Habermas and Postmodernism

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In the burgeoning debate over the apparent arrival of the postmodern era (or over the implications of a discourse that claims such an era has arrived), no contributor has been as forthright and unflinching a defender of the still uncompleted project of modernity as Jürgen Habermas. In several recent works, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit* and his response to the essays collected by Richard Bernstein in *Habermas and Modernity*,[1] he has expanded his critique far beyond the first, tentative essays he published in the early 1980's.[2] These initial efforts' in part because of their imperfect command of the French intellectual scene and in part because of their imperfect command of the French intellectual scene and in part because of their controversial attribution of a conservative political implication to postmodernism, proved a lightning rod for criticism. In many quarters, Habermas was pilloried as a naively one-dimensional celebrant of an outdated liberal, enlightenment rationalism. Although the relation of Habermas' critique to the specific context out of which it emerged, that of the cynically anti-political *Tendezwende* in the West Germany of the late 1970's was on occasion acknowledged,[3] by and large, he was chided with having superficially reversed the profound analysis of the Enlightenment's failure offered by the older generation of the Frankfurt School. Indeed, because he has been understood as a staunch defender of universalist, totalizing reason, his work has been accused of being only the most recent and subtle version of an intellectual tradition which inadvertently fostered the authoritarian political uniformity it claimed to resist. Habermas, the passionate defender of democratically achieved consensus and generalized interests, was thus turned into the terrorist of coercive Reason *malgrē lui*.

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Whether or not his more recent works will dispel this caricature remains to be seen. From all reports of the mixed reception he received in Paris when he gave the lectures that became *Die philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*,the odds are not very high that a more nuanced comprehension of his work will prevail, at least among certain critics. At a time when virtually any defense of rationalism is turned into a brief for the automatic suppression of otherness, heterogeneity and non-identity, it is hard to predict a widely sympathetic hearing for his complicated argument. Still, if such an outcome is to be made at all possible, the task of unpacking his critique of postmodernism and nuanced defense of modernity must be forcefully pursued. One way to start this process is to focus on a particularly central theme in his work, which has hitherto been relatively ignored. Because it concerns an issue closely related to his similar critique of post-structuralism, it will also illuminate Habermas' no less virulent hostility to the other leading "post" phenomenon of our no longer modern world.

The theme in question is what might be called the opposition between differentiation and *difference*.The latter term, a neologism coined by Jacques Derrida in a seminal essay now twenty years old, doubtless needs little introduction to contemporary readers of cultural criticism. I would only like to emphasize that Derrida specifically emphasizes its distance from differentiation. "Among other confusions," he notes, "such a word would suggest some organic unity, some primordial and homogeneous unity, that would eventually come to be divided up and take on difference as an event. Above all,formed on the verb 'to differentiate,'this word would annual the economic signification of detour, temporalizing delay; 'deferring."[4] Differentiation, in other words, implies for Derrida either nostalgia for a lost unity or conversely a utopian hope for a future one. Additionally, the concept is suspect for deconstruction because it implies the crystallization of hard and fast disticntions between spheres,and thus fails to register the supplementary interpenetrability of all subsystems, the effaced trace of alterity in their apparent homogeneity, and the subversive absence undermining their alleged fullness or presence.

Now, although deconstruction ought not to be uncritically equated with postmodernism, a term Derrida himself has never embraced, one can easily observe that the postmodernist temper finds *differance* more attractive than differentiation as an historical or, better put, post-historical

