

THE COLONIZATION OF CRITIQUE: HABERMAS' OVER- RELIANCE ON SYSTEMS THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL THEORY

André Saramago

Investigador Associado do Observatório Político

Habermas' critical theory has had a significant influence in international relations and social theory, especially in what concerns the appropriation of his reflections on discourse ethics. However, this appropriation has not sufficiently engaged with the wider aspects of Habermas' project, namely his distinction between the societal realms of the lifeworld and the system, which arises from his attempted synthesis between Parsonian systems theory and critical theory. My argument in this article is that there are fundamental problems with Habermas' usage of systems theory. Most significant, Habermas appropriates its dichotomous conceptions of society with significant implications for critical theory. Namely, such appropriation diminishes critical theory's capacity to provide adequate frameworks for a better understanding of human societies and their development, making it unable to fulfil its critical role of providing adequate means of orientation for social movements in their emancipatory struggles.

I - HABERMA'S THEORY OF SOCIETY: BETWEEN SYSTEMS AND LIFEWORLDS

Habermas has been involved in a life-long project of reconstructing critical theory and moving it beyond some of the limitations he thinks affect first generation Frankfurt School. This project ultimately strives to develop a critical theory of society which provides the theoretical means of orientation by which a better understanding of human societies and their development can be attained, and which is also capable of informing the activity of emancipatory social movements, something that Habermas finds early Frankfurt School critical theory unable to do¹.

According to Habermas, the whole critical tradition introduced by Kant and developed by Marx and Western Marxism possesses three main problems.

¹ Habermas, J. *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.2: Lifeworld and System* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.397

First, there is a “lack of clarity concerning [its] normative foundations”², which led it to over-rely on immanently criticizing bourgeois ideals³. Second, “Kant and the [tradition of critical theory] operated with concepts from the philosophy of consciousness [that] reduced the motives and aims of action, as well as the interests and value orientations on which they depended, to inner states or private episodes”⁴. Third, and finally, Habermas considers that critical theory’s conception of rationality never adequately established the distinction between purposive and communicative reason. The tendency to collapse human rationality into an ill-defined conception of ‘reason’ characterized predominantly by purposive rationality was reinforced by critical theory’s appropriation of Weber’s studies of rationalization in an effort to understand the absence of the envisioned proletarian revolution. The main problem with the appropriation of Weber is that he studied the rationalization of action systems predominantly from the perspective of purposive rationality⁵, and hence, the processes of reification which can be described as a consequence of purposive rational actions in the context of economic and bureaucratic systems, ended up being causally explained as having human ‘reason’, in general, as its main cause.

To Habermas these three problems led critical theory to the conception of a ‘totally administered society’ in which the hope for human emancipation became increasingly a mirage and human beings were perceived as isolated individuals hopelessly facing an anonymous oppressing force in the form of a society dominated by instrumental reason. The main impetus of Habermas’ theoretical project is to overcome these problems and reconstruct a critical theory of society able to account for the reifying aspect of modernity, but also capable of identifying the potential and the resources for emancipation struggles which salvage and rework the critical project of the Enlightenment and its objective of actualizing the human capacity for freedom. Habermas starts by attempting to reconceptualise the concept of ‘reason’ and to identify a distinction between purposive and communicative reason which serves as the groundwork for the establishment of the normative foundations of his critical theory.

To do so, he reproduces Marx’s approach in the *Paris Manuscripts* and tries to trace the fundamental difference between human beings and non-human species. Marx considers that “what is specific to the human mode of life, [is] the relation between organism and environment at the level of labour processes, (...) through the sociological aspect of the goal- directed

² Habermas, J. *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London, Heinmann, 1979), p.96

³ Idem, p.97

⁴ Habermas, J. *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.2: Lifeworld and System* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), P.96

⁵ Idem, *ibidem*



transformation of material according to *rules of instrumental action*⁶. However, argues Habermas, since labour needs to be socially organized to become effective, human action also necessarily requires “rules of interaction that can be set intersubjectively at the level of linguistic understanding, detached from the individual case, and made permanent as recognized norms or rules of *communicative action*”⁷. What Habermas is attempting to achieve with these distinctions is a way to break the hold that a conception of reason predominantly limited to purposive rationality has exercised over critical theory. As such, he places in doubt the conception of labour as the fundamental factor of the transition to the human stage of development. There is a need, Habermas claims, to ask “whether the concept of social labour adequately characterizes the form of reproduction of human life”⁸. Habermas answers with reference to knowledge from the field of anthropology claiming that the specifically human stage of development was reached not with the development of socially organized labour, which is a capacity shared with earlier groups of hominids, but with the development of complex socio-cultural arrangements structured around communicative skills⁹. These anthropological considerations lead Habermas to the conclusion that “the Marxian concept of social labour is [thus] suitable for delimiting the mode of life of the hominids from that of the primates, but it does not capture the specifically human reproduction of life”¹⁰.

