930s, however, Williams resigned in 1940. His resignation was not a categorical rejection of communism; rather, he had slowly become convinced that orthodoxy and ideology were replacing socialist thought in the Communist party, and there was a triggering event; his fiancée was rejected as a suitable wife by a Communist party official (Inglis, p. 84).

Communism in this period was the primary source of the theories of class and class struggle Williams used as the basis of his analysis of the political system. However, he incorporated class into his own theory of society, in which he gave as much weight to culture as a force of development as the traditional Marxist materialist base. When applying this theory, Williams explored the collective representations of social life and the "lived reality" of individuals, which he reconstructed by working through class, economics, and politics (Jones, 2006).

In the earlier part of his career, before structuralism began to dominate the intellectual environment in the UK, Williams directed his criticism towards Marxism on one hand and conservative "cultural preservationists" on the other. As Dworkin describes, Williams felt that both theories created an ideological category, "the mass", which

“justified a minority’s manipulation and control of the majority. This minority control was true of Marxists, for whom the people were helpless and ignorant, and of conservatives who saw the people as a threat to cultural standards” (Dworkin, 1997, p. 91).

He approached education, in particular, with a communist/socialist belief that education – education that provided critical tools to ordinary people – was a means to emancipate society (Inglis, 1995, Dworkin, 1997). Williams’s belief was that the “common good” was best served by implementing a form of education that would enable all elements of society to actively contribute to the processes to which they were subject (O’Connor, 1989, p. 10). The methodology Williams developed to use to this end was not solely intended for the working class; it was meant to provide all students with the tools to critically evaluate the culture that surrounded them.

As O’Connor describes, Williams believed that education should be more than a form of vocational training: he believed that education should be a development of the individual as a member of a society, a critic of culture, and a participant in the public sphere. In O’Connor’s words:

It was not only a matter of taking a course: there was something that could properly be called an educational movement which Barnes describes as a product of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. These, according to Barnes, brought the masses into politics and led them into discussing momentous issues. Although the WEA changed rapidly through the 1950s,

Williams's *Culture and Society* (written over the period 1952-6) certainly fits with this educational movement" (O'Connor, 1989, p. 8).

Williams applied a hybrid form of literary criticism to cultural products not otherwise subjected to analysis, particularly elements of mass culture and new media, such as forms of media that had emerged since the start of the 20th century (Dworkin, 1997, p. 81-93). Williams argued for "the importance of the press, broadcasting and television as educational communicators. It is necessary to move beyond the organizations of adult education to rethink many other experiences as part of a 'permanent education'" (O'Connor, 1997, p. 10).

Williams sought to elucidate the links between the new cultural forms and institutions and different social groups, in one direction, and in the other, examine embedded "ideological" concepts and explore how they changed over time to support particular social formations (Dworkin, 1997, pp. 80-95). His approach had two methodologies: with one, characteristically presented in *The Country and the City* (1975), he examined the ideological content of particular words or concepts, and linked them to specific social interests. In the other, which can be found in *Communications* (1977), he explored the ideological structuring, and links to specific social interests, of the institutions of new media (in *Communications*, primarily television).

Later in his career, after reading Gramsci, Williams developed a theory of class domination specifically related to cultural products, informed by Gramsci's ideas of

hegemony. He developed an applied theory of hegemony that recognized three types of cultural products, with distinctively different uses in the system of hegemonic domination: the residual, the dominant, and the emergent (Williams, 1995).

The refinement of Gramsci's hegemonic theory, and its application to: "identifiable "institutions" on the one hand, and what Williams terms formations, that is, intellectual or artistic movements, on the other" (Milner, 1996, p. 34) may have been a direct result of Williams's exposure to literature and historical analysis of the way literary forms were used. Williams could draw from Gramsci's theory and locate "proofs" in the cultural product he was most familiar with – literature. Dworkin (1997) comments that historically, particular forms of literature, produced for, or selected by particular social groups were used to support attitudes intended to have social impact (Dworkin, 1997, p. 91).

As described by Milner, Williams also identified the changes in the way literature was "unacceptable" in one historical period, and valorized in another as part of the ideological use of literature: "we must remember that two forms condemned in their own day as low and idle – the Elizabethan popular drama and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel – are now heavily represented in our standard literature." (Williams in Milner, 1996, p. 32). As Milner describes, "For Williams, "culture....has to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" and tradition itself as "always more

than an inert historicized segment... it is the most powerful practical means of incorporation” (Milner, 1996, pp. 33-34).

Cultural Materialism

Williams’s theory of cultural materialism developed from his frustration with the simplifications he identified in Marxist economic materialism. Williams argued that, while economic production was profoundly significant to social organization, cultural production was equally important (Williams, 2001). Rather than entirely discard Marxist economic materialism, Williams introduced “cultural materialism” as an additional requirement in materialist analysis, and with it, a theory of culture as a form of “production” with a decidedly economic element.

One of Williams’s terms of analysis, “mode”, helps clarify the thesis of cultural production which underlay his reworking of cultural materialism. Williams defines mode as a “fundamental genre” (Jones, p. 139), behind genre itself. He conceptualizes modes as types of interaction that are embedded in human practice – e.g., ritual or myth – that are subsequently disembedded into new artistic products. Williams points to the example of acted dialogue, which emerged in Greek tragedy. The “disembedding” of dialogue from its role in ritual and myth turns it into a new form of institutional production. “Dialogue” becomes part of a new kind of social production – theatre – and is normalized into a new set of interactions and social conventions (Jones, pp. 139-140).

It is easier to understand Williams's contention in connection to literature, more particularly, books or newspapers. Both these forms of production were extensively studied over the historical period in which they first emerged, and have been up to the present. The systems of production have changed, along with the systems of distribution. In addition, the content of both has changed in particular ways, in response to the societies that consume them. Herman and Chomsky's study of the newspaper industry is illustrative of the adaptation of content to particular social interests (*Manufacturing Consent*, 1988) while Paul Starr's exploration of the broadcasting industry is illustrative of the shift in systems of production (institutional basis) in support of particular social interests (*The Creation of the Media*, 2004).

Williams argued that "drama is a precise separation of certain common modes for new and specific ends... drama broke from the fixed signs, established its permanent distance from myth and ritual and from the hierarchical figures and processions of state, broke from precise historical and cultural reasons into a more complex, more active and more questioning world" (Williams, 1977, pp. 11-12). Drama has "broken" from the hierarchical, fixed structures and systems in which it was embedded to provide new possibilities for communication between members of a society.

Williams's analysis is similar to Habermas's ideas of the potential for aesthetic experience. Duvenage describes Habermas's understanding thus:

In its disconnectedness from social and traditional limitations, aesthetic experience is, according to this line of thought, more reflexively open to the structure of human needs... The artist, on his or her part, opens a space for free play and experimentation via a reflexive handling of materials, methods and techniques – and thereby opens a space in which formal decision-making processes are opened up for aesthetic experience. This implies that the specific rational content of autonomous artworks and art judgments (*sensus communis*) can be interpreted, evaluated and put in language (Duvenage, 2003, p. 61)

Understanding Society

Rationalization of the Lifeworld

Habermas identified a problematic in the interpretation of the Frankfurt School of the thought of Weber, which ultimately informs his own theory of communicative action. In Habermas's words:

...there is a rationalization of everyday practice that is accessible only from the perspective of action oriented to reaching understanding – a rationalization of the lifeworld that Weber neglected as compared with the rationalization of action systems like the economy and the state. In a rationalized lifeworld the need for achieving understanding is met less and less by a reservoir of traditionally certified interpretations immune from criticism; at the level of a completely decentred understanding of the world, the need for consensus must be met more and more frequently by risky, because rationally motivated, agreement. (Habermas in White, 1998, p. 98)

Habermas is in agreement with Weber that during the period between approximately 1800 and 1900 an older, magico-mythical worldview was replaced by a “decentred” “disenchanted” worldview. Habermas, however, argues against the central thesis in Weber's thought: that the form of rationality that resulted from “disenchantment” was primarily instrumental rationality (White, 1998).

Discussing Habermas's interpretation of Weber's thought, Austin Harrington (2001), notes:

A driving motive behind this interpretation is Habermas's concern to develop a less pessimistic account of the future of capitalism than that outlined by Horkheimer and Adorno in their reading of Weber in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Although Habermas accepts that Horkheimer and Adorno well reflected Weber's own mood of resignation at a world dominated by the "iron cage" of bureaucratic regimentation and meaninglessness, Habermas maintains that they neglected the import of Weber's other insights into processes of formal liberation and democratization. Indeed, Habermas suggests that Weber himself overvalued the significance of his analyses of instrumental rationality at the expense of his notion of value-rationality and other, more substantive elements of rationality. (Harrington, 2001, p. 62)

Recent criticism of Weber has tended to support Habermas's argument that Weber's theory was seriously flawed. In a comprehensive review of Weber's economic theory in the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Helge Peukert clearly supports her thesis that Weber's approach was empirically rationalist. Peukert bases her argument on a survey of recent "major texts" on various aspects of Weber's economic theory. The consistent theme of these major modern critics on Weber's economic thought (which is situated variously as in the fields of marginal neoclassical economics, and marginal utility), is his empirical rationalism, and the impact it has on his theory of social rationalization.

Peukert's critique is worth quoting at length:

Weber's typology was developed to broaden the narrow horizon of neoclassical utility maximization, first by the extension from utility to goal-oriented

behavior, and next by the inclusion of three other motivational forces (values, affection, tradition). So Weber does not say that all humans act rationally all the time, but what he says is that he (the scientist) knows all the time what the rational course of action would have been. But from where does the distinguished observer get his special knowledge? Despite all methodological sophistication, Weber was rather naïve and committed an empirical or rationalist methodological fallacy: believing that a rational course of action can be depicted without interpretative meta-models that are at the mercy of reasonable alternative descriptions of rational courses of action. Despite the supposed introduction of subjective meaning systems, Weber must presuppose a world of rational actors with a mechanically verifiable, certain, and predictable future. (Peukert, 2004, pp. 987 - 1021)

In the same article, Peukert discusses D.Y. Kim's analysis of Weber: "Kim (with his strong claim of influence on method and cultural sociology) seems correct, and Weber's sociological categories are in fact based on theoretical economics...". (Peukert, 2004, pp. 987-1021) Thus, Peukert and Kim conclude that Weber's theory of social rationalization is based on empirical rationalist assumptions and methodology, with an inherent bias towards economism and political utilitarianism.

Habermas's analysis of Weber illustrates his re-working of the Enlightenment version of reason. Habermas advances the theoretical analysis of reason in a very specific direction: he assesses the practices of understanding that evolve over time. Habermas's theory of social evolution is more abstract than Williams's understanding of historical social

development, but there are clear parallels in their thought related to the inherent potential for society to develop.