conceptual tool. The meta-narrative of a process of original unity progressively articulating itself into a series of increasingly autonomous subsystems is far less compelling to it than an anti-narrative of heterogeneous, but interpenetrating movements that flow in no discernible historical or evolutionary direction. Even though the prefix "post" implies temporal irreverrsibility, it has become a favorite pastime to find the postmodern already evident in such earlier figures as Flaubett.[5] Postmodernists like Jean-Francois Lyotard explicitly eschew any yearning for the restoration of a pre-differentiated unity or the construction of a dedifferentiated totality In a reconciled future. Instead, they valorize a fluid network of proliferating and incommensurable *differances*, which escape reduction to a finite number of common denominators. In the neo-Wittgenstenian language Lyotard adopted in *The Postmodern Condition* (but later abandoned as too anthropocentric in *Le Différend*), he contends that "there is no possibility that language games can be unified or totalized in any metadiscourse."[6] But if unity or totality is denied, so too is the apparent necessity of those binary oppositions that characterize traditional thought. Thus, the recent postmodernist "non-exhibition" staged at the Centre Pompidou in Paris by Lyotard was called "Less Immatériaux" to stress the overturning of the rigid separation between mind and matter, subject and object, consciousness and body, even life and death.[7] Furthermore, as Jacques Bouveresse, one of Lyotard's most persistant critics, notes in his recent diatribe *Rationalité et Cynisme*, "the deliberate effacement of conventional frontiers that exist for the moment among sciences, philosophy, literature and art is the shibboleth *(mot d'ordre) par excellence*, it seems to me, of postmodernity."[8]

If we also look more closely at the aesthetic dimension of the postmodern condition, we will see the same anti-differentiating impulse at work. Thus, the art critic Suzi Gablik notes in *Has Modernism Failed ?* that a great deal of performance art in particular makes us anxious because "it violates our sense of boundaries; no distinction is made between public and private events, between real and aesthetic emotions, between art and self."[9] As such, postmodernism can be seen in part as the non-utopian anti-climax to what Peter Bürger has defined as the avant-garde, as opposed to the modernist, project: the abolition of the separate institution of art and its reabsorption into the life-world out of which it originally came.[10] Typical of this postmodernist penchant for violating boundaries

is the breakdown of the differences between high and low art, culture and kitsch, and the sacred space of the museum and the profane world without. In architecture in particular, which has been widely recognized as the cutting edge of the postmodernist offensive, what Charles Jencks called "radical eclecticism"[11] has meant the disruption of the time-honored distinctions between different styles in favor of an historical pastiche, as well as the breakdown of the hierarchical superiority of "serious" architecture over a more popular and vulgar vernacular, such as that celebrated by Robert Venturi in his defense of Las Vegas.[12]

What is, however, important to recognize in all of these transgressions of various frontiers is the abandonment of any hope for a new totalization in the sense of a dialectical *Aufhebung* or sublation. Instead, an untotalized network of supplementary *differances* is posited as the superior alternative to the seemingly rigid and unyielding dichotomies of modernist differentiation. Thus, the postmodernist sensibility has borrowed a great deal from that dimension of feminist thought which rejects the abstract universalism underlying any homogenizing humanist discourse, while also remaining suspicious of the essentializing opposition between the sexes so much a part of patriarchal culture.[13]

Now, because Habermas has been out spoken in his distrust of both post-structuralist and post-modernist theories, and has heretofore not really absorbed the feminist critique of the Western tradition,[14] he has variously been accused of hoping for a u opian totalization based on the universal power of rationality and rigidly holding on, like a typically German anal-compulsive, to the existent differentiations of a modernization process still worth salvaging. The first charge is exemplified by Lyotard's complaint that "what Habermas requires from the arts and the experiences they provide is, in short, to bridge the gap between cognitive, ethical and political discourses, thus opening the way to a unity of experience."[15] Habermas, he believes, still remains hostage to the fantasy of "humanity as a collective (universal) subject"[16] seeking a perfect consensus in a meta-language game transcending all others.

