

Rationality, Language, and Peace

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合理性、言語、平和

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Abstract :

Michel Foucault, a postmodernist philosopher, argued that rationality, our only reliable and objective faculty, is tainted with power and used as a tool for human domination and coercion. Jürgen Habermas, on the other hand, made a distinction between two types of rationality, instrumental and communicative. He conceded to Foucault that instrumental rationality is used for coercion. Communicative rationality, however, is a force for good, specifically for preventing as well as resolving human conflict or achieving a true and everlasting peace. At the heart of this theory is free and fair communication as he called 'speech act'. In order to create a just society, it is necessary to have an open and honest communication.

要旨：ポストモダンの哲学者、ミシェル・フーコーは、我々が持つ能力において唯一確かで客観的な能力である合理性について、権力によって汚され、人間による支配と抑圧の道具に用いられていると論じる。一方ユルゲン・ハーバーマスは、合理性を道具的合理性とコミュニケーション的合理性の二種類に区別する。フーコーに対し、道具的合理性は抑圧に利用されていると認めながらも、コミュニケーション的合理性は善なる力であり、特に、人間の対立を防ぐだけでなく解決する力、あるいは真の平和、恒久的平和を達成する力であるとする。この論理の中心にあるのは、自由で公平なコミュニケーションであり、ハーバーマスはこれを「言語行為」と呼ぶ。公正な社会を実現するには、オープンで率直なコミュニケーションが必要とされる。

Key words : Rationality, Language and Peace

Introduction

How should one account for the so-called selfish behaviour of bankers and financial specialists amid the 2008 global economic crisis? Some argue greed is to blame for the risks they took in order to maximise their own financial gains. Others, on the other hand, justified their action as mere rational decisions, to say that anyone in their position would do exactly the same. This rationality according to many is to blame for much of what is wrong with the current global problems. It has become the instrument of greed and personal gains amid the hardship for a large segment of society. Michel Foucault argued that modern science, the product of rationality, has become a tool for exploitation

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and domination of individuals in the hands of governments and corporations. Some economists, on the other hand, argue that utilising science and technology are the driving force for human prosperity. This unresolved dispute leads to a conclusion that in a postmodern world deriving normative standards is problematic. Reaching consensus on a common understanding of good life, therefore, is no longer plausible.

In order to overcome the impasse of relativism, Habermas offers a radical approach to the notion of rationality. He divides rationality into two distinct types: *instrumental* and *communicative*. He agrees that the former is strategic, providing the individuals in position of power and wealth to use it in order to advance their own interest and deprive others. Communicative rationality, however, is a tool for building consensus and emancipating humans because of its egalitarian root, i.e. language. All individuals are equally capable of utilising communicative rationality through dialectically-charged and well-reasoned arguments. Communicative rationality, therefore, provides a solid framework for creating a lasting peace through rational and honest argumentation while also enabling individuals to effectively participate in society through their linguistic capability.

Rationality : From Late Renaissance to 20th Century

Before getting to Foucault's charge against rationality, it is imperative to sketch the philosophical history of rationality from late Renaissance in Europe to the 20th century to truly understand where he comes from. In the 18th century Europe, after Galileo-Copernicus's scientific revolution, started what is now called the Enlightenment era or the age of reason as opposed to dogmas and superstitions. Thinkers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith and others welcomed rationality as a liberating force. Kant, for instance, argued that rationality-powered Enlightenment was the stage of human maturity. For him reason not only gave humanity science and technology but also justice and fairness, because through reason one understood and agreed to a moral system that treated everyone equally. Economists such as Adam Smith too hailed the new mode of economic production as a source of freedom. The 'invisible hand' of the market, he argued, would benefit all as it allowed a new arena for competition and specialisation in which individuals as well as nations could specialise in producing and selling one or few products which they could produce in the most efficient and cheapest way (Smith 1976 [1776]: 49). Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries rationality was championed as a true source of human emancipation from the constraints of church as well as nature.

By the 19th century, however, this optimism was challenged, first, by the romantics (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe and Victor Hugo to name a few) who found reason-based industrialisation as a destructive force against nature. Later, Dostoevsky (1860s) went further and questioned rational, yet the godless, modernity as a project doomed to fail because it destroyed the moral power of god and faith, making individuals perceive themselves as their own moral arbiter. Through rationalism personal success replaced the moral benchmark that was created by religion and faith, therefore paving the way for self-referentialism. In his popular novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866) Dostoevsky's protagonist, Raskolnikov, murders a pawn broker and steals her money claiming that he can set his own moral standard in the absence of god. Karl Marx (1840s–80s) argued that capitalism-based modernity dehumanised individuals as it alienated them from their fruits of labour. He argued that modernity hadn't freed humans instead chained the majority for the benefit of very

few, those with capital.

