

THE MARKET ECONOMY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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Contents

<i>General editor's preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	i
1 Modernity, the market and human identity	14
2 Consumerism and personal identity	82
3 The work ethic	151
4 Globalization	200
5 The response of the churches	222
6 Concluding reflections	270
<i>Notes</i>	274
<i>Select bibliography</i>	298
<i>Index of names and subjects</i>	311
<i>Index of biblical references</i>	325

Modernity, the market and human identity

The question of human identity as being at the heart of modernity is one posed a century ago by Max Weber. Weber studied the Protestant Work Ethic as the fundamental force which shaped large portions of European civilization, and eventually spread world-wide through the expansion of European imperial power. Out of this power came the identity of the European industrial worker, who creates the self-alienating world of modern consciousness. This is a seamless argument, but we will pick it up, not chronologically, but in terms of a thematic approach, following the approach set out in the Introduction. The question of the Protestant Work Ethic, and its survival in the present day, is taken up in chapter 3, and the transformation of this ethic into an ethic of consumerism is argued historically in chapter 2. In chapter 1, a philosophical overview of the marketing identity and rationality is given. Those who would prefer to move into the substantive issues of consumerism and work can begin this study at chapter 2, ignoring the philosophical argument. Nevertheless, the philosophical grounding encapsulates the entire book.

What is important at this point is to notice how central Weber's formulation of the Protestant Work Ethic is to Jürgen Habermas, who is the pre-eminent German philosopher of social relations at the present time. This is because Habermas uses Weber's theory as a way into the question of human identity. However, Habermas believed that Weber's understanding of the growth of human identity within the market is fundamentally a mistake. Theologically it is worth beginning at this point, because it can be argued that the abyss in the middle

of human society is that of identity. Kant's overemphasis on rationality and human choice, expressed through the good will, undermines the nature of identity. All that remains in a Kantian understanding of human identity is the correct moral choice, made in terms of rational decision-making, and implemented through human action governed by the will. Identity becomes a matter of moral choice. The nature of the person, as a being with a moral character, becomes abstracted into the moral individual who stands alongside his neighbours in a fragmented universe.

It was this challenge which drove both Max Weber, and the critics of Weber found in the Frankfurt School, into their historical account of why Kant's philosophy had come to be accepted. Weber traced the demise of magic and myth to the gradual dominance of the Protestant ethic, which then became secularized by Kant. Although Kant retained a place for religion, the effect on religious faith was to subject it to a severe form of rationalization. Weber's account of the Protestant ethic gave the first systematic account of rationalization in western culture. In turn, Weber's own views were themselves criticized at length by the Frankfurt School of sociology in the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s, especially by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Their pessimism about western civilization built on the work of Max Weber, arguing that the full development of capitalism was inherently alienating, and rationalized human identity out of existence.

Habermas sets out to confront this tradition of Weber and the Frankfurt School, but to offer a far more positive reading of modern civilization. In so doing, he rewrites the tradition which Weber had constructed of the origin of western rationalization, and the demise of human identity. Habermas' theory is highly complex, in its own right, and here only a few aspects will be selected. In particular Habermas confronts the issues of human identity, the fragmentation of modernity and the nature of justice. Human identity and the achievement of justice are questions which are resolved through communicative competence. Identity is given as a human being by being a person who communicates. Justice is defined as the process by which

this communication is carried on. In brief, if there is no overarching narrative, there can be good 'networking'. The importance of Habermas, as will be shown, is that he sets this within the most sustained discussion of capitalism and bureaucracy in contemporary philosophy.

How did Habermas rewrite the account which Weber gives of the problematic status of human identity in a rationalized world?

MODERNITY AND THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

Habermas' argument that modernity is a development to be welcomed is not one which earlier theorists in the Frankfurt School would have accepted. Horkheimer and Adorno were deeply critical of modernity in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Habermas believes that modernity is beneficial, but the price has been the alienation of human beings. Their consciousness becomes morally and psychologically damaged. The costs of modernization are the loss of freedom in an increasingly bureaucratized society, and the loss of meaning in a world far beyond the enchantments of the pre-modern world.

