

Reconstructing the Rational Dimension of Modernity

On the Purpose of Habermas Communicative Action Theory

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Abstract: Since twentieth Century, under the background that linguistic turn took place in the tradition of modernity criticism and modern philosophy in the western philosophical circles, Habermas combined the research of linguistic philosophy with the theory of linguistic behavior. He founded universal pragmatics, laying a methodological basis for his theory of communicative behavior. The modern communicative rational dimension is reconstructed. The inter-subjectivity of the communication paradigm replaces the subjective and objective opposition of the consciousness philosophy. The formation of communicative rationality characteristics is argumentative and practical. The rational division is really repaired at the level of communication behavior.

Keywords: Modernity; Philosophy of consciousness; Universal pragmatics; Communication behavior; Communication rationality

1. Introduction

“Modernity” is a concept with different understandings and definitions in different fields. Philosophically speaking, it is the essence, basis and principle of the modern world. Further from the history of philosophy and history of thought, modernity means a new historical significance and a new beginning. The Enlightenment when people were characterized by human reason and subjectivity in the eighteenth century was often regarded as the beginning of modernity. In other words, modernity is closely linked with the subject and liberation of mankind from the beginning. The process of modernity is to establish the subjectivity and rationality of human beings. In a sense, modernity is rationality and realization. However, the rational essence of modernity in modern society is mainly manifested as the development and alienation of instrumental reason. Since Descartes put reason into the active subject of human beings, the rational question has been transferred to the paradigm of philosophy of consciousness. Philosophy of consciousness refers to the mastery of human subjectivity and rational ability from the subject-object relation, in order to study the relationship between the subject and the objective world. The way of analyzing and solving the problem is that the subject is separated from the objective world. It highlighted the subject of human and human consciousness. The principle of subjectivity contains the opposite way of thinking and leaves hidden trouble between the subject and the object, self and others, individuals and society. It also laid the ideological foundation for the rational to atrophy into the instrumental rationality. After the awa-

kening of reason in the Enlightenment, the unified religious worldview collapsed. At the same time, reason became a new authority and new religion because people pursued it. The emergence and development of rationality has double consequences. On the one hand, instrumental rationality brings the most rational tools and means. Social production and life at all levels take efficiency, cost, precision and specialty as standards. On the other hand, the egocentric thinking caused by the subjective and objective way of thinking makes the opposite of the subject only treated as an object. The meaning and freedom of it as human is not concerned. So far, the split of reason and value in Webb's diagnosis occurred in modern society. The modern principle of subjectivity can't establish a unified foundation for many value fields of human beings. While modernity is advancing all the way, the principle of rational circulation gains great development, but gradually turns into its own opposite side. This is the dilemma of modernity itself.

For the division of Enlightenment rationality and the new human survival dilemma, the western philosophical circles reflected and criticized the traditional rationalism in different ways from their own point of view, resulting in a great upsurge of cultural criticism theory. Philosophers were tireless and tried reconstructing rationality to repair this split. Habermas was faced with various critical theories to reconstruct the rationality and the critique of rationalism by postmodernism. He argued that the reason why thinkers failed to break the path of saving rationality was that the mode of thinking of critical theory was still confined to the philosophy of consciousness. Unlike postmodernism, he insisted that modernity was an unfinished

design. He believed that the disadvantages of modernity came from the expansion of individual subjects caused by the principle of subjective philosophy of consciousness. The expansion led to that one-sided development of rationality distorted. Habermas stressed that if people wanted to get out of the plight of the philosophy of consciousness, people should learn the theoretical results of contemporary linguistics research and eliminate the opposition between thought and existence, subject and object from the perspective of human language dialogue and communication time really. The theory of communicative behavior is constructed by universal pragmatics. The communication rationality characterized by intersubjectivity made the communication alienated which is used to get one dimension out of instrumental rationality in the world. People should restore the rationalization of people's contacts and reconstruct the world of reality in life.

2. The Philosophical Basis of Reconstructing the Rational Connotation of Modernity

Linguistic turn happened in modern western philosophy of subject consciousness. The relationship between language and the world, the proposition and the state of affairs replaced the relationship between subject and object. The starting problem of philosophy turned from "what I can know" to "what I can understand". The turning of the linguistic philosophy marked the transformation of philosophical themes and the transformation of philosophical research methods. The task of building the world was transferred from the transcendental subjectivity to the grammatical structure. The creation of the Habermas's universal pragmatics was achieved in the context of linguistic turn of modern philosophy. Specifically, the first thing is that philosophy has undergone a semantic shift. Modern western philosophy no longer starts from the relationship between subject and object, just like modern philosophy. It solves cognitive problems through the meaning discrimination and analysis of language to solve the problem of knowledge. Philosophers recognize that, regardless of the existence of research or research, the meaning of philosophical language needs to be found out firstly. The second is the shift from semantics to pragmatics. Linguistic philosophers are no longer confined to the study of language itself, and expand the horizon to the relationship between language and users. It focuses on how people follow the norms of language, so that they can use language more effectively to achieve illocutionary act. In this way, the individual subject of the actors established a relationship between each other through the medium of language and speech acts. Language is deeply involved in human life and plays an important role through being used. It can be said that the way of conversion between subjective and objective thinking mode of conversion consciousness philosophy

can be explored theoretically through the pragmatic turn. The interdisciplinary structure formed by language action through speech acts makes it possible to leave the subjective way of thinking.