By demonstrating that labour is not the defining human characteristic, Habermas hopes to release critical theory from the clutches of a conception of rationality that is predominantly intertwined with the purposive character of labour. If the defining human stage of evolution is characterized by a form of communicative reason which allows shared intersubjective understandings, then this communicative dimension of human rationality should become integrated into the conception of reason with which critical theory operates. More than that, if the defining human feature is communicative rationality, with which intersubjective mutual understanding as a form of social organization becomes possible, then the tendency critical theory developed to equate reason with reification becomes jeopardized. Reification appears only as one of the outcomes of human reason when operating in its purposive dimension while, at the same time, its communicative dimension allows the development of freer forms of social organization structured around intersubjective mutual understandings.

Habermas uses Mead’s claim, according to which the main drive of human

⁶ Habermas, J. *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London, Heinmann, 1979), p.181

⁷ Idem, p.132

⁸ Idem, p.134

⁹ Idem, *ibidem*

¹⁰ Idem, p.135



social evolution is the progressive development of communicative reason, together with Durkheim's account of the rationalization of the sacred, to support the claim that throughout human history social integration progressively stopped being carried out through the compulsion of sacred and traditional interpretations of the world to be secured on the basis of communicative interaction. As traditions were demystified by the process of modernization they lost their compulsory force to provide social integration and, consequently, social integration started to have to rely on communicative action between the members of a community through which the development of shared understandings about the world, society and its individuals. In Habermas' words "socially integrative and expressive functions that were at first fulfilled by ritual practice pass over to communicative action; the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus"¹¹. Habermas' characterizes this process as a progressive rationalization of the lifeworld, "to the extent that language fulfils functions of reaching understanding, coordinating actions, and socializing individuals; it thereby becomes a medium through which cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization take place"¹². The lifeworld is thus understood as the context which necessarily constitutes the backdrop of human existence and interaction. It is the "transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social or subjective) and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements"¹³.

Using Piaget's developmental psychology together with insights arising from systems theory, Habermas argues that, both at the individual and at the social level, the transition between the different stages of development occurs whenever a challenge arises out of the external environment which exhausts the adaptive capacities of the system under consideration. The system, either individual or societal, is then obliged to carry out a learning process in which it alters its internal structures and becomes capable of integrating the new challenge and re-establish its dynamic equilibrium. At the societal level this means that whenever a new challenge arises which exhausts society's adaptability, the social system taps into the moral resources of individuals – produced by individual learning processes – and integrates these into transformed societal structures that increase its capacity to integrate the new challenge¹⁴.

Habermas considers, however, that social integration and evolution cannot be

¹¹ Idem, p.76

¹² Idem, p.86

¹³ Idem, p.126

¹⁴ Idem, ibidem



conceptualized only from the point of view of a progressively rationalized communicative lifeworld as Mead does. The one-sidedness of this “communication-theoretic approach (...) can be seen already in the fact that (...) the material reproduction of society (...) is blended out of the picture of society”¹⁵. In fact, Habermas argues, social development occurs through a dialectical process in which, parallel with the development of communicative rationality at the level of the lifeworld, new forms of domination also arise. This growing potential for domination can be understood through the dialectic which is established between communicative and purposive reason. The freeing up of “communicative action from [traditional] value orientations also forces the separation of action oriented to success from action oriented to mutual understanding”¹⁶. This leads to a growing difference between social reproduction secured through communicative reason and social and material reproduction secured by purposive reason. While the former is characterized by mechanisms of mutual understanding that harmonize the action *orientations* of participants at the level of the lifeworld, the latter is focused on the pursuit of the limited and egotistical goals of the actors involved, the intermeshing of which frequently creates non-intended interconnections and action *consequences*¹⁷. There thus develops a social need to integrate the field of these purposive relations so that they do not cause disturbances at the level of overall social reproduction. It is at this point that Habermas, with recourse to Parsonian system theory, distinguishes between social integration, i.e. the process of securing social cohesion and reproduction through communicative reason and, system integration, i.e. the process of securing social and material reproduction through purposive reason. In his own words, “I have proposed that we distinguish between *social integration* and *system integration*: the former attaches to action orientations, while the latter reaches right through them. In one case the action system is integrated through consensus, whether normatively guaranteed or communicatively achieved; in the other case it is integrated through the non-normative steering of individual decisions not subjectively coordinated”¹⁸.

