HABERMASIAN LOGIC AND THE SEARCH FOR HOLISTIC KNOWLEDGE

Emmanuel J. Ibuot
Humanities Unit, School of General Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Abstract
The history of thought in the West has greatly been defined by the epistemological trend that claims that the subject knows the objects of thought without being involved; that neutral, a historical, and unbiased account of knowledge was possible, especially by way of logic and the positivist sciences. In this mode of knowing, objectivity has always been the keynote. All other things could only be explained in terms of reason. For several centuries, any opposition to this form of understanding has been widely resisted. In our times, this very opposition has gained ascendancy in Post-structuralism. Post-structuralists do not generally buy into the idea of grand knowledge by the subject founded upon transcendental platforms. They deny the idea of neutral reason, which was based upon the subject’s rational powers and announced a rival epistemic mode, namely epistemology without a subject. In order to checkmate the supposed excesses of Post-structuralism, Jurgen Habermas moved to the defence of the subject (and object) by way of his logic of communicative reason. This paper seeks to depict the weakness in western thought instantiated by Habermasian logic and the necessary participation of emotions in any holistic knowledge.

Every epoch in human thought is marked by a philosophy with a unique epistemic character. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are known to have been very notable in its contributions to knowledge, specifically through Post-structuralism. Post-structuralism has been known for its avowed anti-epistemic stance as in the case of Richard Rorty. This anti-epistemic stance arose as a reaction, to say pointedly, to Kant’s immoderate arrogation to philosophy, generally and epistemology, particularly the roles of Usher and Judge of all disciplines. In other words, foundationalism positions philosophy before the sciences because it insists on a cognition that comes before cognition.

Historically Kantian philosophy marks the birth of a new mode of justification… What Kant calls “transcendental” is an inquiry into the a priori conditions of what makes experience possible… The first job for the philosopher, then, is to analyse the concepts of objects as we ‘always already’ intuitively use them… In so doing he redefined the task, or vocation if you like, of philosophy in a more demanding way. Kantian philosophy sets up a domain between itself and the sciences, arrogating authority to itself. It wants to clarify the foundations of the sciences once and for all, defining the limits of what can and cannot be experienced. This is tantamount to an act of ushering the sciences to their proper place.

Kant seems to have presumed that reason is the foundation of all things. This brought about the re-examination of reason and its necessity as the father of all other disciplines by some critics like Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida among a host of other thinkers. The resultant of this confrontation was the collapsing of the adoral throne offered reason as the ground of lordship over other disciplines. Amidst this movement towards the erasure of rationality, viewed as logical analysis, came Jurgen Habermas (helped by Karl-Otto Appel) to rescue the epistemic subject from total extinction. This underlies the idea of “the project of modernity” (Habermas) that states that
rationality, as defended by the enlightenment thinkers, must be completed so as to save the epistemic subject.

Post-structuralism has generally been identified with personalities like Richard Rorty, Hans Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Alasdair Mcintyre, etc. Though they defended a form of scepticism different from those generally known, they are very much influential. The members of this movement can be said to span across various fields such as the philosophy of science, religion, social theory, feminist criticism, literary criticism, etc. This is one movement that has affected almost all knowledge lines. As its focus, it tries to undermine the very principles for which modernism stood. For her proponents, Post-structuralism brings to an end the excessive stress on scientific rationality, a unitary theory of progress, and a rationality independent of any context.5