Williams was also highly critical of the movement he saw in Western society towards rationalization. Williams, like Habermas, viewed rationalization as a problem of capitalism which not only permeated social relationships but also extended to the academic tools used to understand society. As Milner describes: “It is the social reality of capitalism itself, Williams insists, which progressively reduces production in general to commodity production in particular; the base/superstructure formula in Marxism merely reproduces and replicates that reduction at the level of theory” Milner also detects a parallel between Habermas and Williams in this area: “[Habermas] interprets the base/superstructure model very similarly to Williams as a historical rather than ontological proposition” (Milner 1994, p. 68).

Peter Osborne provides an alternative critique of Adorno, arguing that he failed to connect with the lifeworld because his theory was based in: “a Marxian reading of classical German philosophy... but he eschewed ... historical concepts” (Osborne, 2000, p. 8). Osborne concludes: “these writings avoid theoretical specification of the social relations constitutive of different cultural practices and forms. Thus, while critical theory achieved impressive levels of sophistication... it failed to carry that project through at a sufficiently concrete, historically and geo-politically differentiated, theoretical level” (Osborne, 2000, p. 8).

This understanding of the social relations constitutive of different cultural practices and forms – firmly situated in different historical periods – was at the heart of Williams’s work (Milner, 1994, p. 64). Habermas developed a different understanding, using a much more abstract concept of history but nonetheless carefully retained a sense of the historical situatedness of human culture, and the potential for vastly different forms of reason based in a social organization in a particular historical situation (McCarthy, 1991).

Milner describes the historically situated element as the basis for critique and for elaborating the (socialist) potentials for the future: “For Habermas as for Williams the theoretical model of an emancipated culture, deriving from the allegedly constitutive properties of actually existing culture, provides the criteria by which both to critique existing social reality and to elaborate the utopian possibilities for real social change. For Williams the model is that of a truly “common culture”, for Habermas that of unimpeded communication” (Milner, 1994, pp. 68-69). The differences point to the underlying differences in the way Williams and Habermas understand the individual, and the differences in the way Williams and Habermas understand where the emancipatory impulse arises (for Williams, in an idealist individual, and for Habermas, in communicative interaction). At a more practical level, Milner notes that both Williams and Habermas use a model of emancipated culture to critique existing culture, and elaborate the utopian possibilities for real social change.

Historicism and Hermeneutics

By and large, Williams is regarded as a “culturalist” (Eagleton, 1984; Milner, 1994). But Williams used historical changes as a fundamental element in all his analysis. In contrast, Habermas is generally considered a “pragmatist”, although he also consistently integrates historical change with his social and political analysis (Houlb, 1991). Jones discusses the parallels between the use of particular social/historical formations in the analysis of Williams and Habermas: “Habermas’s historical account of the relationship between literary and political public spheres not only overlaps with Williams’s early socio-historical interests, but strongly resembles the later Williams’s emphasis on the “emergent” capacities of cultural forms and formations. Habermas has recently revived the model of the literary public sphere as a means of recognizing more fully the role of emergent social movements” (Jones, 2006, p. 183)

Williams seems to get closer to the lifeworld than does Habermas in his analysis, by looking at the historical social changes in perception – the loosening or changing of the boundaries of interaction – caused by artistic production. Williams argues that “we learn above all, in the historical analyses, ... a remarkably extending and interpenetrating activity of artistic forms and actual or desired social relations” (Williams, 1989, p. 175). When describing Williams’s structures of feeling, Eagleton points out the way in which Williams uses historical change in his analysis: “His early concept of a “structure of feeling” is vital in this respect, mediating as it does between an historical set of social

relations, the general cultural and ideological modes appropriate to them, and the specific forms of subjectivity ... in which such modes are lived out" (Eagleton, 1984, p. 110).

Williams's analysis highlights a subjectivity that is both situated in the social conditions in which it develops, but at the same time, one that is free to create "desired social relations". What is most significant, however, is that both Williams and Habermas identify the role of affective dimension of human life in initiating an examination of actual social relationships.

Eagleton also illustrates the way in which Williams's methodology works at the level of rationalization of the lifeworld: "If Williams has a "field" then it is doubtless this: the space constituted by the interaction of social relations, cultural institutions and forms of subjectivity" (Eagleton: 1984, p. 110).

Williams's argument rests on the imaginative potential of the individual as it can be expressed socially in various artistic fields. However, Williams links this originality to sensitivity to changes in social organization, not an Idealist or Romantic form of internalized genius: "the structure of feeling is changing. Awareness of such changes will, at first, be confined to a few minds only; and, among artists, it may not be awareness in the sense of an intellectual understanding of such change, but may express itself as an apparently purely personal originality" (Williams in Higgins, 2001, pp. 34-35). And Williams, like Habermas, recognizes that it is only when the affective, aesthetic

dimension of social experience has been expressed in a form in which it can enter into social discursive practices that it releases its potential for social change.

Williams's methodology reflected the hermeneutic tradition, although it was far more than simple hermeneutics. Williams, like Habermas, argued that the hermeneutic tradition was essential to understanding and interpreting social interaction. As Jones describes:

The negative social theoretical role assumed by McLuhan's work is due, on Williams's account, to an absence created by the positivist sociological tradition that studied the media in terms of its "effects"... and the related functionalist conception of socialization... this tradition forms an important example for Williams in *The Sociology of Culture*, against which he contrasts the legacy of the alternative hermeneutic tradition. (Jones, p.158)

His identification of the positivist sociologist tradition, as described here by Jones, parallels the discussion of Weber above: the opposition of a positivist sociological tradition with the alternative hermeneutic tradition ties into Habermas's thesis that the lifeworld must be understood with the appropriate tools.

Williams also deployed hermeneutics extensively in his methodology, as described by Richard E. Lee: "In his chapter on the 'Images of Society', Williams puts into practice the idea that we see the actual relationships in society by learning to describe them and that the abstract ideas we use are actually interpretations (both persistent and subject to change)" (Lee, 2003, p. 25). Lee also quotes Julia Swindells and Lisa Jardine about the literary quality in Williams's analysis: "Williams [provides] a particularly *literary*

narrative, which can give agency to the characters of history, a narrative which is not the conventional one of the liberal historian, but one which can activate the categories of class and socialism” (Lee, 2003, p. 32).

Paul Jones also describes the way in which Williams’s model uses historical change to reveal subjectivity: “[a] way of explaining, not always with full clarity but often very suggestively, how it is that language both bears structures of consciousness and structures of feeling and at the same time articulates the changes that take place historically between them, and thus leaves room for the subject, that is, the conscious, intending, purposive speaker or writer” (Jones, 2006, p. 100).

Habermas also saw the value of hermeneutics, as McCarthy notes “Habermas did not deny the intimate connection of critical reflection to hermeneutic understanding”, and in fact noted that hermeneutics represents: “a perspective that has much in common with his own, including recognition of communication as a ‘universal medium’ of social life, awareness of the historicity of human existence, and the ideal of a dialogueical resolution of practical questions” (McCarthy, 1994, p.190).

McCarthy also notes, however, that: “Habermas’s counter-position is an attempt to mitigate the radically situational character of [hermeneutic] understanding [in the theory of Gadamer] through the introduction of theoretical elements; the theories of communication and social evolution are meant to reduce the context-dependency of the basic categories and assumptions of critical theory” (McCarthy, 1994, pp. 192-193).

The Role of Communication in Social Organization

Williams also worked through the idea of the subject or individual in relation to communicative interaction, and his thought has several parallels with Habermas's concept of language as underlying social organization. In his major work on communication (Williams, 1977), he introduces the idea of communication as an element of social organization: "*communication and its material means are intrinsic to all distinctively human forms of labour and social organization, thus constituting indispensable elements both of the productive forces and of the social relations of production*" (Williams: 1977, p. 50, emphases added). Williams is clearly aware of the Hegelian inheritance of Marxist theory and incorporates it into his own theory.

Discussing the individual artist, Williams identifies the historically situated and internalized social environment: "His ability to make his work public depends on the actual communication system: the language itself, or certain visual or musical or scientific conventions, and the institutions through which the communication will be passed...it is not only a communication system outside him; it is also, however original he may be, a communication system which is in fact part of himself" (Williams: 1977, p 126). Williams's theory of cultural materialism also places language and "arts" at the centre of social organization:

...the production (rather than only the reproduction) of meanings and values by specific social formations, on *the centrality of language and communication as*

formative social forces, and on the complex interaction both of institutions and forms and of social relationships and formal conventions.... What I would now claim to have reached, but necessarily by this route, is a theory of culture as a (social and material) productive process and of specific practices, of “arts”, as social uses of material means of production (from language as material practical consciousness to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing, through to mechanical and electronic communications systems). (Williams, 1980, pp. 88-89)

It is the formulation of language and communication as “formative social forces” that brings Williams’s cultural materialism close to Habermas’s theory of universal pragmatics. Habermas argues, in the same vein, that language underlies all other forms of interaction – starting from the basis that language is a form of socialization that redirects human instincts and drives into patterns of predictable behavior (McCarthy, 1994). Implicit in Williams’s theory of structures of feeling is the idea that the affective dimensions of social organization can be critically assessed, and these affective dimensions are shared, as subjective aesthetic experiences.

Because they are both subjective and “shared” – relatively homologous for a large number of individuals – by de-sublimating them, the artist opens them to review in the public sphere. Habermas has admitted that in his understanding, “Aesthetic validity claims... remain bound to particular local contexts, and are valid, if at all, only for those in a particular space and time” (Duvenage, 2003, p. 131). Williams identifies this limited

sphere of relevance as the most significantly positive element in artistic expression, and the aesthetic experience.

The Individual in Society

Williams's Theory of the Individual

At a very general level, Williams theorized that, even under conditions of repression, there remained a hidden subject in the collective that is capable of recognizing and creating social systems that “contribute radically to the growth of man’s powers to enrich his life, to regulate his society, and to control his environment” (Williams in Jones, p. 33). That is, he argued that even in a situation in which hegemonic domination determines the course and development of a society, the path of development would be shaped in a positive way by the strivings of individuals in that society. Particularly, Williams identifies agency in literature, in individual authors. Carrying this out to Williams’s belief in the essential creativity of all human practices, it is clear that Williams believes in both a diffuse general creative agency, and a more specific individual creative agency.

Williams describes the sense of shock and gratification when he recognized this element of his theory in Marcuse’s theory. Williams quotes Marcuse: “Affirmative culture was the historical form in which were preserved those human wants which surpassed the material reproduction of existence” (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 64). Williams proceeds to comment that what he saw was: “an idea of culture representing human values which the society repressed or could not realize” (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 64). As Williams describes it in greater length, before encountering Marcuse’s work he had consistently

argued "...that no mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts human practice, human energy, human intention" (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 104). There is clearly an idealist element in this description.

Williams's concept of this situated emancipatory subject combines ideas of individual and collective agency. In the collective sense, Williams describes the work of artists, and particularly writers, as exposing and expressing missing "transcendental" elements in society: "Art reflects its society and works a social character through to its reality in experience. But also art creates, by new perceptions and responses, elements which the society, as such, is not able to realize" (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 23). Williams approvingly describes the role of writers such as Dickens in shifting the social agenda by presenting an alternative to the current social structure and thus providing an emancipatory vision that could be enacted (Williams, 1975).

