

The Theory Of Communicative Actions By Jurgen Habermas

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Introduction:

Jürgen Habermas (18th June 1929) was born in Germany and was witness to most of the post-war period. Habermas was old enough to know what the different countries had started and understood the impact that World War II had left on those countries that were involved (Held, 1980). Being a part of the Hitler Youth party, Habermas had to serve some time in the army during the final stages of the war. After the war, the Allied forces gathered in Nuremberg, Germany, to list the war crimes that had been committed during the war. Some of the most prominent Nazi soldiers had been executed for their war crimes. These trials left a deep impact on Habermas and made him realize that there was a flaw in German political ideologies and ethical philosophies. German ideologies are what motivated Habermas to formulate theories that worked towards making a better society. Habermas gained popularity when his first book, *Structural Transformation and the Public Sphere*, was published. The book centered on the history of the development of the bourgeois class, which overtook the public sphere and turned into a private platform where only those people who had a proper education and the property that they were entitled to could join. Habermas is also known for his other two books, *Rational Society* and *Theory and Practice*, which are based on critical and social analysis that was fueled by his desire to understand how society functioned and influenced its people.

Discussion:

It should be noted that while Habermas published words that were based on a social and political critique of his society, in the *Theory of Communicative Action*, the German philosopher took a linguistic turn. Habermas reshaped his concept of [Critical theory](#), and the new concept was termed the Theory of Communicative Action. He utilized the works of Anglo-American philosophers, which included noticeable individuals like Ludwig, Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, and a few others (Bubner, 1982). In this theory, the author's main focus lies on the importance of human interaction, which is an essential component of the communicative approach rather than the strategic approach (Habermas, 1984). Furthermore, Habermas discussed two thoughts in his essay: one thought that was based on communicative competence and rationality, and the second perspective is based on the concept of distorted communication. The reason behind formulating such a theory was to gauge how people interpret their social norms, which, at times, turn out to be harsh. Such social norms are not applicable to every member of the society. The Theory of Communicative Action highlights three interrelated concerns:

1. To create a concept of rationality that is not linked to subjective or individualistic aspects of modern philosophy
2. To formulate a concept of lifeworld and system paradigms
3. To outline a critical theory of modernity that examines and suggests a solution instead of forsaking the topic of enlightenment.

The key elements of the theory are rationality, argument, and understanding. Habermas asserted the importance of using rationality in public spheres to have a rational debate that would work towards discussing important matters and reaching a mutually agreed solution. Habermas begins his essay by stating that it is important for members of a society to be able to communicate. Being able to interact by using verbal signs allows people to get their points across to others and, in this way, have their problems addressed. This act of communicating is referred to as Communicative Competence (Honneth & Joas, 1991). Habermas asserts that communicative competence involves not only making correct grammatical sentences. Rather, it means that when someone speaks, the words they utter carry some sort of meaning, which is logical in essence and shows that the person is a rational being. People interact with others, making claims that whatever they say is true and asserting their viewpoints on different subject matters that are focused on the norms of their society. Such claims can be criticized and defended, which shows that a rational debate is taking place between members of a society. This is an example of rationality that Habermas talks about in his theory of Communicative Action. Initiating an argument is another key factor of the theory, and Habermas claims that rational individuals gather in the public sphere and argue over matters of utmost importance so that everyone can express their issues and seek out a rational answer. The third element that Habermas discusses is being able to understand. It is the most important factor as it urges people to be tolerant of other's viewpoints and to allow others to speak before mutually agreeing on a solution.

I believe that applying Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action will be beneficial for society as it aims to allow people to come forward and interact with other groups. Habermas experienced the horrors of World War II and knew the effect it had left on people. He realized that the German political and social ideologies were flawed and, therefore, were mistreating the people as everyone had different experiences. The Jewish persecutions are one of the events that deeply impacted Habermas. The Theory of Communicative Action allows people to use the public platform to present their issues so that the government can work out a solution and fix the problem. If people use rational arguments with proper evidence to justify their claims, then a mutual agreement can be reached. Society can be made better, which will not only make the lives of the people better but also be advantageous for the social, economic, and political institutes. The application of the theory to society will urge people to put aside their interests and work together for a unified goal, be it working towards changing ideologies or solving issues related to daily life.

Habermas has divided the activities of daily life into two domains: in one domain, which Habermas notes as the social arena, actions such as family interactions and social activities are present. In the second domain, which is professional in nature, people work and interact with the institutional

authorities. According to Habermas, the former domain refers to lifeworld. The lifeworld constitutes the day-to-day routine and interactions that people have with other members. This social sphere involves family life and traditional and social interactions. Most of the personal life and social life is set as the basis of the lifeworld. The world of life has been damaged by modernity because people have become more interested, and social and personal lives have been pushed aside. Modern life has made people work-driven to the point that they have become self-centered and focused on their own goals only. Since lifeworld was based on family interactions, the workload on the modern people drove them away, reducing the interactive aspect.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded from the following discussion that the theory of communicative actions is an essential concept as it motivates people to put aside their interests and step into the public sphere, where they can voice their issues and reason with others on important subjects. People get to participate in rational arguments and present their opinions on topics that need their attention. Habermas wanted to change the way societies functioned, especially in terms of implementing laws and norms that could not be imposed on every member of the society as each person goes through a different experience and cannot, therefore, be forced to live out their lives in a specific way. Applying rationality in debates will increase intimacy among people and make them aware of their surroundings and of other people's problems. The individuals of society will be able to understand others and mutually agree on a solution, thereby gaining solidarity and creating a social identity in the process. The Theory of Communicative Action highlights the important role that language plays in bringing people together. Without language, the world would be facing a crisis as people would be unable to communicate with others, which would lead to disorganization. Habermas also addressed the daily activities, which he divided into two spheres, each according to the aspect that was involved in it. He defined the concept of lifeworld and said that it consists of family and social interactions. These family and social interactions are necessary as they allow people to develop intimacy and, by doing so, understand the other person. In Lifeworld, people get together to share their concerns and present rational arguments that are backed by proof. The purpose of such an occurrence is to solve the issues that people have by involving everyone in the process. The Theory of Communicative Action should be applied to society so that the institutional structures can be modified and made flexible, thereby allowing people to live their lives the way they want instead of forcing them to do what the state wants.

References

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