The previously held status of epistemology as involving the subject and object was replaced with the notion of epistemology without any subject. Whatever was seen as a path to asserting the rational subject was countered with their stress on the unconscious. Even the elements that were thought to be definite in the representation of meaning were now interpreted as ‘free-floating’ and thus, had nothing definite as regards internal structure to found theories. It negated the Marxian substructure-superstructure model. Everything is plural and stands on equal footing with each other (Derrida). It is in this denial of basic structure that they are also called Post-structuralist since they basically do not uphold any structure. Philosophically, they have been known to advance theories with the effect of extinguishing epistemology and its subject. Thus, they tend to support an epistemology and its subject. Thus, they tend to support an epistemology without subject, except object. Be that as it may, Habermas comes forth as a defender of the subject–object relationship in epistemology. The writer agrees with Habermas that a philosophy without the subject deviates from, and deforms man’s epistemological and ontological status. It is dehumanising; since it negates the knowing subject, it is bound to be abusive in that it creates room for man to be handled as an object of manipulation, a character of technological rationality. Habermas rejected the ‘free-floating’ thinkers and the positivists because of this manipulative streak. Manipulation includes any denial of man’s fundamental rights and oppression of all sorts.

A careful race through the history of Western philosophy, from Plato to Kant, reveals that the explication of knowledge has been in terms of historicism and transcendentalism. In Habermasian epistemology, it is not a problem of drawing a fine line between the two. This unique move is upheld because these modes of knowledge-explication are necessarily found together in a relationship of mutual compatibility. In no way must this be taken to mean interactionism in the sense of mind-body interconnectivity for his philosophy is not defined by the philosophy of consciousness, but the philosophy of language, i.e. the “linguistic turn,” which characterizes the greater part of post-structuralist thought. Why did he argue for this relationship? How did he resolve the bifurcation of knowledge along polar lines as found in the history of thought? Although his conception of knowledge is germane by its composite forms, can it like other forms of rationality be said to be a true representation of human rationality? This paper seeks to determine how the ‘a priori’ and ‘a posteriori’ elements of knowledge are based within Habermas’ Communicative Reason. It demonstrates that his rationality as found within the contexts of his theories of Cognitive Interest and Ideal Speech Situation perpetuates the moribund idea that rationality is defined by logic (cf. Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant) to the elusion of elements like will (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer), faith (Kierkegaard), sexual difference (Irigaray), unconscious (Freud), power (Foucault), imagery and

gender (Le Doeuff). In the quest for wholeness in thought, this paper posits human reason as the basis of ‘logic’ and ‘non-logic’ (it includes the human emotion and imagination at least) and thus propose the possibility of a more holistic theory of knowledge. In this paper, the elements of emotion and imagination are captured in the umbrella term, ‘non-logic’ (Ed. L. Miller). Reality cannot be exhaustively captured by ‘logicality’ and ‘illogicality’. A thing can be different from logic without excluding logic. If a thing is opposed to logicality in the sense of consistency in thought, we have contradiction. But if a thing is different from logic (ideas in the mind) while it is at the same time not contradictory, then it is an abuse to identify it with a linguistic code that is used to signify a thing that is opposed to consistency in thought (logicality), i.e. illogicality. Non-logic is the code for signifying anything that is different from logic, but not mutually exclusive. Ontological entities like the human emotion, imagination, faith, will, power, etc. cannot be rightly termed contradictions because they are ontological entities; they are removed from the frame of objects that submit to logical descriptions, ideas in the mind. Thus, we can say that only mental entities can be descriptively handled as rational or irrational, logical or illogical. Logical consistency may not necessarily be the same with ontological consistency. There is more to life than the epistemological (mental) plane or ideas. A lot of realities are not human ideas (logical materials). The imposition of logicality on the entirety of life is unduly overbearing, and apparently calculated to mislead. By introducing the concept of ‘non-logic’, it is proposed here that a holistic and encompassing theory of knowledge, which takes cognisance of the significance of faith, will, power, imagination, woman, sexual difference, etc. is possible.