The second and in some ways contrary criticism is typified by the Derridean argument of Dominick LaCapra, who concedes Habermas, strong distaste for Hegelian or other meta-subjects, but still questions his alternative :

> The prolem, however, is whether, in rejecting reductionism and dialectical synthesis, Habermas goes to the extreme of analytic dissociation which is itself constitutive of a logic of domination. Habermas does not directly see how his own analytic distinctions, which are useful within limits, may be rendered problematic, especially when they are taken as categorical definitions of realms of thought or action.[17]

As an antidote, LaCapra urges Habermas to Pay more attention to the supplementary and carnivalesque play of language, which would undermine the apparently rigid differentiations posited in various ways during the development of his work. More recent deconstructionist critics of Habermas like Michael Ryan and Jonathan Culler have echoed this advice, in each case defending *differance* as superior to categorical distinctions.[18]

A more patient reading of Habermas' demanding corpus than is evident in these critiques would, I want to suggest, allow us to appreciate the virtues of defending a certain notion of differentiation against post-modernist *differance*. First it is clear that although the very early Habermas may have espoused the position attributed to him by Lyotard, that of believing in a meta-subjective species being capable of achieving a universal consensus, at least as early as 1972 and possibly even during the positivist dispute of the 1960's, he had explicitly abandoned this position.[19] Repudiating the idea of a Hegelian-Marxist universal subject as a residue of a discredited consciousness philosophy, he began to call instead for the nurturing of a plurality of intersubjectively grounded speech communities. In fact, his main complaint against post-structuralism is that it merely inverts consciousness-philosophy by denying the subject, and thus ironically is as holistic as the logocentric traditions it opposes. Rather than calling for a unity of experience, as Lyotard contends, Habermas has scrupulously defended the value of distinctive forms of interaction. not merely among human beings, but also between man and nature. In fact, his scepticism towards the project of reconciling humanity and the natural world has brought him under fire from such advocates of a more Marcusean or Blochian strain in Western Marxism, such as Thomas McCarthy, Joel Whitebook, and Henning Ottman.[20] Instead of holding out hope for a utopian reenchantment of our disenchanted world. Habermas has resolutely acknowledged man's disembeddedness, that is, differentiation from the natural world,

But second, while valorizing differentiation, Habermas has fully recognized that the process has been plagued by severe difficulties. Even as he has called modernity an uncompleted project worth carrying forward, he has been very sensitive to the deep discontents it has spawned. Unlike the more sanguine defenders of modernization who peopled the American and West German academies in the postwar era, he has always been enough of a student of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to recognize that the mere refinement of analytic categories and the increased complexity of modern society are by no means emancipatory in themseles.

Habermas' attitude towards differentiation is, thus, a highly complicated one. To do justice to it would require tracing its origins in at least two traditions, sociological and philosophical. To make sense of the former would mean beginning with Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim in the 19th century and passing on to 20th-century theorists like Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann and Wolfgang Schlucter, all of whom are critically appropriated in Habermas' massive *Theory of Communicative Action* and elsewhere.[21] We would then have to reconsider the heated sociological controversies over evolutionism and functionalism and make distinctions among segmental, and functionalist forms of differentiation. And finally, we would have to consider the responses of such contemporary sociologists as Anthony Giddens to Habermas reading of the tradition.[22]

To probe the second, philosophical tradition, we would have to go back at least as far as Kant and examine his three critiques with their separation among forms of judgment. We would then have to trace efforts to undo Kant's differentiations, beginning perhaps with Hegel and continuing up through the Western Marxist struggle to articulate a defensible concept of totality.[23] And we would have to conclude with a consideration of Habermas' recent exchanges with Gadamer and other defenders of radical hermenutics, who try to provide a new foundationless foundation for a holistic approach to understanding.

Rather than attempt so ambitious and foolhardy a reconstruction of the roots of Habermas' attitude towards differentiation, let me simply point to the major implications he has drawn from his contact with these disparate sources. Habermas' rational reconstruction of the evolution of Western societies posits a relatively undifferentiated society of