In the study of philosophy of language, especially the analysis and reconstruction of pragmatics, Habermas formed the methodological foundation of his critical theory -- universal pragmatics named formal pragmatics. Habermas was influenced by the philosophy of Wittgenstein, Austin and others. Especially of Austin's speech act theory and Wittgenstein's assertion "the meaning of language lies in its use", it emphasized that language is a real activity of language game theory. Habermas recognized the dual structure of verbal behavior and illocutionary act which contains universal norms of the application of speech act. Its requirement could be based on the purpose of anticipated effect. The possibility of universal validity is discussed through the normative analysis of speech acts and reflective reconstruction. The pragmatic norms are constructed. He pointed out that universal pragmatics was used to "refer to the study of the purpose of reconstructing the basis of the universal validity of speech".

Universal pragmatics is the basic method and starting point of Habermas's social criticism and rational reconstruction. The purpose of reconstructing the validity of speech is to establish the ideal speech situation and to offer normative foundation to the successful completion of the language-based communication activities. The universal pragmatics analyzed the structure of speech, speech behavior norms and communicative qualification of subjects to establish a general condition in which the subjects of speech act may reach a consensus. These general conditions include understandability, authenticity, correctness and sincerity. The four effective requirements actually correspond to the language itself, the objective world, the social world, and the subjective world. A brief summary is that language actors must use a word that is correct and understandable to express a true statement sincerely. The listener can comprehend, share, understand and trust the speaker, so as to reach a consensus. Authenticity, correctness and sincerity are the most important things which are the normative premise that a successful communication behavior must have simultaneously. Speech act has the function of presenting facts, revealing the speaker's subjectivity and establishing reasonable interpersonal relationships. Successful communication requires not only the premise norm of universal validity, but also the ability of the actor to follow the requirements of verbal validity and the ability to communicate. The combination of normative premise and behavior subject can communicate and establish communication relationship. Through the interpretation of universal pragmatics, Habermas revealed that language had the function of pointing to others and establishing inter-

subjective communication relationship. Rationality was no longer the cognitive rationality in the framework of the philosophy of consciousness, but the interaction of rationality in language activities. Correspondingly, the subject is not only the subject with cognitive function, but also a practical subject related to the other in communicative behaviors. On this basis, Habermas constructed the philosophy of communication or the theory of communicative action. It transformed the philosophy of consciousness into the philosophy of communication and the subject centered rationality into communicative rationality.

3. Reconstructing the Rational Dimension of Modernity

Communicative rationality means the rationality of communicative behavior, which is inter-subjective, argumentative, practically generated. Habermas argues that the critique and reconstruction of the philosophy of reason are confined to the subjective relationship within the subjective consciousness regardless of forms. It even remained in the isolated subject. The general theory and the problem of the reality could not be solved. To thoroughly break through the limitations of the study of philosophical consciousness rationality, the concept of "communication behavior" must be introduced to explain the rationality of communication. The subject of loneliness turned to the inter subject. The rational inter-subjectivity of communication structure can be formed.

Habermas introduced the concept of communicative rationality through the explanation of the concept of rationality in Sociology. He pointed out: "the connotation of the concept of communicative rationality can eventually be restored to a core experience that the discourse of argumentation reached a consensus without restriction. Among them, different participants overcame their original purely subjective ideas. At the same time, the identity of the objective world and the inter-subjectivity of the life context are established for the sake of the common reasonable belief". Habermas stated that "we can also measure the rationality of what the participants did according to the subject with the ability of speech and behavior. Habermas's explanation of the rationality of communication reveals the characteristics of practical generation of communicative rationality. On the basis of the communication between the actor and the other, the relationship between the other's life world and his own life world was constantly revised. That is, the interpretation context of the other is contained in the interpretation context of their own through communication. The purpose is to reach agreement as much as possible. In this process, language is the medium of communicative action. Through the act of speech, the actor and the other occur at the same time as the objective world with the totality of all entities, the social world with all the proper