However, Williams also specifically recognized the potential for emancipatory vision and action in every individual. Williams argued that this concept could be taken from a careful reading of Marx, as he had done. Marx, as is well known, drew from Hegel's philosophy, although he replaced the Hegelian "world spirit" with a materialist evolution of history, and replaced Hegel's dialectics of alienation with his own dialectics of class alienation (the alienation of the proletariat). Williams argued that Marx's philosophy

retained an idealistic conception of the individual, which was central to Hegel's philosophy, and which was overlooked or ignored in Marxist political theory.

Williams argued that Marx's intentions – specifically as they were laid out in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* - were never to discard an element of idealism in a conception of the individual. Williams started with a passage from *Capital*, which clearly describes an idealist concept of the individual: “a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.... He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi* and to which he must subordinate his will” (Marx in Jones, 2006, p. 48).

Idealism is reflected in the way Marx characterizes the idea the architect puts into practice as existing in his imagination before it is realized. Williams comments that: “Thus “real active men”, in all their activities, are full of consciousness, foresight, concepts of how and why” (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 48). However, Williams seems to dilute the idealist element of Marx's thought in his analysis, which points to his own reluctance to come to a rapprochement with idealism. As an example, rather than argue that ideas shape human behavior, Williams introduces elements of practice, more typically be associated with pragmatism, in this passage: “the full range of human *practice*, human energy, human intention (this range is not the inventory of some original

“human nature” but, on the contrary, is that extraordinary range of variations, both practiced and imagined, of which human beings are and have shown themselves to be capable)” (Williams: 1977, p. 43, emphasis added). Clearly, here, Williams puts practice on the same level as imagination, in contrast to Marx in the previous passage, who argues that everything is conceived of in the imagination before being put into practice.

And, in his own theory, Williams specifically rejects a Hegelian concept of social development, although he retains an idealist image of human progress: “Yet if we call the process, not human perfection, which implies a known ideal towards which we can move, but human evolution, to mean a process of general growth of man as a kind” (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 31).

Habermas: Reason, Society, and the Individual

For both Habermas and Williams, the process of social change takes a relatively positive path, in what can be characterized as an evolutionary development. The model Habermas uses to explore this evolutionary development contains three basic elements: his own theory of universal pragmatics; a schema for individual development modeled on Mead’s theory of social interaction (which supplies stages of role playing that incorporate increasingly abstract and complex internalized interaction rules); and a model of socially-mediated rules for actions, norms and principles, which he takes from Kohlberg (which also postulates increasingly abstract and complex systems of interaction). (McCarthy, 1994, pp. 345 – 350).

Habermas incorporates Kohlberg's model to explain evolutionary development in society. Kohlberg's model provides for organic evolution in sociological terms – as a structural formation that is capable of adapting to “crisis” events. Kohlberg's model allows that social change is not just adaptive, but presents a generally evolutionary progression. That is, a society naturally evolves towards a state in which universalized needs form the basis for interaction.

Kohlberg's theory also postulates that social evolution is contingent on the development of the underlying “structures” of the individual. That is, that the social structure is not entirely independent of the individuals it contains. Thus, at any stage, a social order can fall back on the individuals it has “produced” to address structural problems. As Habermas describes it “in role behavior the interacting parties can rely on an understanding that has been previously secured through normative integration; to the extent that this understanding is no longer unproblematic at the next level, it has to be replaced by the interpretive accomplishments of those involved” (Habermas in McCarthy, 1994, p. 349).

Having explicated the operational processes by which a society can both deal with structural problems and evolve, the problem, for Habermas, becomes how the foregrounded problems are dealt with by independent and self-reflective individuals.

Both universal pragmatics and Mead's model of roles are socially mediated, which suggests unchanging expectations and behavior patterns. This became the fundamental

problem for the Frankfurt School when Freudianism was integrated into their social theory; the individual was embedded in social structures that demanded stability, and Freudianism provided no element of transcendentalism that would enable the individual to critically evaluate the values that were taken from society. Habermas argues that both universal pragmatics and Mead's model of roles contain elements that enable the individual to "escape" the historical, situated setting.

In an extensive discussion of Mead's theory of social roles, Habermas elaborates on the philosophical underpinnings that support Mead's theory, that allow Mead to convincingly explain how an individual can release herself from a fixed social structure, even when faced with an internalized system of rules and norms drawn from that structure.

Habermas argues that Peirce's proposition that our self-knowledge is generated within a linguistic system is the essential element that carries Mead's theory beyond standard sociology, to provide a valid explanation for independent subjectivity.

Habermas describes the historical problems in generating an acceptable concept of the self within the field of philosophy. He argues that, while Kant's "Kingdom of ends" represents a justifiable thesis for the moral coherence of a human social order (if at a very abstract level), Kant's theory of the transcendental subject cannot be used to describe a subject that is unique and self-determining. Habermas traces the ways in which Fichte, Humboldt, Husserl, and Sartre attempt to resolve the problem and locate the missing subject.

In each case, Habermas argues, the problem remains that the subject is only available to consciousness as an object. Habermas describes the issue as:

the circle inherent in every philosophy of consciousness: in consciously assuring itself of itself, the knowing subject unavoidably makes itself into an object, and it thereby falls short of itself as the antecedent source of all accomplishments of consciousness, a source that precedes all objectification and is absolutely subjective. (Habermas in McCarthy, 1997, p. 296)

The problem he describes in these philosophical systems is that, when confronting others as objects, there can be no real confrontation between independent, self-aware subjects. In Habermas's words: "Subjects can only be objects for one another, so that even in the reciprocally limiting influence they have on each other, their individuality does not reach beyond the objectivistic determinations of the strategic freedom of choice whose paradigm is the arbitrary will of privately autonomous legal subjects" (Habermas in McCarthy, 1997, p. 295)

Habermas's Elaboration of Mead's Theory of Social Subjectivity

Mead's theory, on the other hand, provides a model of the self-aware independent subject that can confront other self-aware independent subject; and this model is also capable of being philosophically and logically justified. However, Habermas argues that Mead's theory was not entirely clear to Mead himself, which leads him to elaborate on the philosophical underpinnings that he felt were only partially explored.

The argument starts with the fact that prior to language, individuals living in communities had intersubjective social stability due to mutually recognizable behavior patterns, driven by instinctual drives. When language emerged, the drives were subsumed within language, and the resulting behavior patterns were also mediated by language. Instinctual drives are “suppressed” by language, but at the same time, are mediated by communicative interaction. The linguistic mediation of underlying drives creates a structure of norms, which, as Habermas notes, ensures that expectations are clear in social situations where interpretation of behavior is required.

Habermas describes the way in which the individual that identifies itself as an individual can be theoretically described within this picture. Problematically, the subject must identify itself as a subjective “I” without stepping outside of a subjective framework. It must also not lose the self-positing and self-determining situational independence that would allow it to identify itself as making choices.

Habermas argues that the first step to resolving the problem was taken by Hegel, with the introduction of a historical subject. However, Habermas reduces Hegel’s transcendental historical subject to a non-transcendental subject, embedded within the historical social structure, for his analysis. Within the larger historical social evolution, the subject retains a “history” that is uniquely its own, but at the same time, part of a shared social world, created by all subjects. This is one area in which Williams and Habermas are clearly in

close agreement: the individual is embedded within the historical social structure, but retains a sense of his or her unique existence in that social structure.

In the following step, Habermas describes the way in which language creates a form of subjectivity that can be explored in a historical context. In a linguistic interaction, the subject brings norms, expectations, and possibly, aims or goals. In the process of interaction, the subject recognizes the “alter ego” in the interaction, and also recognizes that the act of communication can cause a somewhat predictable outcome in the *response* of the alter. The alter is distinguished from the self, and at the same time, the self’s norms, expectations and aims are distinguished in the reactions of the alter.

Not only the self’s norms, expectations and aims are distinguished in the reaction of the alter, they can be linked back to the subject as it exists in a historical sense. The consecutive moments of the self’s norms, expectations and aims are distinguished in interaction with the alter. The self experiences the impact of its norms and expectations on an alter immediately available to consciousness. Both the alter and the self are experienced as moving consecutively through history, and both are experienced with changing norms and expectations. In some sense, the alter is a reflection of society, and in some sense a reflection of the subject.

The reflective power of the alter allows the subject access to a historical “image” to itself. In this way, the individual becomes conscious of a unique and independent, subjective self in relation to a changing social-historical environment. This subjective historical self

is internalized and somewhat beyond the reach of the individual, but forms a sub-text on which the individual can draw on to establish her or his unique subjectivity, from a subjective perspective.

Habermas's concept of the individual can be compared with Williams's more general comment about art in society: "Art reflects its society and works a social character through to its reality in experience. But also art creates, by new perceptions and responses, elements which the society, as such, is not able to realize" (Williams in Jones, p. 23). Habermas's theory of self-awareness enables us to understand a unique subjective understanding of the affective dimension of society can be shared among its members – by drawing on a shared historical social dimension.

This area of Habermas's theory also corresponds to Williams's idea of a shared dimension of society that he characterizes as a "shared sense of life":

One can say with confidence, for example, that nobody really knows the nineteenth-century novel; nobody has read, or could have read, all its examples, over the whole range from printed volumes to penny serials... Equally, of course, no nineteenth-century reader would have read all the novels; no individual in the society would have known more than a selection of its facts. But everyone living in the period would have had something which, I have argued, no later individual can wholly recover: that sense of the life within which the novels were written. (Williams in Jones, p. 21)

Habermas and Self-Determination

Turning back to Habermas's argument that "in role behavior the interacting parties can rely on an understanding that has been previously secured through normative integration; to the extent that this understanding is no longer unproblematic at the next level, it has to be replaced by the interpretive accomplishments of those involved" (Habermas in McCarthy, p. 349), we can now identify a subjectivity that can project itself into a social environment as a unique individual. This subject, however, has still not been freed from the internalized norms and expectations it receives from society.

Habermas argues that the internalized interaction rules are dominated by a moral imperative, and that this imperative is based on interactive reciprocity. Interactive reciprocity demands that "both may do or expect the same thing ($x = y$) in comparable situations (e.g. the norms of civil law)" (Habermas in McCarthy, p. 350). The individual has ultimate control over moral decisions, and can orient them both to the (Kantian) moral imperatives and the less deterministic moral standards of the society she occupies. This control over moral decisions and the significance of their results (particularly in the collective, where multiple moral decisions fundamentally define a social order) is the reason they are used as the basis of a unique personal subjectivity.

Habermas points out, however, that general morals can only be drawn from a social context in the first place, as morals are learned through interaction with others. That is, in any situated historical society, certain moral rules are enforced, and through this

enforcement by the group, are learned, “internalized” by the individual. And, when an individual needs to confirm an interpretation of a moral, it is only through interaction with a community of others that this can be accomplished.