hominids who became what can be called human through both the division of labor and the development of kinship structures.[24] At the very beginning of the evolutionary process, as he conceptualizes it, there is thus already a form of differentiation between subsystem of the whole. Similarly, the distinction between labour and language means that any universal explanation of human developement, say, a vulgar Marxist productivism or a vulgar deconstructionist pantextualism, must be rejected as reductionist. For the process of evolution takes place on several levels, which roughly can be grouped under two rubrics. The first, which Habermas calls system integration, derives from an instrumental relationship between man and his natural environment. Initially generated by the dialectic of labor, system integration spawns steering mechanisms, like money and bureaucratic power, which achieve a certain autonomy of their own. The second level, which Habermas calls social integration, refers to norms and values, which are derived from a communicative rather than instrumental relationship among actors, who have the capacity to be active agents rather than mere bearers of structural forces. It is only in the modern period beginning in the 18th century, so Habermas contends, that the distance between system and social integration becomes especially evident with the differentiation of subsystems of economics and administration, the decentering of world views (what Weber calls the "disenchantment of the world" and the uncoupling of law from morality.

Unlike more complacent functionalist theorists of evolutionary differentiation, Habermas recognizes the potential for radical distress in this process. In particular, he is sensitive to the disproportionately advanced development of system as opposed to social integration in modern capitalist and bureaucratic socialist societies. Both types of integration can be understood as emerging against the background of a life-world in which rationalization takes place when communicative argumentation supplants more authoritarian and coercive forms of social coordination. System rationalization, however entails means-ends rationalism, whereas social or communicative rationalization involves other forms of reciprocal intersubjective interation. In the modern world, the former has revealed itself as more powerful than the latter, leading to what Habermas calls the "colonization" of the life-world by system or instrumental rationality. Hostility to this trend has expressed itself in many ways, including the derogation of all forms of reason as dominating and coercive. It is,

however, Habermas' contention that unless we carefully distinguish among types of rationalization, we risk regressing beyond the genuine achievements of modernization. Thus, he writes, the deconstructionist critique of logocentrism become legitimate when it understands its target, "not as an excess, but as a deficit of reason"[25] because of the partiality of the subject-centered, instrumental rationality it misidentifies with reason *tout court*.

Following Weber and before him Kant, Habermas stipulates a differentiation among three basic types of reason in the sphere of values: cognitive (or scientific), moral and aesthetic. The Enlightenment had hoped that the emancipatory potential of each of these spheres could ultimately be harnessed for practical purposes. "The 20th century," Habermas admits, "has shattered this optimism. The differentiation of science, morality and art has come to mean the autonomy of the segments treated by the specialist and at the same time their splitting off from the hermeneutics of everyday communication. This splitting off is the problem that has given rise to those efforts to 'negate' the culture of expertise."[26] Although understanding the motivation behind these attempts to dedifferentiate and thus end the alienation of the separate spheres from each other and from the everyday life-world, Habermas is nonetheless very reluctant ro abandon the Enlightenment project entirely. For with it came the refinement of rationalization itself, which resists the reduction of modern life to any one common denominator, rational or otherwise.

Habermas' argument in this regard is worth following in some detail, because it has so often been misconstrued by those who see him as the advocate of a terroristically universal form of reason. First of all, although Habermas sees each sphere as having undergone a variant of what can be called rationalization, he nonetheless explicitly rejects the idea that reason means the same thing in each case. In an earlier essay on his attitude towards modernism, I challenged him in particular to clarify what he meat by rationality in the aesthetic sphere[27] Was he claiming in the manner of, say, Suzi Gablik in her book on *Progress in Art* that Piaget's developmental cognitive categories could be applied to aesthetics, as he argued they could to cognitive and moral development ? His reply was that art criticism, which arose with the differentiation of autonomous art from its religious-ceremonial context,

has developed forms of argumentation that specifically

> differentiate it from the forms of theoretical and moralpractical discourse. As distinct from merely subjective preference, the fact that we link judgements of taste to a criticizable claim presupposes non-arbitrary standards for judgement of art. As the philosophical discussion of "artistic truth" reveals, works of art raise claims with regard to their unity (harmony: *Stimmigkiet*), their authenticity, and the success of their expressions by which they can be measured and in terms of which they may fail. [28]

Thus, in the discourse about art, there is an argumentative rationality that resists reduction to moral or scientific reason.