Habermas spends some time outlining why he finds Weber's view both the basis from which he starts, and ultimately unsatisfactory.¹ First, Weber relates the end of a magical or mythical world-view to the rise of the world religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam). All these religions have a coherent world view, where they explain the cosmos as a meaningful whole. The great world religions are, for Weber, the forces which brought the modern era to world civilization. Suffering can be explained, and an ethical and spiritual framework guides the individual in ways that will enable her to find (or sometimes earn) salvation in that suffering.² As this religious rationalization became accepted worldwide, in different religions forms, so the West came to organize the economy and administration in terms of purposive, formal rationality. By this is meant a planned, intentional organization of work and society on rational lines. Work no longer is a response to the demands of hunger or shelter: it is organized,

and profit is consciously sought after. This social rationalization was linked to the universal rationalization of the world religions through the ascetic nature of European Protestantism. Religion becomes in Protestantism a force for disciplinary work and labour. Ascetism spread out of medieval monasticism into the organization of the whole of society on rational and methodical lines through the impact of Calvin and his Reformed theology. Capitalism begins its ascendancy.

At the same time, Weber linked the rationalization of religious beliefs and the social-economic rationalization of the sixteenth century, with a third form of rationalization. As the first two processes get underway, so the values within society and culture become rationalized. The modern world 'is composed of a number of distinct provinces of activity, each having its own inherent dignity and its own immanent norms'.³ Each sphere has its own inner logic, with great conflict between them. Fraternity, aesthetic worth and economic efficiency are all values which are in conflict. For Weber, this leads to the loss of harmony and meaning in the modern world. There was the world of religious beliefs, which, by 1900 when Weber wrote, had become a highly secular cosmology and epistemology, thanks to Kant's philosophical impact. There was the claim of political and social cohesion, expressed at the time as fraternity or class consciousness. Finally, there was the scientific and technological revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, resulting in very rapid industrialization.

Habermas finds much of this a necessary starting-point for his own analysis of modernity, and yet he wants to reconceptualize it. He examines the change in consciousness brought about by the rise in the world religions. Instead of emphasizing the connection between religion, moral standards and the emergence of the Protestant ethic, he examines the change in cognitive structures within religious world views. Contemplative theorizing comes from Greek cosmology in the West, and eventually creates modern experimental science. Habermas is fascinated by the revival of Aristotelean thought in medieval philosophy and theology, which created Thomism. This was then secularized by Baconian induction in England, and the

growth of scientific empiricism in such scientists as Isaac Newton. This is analysed in terms of the shift from a consciousness focused on itself in a magical, or mythical, world (a 'socio-centric' consciousness) to one which has no centre. Pre-Thomist religious thought in the West was, for Habermas, immersed in a magical world of religious forces, where the universe expressed divine anger or blessing through sickness or prosperity. After the lengthy evolution of thought from Aquinas, through Bacon and Newton, to the post-Kantian secular world, Habermas finds a fragmented human identity which thinks and feels in different ways about cosmology, society, the self and the economy. The centre has disappeared. This decentred consciousness or identity does however recognize that there are sharp divisions between the natural, social and subjective worlds. Within each of these there are validity claims which differ in their arguments. The reflexive capacity of agents leads to new forms of rationalization. For each they can consider different interpretations of what is the case (the natural world), what is legitimate (the social world), and what is authentic self-expression (the subjective world). So for Habermas modernity is not simply about cultural rationalization and the emergence of the Protestant work ethic. Modernity is complex, and is more than the acquiring of formal rationality, in which one learns how to enact science and technology. It is about the multi-dimensional enhancement of learning (we will return to this with Lane's study of cognitive complexity in chapter 3). It is above all about a fragmented human identity. As Habermas says, the emphasis on science and technology has 'led to an uncritical self interpretation of the modern world that is fixated on knowing and mastering external nature'.⁴