From this perspective, social integration secured by communicative reason appears as the realm of the lifeworld while system integration secured through purposive reason appears as the realm of the system; namely, the economic subsystem responsible for the purposive interaction with nature and the material reproduction of society. Societies thus have to be conceived “*simultaneously* as systems and lifeworlds. This concept proves itself in a theory of social evolution that separates the rationalization of the lifeworld

¹⁵ Habermas, J. *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol.2: Lifeworld and System* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.110

¹⁶ Idem, p.150

¹⁷ Idem, ibidem

¹⁸ Idem, ibidem

from the growing complexity of societal systems”¹⁹.

However, the relation between system and lifeworld is not necessarily harmonious. Although, on the one hand, lifeworld rationalization and its increased reliance on communicative reason might create more universal frameworks that allow greater system complexity, on the other hand, the reliance on communicative reason also causes disruption in systemic demands for efficiency and rapid decision-making. Furthermore, system complexity, while compelling the rationalization of the lifeworld, also tends to disrupt lifeworld integration with its systemic imperatives. It is this dialectic, between a progressively autonomous system and a rationalized lifeworld that Habermas tries to capture in his thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld. The increased complexity of the system leads to a situation in which, on the contrary of what happens in the lifeworld, system integration cannot be secured through communicative action because increased reliance on communicative action also “increases the expenditure of interpretive energies and the risk of dissensus”²⁰ which, from a systems perspective, leads to a loss of efficiency. As such, Habermas argues, once again with the help of Parsons, that systems develop other forms of securing integration. Namely, through the transference of the coordination of action to delinguistified media, such as money and power, which replace the need for linguistic communication within the system and fulfil the role of securing integration. Inasmuch as these media “do not merely simplify linguistic communication, but *replace* it with a symbolic generalization of rewards and punishments, the lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching understanding are always embedded are devalued in favour of media-steered interactions; the lifeworld is no longer needed for the coordination of action”²¹.

According to Habermas, the channels of communication between system and lifeworld can “serve (...) *either* for the influence of the lifeworld on formally organized domains of action *or*, conversely, for the influence of the system on communicatively structured contexts of action. In one case, they function as an institutional framework that subjects system maintenance to the normative restrictions of the lifeworld, in the other, as a base that subordinates the lifeworld to the systemic constraints of material reproduction and thereby ‘mediatizes’ it”²². This mutual influence accounts for the dialectic that Habermas is trying to identify between freedom and reification. On the one hand, the constraining of system functioning by the normative restrictions of a rationalized lifeworld which were secured through

¹⁹ Idem, p.118

²⁰ Idem, p.183

²¹ Idem, *ibidem*.

²² Idem, p. 185

communicative action accounts for the expansion of human freedom in modern societies, by entailing the subordination of the reproduction of the whole of the social formation, both in the dimension of the system and that of the lifeworld, to the normative principles and objectives which were freely consented by free individuals in cooperative discourse by the usage of communicative reason. On the other hand, the subordination of the lifeworld and its communicative context to system imperatives through the media of power and money, accounts for the expansion of reification in modern societies, by entailing the subordination of the reproduction of the whole of the social formation, in its two dimensions, to systemic imperatives driven by purposive rationality. This subordination of the lifeworld to system imperatives amounts to what Habermas calls a 'reification' of the lifeworld, domination of the communicative context by the media of power and money²³.

Habermas' claim is that there are areas of the lifeworld, especially those at the level of individual socialization and democratic politics, which simply cannot withstand their subordination to purposive reason without causing serious pathologies that threaten both individual personality structures and the stability and reproduction of social formations. These pathologies are classified by Habermas, following Weber, as a loss of freedom and a loss of meaning. A subjection of social relations purely to purposive reason and system imperatives means that social norms and understandings are no longer a reflection of free consensus obtained through argumentative justification of validity claims, but are instead an expression of relations of domination secured by the influence of power and money. So, human beings are reified, losing their role as subjects capable of self-determining their social formations, to become instead objects fulfilling systemic needs of reproduction.