Nor only does aesthetic discourse reveal such a rationalization, Habermas continues; so too does art immanently considered. In art itself, there is a type of learning process," which is cumulative: "what accumulates are not epistemic contents, Habermas contends, "but rather the effects of the inner logical differentiation of a special sort of experience: precisely those aesthetic experiences of which only a decentered, unbound subjectivity is capable."[29] The increasingly decentered and unbounded subjectivity of artistic experience has an ultimately emancipatory potential, for it "indicates an increased sensitivity to what remains unassimilated in the interpretive achievements of pragmatic, epistemic, and moral mastery of the demand and challenges of everyday situations; it effects an openness to the expurgated elements of the unconscious, the fantastic, and the mad the material and the bodily."[30] Thus, "art becomes a laboratory, the critic an expert, the development of art the medium of a learning process—here, naturally, not in the sense of an accumulation of epistemic *contents*, of an aesthetic 'progress'—which is possible only in individual dimensions--but nonetheless in the sense of concentrically expanding, advancing exploration of a realm of possibilities opened up with the autonomization of art."[31] In short, instead of providing a straightjacket for transgressive, heterogeneous experiences, as those who formulate a simple opposition between art and reason assume, aesthetic rationalization, in the dual sense of critical and productive learning processes, allows, indeed encourages, a proliferation of artistic stimuli to a widened consciousness. Only the modernist autonomization of art, its differentiation as an institution of its own, makes such a rationalization possible.

The extreme autonomization of both esoteric art and hermetic

aesthetic criticism does, to be sure, create pressures for their reintegration with the life-world out of which they originally emerged. Here Habermas admits to a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, he rejects what he sees, following Adorno, as the premature, forced and impotent *Aufhebung* of art and life in such movements as Surrealism. Yet on the other hand, he recognizes that too rigid and inflexible a detachment of art from life courts the danger of forfeiting art's ultimate capacity to reinvigorate the life-world by giving it a higher level access to those expurgated experiences it normally marginalizes or suppresses. Too radical a break between art and life also threatens to cause the well-springs of aesthetic expression themselves to run dry. He hesitates to affirm an immediate reintegration, however, because he contends that the utopian dedifferentiation of art *by itself* is insufficient to undo the pathologies of modernization. A new constellation of the separate value spheres with their expert rationalized discourses and the communicative life-world of everyday experience is needed in order to maximize the emancipatory potential in the project of modernity. This neither necessitates the collapse of all of these now distinct realms into one universal language game, as Lyotard accuses him of advocating, nor the rigid maintenance of the boundaries of the differentiated spheres, as his deconstructionist critics aver he upholds. Instead, a more nuanced mediation of relatively, but not absolutely commensurable realms is a preferable alternative.[32]

In a recent essay on "Modern and Post-modern Architecture,"[33] Habermas spells out the implications of this argument in the aesthetic field that is now at the cutting edge of the debate. Modernist architecture, he points out, was at once functional and formalist, following both the socially progressive imperatives of, say, early Bauhaus radicalism and the anti-ornamental purism of constructivist abstraction. In both ways, it sought to break with a sterile traditionalism and use the methods and materials of the modern world. As such, it was based on a mediated interaction between non-aesthetic needs and the development of immanent aesthetic reflexivity. The post-modernists are right, Habermas admits, in recognizing that the utopian social intentions of the early modernists went away when the international style became the emblem of corporate capitalism and the excuse for alienating and impersonal mass housing. But here the problem was not so much the Enlightenment ambition at the root of the modernist quest, as its distorted application in terms more of instrumental, system rationality than communicative, social rationality.

The postmodernists go too far, Habermas suggests, in reaction to this failure by seeking to separate formalist and functional imperatives entirely and retreat into an eclectic celebration of historical styles, which conservatively affirm all of them merely because they once existed. Any attempt, moreover, to generate a vitalist architecture, which would immediately restore all severed ties with the life-world-here perhaps Habermas is thinking of the Heideggerian-inspired call for a Critical Regionalism by Kenneth Frampton and others[34] —risks turning into an antimodernist nostalgia for a pre-differentiated form of life. An immanent critique of the limitations of modernist architecture, acknowledging its achievements as well as its failures, is thus preferable to a wholesale turning of the page, which offers only pseudo-solutions to the pathologies of modern life.