Habermas distinguishes three different cultural value spheres, which are science and technology, morality and law, and art and literature, based on the three worlds of the natural, the social and the self. This claim would be disputed by theologians, as being too simple a division of culture, but nevertheless Habermas does attempt to understand the importance of aesthetics in understanding modernity. Hence the rise of modern science and modern art stand as significant for

modernity as the Protestant Work Ethic. Even in ethics itself, the establishment of formal processes in modern law must be taken alongside the ethical preconditions of bourgeois capitalism. It is Habermas' contention that, to understand the crisis in human identity, the fragmentation of society and the disordered forms in which one group attempts to speak to another, one must understand not just the work ethic and the decline in religious faith, but also the growth of modern art and music. So, for Habermas, the purposive rationalization of science, technology and capitalism 'is only one possible way of developing of that broader potential . . . which is made available with the culture of modernity'.⁵ Modernity therefore represents an enormous unfolding of possibilities for humanity. In each situation there are alternative possibilities of what is the case, what is legitimate and what is authentic self-expression. This dissolves any concept of self-evident human flourishing (as in the American Declaration of Independence, which runs: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident') into a position which must be defended rationally through communicative rationality. By this Habermas refers to a mode of arguing which includes the other in such a way that the formal principles of Kantian ethics are broadened to include dialogue and respect for others. What it means to be a human being, with an identity which is not fragmented, is answered by an appeal to ways of arguing with one another. It is also the case that these 'specialized forms of argumentation'⁶ which make up the modern world, are institutionalized as well. The threefold system of validity claims is therefore the basis for three forms of argumentation, and results in three different institutional spheres. It is worth quoting Habermas at some length here:

Along this line we find (a) the establishment of a scientific enterprise in which empirical-scientific problems can be dealt with according to internal truth standards, independently of theological doctrines and separately from basic moral-practical questions; (b) the institutionalization of an artistic enterprise in which the production of art is gradually set loose from cultic-ecclesiastical and courtly – patronal bonds, and the reception of works of art by an art-enjoying public of readers, spectators and listeners is mediated through professionalised

aesthetic criticism, and finally (c) the professional intellectual treatment of questions of ethics, political theory and jurisprudence in schools of law, in the legal system and in the legal public sphere.⁷

Habermas therefore argues that the changes brought by modernity go far beyond Weber's understanding of the conflict of values in the modern world. He perceives the modern consciousness as decentred, recognizing clear boundaries between nature, society and self, with different forms of argument (or systems of validity claims) in each. Each of these spheres is itself institutionalized, and in each there are alternative possibilities of arguing what might be true, in the complexity of the meaning of that term. It is because of this understanding of consciousness that Habermas differs from Weber in his understanding of capitalism and market forces. For Weber, the rationalization brought about by the world religions need not have caused social rationalization, and only did so through the rise of the Protestant ethic. But, once this event had happened, social rationalization spread through society by means of purposive-rational action. Indeed, the two became identified as one force. For Habermas, the critical issue is not the Protestant ethic but the growth of self-critical rationality in different ways. Certainly social rationalization would occur, but it must be seen through the perspective of cultural rationalization. By this Habermas means that the crucial issue is not the spread of the Protestant Work Ethic to the economy and society, as Weber had claimed, but the gradual emergence of changes in art, music, literature (culture) and the increasing professionalization of such areas as medicine, the law, accountancy etc. These two changes reinforce each other. The significance of this is that purposive-rational action, or strategic rationality, is not the only means of organizing society. It is here that Habermas responds to Weber's analysis of the loss of meaning and freedom in the modern world. First, he accepts that there will be differentiated spheres of meaning in modernity, but the individual can recognize this, so long as there is a common, universal structure of consciousness in each of these spheres.⁸ Secondly, the experience of loss of meaning is a challenge to reorder society in some other way than purposive

rationality. The scientific world, and scientific way of thinking, in an instrumental manner, is no longer normative. Thirdly, it makes Habermas hostile to any talk of 'essential humanity' or invariant forms of human flourishing. What matters is that new possibilities of social relationships are explored.

We are now in a position to move to the second aspect of Habermas' thought which is significant, namely, the relationship of modernity and capitalism. At this point, Habermas introduces the concept of the 'lifeworld'. The 'lifeworld' is what nourishes human identity. As this world becomes dominated by money and social power it becomes weaker. So, too, does human identity.