In this manner Habermas reconstructs a critical theory of society which, in his view, is capable of providing the means of orientation which not only help gain a better understanding of the dialectics between freedom and reification in modernity, but also provide social movements with the necessary framework to orient their emancipatory social action and resist the colonization of the lifeworld by the system. As we saw, Habermas initiated his project as an attempt to solve what he considered to be the main problems with first generation Frankfurt School critical theory, namely the lack of normative foundations, the philosophy of consciousness and the misconception of 'reason'. However, despite initially engaging this project from a Marxist, historically and anthropologically oriented perspective, Habermas then progressively drew nearer to Parsons' systems theory as a way to complement his theoretical framework. My argument is that, in doing

²³ Idem, p. 187

so, Habermas effectively frustrated his initial goal. Instead of releasing critical theory from its problems he reintroduced them in the guise of systems theory and re-established, in a new form, not only the philosophy of consciousness which pervaded first generation critical theory, but also an a-historical take on social development which was not initially present.

II – THE LIMITS OF HABERMAS’ SYSTEMIC TURN

As we saw, at the beginning of his project Habermas made significant efforts to develop an historically and anthropologically informed critical theory of society, which was not only capable of abandoning the philosophy of consciousness but also the dichotomous understanding of society and human beings that he believed classical critical theory still maintained. In his latter writings, however, as Habermas became theoretically closer to systems theory, he appears to have re-established, in a new form, many of those elements. Now, the philosophy of consciousness appears not in the form of an individual facing an alienating society dominated by instrumental rationality, but in the form of a lifeworld of intersubjective communication, tendentially free of domination, facing a reifying system which autonomously spreads its purposive logic of operation to all spheres of society. And the dichotomies between subject and object, individual and society, and morality and history are now re-established as the opposition and interpenetration of different spheres of society, and the confrontation between lifeworld and system.

Since Habermas started carrying out his systems theoretical turn, his work has been subject to the criticism of several authors who consider it undermines his credentials as a critical scholar and the project of critical theory. Thomas McCarthy has placed particular emphasis in the artificial character of Habermas’ distinction between communicative and purposive rationality and their respective predominance in the lifeworld and the system. In particular, he questions the usefulness of making such distinctions, and of using systems theory’s conception of interpenetrating subsystems to provide an account of society. As seen above, Habermas considers that in the system dimension of social life purposive rationality predominates which operates on the basis of media capable of abstracting from the lifeworld, thus allowing the system to function without requiring the communicative consensualization of norms and behaviours. This releases the system from the burden of communicative action and allows it to increase its effectiveness and efficacy of operation. McCarthy questions to what extent this is an adequate portrayal of the organizations classified under the heading of ‘system’, since several empirical studies have shown that both the distinction between an organization and its ‘environment’ and between instrumental oriented action and communicative action within organizations is not as clear cut as systems

theory might make it appear to be²⁴. McCarthy thus argues that “if organizations are systems they are, unlike organisms, systems with porous and shifting boundaries; and if they are constituted by positive law, the legal regulations in place are not merely ideal presuppositions but elements (...) in the representations and interpretations that members deploy, at times with strategic intent, at times in the search for consensus”²⁵. As such, it “is *not* that there are no important differences to be marked here, but that these systems-theoretic concepts may not be the best way to mark them”²⁶. Consequently, the distinction that Habermas establishes between system integration and social integration “seem to be extremes rather than alternatives that exhaust the field of integration (...) possibilities: the denial of one does not entail the other. (...) [In fact] it seems clear that most, if not all, domains of social action can be looked at in both ways”²⁷. Habermas’ systemic framework thus appears to fail to provide an adequate account of society and its different dimensions, reifying and objectifying certain divisions and modes of operation within each sphere.