Rationality, then, was considered, not as an emancipatory force, as Enlightenment philosophers had advocated, but as an efficient tool for individuals or groups to achieve their strategic goals in order to succeed in the world through calculated actions, i.e. the exercise of reason. This view also supported the arguments that rationality is either a mechanism for survival or a tool for domination—or that the latter is just a continuation of the first, once survival becomes a non-issue, domination take centre stage. In Darwinian terms rationality is an extension of instinct that plays an important evolutionary function for the survival of the human species. This also explains the development of complex reasoning ability among humans which gives them a greater advantage over other species in their attempt to understand and exploit nature. Some years after Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) Nietzsche went a step further and argued that the *will to survival*, the cornerstone of Darwinian evolutionary for the explanation of diversity in life, was an inadequate account of life in general and human life in particular. He argued that animal species and humans in particular tend to be more opportunistic, therefore have a will to expand and grow, which is a step further from a mere survival. He coined a new term, *will to power* (Nietzsche 1887 : 55). On the basis of this argument rationality plays a major role in making one individual dominant over others. This strategic view of rationality corresponds to the common view that there is something fundamentally selfish about rationality which stands in sharp contrast to reciprocal altruism often associated with rationality in the Enlightenment era.

In the twentieth century Michel Foucault, following Nietzsche, effectively questioned Enlightenment project by arguing that rationality not only did not emancipate but it was the very tool that enslaved humans. He argued governments, institutions, corporations and other bodies of social control utilised rationality in order to tame humans, far from the optimism propagated by the early Enlightenment philosophers who thought rationality was for taming nature and for the freedom of humans. He argued, prior to modernity, power used to be manifested in the form of physical repression in the hands of the king, but in modernity it has become a rational tool for social normalisation in the hands of social and political machineries. This can be illustrated through the works of Franz Kafka (*the Trial, the Castle*), where a bureaucratic world resembles a giant spider web that entangles individuals. As a result rationality is not separate from power-relations that produce normality and abnormality but as an effective instrument it aids that process. In other words, rationality is a tool for disciplining individuals under a particular regime of truth in order that individual fits in the system. This argument goes against a common belief that institutions, especially state institutions, are there to serve the needs of individuals. As a result they are patient and adept to such needs. But Foucault argues that the reverse more correct. Individuals have to adapt in order to fit into the frameworks created by these institutions. According to him, truth itself is manufactured through rationality in the hands of the powerful. “Each society has its *regime of truth*, its general politics of truth, that is, the type discourse which it accepts and makes function as true . . .” (Foucault, *power/knowledge*, 1980 : 131)

Enlightenment according to Foucault has produced and provided the state and its various institutions with the necessary tools and technologies to control and regulate its subjects. Foucault’s studies on the prison and surveillance system gave important insights into how the system uses science and technology, products of rationality, to tame, dominate and *normalise* individuals. Rational-

ity in essence is an instrument of control in the hands of the powerful. This damning accusation was the last nail in the coffin of modernity and its rationality as a force for good. It seemed that relativism had severely damaged the universal core of modernity. Rationality, the universal force that united all cultures and groups, was a force of repression, after all. Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist offers a response. Habermas concedes that power does control one type of rationality, which he calls *instrumental rationality*, therefore agreeing with Foucault in his analysis of instrumental rationality and its employment by the system to control humans. But according to Habermas, Foucault overlooked another type of rationality, which he calls *communicative*. Located in the language it still holds an emancipatory power that early Enlightenment philosophers attributed to reason, a counter-weapon to the tyranny of the instrumental rationality. If instrumental rationality has become dominant within capitalism, communicative rationality holds key to reverse the trend from strategic competition towards a reciprocal cooperation.

Linguistic Turn

Habermas combined Kant's notion of *practical reason* (1788) with Hegelian-Marxist dialectical philosophy to locate a new rationality that aims to liberate individuals from the repression of instrumental rationality, an indictment by Foucault and many other postmodernist philosophers. Kant argued that reason—he made no distinction between the instrumental and communicative reasons—provides a solid basis on which a system of morality can be established and defended. Hegel's dialect philosophy is based on the theory of conflict between *thesis* and *antithesis* and the result of which is *synthesis*. Marx, applying Hegel's dialectics, argued that the only way to liberate the working class in order to create a truly egalitarian system was revolutions meaning physical confrontation against those who owned the means of production i.e. the ruling class. Habermas, however, shifts the focus from physical uprising to linguistic revolution, specifically in the language of deliberation or argumentation, to emancipate individuals and groups.