Premature de-differentiation is, in fact, one of the most troubling of those false answers, which Habermas sees as legitimated by the postmodernist discourse of *differance*. In his latest book, *Die philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, he criticizes Foucault, Derrida and also Adorno for their undifferentiated critique of modernity: "Enlightenment and manipulation, conscious and unconscious, forces of production and forces of destruction, expressive self-realization and repressive desublimation, freedom-guaranteeing and freedom-eliminating effects, truth and ideology—all of these moments are confused with each other."[35] The dedifferentiation of the value sphere of modernity are,moreover, purchased at the cost of the tacit elevation of one of them, aesthetics, understood in an essentially irrationalist sense. For Habermas,the current fascination with Nietzsche betrays this inclination, for the new Nietzscheanism "represents the differentiation of science and morality as the developmental process of a reason that at the same time usurps and stifles the poetic, worlddisclosing power of art,"[36] which it seeks to resurrect. But in making art somehow prior to differentiation, in assuming that rhetoric is somehow more fundamental than philosophy,[37] it fails to see that the very sphere of art itself is the result of a process of differentiation. In other words, it is mistaken to offer an aesthetic colonization of the life-world as an antidote to its instrumental rational counterpart produced by the hypertrophy of science and system integration in modern capitalism.

Similarly, Foucault's effort to collapse cognition and power is based on a problematic dedifferentiation of the will to knowledge and the

will to power, which reduces all the human sciences to little more than subtle instruments of discipline and normalizing control. Likewise, Derrida's critique of Austin fails to register the linguistic differentiations of the communicative life-world in which fictional discourse has been usefully distinguished from other language games.[38] In short, much postmodernist analysis has been vitiated by a confusingly ahistorical failure to recognize that certain patterns of differentiation have emerged in ways that defy the attempt to say that they are always already undermined. And moreover, it is precisely the separate rationalization of the distinct spheres that must be defended as a way to avoid a holism of indiscriminate *differance* that merely turns on its head the logocentric holism of reductive sameness. Albrecht Wellmer puts Habermas' alternative cogently when he writes,

> we have to distinguish between those irreversible differentiation process, which signify the end of traditional society and the emergence of specifically modern,universalist conceptions of rationality,freedom,and democracy on the one hand,and the specific form in which these differentiation processes have been articulated and institutionalized in capitalist societies. It is obviously to the *latter* only that the ideas of a sublation of formal law, politics, or art can meaningfully apply. What they can mean is that could be called a new "permeability" of the relatively autonomous subsystems or cultural spheres for each other.[39]

Such an answer may, to be sure, raise a few questions of its own. How can we tell, for example, when a healthy balance has been struck between permeability and boundary maintenance? If, on the one hand, the boundaries become too fluid, aren't we forced into a postmodernist *differance* in which supplementarity reigns supreme? If, on the other, they have become too rigid, might it no longer be possible to assume even the partial commensurability that is at the root of Habermas' guarded optimism about the modernist project? How can we, moreover, be certain that it is the only the specific differentiations of the Western modernization process that posses enough rationality to be worth defending? As Thomas McCarthy points out in questioning Habermas' debt to Luhmann's systems theory, it is important to insure that "the possibility of democratization as dedifferentiation of economy and state not be metatheoretically ruled out of court by systems-theoretic borrowing. Here

again, the question arises of whether it should be superseded by some non-regressive form of dedifferentiation."[40] The same question arises for the other forms of articulation defended by Habermas in his eagerness to avoid abandoning the modern project before its emancipatory potential is fully tapped. It is perhaps not by chance that *differance* has often come to be the rallying cry for many who feel excluded by the dominant forms of rationality in our culture.