Just like Habermas’ account of organizational functioning purely through the lenses of purposive rationality appears to be particularly one-sided when compared to empirical studies of the area, so too does his account of the political and economic systems. These are portrayed in his theory as sites of purposive rationality operating in a non-communicative, non-consensual manner, through the media of power and money. Such a conception not only reflects a highly idealized account of bureaucracy and the political process of decision-making, but has very important consequences for Habermas’ account of modern society and its potential sites of conflict and transformation. Habermas’ systemic interpretation of the economic system and its interactions with the political system lead him to consider that, with the welfare state, capitalism has been able to overcome its inherent systemic and distribution crises, which have now moved to the lifeworld in the form of its colonization. As such, the sites of struggle in modern late capitalist societies are no longer associated with the means of production and the work place, but are instead focused in protecting modes of life and intersubjective communicative communities which are threatened with instrumentalization by the system. For authors such as David Harvey, Mike Reed and John Sitton such a conception reflects a failure to account for the continued crisis-ridden character of capitalism and the exploitation it carries out and which continues to be resisted, in many instances, in the work place²⁸. But more importantly, it

²⁴ McCarthy, T. “Complexity and Democracy, or the Seductions of Systems Theory”, *New German Critique – Special Issue on Jürgen Habermas*, No.35 (1985), p.34

²⁵ Idem, p.41

²⁶ Idem, *ibidem*

²⁷ Idem, *ibidem*

²⁸ Harvey, D. and Reed, M. “The Limits of Synthesis: Some Comments on Habermas’ Recent Sociological Writings”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol.4, No.3 (1991)

leads to a conception of society according to which there is a deep and clearly demarked separation between the structures of the lifeworld and those of the economy, and hence, between the life of individuals as members of a specific intersubjective lifeworld and their existence as workers. According to Sitton, such a division “neglects the ways in which the capitalist economy (...) is rooted more deeply in lifeworld forms than Habermas allows, and how processes of the system are amenable to organizational control from within the lifeworld and therefore historically contingent, and that there are therefore more potential channels of social conflict than Habermas suggests”²⁹.

If indeed McCarthy’s observation about the impossibility of clearly delimitating different spheres of society and their respective forms of rationality proves correct, then, Sitton’s argument about the fundamental intermingling between forms of capitalist economic production and the structures of the lifeworld can be supported. From this perspective, capitalism is not a disembodied system of economic production existing over the heads of human beings but is, in fact, constituted through the workers who are also simultaneously citizens and members of a communicatively structured lifeworld, and by the way in which these human beings relate to each other and to the social institutions that they together constitute. Consequently, capitalism, or what Habermas classifies as the economic system, is not an autonomous sphere of society, but is instead a specific form of interaction between human beings in the process of production which, consequently, is necessarily caught up with, and embodied in, the intersubjective communicative lifeworld and its socially constituted norms and ways of being³⁰.

Habermas’ systemic reading of society thus has several implications for his critical project. It presents a too clear cut interpretation of the divisions and operational criteria of the different spheres of society which does not hold up to empirical scrutiny. Also, it leads to a conception of the sites of struggles for emancipation in modern society focused in the lifeworld and its resistance to system colonization, ignoring other sites of struggle such as those in the workplace and within the administrative apparatus of the state. By doing so, it fails to account for very important sources of tension and resistance within what Habermas classifies as the system. Furthermore, by understanding the system as a site of purposive rationality and media steered behaviour, Habermas’ explanatory scheme effectively tolerates forms of oppression and domination within the system, identifying the associated exclusion of communicative and consensually self-determined actions as

²⁹ Sitton, J. “Disembodied Capitalism: Habermas’ Conception of the Economy”, *Sociological Forum*, Vol.13, No.1 (1998), p.73

³⁰ Idem, p.80

necessary requirements for the smooth functioning of the system. In this manner, Habermas' theory becomes effectively compliant with the reification of human beings in the context of their interactions within the so-called system. This interpretative framework also significantly limits the role of a critical theory of society in providing means of orientation for social emancipatory transformation. Instead of having a pro-active role in bringing about emancipation, critical theory now assumes the role of identifying the sites of resistance where the lifeworld can, with some possibility of success, resist the colonization of the system, while also distinguishing these from those sites where colonization is not only inevitable, but also essential for the maintenance of the system and the material reproduction of society. Critical theory and the social movements informed by it are thus circumscribed to the role of resisting the spread of purposive rationality without, however, informing an alternative view of society which could prove to be more emancipatory.