THE COLONIZATION OF THE LIFEWORLD

The lifeworld is constituted by unproblematic, diffuse background convictions. It stores the work of past generations. Since Habermas has so emphasized the lack of importance of tradition in society, and the necessity of society reaching agreement through consensus and communicative action if it is to act at all, there is a possibility that society could ground to a halt, as it considers every option. This ignores the substantial work by philosophers such as Gadamer who have argued persuasively that human understanding is based on tradition as it encounters new experiences. Indeed, right at the very beginning of this exposition of Habermas' complex and careful argument, there must be some dissent by a theologian. Theology in the western Christian tradition has always given a high place to the tradition of the church. Instead, Habermas appeals to the weight of understanding that is stored in society. It is not legitimated by tradition, but is instead an implicit rationality: a 'conservative counterweight to the risk of disagreement that arises with every actual process of reaching an understanding'.⁹

This lifeworld has basic structures of consciousness, and pervades every aspect of thought. Less and less is there a traditional reservoir of beliefs which we accept 'immune from criticism'. We live in a rationalized world, and we assess new experiences in terms of these background convictions. Ha-

bermas rejects the authority of norms and values whose sources are not amenable to rational justification, but accepts that in place of 'opaque sources of authority' there can be implicitly known rationalizations which pervade our thought. It is important to note that, for Habermas (as, of course, for Kant and Weber), the justification of a belief, value or command in terms of its purely religious authority is no longer acceptable. 'The Bible/Pope/Spirit says' is a pre-modern way of thinking, which is rightly meaningless to contemporary human beings. Always we must explain in terms others can understand, accept and justify why we think, act and feel the way we do. Communication is the answer for Habermas to the issue of both identity and social fragmentation. If pressed, we could give a reasoned justification of why we act the way we do, or at least some people could do this on our behalf. The lifeworld pervades culture, society and personality. Habermas writes:

In relation to culture and society the structural differentiation indicates an increasing uncoupling of world views from institutions; in relation to personality and society, an expansion of the available space for the generation of interpersonal relations; and in relation to culture and personality, it indicates that the renewal of traditions is ever more strongly dependent on individuals' readiness for critique and capacity for innovation. The end point of these evolutionary trends is: for culture, a condition allowing for the continual revision of traditions which have become hardened and reflexive; for society, a condition allowing for the depending of legitimate orders on formal procedures for the . . . justification of norms; and for personality, a condition allowing for the continually self-steered stabilization of a highly abstract ego-identity.¹⁰

This is such a critical passage of Habermas' understanding of how society becomes rationalized, and only then is affected by the working of capitalism and the market, that it is worth exploring the meaning of the text. Habermas contends that the beliefs and values predominant in each social group are no longer shaped to a decisive extent by the institutions which individuals may belong to. Neither the state, nor large employers such as the multinationals or a broadcasting company, still less the church, or a political party, mould the outlook

which individuals have. Habermas will later argue that the mass media certainly affect beliefs and values, but his crucial point is that they no longer spring from the experience of being part of an institution. So traditions become much looser, there is much more discussion of their origin, validity and future existence, and they can become changed. In Habermas' words, traditions are 'unhardened and reflexive'.¹¹ Once again we see the hostility of Habermas to the role of tradition, but what Habermas is seeking is an understanding of social change and the transformation of beliefs and values. Society also changes, as social roles becomes much freer. This has been especially true of relationships between men and women, and between the generations. The possibilities of change become greater, and there is an 'expansion of the available space' in which people can express who they are. Norms as such must be justified by argument, and the social structures which do exist, such as the family ('legitimate orders') or educational institutions, depend on arguments for their continuing relevance to society. It is noticeable that this claim says nothing about the truth of these norms and the norms are agnostic about the understanding of the good. Habermas puts this in a highly abstract way, speaking of 'a condition allowing for the dependency of legitimate orders on formal procedures for the . . . justification of norms'¹² but his meaning is clear. As a social philosopher and critic, Habermas believes that personalities only exist in this rationalized, modern world by achieving their own ego-identity which must be continually maintained by oneself. This appears to be rather an exaggeration. It is true that there is far less support for personal identity in the fluid, atomized world of the modern city, but it is not clear that the stabilization is quite as precarious as Habermas implies. Part of the problem is that Habermas places individuals in the position where they are always struggling to renew traditions by engaging in a critique of them, and seeking innovative ways forward. This leads to a vision of the intellectual ever debating the issues of social existence in a manner necessarily removed from any acceptance of continuity or stability. Individuals must always take up an attitude of examination, discussion and seeking consensus ('communica-