This confirmation or interpretation of a moral rule is conducted in the context of a community of moral beings. Habermas argues that, starting with the moral imperative of interactive reciprocity, individuals have the ability to challenge existing social interpretations of moral rules, and measure, evaluate and respond to interactions with others on this basis. He argues that there remains an “excess” of individual moral interpretations which are continually brought to bear on social interpretations of moral issues (McCarthy, 1996). The result is a social organization that is inhabited by individuals who experience themselves as unique, self-determining subjects, who experience their subjectivity through language within a shared discourse community, and who consistently question and “interpret” the morals and norms of their community.

Habermas adds to this basic mediation of the social conducted by the self-aware subject with the theory of universal pragmatics. With this theory, Habermas introduces a second form of interpretation of historically-situated morals and norms: interpretation and arbitration of communicative interaction on the basis of abstract, pre-conscious assumptions embedded in linguistically-based interaction. Habermas re-activates the Enlightenment concept of transcendental (idealist) reason in his theory of universal pragmatics. In this case, the individual is seen to be drawing on socially independent,

internalized concepts, which function as rules to which interpersonal communication does or does not adhere (McCarthy, 1996).

Habermas provides a very rigorous model of what he proposes as the rules that underlie communicative interaction. He argues that it is these rules that ultimately form the fundamental premises for all known social systems. These rules, described as universal pragmatics, include (a) comprehensibility – grammatical correctness, (b) correspondence – a true relationship of the content or propositions to external reality, (c) truthfulness – a real and accurate representation of the speakers intentions or internal state, and (d) appropriateness – a true and binding representation of the reciprocal expectations of the individuals involved (McCarthy, pp. 279-282).

Habermas's universal pragmatics carries some of the burden of the transcendental construction and justification of aims or ends, issues traditional to metaphysics.

Habermas avoids the problems of traditional transcendentalism (particularly, the problem of where the aims or ends originate) by linking the universal claims described above with the processes communication supports in social organization. As described above, Habermas links the process of communication at the most fundamental level to human instincts and drives. This contention seems reasonable: language is universally used to interpret and manage instincts and drives in ways which support social complexity.

It is useful here to compare Habermas's views with those of Williams, who believed that society was ultimately: "based in a relatively unchanged human biological constitution...

in persistent experiences of love and parentage and death, qualified but always present in all social conditionsin the facts of human presence in a physical world” (Williams, 1989, p. 220) Habermas argues that universal pragmatics are part of human “nature”: they emerge, with language, from human consciousness. On a more practical level, Habermas asserts that they provide a quasi-idealistic conceptual system that is drawn on in everyday practice (Habermas, 1993, p. 50). Williams, while clearly feeling that language underlies social interaction at a fundamental level, does not share Habermas’s belief that language contains validity claims that reach into the human psyche.

Habermas’s thesis about the underlying validity claims in linguistic interaction have been questioned by many theorists (Edgar, 2005; McCarthy, 1994; White, 1998). There is a general consensus that Habermas has not sufficiently explored the aesthetic dimensions of communicative interaction (Duvenage, 2003). On the other hand, Habermas’s argument that the validity claims he identifies are a resource in communicative interaction is hard to dispute. When arguments or disagreements erupt in communicative interaction (as they so often do), there is a universal tendency to revert to normative judgments about the sincerity, validity, and appropriateness of various “claims” that can be identified. Williams’s lifelong belief in education as a means of developing critical approaches to the cultural environment also touches on this area: communicative sophistication, and the ability to critically approach communicative interaction, is often dependent on providing and supporting arguments that draw on the dimensions of sincerity, validity, and appropriateness. Even if the validity claims that Habermas

proposes do not exist intrinsically in communicative interaction, they exist extrinsically, and enable individuals to use language to advance claims to fairness and equality.

Problems with Habermas's Historically Independent Subjectivity

Thomas McCarthy extensively explores the problems with Habermas's thesis: not the problems of empirically justifying the claim that language contains validity claims, but of philosophically justifying it. Making this claim, Habermas is arguing for a pre-social communicative "nature" of humans, which shapes the way they understand the social world. On the one hand, Habermas needs to retain a subjectivity that is self-determining, and which unfolds in the process of the historical development of humanity, while on the other, he argues for a fixed, determinate element underlying history.

McCarthy concludes that Habermas's dual schema makes sense, because both facets are justifiable (within his general schema), but also that there is a paradox that cannot be resolved. McCarthy closes his discussion by quoting Habermas, who has also wrestled with the issue: "Presumably, assertions about the contingency or necessity of cognitive interests, just as those about the contingency or necessity of the human race or the world as a whole, are meaningless" (Habermas in McCarthy, p. 125).

A more extended discussion of the Neo-Kantianism by Steven Crowell (2001, pp. 33-36) describes various neo-Kantian and phenomenological strategies for dealing with the same issue – the priority of the knowing subject versus the structure from which that subject

emerges. From Marburg to Husserl, Crowell argues, transcendentalism is confronted with variations of the problems that emerge, and fail to convincingly resolve them. Given that the question may be impossible to resolve, it is more significant to review how Habermas reaches his assertion that universal pragmatics underlie linguistically mediated social organization. As Nigel Dodd describes, Habermas starts with a basic Marxist conception of the fundamental requirements of human life, and the way in which they shape and determine social life; the need to physically survive (to obtain food and shelter), and the need to reproduce. Above and beyond this, Marx identified the need for interaction and cooperation in fulfilling human potential.

Habermas criticizes Marx for overestimating the role of the economic in social interaction and development. As noted above, Habermas argues that communicative interaction emerges from the most fundamental human instincts and drives, and therefore, must take precedence over economic structures. (Dodd, 2000, p. 117) There are, once again, strong parallels between Habermas's thoughts and those of Williams, presumably because both use Marx's thought as a basis of their own. And, like Habermas, Williams criticizes Marx for overestimating the role of the economic in social development (Williams, 1965). Habermas moves next to Wittgenstein's language game theory, along with Searle and Austin's later elaborations of this theory (Habermas, 1992). He argues that Wittgenstein rightly identified the way in which language raises validity claims for social practices and norms, but also criticizes Wittgenstein's theory for losing sight of the need for language to disclose external world conditions (Habermas, 1992, p. 69).

Habermas, in contrast, stresses the way in which language creates conditions that enable subjects to transcend language games and to disclose both the external world and the contents of the “lifeworld”: “True, claims to propositional truth, normative rightness and subjective truthfulness intersect here within a concrete, linguistically disclosed world horizon: yet, as criticizable claims they also transcend the various contexts in which they are formulated” (Habermas, 1992, p. 50). Thus Habermas links communicative interaction and the rules of universal pragmatics to reality, or the natural world that is manipulated by humans in their efforts to survive and reproduce. Habermas also links universal pragmatics at a lower level to the complex of instincts and drives that inform these efforts to survive and reproduce. They are always in dialogue with a concrete historical social order, and a situated relationship with the natural world that is encountered.

Communicative validity claims, however, based “in the principle egalitarian relation of reciprocity” are fundamentally oriented towards “ideals of freedom and equality” (Habermas “A Reply to my Critics” in Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 248). In communication, individuals make assumptions based on the fundamental underlying structures of language, which are in turn based on the most fundamental needs, instincts and drives of humans. Habermas argues that the organization of a society will at all levels have some reflection of the basic value orientations embedded in universal pragmatics.

Summary of Habermas's Theory of the Individual and Society

To reflect on what I have discussed so far, Habermas proposes that in social interaction there is a fundamental group of quasi-transcendental presuppositions or rules that convert into validity claims that can be redeemed. The individual, while being a subject of history, including the historically determined systems of actions, norms and principles from which each individual emerges, is also able to step outside of the historical context and linguistically evaluate and redeem validity claims embedded in linguistic interaction. Redeeming the validity claims embedded in interpersonal interaction involves the application of reason in a Kantian, idealist form. The individual can also refer to the “discourse community” in effect in their society to evaluate any morals or norms, or test a personal interpretation of morals or norms.

The condition of a society at any historical point determines, to some extent, the ability of the individual to evaluate the systems of actions, norms and principles in effect. The structures of individual development – which determine interpersonal behavior and the redeeming of validity claims - can be more or less evolved, and similarly, the socially-mediated systems of actions, norms and principles can be more or less developed. The basic tendency, given by the orientation of communicative validity claims, is for an evolutionary progression of individual and social organization towards realizing the fundamental communicative validity claims of freedom, inclusiveness and justice.

Habermas refers to Kohlberg's model of social development for further support for the evolutionary progression of both the individual and society.

The concept of reason is a much worked terrain in Habermas's thought. The use of reason is required to enable social evolution: without the possibility of bringing norms and ethics into question, to publicly evaluate the competing claims that converge in norms or ethics, no social change would be possible. Habermas's use of universal pragmatics has been criticized as a foundation for reason. McCarthy provides a detailed exploration of the problems with using universal pragmatics to pursue the project of critical theory (McCarthy, pp. 291 – 333).

The significant general objection, described by Seyla Benhabib and Steven Lukes, is that universal pragmatics rests on an assumption of quasi-transcendentalism – it arises outside of a specific, concrete community. However, it must be applied in a real social situation, and adjudicate the applied norms, ethics and standards of that community. In Benhabib and Lukes's words: "a discourse ethic developed in communications-theoretic terms would have to establish between itself and its addressees [terms of agreement based on] ...on the one side; its abstract insights, *radically ignoring all content* and concentrating only on the sense of normative grounding, and on the other side, the historical reality, the *already operative* ideas of justice, the orientation of *already present* social movements, the *existing* forms of freedom" (Benhabib and Lukes in Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 252).

Habermas argues that the key is the “...*form of life* that we anticipate in the *concept* of the ideal speech situation” (Habermas in Thompson and Held, 1982, p. 262, emphases added). His response draws on the theoretical position described above; that historical development itself is oriented to the fundamental validity claims of universal pragmatics. As discussed previously, in this thesis I do not intend to closely examine the validity of Habermas’s thesis about universal pragmatics. What is significant is that the claims that Habermas identifies inform normative judgments about the sincerity, validity, and appropriateness of various claims, and these normative judgments are used to support critical evaluation of communicative systems and communicative interaction. Williams approaches the problematic from a different direction, but also argues that at some point, some fundamental and universal “claims” that support fairness and equality are adjudicated in communicative interaction. It is in the layers above the originating impulse that are significant, because it is in these higher layers that alternative voices are translated into concrete efforts to produce fairness and equality.

Applying Humanism

Critical Approaches

Both Williams and Habermas write from a position that rejects the major strands of academic analysis that existed when they were learning their academic discipline: for Williams it was a rejection of elitist literary analysis, and to some extent dogmatic Marxism, while for Habermas it was a rejection of much of later Marxism, and particularly the Frankfurt School. Both Williams and Habermas worked to develop a theory that could explore and explain the positive developments in society that reflected rationalization of the lifeworld, or a society organized around democracy.