And yet, after having acknowledged all of these questions, it still seems justifiable to conclude by stressing the value of Habermas' alternative to postmodernist *differance*. A recent critic of his position, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, complains that

> it is not quite evident why Habermas is not willing to use the critical force of deconstruction against the logic of differentiated systems. It seems that Habermas overstates his case when he describes deconstruction as a purely literary approach without concern for problem-solving in the realm of the life-world. Thus my suggestion would be: if we want to free the life-world from the constraints of the overarching system and its institutions, there is room for the project of deconstructive criticism, precisely because it questions the logic of systems.[41]

The answer to this complaint is that for Habermas, the differentiation of systemic institutions cannot be construed *solely* as a constraint on an oppressed life-world, but rather as the source of certain rationalizations that are worthy of continue preservation. It would therefore be dangerous to turn deconstruction from an essentially literary approach into a more universal solvent of all structures and systems. For the result would be a night of endless *differance* in which all cows were piebald, which is as deceptive as the old idealist trick of turning them all black. Instead, we should be more sensitive to the enlightening as well as obscuring implications of a much-maligned modernity whose promise is still greater than is assumed by those who counsel a leap into the postmodernist dark.

Notes and References

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2. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," ***New German Critique***, 22 (Winter 1981); "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-reading ***Dialectic of Enlightenment***," ***New German Critique***, 26 (Spring-Summer, 1982).

3. Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," ***New German Critique***, 33, (Fall, 1984), p. 30.

4. Jacques Derrida, "Differance," in ***Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs***, trans. David Allison (Evanston, 1973), p. 143.

5. See, for example, Naomi Schor and Henry F. Majewski, ed. ***Flaubert and Postmodernism*** (Lincoln, 1984).

6. Jean-Francois Lyotard, ***The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge***, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1984), p. 36.

7. ***Les Immatériaux*** was presented at the Centre Pompidou from March 28 to July 15, 1985. For a selection of texts reflecting on it, see the simultaneously published ***Modernes et Après; Les Immatériaux***, ed. Élie Théofilakis (Paris, 1985).

   It should be acknowledged that in certain of his writings, Lyotard himself emphasizes the impermeability of boundaries between radically commensurable spheres. See, for example, his dialogue with Jean-Loup Thébaud, ***Just Gaming***, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis, 1985), In the Afterword to volume by Samuel Weber, Lyotard is in fact criticized from a more rigorously Derridean perspective for being too obsessed with the purity and specificity of discrete language games. Instead, Weber asks him to be aware of their ambiguous interpenetration, that is, of the very ubiquity of ***differance***, which is privileged by the post-modern temper.

8. Jacques Bouveresse, ***Rationalité et Cynisme*** (Paris, 1984), p. 163.

9. Suzi Gablik, ***Has Modernism Failed ?*** (New York), 1984, p. 48.

10. Peter Bürger, ***Theory of the Avant-garde***, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, 1984).

11. Charles Jencks, ***The Language of Post-modern Architecture*** (New York, 1984), p. 127f.

12. Robert Venturi et al., ***Learning from Las Vegas*** (Cambridge, 1977).

13. Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Fminists and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster,ed., ***The Anti-Aesthetic; Essays on Postmodern Culture*** (Port Townsend, Washington, 1983).

14. For a feminist-deconstructionist critique of Habermas, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble, Habermas," ***Union Seminary Quarterly Review***, 35, 1-2 (Fall, 1979-Winter, 1980). For a feminist critique closer to his own position, see Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory ? The Case of Habermas and Gender," ***New German Critique***, 35 (Spring/ Summer, 1985).

15. Lyotard, ***The Postmodern Condition***, p. 72. This characterization of Habermas is also taken for granted by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in his 1982 discussion with Lyotard at Cerisy-la-Salle. See the transcript, "Talks," in ***Diacritics***, 14, 3 (Fall, 1984), p. 26.

16. ***Ibid***, p. 66.