tive action') on the entire claims made within society. Only so is the lifeworld passed on. Hence Habermas both accepts that the lifeworld is made up of unproblematic, background convictions and that its transmission to new generations and different parts of the world can only be through the challenge of communicative action. In conclusion, Habermas sees the lifeworld as being highly rationalized; by which he means that society no longer develops through the force of tradition or uncritical thought, but that an explanation or justification, in principle, could be given by an expert in that particular area; secondly, it is therefore differentiated into culture, society and personality, concepts which are clearly related but not to be reduced to one another as might be possible through reductionist arguments in a pre-modern culture; thirdly, it can only be passed on ('reproduced') through argument and challenge (the 'performative attitude' of 'communicative action'). Society continually seeks to reproduce its knowledge, while groups seek a more integrated form of solidarity or integration. Habermas is thinking here of the slow process of new towns achieving an identity, or firms a corporate culture. Individuals also seek greater socialization and self-awareness as a 'responsible actor'. One final aspect of this reproduction is that each factor in the lifeworld, of culture, society and personality, affects each other. Thus, for example, the individual personality will be affected by cultural reproduction through educational and behavioural goals; by social integration through social memberships; and by socialization through achieving personal identity.

Habermas bases his understanding of personal identity from the work of Lawrence Kohlberg on moral reasoning. The ethics of the ideal speech situation is related to Kohlberg's study of the stages of moral argument. This is not, as such, an understanding of human nature, as Forrester has made clear. The fluidity of personal identity is precisely the result of living in a highly sophisticated industrial society, and sets any theory of human nature at risk. What there is instead is an empirical account of the development of moral consciousness in young people, which Kohlberg claimed was a reasonably universal account of human development.

I – Preconventional Level. Here the child responds to punishments and rewards or the physical power of the person who commands.

1. The Punishment and Obedience Orientation: here it is the consequences of actions rather than any idea of the meaning or value of these consequences that determines moral behaviour.
2. The Instrumental Relativist Orientation: right action is what satisfies one's own needs, or occasionally the needs of others. Simple ideas of fairness and reciprocity are present, but 'human relations are viewed like those of the market place'.

II – Conventional Level. Here the stress is on loyalty to the group, family or nation, and conformity to the standards of the group.

3. The 'Good-boy-nice-girl' Orientation: good behaviour is what pleases others, and there is a tendency to conform to stereotypes.
4. Law and Order Orientation: here authority, fixed rules and maintaining the social order are the most important emphases.

III – Post-conventional, Autonomous or Principled Level. Here there is an effort to discover and follow moral principles which have a general validity and are not simply based on the norms of one's group.

5. Social Contract Legalistic Orientation: there is a tendency to stress rights and to base moral action on a properly achieved social consensus.
6. Universal Ethical Principle Orientation: conscience decides what is right in the light of universal ethical principles like the Golden Rule or the Kantian categorical imperative, which are freely chosen and reflect logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency.

Kohlberg believed that the majority of adults remained at stage four. About 20 per cent reached stage five, and only between 5 and 10 per cent reached stage six. What happens to this argument in the hands of Habermas is that these stages become stages of social development.

Forrester is cautious about the unexamined value assumptions of Kohlberg's work, important though it undoubtedly is. Indeed Carol Gilligan, who was an assistant of Kohlberg, challenged him in the most authoritative study of psychological theory yet written from a feminist viewpoint. This study was entitled *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. She points out that, both Piaget and Kohlberg primarily study young boys. Indeed, she argues that whereas Piaget made some reference to girls, Kohlberg ignores them. What is directly relevant about Gilligan's criticism, and bears heavily on the discussion of society in this chapter, is that she argues that Habermas believes that women have a different way of construing the relationship of private and family life to the public realm. Habermas, in Gilligan's view, is mistakenly persuaded by Kohlberg into a whole set of beliefs about women. For Kohlberg, women remain at stage three of his sequence. Morality is seen in interpersonal terms at this stage, and goodness is equated as helping and pleasing others. Goodness is lived out by mature women whose lives are primarily centred on the home. Gilligan believes that this is research primarily on male subjects, with women as an afterthought. Since the research reflects male experience, it leads, not surprisingly, to male conclusions. Women are best, in this theory, in the home and in private, and are less adequate in the public sphere. Women, for Kohlberg, must become like men to survive in the public realm. However, this division between public and private reflects the division between system and lifeworld discussed in this section.