Habermasian reason is developed within the nexus of a unique tradition in Western Philosophy, a tradition that has drawn the greatest attention to itself. In order to enable us appreciate Habermas in a more co-ordinate and clearer manner, it will be worthwhile to give a summary of the tradition within which he develops his theory by way of examining the Platonic, Kantian and Wittgensteinian models. Plato presents his epistemology basically in two of his books – Theaetetus and Republic. His theory of knowledge, in these works, is not systematically presented which creates a problem for any proper articulation of his position on true knowledge. This problem becomes complicated by the apparent inseparability of his epistemological musings from the ontological. We find that he expounds his conception of knowledge with the help of two metaphors: (i) the Smile of the Line and (ii) the Allegory of the Cave. This application of metaphor creates further difficulty for any clear reading/re-reading of his thesis.

The theory of knowledge in Plato involves degrees of knowledge. Each degree is defined by distinct and unique objects. There are basically two separate worlds - the state of mind and of sense-perception [invisible and visible worlds]. The plane favoured with true knowledge is the invisible world while opinion concerns the visible world. The level of opinion is built up by two knowledge activities, the lowest being the imagination is followed by belief. At the upper level, one notices that true knowledge is broken into two parts of lower reason (understanding), i.e. hypothesis and higher reason (pure abstraction). One can move from the lowest level characterised by imagination to the highest level, which is pure abstraction [certainty]. Nevertheless, Plato was at pains trying to explain the precise relationship between the particular and the universal, the visible world and the invisible world. Up to our times, this split has engaged the interests of a lot of scholars trying to bridge up the gap properly by way of good reason. One of such attempts was by Immanuel Kant, who has been blamed and praised for enunciating what he called his ‘Copernican Revolution’ that pronounces in unmistakable terms that knowing involves two essentially different elements – the noumena and the

phenomena. The noumena are things-in-themselves whereas the phenomena, seen from the viewpoint of the spectator, are things-as-they-appear and they should be understood as the effects of causes determined by natural laws. The above split has been interpreted and used by many scholars to argue that Kant forecloses any link between the realms of rationality and of being; thus, the assertion of the impossibility of knowing a thing as such. But this seems to run contrary to other evidence provided by Kant and criticized by many notable scholars. In Kant, there is an attempt to establish a link between thought and being. We find this in Kant’s distinction between intellectus archetypus and intellectus ectypus, i.e. intuitive intellect and discursive intellect, respectively. The discursive intellect, ordinary human intellect, deals with different ‘sensate manifoldness’ – material objects – to which it can gradually give determinacy through the pure categories of thought, but which it can never completely resolve into these categories. The matter of concern for the ordinary intellect is to determine the data of the senses by way of the categories of thought/reason. So, we state that this mode of understanding posits the objects as determinable by way of thought/reason; in other words, thought is the tool applied for the control of sensual data. Yet, it notes that being and thought are constantly pulling away from each other. Intuitive intellect (the intuition of the intellect) is that understanding that “knows every manifold only as an unfolding and more specific determination of the original unity which it itself is”. This intellect knows that what lies outside it is only what it has created by itself. Kant brought in the intuitive intellect so as to highlight human ordinary intellect, about which he was interested in. He was interested in showing the limits of the human intellect as we find in his Critique of Pure Reason where he showed that epistemology and ontology do not meet each other. Schulze, the skeptic said:

If there has ever been a beguiling attempt to link the realm of Objective reality directly to the sphere of Notions, and to pass from the latter into the former merely with the help of a bridge which also is made out of mere Notions, this attempt has taken place in Onto-theology. Nevertheless, the empty sophistry and deception which was being practiced have recently been completely uncovered.

When we examine the foregoing and situate it within the context of the noble task of philosophy as the highest judge of culture, we may appreciate how philosophy became the Usher and Judge of all disciplines, especially the sciences. This marked the transformation of philosophy into a meta-science and the most solid structure of justification because it is ‘transcendental’ in nature. After Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein seems to stand as the next most influential character in relation to the development of Post-structuralism. He is known for his logical theories and the philosophy of language (Ordinary Language Philosophy). His later theory – Ordinary Language Philosophy, which involved the analysis of, and application of non-technical language in the conveyance of all thought-forms, was meant to displace his logical theories that came earlier. The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus that captured these earlier theories held that the problems of philosophy had to be resolved by way of organizing theories that reveal hidden meanings/facts. These facts may be likened to the distinctions between Plato’s visible and invisible worlds. In his later work, Philosophical Investigations, concepts had to be defined for specific tasks and so clarify what is already known. This is where we find his widely-spoken Language-Game. It is often said that familiarity breeds contempt and this is the case with us when we get into the art of philosophising; along the way, we lose sight of the specific use to which concepts were made for and get into error. One of such problems is the “problem of other minds”. This arises when we think that we can, and/or