Williams and Habermas have both been classified as humanists (Milner, 1996, Sherratt, 2006). However, it is typically acknowledged that humanist philosophy cannot be usefully “applied” to social organization (Surber, 1998). Stephen Toulmin has explored a strand of social interaction, which he categorizes as “humanist” in contrast to a strand of empirical thought that he ties to the social reorganization that occurred with the spread of capitalism. Toulmin’s theory corresponds to both Williams’s and Habermas’s ideas about the significance of communication structure that is open to, and interacts with the artistic dimensions of society.

Toulmin’s theory deals with the public sphere of the 18th century, which Habermas used specifically to explore the interaction between the political sphere and the artistic sphere.

Habermas particularly emphasized the porous communicative structures that developed in society. Duvenage writes: “the literary public sphere is conceived as a universal auditorium....*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* thus portrays a positive picture of the role of art in opening up critical discursive practices in early modern society” (Duvenage, 2003, p. 14). Toulmin’s analysis of applied humanist thought also ties into Habermas’s theory that: “The systemic aspects of social life only emerge historically because of cultural changes in the lifeworld” (Sitton, 2003, p. 62). Toulmin describes the impact of social change on the development of modernity in the 17th and 18th centuries, and particularly, the impact of social change on the philosophy of modernity.

The main thesis Toulmin lays out, and justifies with a comprehensive review of the historical record, is that modernity should be perceived as progressing in two phases, the second of which overlay, and to some extent reversed, the first. The first phase was a relatively coherent advance, across Europe, of humanism, in the Renaissance. Toulmin describes humanism as a social phenomenon involving new, coalescing social attitudes: toleration of difference, willingness to examine the basis for beliefs; religious or scientific, and a wide-reaching curiosity about the diversity and complexity of human individuals and societies.

These underlying attitudes were expressed in a flowering of art, literature, and philosophical thought that spanned roughly the years between 1520 and 1630. In

Toulmin's words, "from Erasmus to Montaigne, the writings of the Renaissance humanists displayed an urbane open-mindedness and skeptical tolerance that were novel features of this new lay culture" (Toulmin, p. 25). It was during this period, as Habermas noted, that the public sphere was born. The second phase of modernity involved a systemization of thought, particularly philosophy, and introduced a complex of new ideas that were in stark contrast to humanism. Toulmin identifies two central, fundamentalist precepts: "certainty" and "reason". Toulmin traces the fundamentalism of certainty to the political tensions of the 16th and 17th centuries. Toulmin's discussion dwells on the political structure – constituted by monarchical states and religion - in Europe during this period, and unfortunately does not explore the social transformation that most social historians identify as starting during this period; the shift from feudalism to capitalism.

However, his argument rests on the widespread, increasing social instability in Europe during the period and while varying in their views on its causes, historians agree that religious conflict, crop failures and social upheaval were significant features of European life between 1530 and 1630 (Habermas, 1989, Trevelyan, 1926, Tawney, 1926). Toulmin extrapolates from this social situation to the new discourses that focused on certainty; which acted as an anchor in the new forms of social relationships, worked as an ideological support for religious strife, and finally, functioned as a psychological retreat from economic instability.

The idea of certainty informed the scientization of various fields that started in around 1540. Descartes is identified as the primary advocate of the application of reason as a scientific endeavor, and his theories led the charge in this phase of modernity. Descartes innovation was to apply abstract, general rules, based in logic to all fields of knowledge. In field after field, the search for certainty drew its validity from the idea that this abstract and logical approach could reveal reason, or the firm grounds on which reasonable agreement could be founded.

This concept of reason should be distinguished from the Enlightenment form of reason issuing from Kant. Kant's idea of reason was, firstly, an idealist concept. That is, Kant conceived of reason as a transcendental human potential. Kant's thesis of reason was based on an ethical approach to human culture, emerging from the humanist view that freedom of thought was a necessary precondition to equality and justice. Kant viewed reason as the natural opponent (and therefore opposite of) the dogmatism of theology and superstition. The ontology of Kant's individual includes agency directed to *human* ends; the individual is ultimately in possession of reason that informs a will, and will is directed towards chosen aims (Kant, 1997).

Toulmin's Theory of Rationalism (Empiricist Thought)

Descartes concept of reason could be viewed as representative of the new rationalist complex of ideas focused reason, which were very different from those of Kantian humanism. Descartes idea of reason was empirical. He argued that Euclidian geometry

could form the basis for a new approach to knowledge; it would inform a group of abstract rules that could be applied across disciplines and fields of knowledge and practice (Toulmin, 1990, pp. 74-80). There was no idealist individual at the heart of this empirical form of reason. One of the key concepts related to empirical reason was the way in which it obliterated “human prejudice”; reason as a system of rules and concepts that supported a standardized, objective individual.

Rules and concepts were applied without reflection – all that was required was appropriately objective application, and then similarly objective analysis of results. The ontology of Descartes individual is mechanistic and abstracted from social, or “situated” being. There is no distance between the reason and rationality of the individual in Descartes thought and the scientific theories he or she applies. That is, reason and rationality belong to the scientific, logical sphere of scientific thought, not any humanly constituted lifeworld.

Toulmin spends some time exploring how these ideas moved through society. Of particular interest is the fact that these ideas were adopted by the upper classes in major metropolis and largely rejected by those outside. In other words, they were adopted and defended by the emerging hegemonic capitalist order and rejected by other social groups.

If we reintroduce the sweeping social changes related to the shift from feudalism to capitalism, and the destruction of existing norms of interaction, it is clear that certainty has a place in the emerging concepts of the role of the individual in society. This would

not only be as a form of ideology that would serve to control and dominate, but as an ideology useful to the individual as a means of reorientation and control over his or her fate. The economic upheaval associated with capitalism, and the economic hardship caused by a prolonged period of crop failure would naturally leave the newly “liberated” individual confused and distressed. At least in the earlier stages of capitalist development, it would be unsurprising that rationalism, and an associated sense of certainty, would be accepted as a positive development.

The Puritan complex of ideas of the individual, and their role in the emergence of capitalism, as described by Max Weber, also served to restructure social interaction. Weber argued that the complex of ideas associated with Puritanism were one of the fundamental forces that advanced capitalism during this period.

Tawney argues against this idea. Tawney traces the development of Puritan thought, and argues that it intersects with other forms of emergent thought, rather than being solely responsible for these new forms of thought: “What is true and valuable in his essay is his insistence that the commercial classes in seventeenth-century England were the standard-bearers of a particular conception of social expediency, which was markedly different from that of the more conservative elements in society... and that that conception found expression in religion, in politics, and, no least, in social and economic conduct and policy” (Tawney, p. 212).

Sherratt and Humanism

Yvonne Sherratt's book, "*Continental Philosophy of Social Science*" (2006) approaches the same thesis as Toulmin's - that there is a distinct strand of humanist thought that can be traced in social development. However, Sherratt is concerned with humanism within intellectual history. Sherratt identifies three strands of humanist thought: hermeneutics, genealogy, and critical theory, located primarily in universities.

Her definition of humanism includes "three essential features. First... humanism builds upon a knowledge of the ancients: that it is an approach to learning based upon thorough scholarly engagement with the Greek and Roman authors of antiquity. Second... humanism entails a conception of knowledge transmitted through the ages. Thirdly... humanism believes the world to be meaningful and further that that meaning is created to the greatest extent by human beings" (Sherratt, p. 222).

Toulmin's categories of "lay" humanism, or the way in which humanism manifested within society include an emphasis on oral rather than written communication, an interest in the local and particular, as opposed to general and universal, and a focus on the timely – the here and now – as opposed to the timeless. Toulmin highlights the flow of humanist thought from academia to social institutions of knowledge. He describes humanism as situated in "... *practical* philosophy, whose issues arose out of clinical medicine, juridical procedure, moral case analysis, or the rhetorical force of oral reasoning" (Toulmin, 1990, p. 34).

The process of mapping the two theories onto each other is accomplished by understanding that Toulmin's categories of practical philosophy largely emerge from what Sherratt describes as the Greek and Roman authors of antiquity. For example, oral reasoning, and particularly the skills and theory of rhetoric, were developed in Ancient Greek hermeneutics. Juridical procedure, and particularly case law, was a development of Roman hermeneutics (which followed Ancient Greek hermeneutics). Moral case analysis also emerged from Roman legal hermeneutics (Sherratt, 2006, pp. 20 - 35). Toulmin describes a form of understanding that, while not literally involving "a scholarly engagement with the Greek and Roman authors of antiquity", nevertheless looks to antiquity for its forms of analysis and epistemology.

These concepts of humanism tie into the ideas of Habermas and Williams at the practical, applied level. Training in the humanist philosophical tradition supports a more open discursive space. When this training trickles down into society as forms of thought and belief systems, as Bennett argues, they: "create a space within and against [dominant culture] in which contradictory values can echo, reverberate and be heard" (1996, p. 19). For Habermas, rationalization of the lifeworld removes the constraints of religion or tradition and forces individuals to confront their differences discursively (White, 1998). For Williams, education in critical approaches to culture involved deploying these humanist forms of understanding.

The Rise of Humanism in Europe

As described previously, Sherratt identifies three strands of humanist philosophy; hermeneutics, genealogy, and critical theory. Common to each strand are “three essential features. First... humanism builds upon a knowledge of the ancients: ...it is an approach to learning based upon thorough scholarly engagement with the Greek and Roman authors of antiquity. Second... humanism entails a conception of knowledge transmitted through the ages. Thirdly... humanism believes the world to be meaningful and further that that meaning is created to the greatest extent by human beings” (Sherratt, 2006, p. 222).

Charles G. Nauert (2006) in a seminal survey of Renaissance humanism, argues that the central reason for a resurgence of humanism between the 14th and 16th centuries was two-fold: it provided a set of skills that became important in maintaining a new form of society, and it provided a set of attitudes and assumptions that were useful to an emerging commercial class.

The new social form emerged in urban communities (city-states) governed by Roman law, and based on private property. These communities gained independence from German emperors in the 12th century. These city-states were, at least in their earlier incarnations, self-governed by a group of wealthy merchants with some inclusion of other citizens (such as guild members, and certain types of commercial entrepreneur, such as glass-makers). These communities bore a strong resemblance to the city-states of ancient

Greece and Rome, a resemblance that was not lost on the merchants, who attempted to reconstitute the political structure of the ancient city-states.

The use of Roman law meant that the first change in social structure was that a new type of intellectual worker was required; scribes and clerks who, while not lawyers, had the ability to draft legal documents in Latin. Latin and drafting skills were taught to these clerks in an education that included Latin grammar and study of rhetoric, known as the *ars dictaminis*. This education was significantly expanded in the broader education that gradually began to be provided to the sons of wealthy merchants and more powerful citizens in the classical *studia humanitatis*, which included grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.