The alternative picture presented by Gilligan is that justice in the public realm and feelings in the private belong together. There is a dual impoverishment. On the one hand, justice is separated from an ethic of care. On the other, injustices in family life are not addressed. Gilligan writes on the need to combine justice and care:

Through the tension between the universality of rights and the particularity of responsibility, between the abstract concept of justice and fairness and the more contextual understanding of care in relationships, these ethics keep one another alive and inform each other at crucial points. In this sense, the concept of morality sustains a dialectical tension between justice and care, aspiring always toward the ideal of a world more caring and just.¹³

After this discussion of personal identity and psychological development, which is related to moral thought, it is time to return to the discussion of the lifeworld, and in particular to the threat which is posed to it. As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, Weber believed that rationalization posed a threat to the harmonious development of moral values in the modern world. Habermas disagrees with Weber's understanding of rationality, and also denies that rationality poses a threat. Nevertheless, like Weber, and unlike Veblen who is discussed in chapter 2, Habermas believes that modern civilization is threatened. This is because the lifeworld is corrupted in a unique way. The threat is not from rationalization. Habermas, as shown above, welcomes the growth of a rationalized lifeworld. However, the lifeworld (or civilization) is corrupted by the system of bureaucracy, found in the state, and finance. 'System' here is a term which must be explained. The ways of thinking, acting and feeling which are appropriate to the worlds of the economy and of administration form a system which gradually pervades and dominates the lifeworld. The family is part of that lifeworld, and it is gradually dominated as well. The phrase Habermas uses is 'colonization'. However, it is clear that, for Habermas, as for Piaget and Kohlberg, the family inhibits moral development after a certain stage. Habermas looks for a universalizing justice which is impersonal, at home in structures, and is impartial. He does not see that the family can be a place where justice is learnt. The family should not be dominated by economic systems, but it is not an end in itself either. Instead, it remains as a place for loyalty, conventional behaviour, and pleasing others in Habermas' view. Feminists criticize him in two ways. On the one hand, they feel that the family should be a place where relationships are just, and that

justice is seen to be important. On the other, feminists argue that Habermas is insufficiently aware of injustice in the family. The critique is profound. There is a need to critique the division between the public realm and the domestic.

Habermas' argument ultimately resolves itself into one point, which he repeatedly emphasizes. There are not different types of action, but a continual reproduction of the lifeworld through different principles of 'sociation'. Sociation involves socialization, the social integration of groups and cultural reproduction. A rationalized society or lifeworld reproduces itself in a different way from the traditional, pre-modern societies where our beliefs and values were born. Two factors make for conflict and suffering. First, Habermas believes that there is insufficient challenge to prevailing structures which dominate the lifeworld and that existing ideologies, social integration and socialization carry on in an uncritical way. Habermas therefore distinguishes a 'normative consensus' (where society accepts the existence of existing patterns of belief or action) from a 'communicatively achieved consensus' (where each individual is respected, their views discussed, and the resources of the rationalized lifeworld employed). Secondly, and this will occupy us in the remainder of this section, there is the 'colonization' of the lifeworld by money and power. Habermas is thus the quintessential modernist. If one offered a justification of, say, marriage from a Roman Catholic standpoint, he would reject it as traditional and uncritical. However, if one justified marriage (or divorce) in terms of the demands of the modern economy, he would reject that as domination by the economic system.