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do have access to the private space of the other person’s thoughts, feelings, imagination, etc. Sentences are made up of separate names, for Wittgenstein, and only describe possible states of affairs of facts, not internal or private data like thoughts, feelings, imagination, etc. By extension, this rules out the possibility of solipsism and private language.

Bringing to completion the task initiated by the enlightenment thinkers is Habermas’ mission in philosophy. While the goal of the Enlightenment was to develop universal standards for the direction and assessment of human life and progress, he saw it necessary to articulate them into formats that would guide the whole human life. Enlightenment was an attempt to employ human reason in developing laws and guidelines said to constitute the ground of the ‘life-world’ of humanity. Habermas speaks thus:

The project of modernity done by eighteen-century philosophers ‘consisted of their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic,’ their aim being … ‘the rational organization of everyday social life’.\(^{13}\)

Habermas presupposes that each discipline was ruled by its principle of internal consistency, which is but human reasoning because no discipline thinks. Rather, it is human beings who think the discipline. This self-imposed task was an attempt to restore the epistemic subject as the basis/foundation of all knowledge. He seeks to articulate a new structure of rationality as against its former alignment with consciousness (phenomenology). In Habermasian consciousness, knowledge is historically rooted and transcendental too. In order to explain knowledge, he calls up the tenets of historical materialism; these tenets would include history, social reality, and known material nature – these are the results of the constituting labour of the human species. In the course of producing his existence and reproducing his species being, man encounters problems. Knowledge is understood within the background of its constitution, that is, the inevitable problems that confront him. The conditions for the making up of knowledge determine the structure of the objects that could be experienced. These conditions are the historical material conditions within which the development of the species has occurred.

The human species arranges its experiences by way of a priori interests/knowledge-guiding interests. This is the theory of cognitive interest, which reveals the conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Knowledge is the product of the cognising subject. Unlike Kant, this activity is not located in an ahistorical, transcendental subject.\(^{14}\) The ‘basis of interests’ follows from an understanding of man as both a tool-making and language using animal; man produces necessarily from nature the things that he needs from material existence by way of manipulating and controlling the objects of the environments and communicating with others making use of rule-governed institutions. It follows, therefore, that man’s interest is in the maintenance of communication. In order to appreciate these interests, there is another interest - interest in the reflexive appropriation of human life. We may consider this to be the third form of interest; it makes possible the interest-bound character of knowledge. It is nothing, but interest is reason - the capacity of man to be self-reflexive, and self-determining and to act rationally. It is as a result of this that knowledge leading to autonomy and responsibility is created; we, thus, have in our hands a liberating interest. Cognitive interests are grounded in nature, though they are transcendental conditions of knowledge – again, a reflection of age-old problem of matter and non-matter. The rule system, which governs the notions of the species

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have a ‘transcendental function’ but come from real life structures. By way of qualification, we may say that these interests are quasi-transcendental in nature.

It is very important to stress, at this point the fact that man’s primal interest is liberation, autonomy and responsibility. If there is anything that raises us into this state of freedom, it is language. Like Habermas opined:

> What raises us out of nature is …language. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.  