Finally, Habermas' appropriation of system theory hinders not only his conception of society, but also his understanding of social change and development. Habermas's explanatory scheme assumes an evolutionary perspective of social development which, informed by systemic analysis, considers that social change occurs whenever new challenges arise, either from the external environment or from the interaction between the different spheres and systems of society, which exhausts the adaptive capacity of the social system in its present form. This exhaustion obliges society to use the moral and technical resources developed by its members through communicative and instrumental learning processes in order to change its structures and gain a new level of adaptive capacity which integrates the new challenge and re-establishes its state of dynamic equilibrium. As Honneth and Joas observe this "explanation of social evolution in terms of developmental logic adduces system-threatening problems, which in the case of a particular society are located in the historically contingent conditions in which the society is set, in order to identify the moral learning process, which must pass through distinct stages, and which, along with the reorganisation of social integration, also permits the overcoming of the threat to the system and thereby the evolutionary further development of the technical-strategic system of action"³¹.

However, such an explanatory framework presents significant challenges when it is applied to understand the actual historical processes of social change. A theory "of social evolution that makes use of this pattern of

³¹ Honneth, A. and Joas, H. *Social Action and Human Nature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988) p.163



explanation has, (...) [in fact,] completely detached itself from the real historical process which it is supposed to help structure from the point of view of social progress. The explanation of socio-cultural evolution by developmental logic must abstract from the determinate complex of events and from the unique experiences within whose historical framework social groups act historically with momentous consequences”³². In the context of Habermas’ systematically informed critical theory the role of history necessarily becomes increasingly neglected since actual historical processes of social change cannot be easily framed only as adaptations to systemic crisis and challenges. In fact, many social struggles and processes of social change and transformation do not arise out of responses to crisis or challenges to the adaptive capacity of society, but from perceived forms of injustice and inequality within society in whatever might be its present stage of development. As Honneth and Joas note, “social movements, the empirical bearers of advances in moral and practical understanding, do not ‘learn’ in reaction to system-threatening dangers, but in the collective experiencing of, and the co-operative opposition to, injustice arising out of the nature of the social system”³³. Consequently, when theoretically framed by Habermas’ critical theory, the social researcher necessarily “loses sight of historically innovative action that expresses itself in social movements without responding directly or intentionally to a problem threatening the social system”³⁴. Habermas’ critical theory of society, with its systems theoretical understanding of social functioning and development has thus “become so remote from the experiential plexus of the real historical happening that it can hardly be translated back into the action perspectives of collective actors”³⁵. As such, its conception of social development and change is unable to connect back to the actual history of the processual development of the human species and human societies. In this manner, the aspiration of critical theory, of uniting theory and practice, ends up being ultimately frustrated since theory has detached itself so much from social and historical practice that the only way to reconnect them is by forceful and selective accounts of historical phenomena in a way that makes them malleable enough to be framed in the categories laid out by the theory. When this is so, theory has effectively lost its capacity to explain and help understand actual processes of human development and has become a new dogmatism, forcing the theoretical shaping of historical accounts in order to support itself, instead of providing the theoretical analytical tools and means of orientation by which a better understanding of history and the development of human beings and their societies can be achieved.

³² Idem, p.164

³³ Idem, p.166

³⁴ Idem, p.165

³⁵ Idem, p.166



This situation is all the more serious considering Habermas' aspiration at providing a *critical* theory of society which orientates the emancipatory action of social movements. Habermas' social theory has, in effect, "relinquished every possibility of providing explanatory interpretations of history that intervene instructively in the present-day situation of social confrontations"³⁶. Because of its incapacity to link itself back "to the unique experiential situation of subjects acting in the present, it cannot be introduced into historical praxis for the purpose of supplying practical orientation for the acting subjects"³⁷. Consequently, Habermas' critical theory, since its Parsonian turn, not only demonstrates little capacity at providing adequate frameworks which allow a better understanding of human societies and their development, but is also unable to fulfil its critical role of providing adequate means of orientation to the action of social movements in their emancipatory struggles. This situation arises mainly, as I've attempted to demonstrate, from the incorporation of Parsons' systems theory into Habermas' theoretical framework and the consequent reintroduction of the dichotomies and philosophy of consciousness that Habermas initially set out to rid critical theory of.

³⁶ Idem, *ibidem*

³⁷ Idem, *ibidem*

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OBSERVATÓRIO POLÍTICO

Av. Elias Garcia, nº 123 – 7ºE
1050-098 Lisboa PORTUGAL
Tel. (00351) 21 820 88 75
Geral@observatoriopolitico.pt

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