Habermas welcomes the enhanced possibility of social reproduction which modern consciousness and a rationalized lifeworld bring. These are in brief a greater awareness of meaning and greater freedom of action, self-expression and beliefs. This is the modern, self-aware human identity in a secular world. It is these aspects of modernity which Habermas values, and in an ironic twist precisely these aspects which modernity also threatens. For capitalism and bureaucratic administration are the means by which society reproduces itself not only symbolically, but materially. The irony is that capitalism and bureaucracy

depend on social rationality for their very existence, as shown in the first part of this chapter. Once again, Habermas does not simply define individual, or even collective, actions, but analyses capitalism and bureaucracy through systems theory. Therefore, the issue lies at the juxtaposition of social-cultural reproduction and 'sociation' on the one hand, and systems theory on the other. Capitalism is an ever-growing advance in terms of systems theory, with its use of strategic rationality as discussed in the first section.¹⁴

At the core of Habermas' thinking on capitalism are two beliefs. First, modern societies are much more prone to instability and changes of direction than traditional ones. This is true not only of societies but of individual identities, as argued above. Perhaps Habermas is reflecting on the massive dislocation which the Weimar Republic, Nazism and the Third Reich caused in Germany from 1920 to 1945. Secondly, however, the media of money and power can increasingly work to stabilize society in a manner unrelated to (Habermas' word is 'uncoupled' from) the lifeworld. The media of money and power develop in a manner that suits their needs. The needs of human identity, groups and culture are barely considered (if at all). Neither culture, social groups nor personal identity need affect the power of money and bureaucracy, as they operate in an ever more powerful manner through strategic rationality in a global context. Hence the reproduction of society ('sociation') in a purely material sense goes on unchecked. Not only is it unchecked, it also threatens the meaning and freedom which the lifeworld offers as it seeks to reproduce society in the opportunities, but also the unstable risks, of modernity. Habermas' greatest fear is, therefore, that society will become culturally impoverished and unable to challenge the dominance of capitalism, relapsing into a modern barbarism devoid of meaning. Tradition is lost, as traditional societies and their consciousness are left behind, but modernity also fails to deliver its promise. How does Habermas justify these fears, in a global perspective which is now the context of the future of our social life? The questions of human identity and of social justice are paramount for Habermas.

Habermas is aware that Marx attempted an answer a century earlier. There are three shortcomings in Marx, which flow from each other. First, he overemphasized the role of class conflict in employer/employee relationships, centring on labour power, capital and income. There are also several other factors which must be taken into account, which Marx ignored. First, within the economic system, there is the role of the consumer, much emphasized by English social ethicists such as R. H. Preston.¹⁵ Secondly, there is the administrative system, where the private sphere of the employee and consumer gives way to the public sphere. In this arena, individuals become clients of the Welfare State, paying taxes and receiving the benefits of organization, sometimes literally in the form of welfare benefits! They also thirdly become citizens, offering loyalty in return for political decisions. The complex of relationships is thus far more sophisticated than Marx allowed, and can be demonstrated in the form of a diagram.¹⁶

Private Sphere	Employee	Gives Labour Power (P) Receives Income (M)	Economic System
	Consumer	Gives Demand (M) Receives Goods (P)	
Public Sphere	Client	Gives Taxes (M) Receives Benefits (P)	Administrative System
	Citizen	Gives Loyalty (P) Receives Decisions (P)	

P refers to power, **M** refers to money.

The second problem in Marx's thought is that of the future. For, if Marx ignored most of the relations replicated in this diagram, he also failed to realize that in a modern, rationalized society there was no possibility of ending the high degree of structural differentiation even if capitalism was abolished. Marx denied that the divisions within work need exist in a communist society. This is fantasy for Habermas. Thirdly, Marx failed to understand how capitalism must be seen in relation to the complex

differentiation of everyday life. Capitalism affects modern societies in different ways, depending on how differentiated they are. As Habermas says, class conflict in Marx is always seen as the destruction of 'a nostalgically conjured, often romanticized past of premodern forms of life'.