Language is a frame for the play of symbols and man, who is a user of language, and may be said to be a symbolic being. The above quote shows the symbol-using angle of man. Real life calls for the making of definite utterances, which may include any of these sentences: question, accusation, command, statement, etc. When an utterance is made, for Habermas, the speaker makes four validity claims. In other words, there are four levels at which a listener can challenge the utterance, namely

1) The challenge may be whether or not the utterance is meaningful (meaningfulness);
2) The truth of the utterance can be questioned. This is on account of the fact that any utterance (including orders and questions) assumes some fact about the world and one may ask if the presuppositions are warranted (truthfulness);
3) The speaker’s right to say what he or she says, even to speak at all may be contested. An example: what authority has a person to make an assertion, request of given an order? (rightfulness);
4) A right to question may be directed against the sincerity of the speech. Such action may try to show that the speaker was lying, teasing, ironic, etc. (sincerity).

Underpinning every actual discourse is the presupposition of an Ideal Speech Situation in which all the participants in a conversation are free to query whatever is said by any speaker. This is the demand of Habermasian ‘informal logic’ for proper communication. If there is anything required of this ‘Ideal Speech Situation,’ it is fair play in dialogue. Since every participant must have equal chance to participate, there must be no delimitation placed against their rights to assert, defend or question any claim of fact or norm. Any activity of this type must be unlimited – freed of “activated role or status difference or one-sidedly binding norms” but this does not mean that the only motivation of participants is arrival at the truth of statements and the validity of norms. In no way can this be said to lead to free and open discourse by itself. A discourse of this sort needs a number of other antecedents stretching from the issues of cultural traditions to the distribution of material resources, according to David Held.

Although Jurgen Habermas claims that justification is the foundation of all forms and dimensions of relationships, his claim has not gone unchallenged. One of such challenges comes from Braaten, who criticized this point by demonstrating that mimesis, sympathy and affection can also be said to have at least as much claim to such status Habermas gives to his theory of justification. The Ideal Speech Situation is not an external guarantor of truth-claims. Since the participants are the only measure of truth, the possibility of relativism/subjectivism may arise. The group may in this way arbitrarily define truth. Only an objective standard can assure of truth. But the calling up of an objective standard raises another significant problem: how clear, valid and stable is the notion of objectivity? This matter shall be addressed, in detail, in a different discourse.

For Habermas, the human species have interest to know so as to manipulate his environment. Knowledge for manipulation is characteristically human and is called techne by the
Greeks. Herbert Marcuse calls it technology. That thing which makes man to realise that knowledge is bound with interest is man’s interest in the fact that his life has a reflective tone, which is psychological and an indication about man’s interest in psychology. There is doubt concerning the stance that all men have this interest for the science of psychology. Lawrence Kohlberg seems to share this doubt in his Theory of Moral Development where he shows that only a few get into this kind of activity. This is found as the involvement of his universal-ethical principle orientation (post-conventional/independent/self-motivated mentality), which is preceded by the contractual-legalistic orientation (the level of crowd or conventional mentality). The post-conventional level may be viewed as the moral development level of leaders – people who chart the direction of history. These are highly developed people said to be guided by internalized universal principles, and in possession of mental frames distinguished by the ability to rise to, and function in abstract reasoning.\(^\text{21}\)

It is a fact that Habermas means to continue his work along the line of rationality prevalent in Western Philosophy, which includes everything except the supposed irrational elements of intimidation, sympathy, coercion, empathy, emotion, faith, will, etc. He advances a theory of rationality in his ‘communicative reason’ that conspires to leave out women and other things that easily integrate the element of human emotion, which is the general practice in the discourse of western philosophy.\(^\text{22}\) Thus, we discover that historically academic discourse, especially in philosophy has been constructed within the codes of sound taste that implies the suppression, just like the stoics did, of emotion as an inferior and debased realm that has long been banished and cannot be allowed any entry into such refined discourse because it is a threat to the rational order. In fact, this informs our household description of man as a higher animal (in possession of the reason viewed as the qualifying mark of Homo sapiens - the rational man) as against all others handled descriptively as lower animals (in possession of the supposedly irrational mark, i.e. the absence of logical reason). My opinion is that this categorization of man as a higher animal, possessing ‘neutral’ reason, i.e. reason devoid of emotions, instincts and all other elements outside reason is seriously flawed and unfounded. Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), the fifth force in psychology that started in the early 1970s by the combined efforts of John Grinder and Richard Bandler, states succinctly that the human person can consciously choose his/her emotions and even modify the intensity of these emotions and that people bereft of belief in emotional freedom are like marionettes.\(^\text{23}\) Emotional freedom means that an agent can determine how to react to a stimulus and discriminate in favour some feelings. V. E. Frankl, a survivor of four horrific Concentration Camps, testifies to this truth.