In addition to skills in Latin and rhetoric and knowledge of history, poetry and moral philosophy, the sons of the wealthy and powerful gained access to the texts of ancient Greece and Rome, with their republican traditions, a form of political organization in which individual members of the society had the right and duty to share in governance. This concept of republicanism, Nauert (2006) takes pains to clarify, is not democracy, because those who govern are not elected: they are rather a social elite either by birth or by economic success. It was the knowledge and attitudes embedded in the texts of ancient Athens and Rome, and particularly the role of the “enfranchised” individual in the republic, that were the real attraction for the newly wealthy and powerful commercial

class, and the reason why the *studia humanitatis* replaced the existing scholastic education.

Nauert also argues that the skills imparted by an education in *studia humanitatis* became increasingly valuable in emerging roles required by other changes in the political system. At differing points in different countries between the 15th to 17th century, ability in rhetoric and logic and the ability to read Latin and Greek fluently became requisite for many, if not all, important positions in courts and other centers of power. As power was extended to more of the citizenry, and as the “balance of power” became less a matter of overt violence and more a matter of complex alliances and negotiations, the need for rhetorical skills became more important. Nauert (2006) argues that these rhetorical skills were more often put into play primarily to persuade the populace; in some circumstances, however, they were also instrumental in forming alliances, or persuading various power-holders (the church and a sovereign, for example) of their shared interests.

The skill of rhetoric, in particular, gained importance as commerce-oriented communication rose in significance. Nauert notes that starting in the 13th century in Italy, grammar school education exploded. This education was for the sons of the well-to-do merchant class, but was also accessible to the brighter sons of the socially disenfranchised. The new type of education served a leveling purpose; with access to this type of education, upward social mobility also became more of a possibility. Significantly, too, Nauert notes that with the later growth in dictatorial political

organization during the 15th and 16th centuries (a resurgence of monarchies and new forms of elitist despotism), many of these grammar schools were closed down.

Ellen Meiksins-Wood (2003) argues that the Italian city-state was a particular form of commercial organization; not capitalist, but a precursor to capitalism. The system of political domination relied primarily on the exercise of force, force which was possible through profits, the profits generated by advances in commercial organization, and some specialist forms of production (such as glass making, and the silk cloth trade). The commercial class had a growing significance for the success of this form of society, and therefore, experienced greater freedom and exercised more power. At the same time, power in Europe began to shift from a feudal structure to a nation-state structure. With the last shift in power to the nation-state, capitalism also became the predominant form of economic organization.

Habermas too identifies the emergence of a new type of humanist knowledge during this period, and, like Meiksins-Wood, argues that what was created was a blended culture: “With the emergence of early finance and trade capitalism, the elements of a new social order were taking shape. From the thirteenth century on they spread from the northern Italian city-states to western and northern Europe. Initially, to be sure, they were integrated without much trouble by the old power structure” (Habermas, 1991, p. 15).

Nauert (2006) traces the spread of humanism through Europe as a series of intensely fought confrontations between the existing, scholastic-based Mediaeval form of

education and the new *studia humanitastis* subjects. The need for skills in rhetoric and grammar for the commercial classes, the new intellectual workers in civil society, and the new intellectual workers engaged by those with political power, and access to the immense artistic heritage of Greece and Rome for those in the emerging artistic fields, meant that ultimately, the *studia humanitastis* was widely adopted by both grammar schools and universities throughout Europe by the 17th century (Nauert, 2006).

As with the complexities of analyzing the role of technological innovations and social changes, or the role of Protestantism in the emergence of capitalism, it is obvious that understanding cause and effect in relation to social changes surrounding the *studia humanitastis* and associated humanist attitudes would be very difficult. However, it is clear that the *studia humanitastis* had an impact on all levels of European culture, as much as it provided the new skills required by the new social organization. Many theorists have identified the new skills and attitudes associated with the *studia humanitastis* as fundamental to changes in social organization related to democracy. For example, Snedeker argues that modernity is predicated on these changes: "...the central problematic of this social theory is modernity and the achievement of moral consensus through argument and discussion" (Snedeker, 2004, p. 66). This echoes Habermas's argument that: "In a rationalized lifeworld the need for achieving understanding is met less and less by a reservoir of traditionally certified interpretations immune from criticism; at the level of a completely decentred understanding of the world, the need for

consensus must be met more and more frequently by risky, because rationally motivated, agreement” (Habermas in White, 1998, p. 98).

Humanism and the Reformation

Stephen Toulmin writes about the cultural and political structure of Europe at the end of the period described by Nauert. Toulmin contends that a “lay” humanist culture had taken hold throughout Europe by the middle of the 16th century, and that it significantly shaped life at the lower levels of society. This lay humanism grew alongside both the expansion of the *studia humanitatis* and the growing influence of “public opinion”.

As those in power in various forms of political organization became increasingly concerned with influencing those they governed, and employed the skills of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric persuasively on “the masses”, the skills, attitudes, arts, and stories of ancient Greece and Rome trickled down in society. There was a very real impact on the artistic production in Europe, both that consumed by the wealthy and powerful patrons of individual artists, and that consumed by the general public (for example, Montaigne’s *Essais* and Shakespeare’s plays). Toulmin characterizes this culture as interested in human variability and quirkiness, realistic about human needs and desires, grounded in the real, daily activities of individuals, and unafraid of examining human foibles and failings.

Toulmin describes the effect of lay humanism on the religious and political structure in Europe towards the end of the 16th century. His description shows a marked shift from the earlier semi-feudal structure that Nauert describes at the start of the 13th century. In 13th century Europe, the sentiments of the masses were both insignificant to those in power, and to a large extent, strictly policed. The two governing social systems, monarchical and religious, were closely intertwined, and had a tight hold on medieval culture. In contrast, Toulmin describes the flow of events at the end of the 16th century and into the early 17th century as strongly influenced by the opinions and sentiments of the masses. These were primarily structured around religion, although also influenced by nationalism. Nauert (2006) describes the growth of the publishing industry during the 15th and 16th centuries, and the realization – first by Martin Luther, that the press could be used to appeal to “public opinion” (Nauert, 2006, p.146). These developments mark the emergence of what Habermas identified as the public sphere in the 18th century, and are clearly closely related to humanism.

As described previously, Habermas links the collapse of the public sphere with the emergence of instrumental reason linked to capitalism. Toulmin identifies an earlier repression of humanism, coinciding with the earlier emergence of rationalism (particularly the rationalism of Descartes and Newton), at the start of the 17th century. More specifically, however, Toulmin links the repression of humanism with problems in social stability, particularly those related to religious tolerance. Nauert (2006) is perhaps a more sensitive analyst of the religious conflicts of the period than Toulmin, who seems

to generalize the causes. Nauert links Luther's aggressively confrontational attitude, later adopted by his followers, directly to the religious conflict that disrupted Europe in the 30 years' war (1618-1648). Nauert suggests that the gradual religious reforms proposed by Erasmus, had they not been subverted by those of Luther, would have lead to a peaceful religious reformation along the same lines proposed by Luther.

Nauert argues that Protestantism was essentially a form of humanism, applied to religion. The approach developed by Erasmus, and passed to Luther, conformed with the humanist approach to literature in general, in which a text was considered in its totality, in its historical setting, and in terms of its author's intentions. This was in contrast to the medieval scholastic practice of extracting passages from the Bible or scriptures, and subjecting them to close scrutiny in isolation.

Erasmus argued that this medieval scholastic form of isolated analysis had led to the transference of the proper authority of the original authors of biblical texts – who had a privileged relationship with God - to church-based “experts” who provided the “correct” interpretations. Erasmus saw this as the root of the problematic materialism and corruption of the church, where power had become more important than salvation and indulgences had replaced personal spirituality. Erasmus insisted that true Christianity required personal spirituality, and this could only be achieved if an individual could achieve enlightenment through a personal relationship with biblical texts, without the intervening “authority” of the church.

Sherratt, however, argues that what was more significant about Protestant thought, particularly in context of the reformation, was not its humanism, but its appeal to objectivism. This objectivism can be linked to the emergence of independent thought in general, and the growth of the public sphere. In Sherratt's words: "there was perhaps one important... novelty to the Reformer's hermeneutics: they had developed the notion of the importance of *objectivity*, and as such, the Reformers paved the way for a later discussion of how objective interpretation of a text could be attained. The Reformers ... paved the way to the central concern of Enlightenment hermeneutics" (Sherratt, 2006, p. 48).

Toulmin provides a catalogue of problems that effected Europe at the start of the 17th century, which he argues fed into a general sense of insecurity and uncertainty. The backlash against this general climate of fear was directed at the type of humanism represented by Erasmus. This type of humanism was linked to philosophical skepticism, which, for the average layman, began to symbolize the uncertainty caused by social reorganization (itself caused by capitalist restructuring), and the generally poor economic conditions in Europe during the period.

Toulmin's analysis of the cause of the sense of uncertainty emphasizes the economic and political:

by 1600, the political dominance of Spain was ending. France was divided along religious lines, England was drifting into civil war. In Central Europe, the

fragmented states of Germany were tearing one another apart, the Catholic princes being kept in line by Austria, and the Protestants reinforced by Sweden. Economic expansion was replaced by depression: there was a grave slump from 1619 to 1622. International trade fell away and unemployment was general, so creating a pool of mercenaries available for hire in the Thirty Year's War, and all these misfortunes were aggravated by a worldwide worsening of the climate, with unusually high levels of carbon in the atmosphere. (Toulmin, 1990, p. 17)

The thought of Descartes and Newton, Toulmin notes, gained widespread acceptance in this state of affairs, as it represented a form of certainty. While the scientific developments linked to Descartes and Newton were somewhat incompatible with religion, they prevailed as a new type of worldview, living alongside religious worldviews. These, too, were changing during this period. Toulmin argues that the assassination of Henry of Navarre in 1610 represented the trigger for the widespread shift to religious intolerance.

Evolution of Literature and the Public Sphere

Thus, the first clearly identifiable use of literature to organize social attitudes that were emerging alongside capitalism (although not with a new form of literature), as described above, came in 15th and 16th century with the emergence of the *studia humanitatis* and use of classical texts to support political republicanism. The liberalization of society, organized around this new communicative structure, was then partially reversed at the end of the 17th century.

Subsequently, Habermas identifies two practices that emerged in 18th century that were linked to new forms of literature: handbills and newspapers circulating in coffeehouse society, and novels and their associated salon society (Habermas, 1991). Habermas also notes the essential role played by literary criticism, in solidifying and organizing public opinion (Bennett, 2006, p. 94).

Habermas describes the process of political liberalization, focused on the creation of a public sphere, in the 18th century. This public sphere was based on, on one hand, literature, and on the other, the circulation of newspapers and political tracts. As with Lee's description of the agitation for emancipation at the end of the 17th century (Lee, 2003), Habermas describes the development of an extensive polemic in support of democracy. The rhetoric of the emerging bourgeoisie was structured around rationality, which was premised on active debate in the public sphere. The production and dissemination of literature and newspapers and their free circulation was thus part of the ideology of democracy, created and sustained by the bourgeoisie (Habermas, 1991).