interpersonal relations, and the subjective world with the totality of the experience of self-consciousness. In this way, the limitation of the pure cognitive dimension and the pure rationality of the purpose tool of Weber rationalization concept were overcome. In the process of three-dimensional sympathetic flow between the inner world of the actor and the other three worlds, communicative rationality is the process of explaining and interpreting - - admitting or denying - Interpreting communication as a cycle of adjustment of demands in order to reach a consensus. The way of proof is produced in practice which manifests itself as an ability to follow the universal validity requirements in the context of a common life world and the ability of an actor to use language to interact with the world in the world. Reason is no longer the invariable cause of all phenomena, it becomes the power of flowing integration. The subjectivity of the actor itself is able to highlight in the interaction with the other to get the other's recognition, and is no longer a lonely individual subject. It only shows in the subjective world of self. The subjectivity of this communicative action is inter-subjectivity. The inter-subjectivity paradigm of communicative rationality reconstructs the rational paradigm of modernity. The change of the basic paradigm made it possible for Habermas to explore the path of modernity to seek unity in reason itself.

The split of reason was repaired by communicative rationality at the level of communicative action. In theory, it was Kant to make a classic provision for the division of value and reason. Kant criticized the unified view of reason and pointed out that different knowledge and behavior fields followed different internal logic and had different rational principles. His three major criticisms showed the three rational principles that existed in the three major fields. The theoretical reason plays a role in the objective world as the object of the cognitive field. People should follow the practical reason in the social field. Aesthetic reason plays a decisive role in the field of thinking. Since Kant established the rational principles of the three areas, reason was in a state of division. Habermas discussed the communicative rationality at the level of communicative action and repaired the rationality of division really. We should make clear that Habermas divided the social behavior of human beings into purposeful behavior, normative behavior, drama behavior and communication behavior. The former three correspond to the authenticity, correctness and sincerity of the general validity requirements. Habermas defined communication behavior as follows: "The concept of communicative action involved the interaction between at least two subjects with verbal and behavioral abilities. The main use of (oral or oral outside) means established a kind of interpersonal relationship". The purpose of behavior is influenced by self-centered interests. The process of action requires the rationality of purpose and

means. The rational requirement of social behavior is not just this one-dimensional and contains a higher and more reasonable requirement of rationality. The communicative behavior is the most prominent. The communicative behavior is the behavior that contains all the validity requirements. Only the two sides in the process of communication are consistent with the authenticity, correctness and sincerity of the normative principles, communicative action is possible to reach consensus and coordinate planning and action. Therefore, communicative rationality is the repair of the split of reason at the level of communicative behavior. The reason why this repair or integration is realistic and true is the process of communication through the continuous argument to reach a consensus. The actors interact with the objective world, the social world and the subjective world at the same time in this process. It means simultaneous interaction with the three fields of reason. If the process of communicative behavior is reflected on, it can be found that every understanding of the consensus at every stage of the communication process is the result of the combined effect of the three rationalities in specific events. The premise of universal validity of communication is the embodiment of the value norm represented by the social world. It constitutes the premise also as a normative principle throughout the behavior process. In communication, actors as subject form self-related associations and also associate others in inter-subjectivity. The other is the "that at" of self-consciousness which is the other's Dasein. Their respective purpose rationality of behavioral agent can be understood in the other's subjective world (communication is purposeful action), according to the actual situation, communicative rationality exchange again and continue the previous action after the reorganization and definition. The other is both objective reality and active subject, subjective and objective interactions at the same time, the interaction follows the common background of the world of life, in other words, it follows certain criteria of value principle, all of these exist in verbal behavior in the process of communication inherently, therefore, in the aspect of communicative behavior, the three rationalities which infiltrate into the whole process of communication of fission have been integrated.

In this sense, it should be said that communicative rationality is discovered and not founded. The communicative activities are carried out in the process of development of human. The inherent nature contains the communicative rational force which can integrate the various rational areas. What Habermas wants to solve is how to extend the communicative rational force to all aspects of human existence and life reasonably, and make the alienated human society recover its original vitality and the power of advance under the guidance of the rational.

The communicative rationality based on Universal Pragmatics constructed by Habermas reshaped the rational connotation and dimension of Modernity, facing all kinds of social realistic problems because of the alienation of rationality leads to the one-sided development of economy in the late capitalist society, communicative rationality aims to guide the social interpersonal relationship into a reasonable level, avoid the crisis of social development caused by the structure of subject and object with inter subjectivity structure, it provides a practical theory and method for us to establish a modern society with rational communication and it has positive significance to break through the shackles of the traditional rational horizon. From the standpoint of Marxist theory, Habermas's theoretical contribution has rich content and profound connotation and has a profound insight into the modern rational crisis, but it basically ignore the material factors of reality, the non-coercive force of communication discourse can't completely overcome the internal decisive influence of material factors on human behavior, problems between theory and reality still exist. We need to continue to explore.

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