Choice is a rationally conscious act and the foregoing shows that emotions have human rationality for its source. Indeed, it could be said that human reason, assisted by the will is the point of origin of emotions. If human emotion was radically different in nature to the extent of excluding reason (logicality), then we would not be able to argue, like Agbakoba does, for any form of interactionism. Taking a cue from his Theories of Mind: A Case for Interactionism as foundation, one argues that man can choose to control his emotions or choose the opposite. Whether for or against, both are choices that are equally rational because the mind can grasp them as alternatives. Put differently, human actions could be driven by passion such that little or no attention is paid to the possibility of reason and/or will being the lead determinants of the course of action. Yet, this does not in any way remove the possibility and actuality of controlling and directing the passions of men and women. According to Agbakoba:

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\text{… the fact that man’s passions are strong and could override his reason and will, dictating his actions, does not imply that man cannot control them by reason and will and channel them to the ends of reason.}\]
It is worth noting that although man may control, as Agbakoba opines, his passions and direct it to the ends of reason, it is difficult to state categorically that reason can function at any moment without the emotions. Human choices are rational to the extent the human being must think out or identify alternatives and grasp them as such before proceeding with making a choice from among the available alternatives. To make a choice connotes the ability to discriminate among various items; such discrimination occurs consciously and within consciousness. This is to say that human rationality, as instantiated in choice making, is discriminatory in nature. Discrimination therefore is functionally the human rationality in action. But there is no way any act of discrimination can occur without an emotional tone owing to the fact that every human act is pursued seriously or less seriously depending on the sort of emotions behind the act, whether weak, or mild, strong or aggressive.

Human rationality as logic, and as an exclusion of all other thought-forms (thought-influencing elements including emotions) has been found to be biased and detrimental to proper knowledge-search and the development of man. If human reason is in itself rational (logical), then it is also irrational in itself considering the fact of its epistemological partnership with emotion, a supposedly irrational and apparent reality. The dichotomization of disciplines according to sophistication and subsequent description in hierarchical terms was based on the accentuation of reason (logic) as holistic and neutral. On this count, reason was said to be able to generate a universal and unbiased explanation of man and reality. From these findings and understanding, philosophy should not be taken as a discipline of superior matrix against other disciplines even though it has its unique contributions to make to man’s development. Rather, it should be seen as a discipline standing in complementary relationship to other disciplines. For Jurgen Habermas:

The discourse of modernity, which we are still conducting down to our own day, is also marked by the consciousness that philosophy is over, no matter whether this is presented as a productive challenge or only as a provocation.25

Contrary to this passion of Habermas, this paper therefore submits that philosophy (especially, epistemology) should lay no more claims to the guardianship of reason.26 Suffice it to say that human life is a combination of some of logical elements and non-logic (signifies realities different from, but not contradictory to thought). To keep human life under the umbrella of logicality is a form of reductio ad absurdum (on the count that the logical consequences of the argument demonstrated above falsifies the argument that man is defined by logical reasoning), which makes a mockery of man and reality and disregards the extensive and intensive nature of human life. Human life would be more comprehensively accounted for by an epistemology that encapsulates non-logic.

ENDNOTES
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, p. 106.
15. David Held, pp. 246.
18. David Held, p. 396.