In this case (in contrast to earlier expansions of new forms of media, which were repressed through physical censorship of the media involved), the emancipatory potential of the new forms of literature were repressed with developments emerging from the general capitalist-driven reorganization of society; on the one hand, instrumental reason, linked to specialized forms of knowledge, meant literary knowledge gradually diminished in importance, while on the other hand, as Habermas describes, the literary field was

replaced by a commercialized equivalent in the form of new entertainment media (Habermas, 1991).

Habermas writes eloquently about the drawbacks of commercial entertainment, particularly the way in which it depoliticizes its consumers. In this aspect, there are clear parallels between the way in which literary criticism was gradually emptied of political content between 1820 and 1860, and the way in which the public sphere was gradually emptied of political content between 1800 and 1900. The crucial issue here is not that capitalism intruded into the lifeworld, or that the literary sphere was undermined by new media (which both definitely occurred), but that forms of communicative interaction, based on a certain constellation of understandings and beliefs, were repressed.

To speculate, at this juncture, it is probable that it was obvious that certain forms of communicative interaction, which I have identified in relation to the *studia humanitatis*, were supporting developments of institutions that also supported a general tendency towards social equality and openness to difference. At the same time, however, the institutional developments threatened those in power (by calling for more equality), and also led to more social instability; as Lee (2003) writes, at the end of the 18th century, when newspapers supported a more active political engagement, agitation in support of the Irish and Caribbean slaves was a real concern. In the following sections, I explore the process by which the more open, critically oriented patterns of thought and belief systems related to the trickle-down effect of the *studia humanitatis* were absorbed by new

structures that created entirely different patterns of communicative interaction – patterns that were more amenable to social stability and domination by a social elite.

Humanism and the Growth of the Public Sphere

It is widely accepted that the period between 1550 and 1700 represented a watershed in political and economic reorganization in Europe. The skills and attitudes associated with humanism provided a foundation for the emerging capitalist society and supported a shift towards what is characterized as the central feature of the Enlightenment: the use of reason by the individual, free of the coercive force of religion or tradition. At the same time, however, the flexibility and skepticism of earlier humanism was being replaced, in various ways, by more rigid, dogmatic forms of thought. Nauert, in particular, describes the radicalism of Luther, and the way it led to dogmatism and repressive conformity. And Toulmin notes the way in which the emerging scientific worldview effected a general change in lay culture, away from traditional humanist concerns with the particular and towards new beliefs in the universal.

It seems reasonable to characterize these changes also as a way of stabilizing the social structure that was emerging, and to reconsolidate power. Paul Starr (2006) notes the pattern of media power during this period was also characterized by, first, a general increase in access to text (through new technologies that made printed materials cheaper, and also from a significant increase in public literacy), and second, between 1550 and 1650, by a reorganization that consolidated and centralized power which served to create

restrictions on what could be printed, and therefore disseminated to the larger consuming public. The resulting social organization continued to evolve towards full capitalism, while the scientific worldview continued to grow in significance. It is the end of the 18th century, and into the middle of the 19th that Habermas describes as the “golden age” of the coffee-house public sphere. Public power continued to expand during this period, and a sub-text of liberal humanism informed this expansion. At the end of this expansion, however, a second wave of repressive, rationalizing ideology emerges.

Decline of the Public Sphere Reflected in Literary Criticism

Describing the period between 1730 and 1850, Richard E. Lee (2003) points to the fault lines in the British Empire – slavery in the Caribbean and social and political instability in Ireland – as the flashpoints for conflict between the state and the populous. In both cases, popular support fell on the side of the oppressed, and served as a focus for the widespread radicalism of the time. This radicalism was politically organized – very loosely, starting in the 1790s and then more and more formally, culminating in the Chartist movement. Habermas notes that “The first newspaper with a mass edition of over 50,000 copies was, significantly, the organ of the Chartist movement—Cobbett’s *Political Register*, published beginning in 1816” (Habermas, 1991, p.168).

As the organization of the demands for enfranchisement grew, so did the forces of repression. Initially, a group of ideologies was created to support conservatism and the role of the state as oppressor, ideologies that originated in the Hobbesian thesis of the

survival of the fittest. They were bolstered by arguments of “innate racial superiority”, particularly as the slavery issue came to a head in the early 1800s. Emerging out of these general theories of the natural order of man was the theory of high culture, or culture as representing what was “sweetest and best” in both man and society. In Matthew Arnold’s words: “... the best that is known and thought in the world” (Arnold in Lee, 2003, p. 46). This idea of culture was used, on one hand, to defend the existing social order; the order that had achieved the heights of cultivation and that would continue on to greater and greater heights. On the other hand, the literature and art of this apex of culture were to serve as a measure against which other cultures (particularly imperial colonies) were to be judged, and to which they should aspire.

John Hartley (2003) notes the way in which this ideology was tied into class: “Thus in a certain sort of painting ... abstraction, idealization and theory produced works designed to teach “public virtue” to rulers, or to gentlemen capable of governing. Barrell pointed out that while the “mere Vulgar of Mankind” were thought to stand in need of the gallows—and other “rectifying objects” like penal Australia and the panopticon prison... [Q]uite the reverse was thought to be true of the gentleman educated by the liberal arts into civic virtue” (Hartley, 2003, p. 73). This ideology of superiority, and the representative function of selected works of literature and art was, Lee argues, modified starting in the 1840s as English became an official academic subject. The emphasis, by the 1860s, was on understanding the subtleties of literature as a form of self-improvement. Thus the skill of criticism was part of the cultivation of the individual,

which was aimed at producing “harmonious perfection”. This harmonious perfection precluded practical criticism, or even engagement in political issues.

The criticism of text during this period was, in many ways, a form of hermeneutics. However, like the earlier scholastic hermeneutics, the intention was to extract the text from any social context, and subject it to analysis as a freestanding object. As with scholasticism in the 13th century, the skill to be cultivated was a form of predictable and proscribed interpretation. In the case of literary criticism of the 19th century, the form of interpretation was aesthetic. Lee notes that this period marked the high-point of Romantic aesthetics, which involved highly apolitical, individualist interpretation. Underlying this, in Lee’s words, was a: “shift from an engaged criticism in a period of violently repressive politics to the suppression of politics in criticism itself, [to] which, despite themselves, Williams and his fellow innovators were heir” (Lee, 2003, p. 38). Williams noticed this shift, and reintroduced hermeneutic openness, alongside political criticism, in his work.

Conclusion

This thesis has moved from an exploration of the background and theory of Williams and Habermas to an examination of patterns of social development that I have characterized as humanist. The theory of Williams and Habermas focuses on the role of communication in society, and how the structure of communicative interaction affects different social groups. I have used this as a starting point to explore the role of communication historically, and to look closely at how different patterns of communicative interaction act as different types of social resource.

What is missing from many critical theories in the field of cultural studies is the recognition that criticism requires more than a voice: to be effective, it must embody a communicative orientation that will engage the dominant culture, and enable change to the dominant culture. Williams identifies the problem as moving constraints, or “pressures and limits” (Williams, 1977, p. 110). In this thesis, I focus on particular forms of thought and belief systems which have been effective historically in facilitating communication that is capable of pushing against and beyond the limits of a particular social structure. I argue that attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about communicative interaction and the possibilities it contains are learned, and represent a social resource, which can be historically traced.

Underlying the theory of both Williams and Habermas is the idea that certain forms of openness in communicative interaction connect with the intrinsic drive in human sociality

towards equality. Williams and Habermas locate this drive toward equality in different places, although both see it effectively expressed in particular communicative structures. Williams's analysis begins from the premise that there is an emancipatory impulse in every sector of society, found at a fundamental level in the individual. He identified the institutional "disembedding" of elements of ritual and myth (for example, dialogue, which was transformed in Greek tragedy) as a primary element of social development. To Williams, the process of disembedding and incorporation into a new institutional framework contains a moment of promise, where new forms of understanding are available in new artistic conventions (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 138).

Williams's analysis is strikingly similar to Habermas's analysis of the necessity for development of a form of reason that draws on cultural rationalization, which, as McCarthy remarks: "signifies the extension of communication free from domination" (McCarthy, p. 23). Williams discusses the emancipatory role of art in general:

Art reflects its society and works a social character through to its reality in experience. But also art creates, by new perceptions and responses, elements which the society, as such, is not able to realize. If we compare art with its society, we find a series of real relationships showing its deep and central connections with the rest of the general life.... We find also, in certain characteristic forms and devices, evidences of the deadlocks and unsolved problems of the society: often admitted to consciousness for the first time in this way" (Williams in Jones, 2006, p. 23).

Habermas has identified a similar emancipatory potential in art, as described by Holub:

bourgeois art functions in two ways when it is received by the general public. On the one hand, it is supposed to educate the public so that each individual becomes an expert. On the other hand, it relates to the life experiences of the public, establishing connections to the lifeworld of its audience. This second manner of reception, decried as naïve identification, has revolutionary potential, according to Habermas. Drawing on a proposal of Albrecht Wellmer, he suggests that art can be employed to illuminate a “life-historical situation”, changing our cognitive relationship to the world (science) and our thinking about norms and values (ethics). (Holub, 1991, p. 137)

In general, Habermas’s critics agree that Habermas abandoned his initial notions about the role of aesthetic experience as a conduit for emancipation (Jay, 1985; McCarthy, 1985; Duvenage, 2003), and instead moved towards the idea that social evolution was predicated on the truth claims that are embedded in communicative interaction.

Habermas’s clearest articulation of his views on the emancipatory potential of art is found in the essay “Walter Benjamin: Consciousness Raising or Rescuing Critique” (1972), in which he argues that the aesthetic, affective dimension of experience contains a form of truth, which returns “nature” to human understanding (Jay, 1985; Duvenage, 2003). Jeffrey C. Alexander (1985) notes that by 1991, Habermas had limited the discursive potential of the aesthetic sphere to claims of “authenticity” and “sincerity”, claims that can be redeemed through rational discussion.

The problem of Habermas’s separate validity spheres is also explored by McCarthy (1985), with the central concern of both Alexander and McCarthy (among others) being

that if only a certain type of validity claim can be redeemed from the aesthetic sphere, it is difficult to identify how the aesthetic sphere can contribute to a general opening of the lifeworld. It has also been commented that it is difficult to reconcile Habermas's view of aesthetic experience with communicative interaction, and that Habermas seems to create a split: on the one hand, aesthetic experience is subjective; while on the other, it contains a form of reason that can be discursively redeemed (O'Connor, 1985; Jay, 1985). But ultimately, Alexander notes, Habermas relies on the idea that any type of validity claim contributes to the rationalization, or opening up of the lifeworld: "The medium for common understanding between these spheres—the source of their higher reconcilability—is precisely the fact that they make such claims to validity, and they can thematize these claims through rational argumentation" (Alexander, 1985, p. 408). It is this element of "rational argumentation" that has been most significant to this thesis. It is in the area of communication as a resource, subject to control, and subject to structural pressures, that Williams and Habermas agree.