17. Dominick LaCapra, ***Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*** (Ithaca, 1983), pp. 178-179.

18. Michael Ryan, ***Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation*** (Baltimore, 1982) p. 112f; Jonathan Culler, "Communicative Competence and Normative Force," ***New German Critique***, 35 (Spring/ Summer, 1985).

19. For an account of Habermas' break with the idea of a meta-subject, see Martin Jay, ***Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*** (Berkeley, 1984), chapter XV.

20. Thomas McCarthy, "Rationality and Relativism: Habermas's 'Overcoming' of Hermeneutics," in John B. Thompson and David Held, eds. ***Habermas: Critical Debates*** (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," ***Telos***, 40 (Summer, 1979); Henning Ottman, "Cognitive Interests and Self-Reflection," in Thompson and Held, ***Habermas: Critical Debates***.

21. Jürgen Habermas, ***Theory of Communicative Action***, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).

22. Anthony Giddens, "Reason Without Revolution ? Habermas's ***Theorie des konnunikativen Handelns***," in Bernstein, ***Habermas and Modernity***.

23. Martin Jay, ***Marxism and Totality***.

24. Jürgen Habermas, ***Communication and the Evolution of Society***, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, 1979) p. 130f.

25. Jürgen Habermas, ***Die Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne***, p. 361.

26. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity, ***"New German Critique***, 22 (translation emended). Winter, 1981), p. 9.

27. Martin Jay, 'Habermas and Modernism," in Bernstein, ed., ***Habermas and Modernity***.

28. Jürgen Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," p. 200.

29. ***Ibid***.

30. ***Ibid***., p. 201.

31. ***Ibid***. For another recent consideration of the issue of aesthetic rationality that draws in part on Habermas, see Martin Seel, ***Die Kunst der Entzweiung: Zum Begriff der Ästhetischen Rationalität*** (Frankfurt, 1985). Ironically, the inflationary expansion of different aesthetic experiences has itself been connected to post-modernism by Charles Newman. See his ***The Post-Modern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation*** (Evanston, 1985). Quantitative increase may not in fact be a fully satisfactory criterion of rationalization.

32. Ironically, despite his opposition to Habermas, Lyotard can perhaps be read against the grain as expressing hope for something similar. Thus. Cecile Lindsay recently writes, "By meticulously unmasking the operations of the various types of metanarratives, by turning the conditions of any narrative back upon itself, Lyotard's work points to a powerful potential for a dialogic situation among genres of discourse that have been kept separate and hierarchized." See her "Experiments in Postmodern Dialogue," ***Diacritics***, 14, 3 (Fall, 1984), p. 61. It is of course in a similar direction—without the overly intersubjectivist notion of dialogue—that Weber wants to turn Lyotard in the Afterword to ***Just Gaming*** cited above. But because Lyotard, like Habermas, is interested in preserving boundary maintenance to a greater extent than the more rabid deconstructionists, he preserves the hope for some sort of actual dialogue. For unless there is a sense of relatively autonomous language games capable of interacting, then all we have is an undifferentiated soup of homogeneous heterogenity, a kind of absolute concreteness that paradoxically turns itself into pure abstraction.

33. Jürgen Habermas, "Moderne und

Postmoderne Architektur," in *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit*.

34. See Frampton's "Toward a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*. Frampton, to be sure, is no friend of postmodernism and acknowledges a debt to the Frankfurt School, as well as to Heidegger and Hannah Arendt.

35. Jürgen Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, p. 392.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

37. Jonathan Culler, in the essay cited in note 17, chides Habermas for marginalizing literature and rhetoric in the name of philosophy. One might reply that the deconstructionist impulse in postmodernism is open to the reverse charge.

38. Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, p. 240.

39. Albrecht Wellmer, "Reason, Utopia and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," in Bernstein, *Habermas and Modernity*, p. 62-63.

40. Thomas McCarthy, "Complexity and Democracy, or the Seductements of Systems Theory," *New German Critique*, 35 (Spring/Summer, 1985), p. 50.

41. Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Dialectice of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School," *New German Critique*, 35 (Spring/Summer, 1985), p. 25.

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