Marx is, in his ultimate standpoint, a conservative, looking to the past. So Marx is regarded by Habermas as laying the groundwork over a century ago for analysing the relationship of capitalism and society. Yet it is excessively, and unhelpfully, focused on class relationships within the employer/employee context of industrial life, and it takes as its norm an ideal of a traditional, pre-modern world which was passing away, even as he wrote. Although Habermas does not make the comparison, for a theologian the parallels with the social conservatism of Martin Luther is striking. Luther offered a revolutionary re-appraisal of vocation in daily life (German: *Beruff*) which respected the autonomy of the ordinary Christian apart from the church, yet he still thought of daily life in unchanging, medieval terms.¹⁷

Habermas speaks of a 'colonization' of the life world by economic and administrative systems. He thus believes that strategic rationality increasingly dominates the thinking of individuals and groups as employee, client and citizen. Habermas sees that advanced capitalist societies are increasingly threatened with a loss of meaning or value, seeking to find a justification for their own morality. It is in the spheres of social life in which knowledge is passed on, social norms are formed between groups and individuals, and responsible people are formed that the problem lies. Capitalism offers rewards to individuals through their roles as private consumer and public client of the Welfare State. However, human identity and social cohesion are weakened by the power of the market.

Habermas speaks of the loss of meaning and of freedom as the issues which concern him here. Capitalism operates in a fragmented universe of consciousness, for, although more and more information is shared, it cannot be put together in a proper way. He believes that rationalization has stripped away the power of metaphysical or religious ideas ('religion as the

opium of the people' in Marx's well-known phrase), so that human beings now live in a 'definitely disencharmed culture' in which such beliefs (or ideologies) no longer can sustain their power to convince. Although many people still believe them, in the long term he sees a culture which is not integrated by metaphysical and religious beliefs. This is something which he welcomes. However, these ideologies are replaced by an equivalent force, which is the splitting off of expert cultures. Metaphysical beliefs worked positively by providing an interpretive understanding of social life, even if they were pre-modern and invalid beliefs. Today there is a negative function, as fragmented consciousness is unable to make use of the culture of modernity. What does Habermas refer to? He does not give many instances, but White (as a commentator on *The Theory of Communicative Action*) suggests the complexity of science and technology; the removal of art from everyday comprehension; and the professionalization of legal matters, or the use of 'experts' to decide a growing number of situations. White regrets the failure of Habermas to sketch out more fully the problems which are given by this analysis. There are two questions which remain acute. First, there is a failure to take further the claim that insulated, expert cultures and fragmented consciousness are 'functional' for advanced capitalism. What social processes promote these two phenomena, and how are they interrelated? What is the role of experts within the class structure, and how do they see the question of social ethics in giving an order to the activities of large corporations or government? We will return to this theme later, but it is noticeable that Habermas identifies the issue without taking it much further.¹⁸

There is also the question of where this discussion leaves Habermas' earlier, and substantial, work *Legitimation Crisis*.¹⁹ This study, translated into English in 1975, shaped a great deal of reflection on industrial society. Habermas changed his mind dramatically in the 1980s, but the argument of the original work is still worth spelling out. Classical bourgeois ideology was seen as being distorted by the inexorable pressures of advanced capitalism. As this ideology gradually fell apart, and capitalism

failed to replace it with a new ideology, Habermas foresaw a massive crisis in legitimizing capitalism. There would then be a contrast between the values of communicative action, which spoke of open discussion, democracy and social inclusion, and the structured society of advanced capitalism, with its commitment to ever greater production and wealth. He now feels that such a development is rendered unlikely, due to the way in which expert cultures exist apart from society, leading to greater fragmentation of social thought.

Legitimation Crisis failed to see that even if disequilibrium in the workings of capitalism and politics is related to the workings of the lifeworld, yet the two can continue to interact indefinitely. Where Habermas has developed his thought is in analysing what sort of problems can now arise. This is best described in terms of a diagram (see below). It describes both how the lifeworld reproduces itself structurally, but also how capitalism and the state cause the social disintegration which is so much a feature of contemporary discussion.²⁰

	Culture	Society	Personality
Cultural Reproduction	Valid Knowledge	Legitimation	Educational Goals
Social Integration	Obligations	Legitimately Ordered Relationships	Social Memberships
Socialization	Interpretative Accomplishments	Motivation	Personal Identity

The theory works through the three aspects of the lifeworld, which are culture, society and personality. These are what structure the lifeworld, and give it its shapes. However, each one of these interacts with each other. This is not a static process, for the lifeworld is continually reproducing itself: what Habermas calls symbolic reproduction or sociation. As culture interacts with itself, and produces new ideas, theories and knowledge, by the process of cultural reproduction, there arises