For Habermas, aesthetic experience can open an individual to the possibility of "difference", and prompt an open, questioning attitude, but this attitude is immediately mediated by the embedded claims in linguistic communication. For Williams, the originating emancipatory impulse is less predictable, in that it is based in consciousness itself (Jones, 2006). Thus Williams is open to more indeterminacy and variability in the way in which aesthetic forms of expression and the emancipatory impulse they contain can intrude into communicative interaction. For both, there is an emancipatory potential

in aesthetic experience, but this potential works as a form of communicative interaction, and can be limited by various social institutions, which range from the educational to the commercial.

Williams's analysis, drawing closer parallels between embedded social practices and disembedded social production, never emphasized the encroachments of capitalism and instrumental reason to the same extent as Habermas (who focused on these areas as part of his legacy from the Frankfurt School). In Williams's words:

For it seems to me to be true that meanings and values, discovered in particular societies and by particular individuals, and kept alive by social inheritance and embodiment in particular kinds of work, have proved to be universal in the sense that when they are learned, in any particular situation, they can contribute radically to the growth of man's powers to enrich his life, to regulate his society, and to control his environment. (Williams in Higgins, 2001, p. 59)

One major difference between Habermas's and Williams's understanding of the subject, or subjectivity, is that Habermas finds subjectivity to be ultimately defined through communicative interaction with others – that the self is only available as a reflection of the reaction of others in communicative interaction (McCarthy, 1994). Williams did not clarify a particular type of subjectivity, but suggestively, described a personal or private use of signs:

The true signifying element of language must from the beginning have a different capacity: to become an inner sign, part of an active practical

consciousness. Thus in addition to its social and material existence between actual individuals, the sign is also part of a verbally constituted consciousness which allows individuals to use signs of their own initiative, whether in acts of social communication, or in practices which, not being manifestly social, can be interpreted as personal or private. (Williams, 1977, p. 40)

Habermas has exhaustively explored the individual in society, and created a compelling theory of how the individual is both embedded in, and transcends, a particular society in a particular historical moment. His argument about the development of the public sphere (1991) is an example of a socio-historical moment in which the “premises” for communicative interaction support the underlying (communicatively embedded) impulse towards equality and fairness. This is one element in Habermas’s theory that is significant in this thesis – whether one accepts Williams’s more romantic, idealist view of the individual and the potential for aesthetics to create a social critique, or Habermas’s view of truth claims within language itself – there remains the question of where the potential for critique emerges, and how critique can be considered in modernist terms, as compelling society in a generally emancipatory direction.

Habermas, as has been noted by various theorists, has undertaken a project of reinvigorating the Kantian Enlightenment project of modernity; a philosophical project that sought to dissolve dogmatism and replace it with “human” reason. Habermas has focused particularly on one aspect of the project, the one that he sees as essentially incomplete: the development of reason in the lifeworld. In Thomas McCarthy’s words:

“Habermas proposes a model of the “dialectic of enlightened will and self-conscious potential” (McCarthy, 1994, p.12). Habermas’s aims can be identified in some of the older, more radically political expressions of the Enlightenment project, as described by Jose Mauricio Domingues: “The very theme of democracy, as insightfully pointed out by de Toqueville in *The Ancient Regime and the French Revolution* (1856), is rooted in a process of disdifferentiating equalization of individuals” (Domingues, 2000, p. 65).

Habermas has provided a complex and subtle analysis of the use of literature in the 18th century in his early work, “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”.

Habermas explores the growth of the public sphere and its relationship to the development of a particular type of social subjectivity: “The parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy and in the end carry the day meant, in the thought of the day, the parity of ‘common humanity’” (Habermas, 1991, p. 36). Habermas notes that this new social subjectivity facilitated an entirely new form of social interaction, located in the lifeworld: “The private people for whom the cultural product became available as a commodity profaned it inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalize it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority” (Habermas, 1991, p. 37). Habermas has analyzed the 18th century public sphere of Europe in depth.

In this thesis, I have explored the influence of aesthetics, and the influence of a particular type of education, the *studia humanitas*, arguing that both represent a form of communicative interaction that enables greater social equality. It is clear from the historical record, as Habermas and Nauert describe, that forms of communicative interaction that draw on aesthetic or humanist forms of knowing or being create an *expansion* in social equality. There are two significances in the use of the *studia humanitas*; the subjects and methodologies are theoretically oriented to a humanist form of knowledge, and there was a struggle between a dominant and an emergent social group over their general use and dissemination.

This is a struggle that Williams regarded particularly significant in illuminating the disruptive potential of new forms of knowing or being (Jones, 2006). For both Williams and Habermas, aesthetic forms of knowing open a space in which difference and opposition to the dominant culture can flourish. Nauert takes pains to clarify that the *studia humanitas* was implicated in a significant social shift: “Humanism inevitably implied criticism of the intellectualism and scientism of the scholastics (and of Aristotle, their philosophical model), and it also implied efforts to end the dominance of logic and natural science in education and replace them with the ethical and rhetorical emphasis that had dominated Roman education” (Nauert, 2006, p. 24). Humanist forms of knowing are generally more compatible with aesthetic forms of knowing; at the least, they facilitate openness to competing interpretations (in the political sphere, of the “good life”), and the acceptance of difference.

Introduction of the *studia humanitas* occurred at the point where society was being restructured by capitalist economics (between the 15th and 17th centuries) but nonetheless facilitated a cultural shift that was not necessary to capitalism. By implication, and as Habermas and Williams would argue, the cultural shift was enabled by capitalism, but represented a form of evolution: a developmental impulse that is intrinsic to culture and/or human nature, and one that occurred in the lifeworld. The *studia humanitas* had a particular impact on society; it acted as a resource for change, and facilitated interaction in which social goals and cultural forms of knowing and being could be discussed and compared. This has obvious parallels with the public sphere of the 18th century, as Duvenage writes: “the literary public sphere is conceived as a universal auditorium....*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* thus portrays a positive picture of the role of art in opening up critical discursive practices in early modern society” (Duvenage, 2003, p. 14).

I also examined the way in which these humanist and aesthetic forms of knowing were shut down, the process by which they were removed, structurally, from vast segments of the population. The elimination of the humanist tradition in education in the 17th century, and the elimination of the literary/critical tradition in education in the 19th century have clear parallels. Eliminating the humanist tradition in education in the 17th century proceeded in two stages. The first stage, as Nauert describes, occurred towards the end of the 17th century:

While the humanistic curriculum dominated the leading grammar schools and expanded its position in nearly all universities, the humanistic curriculum as actually taught focused on a small and cautiously chosen segment of classical literature, tacitly renouncing the dream of enriching student's minds with the whole broad and exciting spectrum of ancient texts. Latin and Greek literature contained much that could challenge prevailing social, political, and religious ideas; but such books were carefully excluded from the classroom. Humanistic education in actual practice imparted familiarity with only a time-worn and often a shop-worn body of safe texts. (Nauert, 2006, p. 202)

The following stage occurred with the rise of scientific rationalism, as described by Toulmin and Habermas. Toulmin argues that in the 17th century: "scientific theories and nation states alike were fully rational only if they formed stable "systems": in one case logical systems *a la* Euclid, in the other institutional systems with determinate relations. With the reconstruction of Europe after 1648, the rigidity of the structures that developed in response to those demands had real merits: they met the demand for "stability" that was a prime preoccupation of Europeans at that time" (Toulmin, 1990, p. 183). The first stage in this process of "social stabilization" is similar to the process that occurred in academia in the 19th century identified by Lee (2003) and Eagleton (1984).

The difference of where the stabilization occurred, or more accurately, the way in which these more open forms of communicative interaction were shut down is significant, but ultimately, what is apparent is that to be truly effective, stabilization must occur at the level of communicative interaction, at the level at which beliefs about *communicative*

possibilities influence the behaviors of individuals, and falling out from that, at the level where individuals can be persuaded to accept particular forms of social organization. The field of Cultural Studies provides many significant theories about stabilization of social interaction, such as Gramsci's theory of hegemonic domination, or Bourdieu's theory of economic and cultural capital (Jenks, 2005). The key issue that Williams and Habermas expose is the role of different types of communicative interaction available in a social structure, and the struggle to legitimate one or another.

Williams's methodology reflected the hermeneutic tradition, although it was an applied form of hermeneutics. As Lee describes, Williams deployed hermeneutics in his methodology: "In his chapter on the "Images of Society", Williams puts into practice the idea that we see the actual relationships in society by learning to describe them and that the abstract ideas we use are actually interpretations (both persistent and subject to change)" (Lee, 2003, p. 25). Habermas also saw the value of hermeneutics, as McCarthy notes "Habermas did not deny the intimate connection of critical reflection to hermeneutic understanding" and that hermeneutics provides "a perspective that has much in common with his own, including recognition of communication as a "universal medium" of social life, awareness of the historicity of human existence, and the ideal of a dialogueical resolution of practical questions" (McCarthy, 1994, p.190). McCarthy notes, however that "Habermas's counter-position is an attempt to mitigate the radically situational character of [hermeneutic] understanding [in the theory of Gadamer] through the introduction of theoretical elements; the theories of communication and social

evolution are meant to reduce the context-dependency of the basic categories and assumptions of critical theory” (McCarthy, 1994, pp. 192-193).

For both theorists, art and literature had a similar role in society – as a vehicle for expressing or exposing ideas that were hidden, repressed, or merely unwelcome, and facilitating social change. Yvonne Sherratt has identified Critical Theory as another in a long line of humanist philosophical systems. Sherratt discusses the academic work of the Frankfurt School, and notes that:

Adorno cites Homer and Aristotle. Moreover, in the English translation of his collection of essays entitled *Critical Models*, there are over eight indexed pages referenced to Plato and seven to Aristotle... More generally, the ideas and issues of the Early Greeks are the bedrock of the major influences of the Frankfurt School. Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud were scholars of the Ancients... Indeed all the German philosophers key to the Frankfurt School both engaged directly with the Greeks and also transmitted humanism indirectly too. (Sherratt, 2006, pp. 180-181)

Williams’s theory of cultural materialism, and Habermas’s theory of communicative action both reflect the second two premises of humanism that Sherratt identifies: a conception of knowledge transmitted through the ages, and that meaning is created to the greatest extent by human beings.

Through the discussion of Habermas and Williams above, I have endeavored to illustrate how the two approaches, both anchored in humanist assumptions, are appropriate to not

only analyzing social interaction, but are the most appropriate forms of analysis available for understanding emancipatory social evolution. The theoretical systems Williams and Habermas developed help us approach the ontology of communicative interaction: not questions of the structure or system, but questions about what resources exist, how they are distributed, and how they are contained. Williams and Habermas both draw on humanism for their cultural analysis, and both end up considering forms of communicative interaction and their role in historical changes in society. Both see the way in which some belief systems or values, directly mediated by forms of communicative interaction, support equality, while others are repressive. This is a relatively unexplored area of theory within cultural studies, and it deserves more attention.

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