Buhler's theory of 'language functions' (1934) is also at the heart of Habermas's theory of communicative rationality. Muhler had argued that linguistic expressions consist of relations between the speaker, the world and the hearer. Buhler had looked at the semantic aspect of language, in other words the reasons why the speaker formed sentences i.e. to convey a meaning about the world to the hearer. Habermas, on the other hand, focused on the pragmatic aspect of language in which the hearer judged an utterance based a set of validity claims that transcends the basic meaning of the sentences (Habermas, 1998 : 277). Habermas makes a distinction between the semantics of language and the pragmatics. In the semantic use of language one states 'what is' and 'what is not', therefore it is a simple cognitive process. In the pragmatics, however, one communicates a speech act to a hearer about something with the change or the betterment of things as a goal (Park and Kayatekin 2000, 560–580). A statement that is open to justification on the speaker's part and criticism on the hearer's part.

The focus of semantic language—or 'non-communicative' as Habermas would like to call it—is on grammar and interpretation. In other words it is not dialectical therefore doesn't presuppose change in the way things are in social spheres. It merely reflects the hierarchical structure of the society as it is. The cognitive use of language doesn't presuppose mutual consensus and reciprocal cooperation as an aim. Most scientists use a cognitive type of language in their research since it is

considered more objective and scientific. Marx's famous quote resonates with Habermas's theory : "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways ; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx, 1845). Habermas argues that communicative use of language focuses more on the changing of the world rather than seeing the social realm as static and permanent, the way most economists would see things. This focus of communicative use of language is more on 'what ought to be' through rational deliberation among the participants. It is also a two-way communication, meaning that it presupposes criticism and counter-argumentation as naturally acceptable criteria. If cognitive language takes the establishment for granted, communicative language dynamically seeks change by arguing for new ways to achieve cooperation and consensus through rational arguments. Communicative language is reciprocal that it allows the speaker and hearer equal opportunity to alternate their roles. In other words all participants have equal opportunity to argue their claims and deliberate over those claims.

Communicative Rationality

Habermas divides the social sphere into two distinct and opposing realms : system and life-world. By system he means the deep structures e.g. markets and bureaucracies where individuals have little freedom to change or modify them. Instead they are run by the media of money and power of special interests. In other words *instrumental rationality* is dominant in system. Ordinary people have little knowledge or expertise to have a real say on the structure of system therefore such tasks are left to technocrats, bureaucrats and market specialists. Habermas agrees with Foucault that rational science for the most part has become an instrument for the system in today's world :

The social potential of science is reduced to the power of technical control – its potential for enlightened action is no longer considered. . . . Socially effective theory is no longer directed toward the consciousness of human beings who live together and discuss matters with each other, but to the behaviour of human beings who manipulate. (Habermas 1974, pp.254–5 cited in Wisman 1991, p.116)

However what Foucault overlooks is a different rationality. That rationality lives not in system but in *life-world*. Habermas adopts the notion of life-world from Husserl that consists of a relation between the *intuitive individual skills* and *socially acquired practices* that are shared among all individuals. Unlike the system life-world is a freer social sphere where ordinary individuals have a say in shaping or personalising it. Examples of life-world include such relationships between friends, siblings, teachers-parents and civil societies that are shared among a linguistic community, therefore allowing the speech to flow easily. Here the consensual mode of action has more say than media of power and money. Life-world is also a background to the system because without it the system wouldn't function as smoothly as it does today. It is a sort of lubricant that allows the smooth running of the rigid and intensive social spheres e.g. markets. Another way of looking at the distinction between the system and life world would be to compare social realm to a spider web, system as the totality of the web while the life-world as each square where individuals can move freely. The bottom line is that system prevents individuals who lack power and expertise to change the web or the rules of the game. They can only manoeuvre inside the four walls of each square. In life-world peo-

ple act more out of cooperation and reciprocity rather than being strategic or goal-oriented.

What is important in the life-world is the use of language as a tool for cooperation and constructing as well as deconstructing consensus. Here language takes a centre stage instead of power and money. System is run by money and power, tools of instrumental rationality but life-world functions through *communicative rationality*. This according to Habermas is inherently set up for the emancipation and empowering of all individuals despite their social differences. All individuals possess the power of language therefore it allows everyone to participate. In the system only those in possession of money and power could participate, while in the life-world everyone who possesses the power of language.

Habermas lays out a few underlying principles for a true communicatively-rational speech act to take place. First, nobody capable of argumentation is excluded. In other words everyone is included if he or she has the ability to argue his or her claims or is capable of using communicative language. In business world or under legal as well as political system most people are excluded. For instance in business world consumer groups have become more specialized therefore exclude large portion of the society. The same goes with the government policies. Governments are run by specialists and specialized bodies. Even within a democratic system most people feel powerless when it comes to influencing new policies or changing things for the better. Social exclusion is a major factor dividing a society therefore fueling conflicts. Second, in speech act participants have an equal voice, transcending their social status, gender, race or other social attributes. Most of human conflicts arise from inequality or lack of voice, due to socially-induced disparities. Third, a speech act is free from coercion. In other words the media of power and money should not influence in the procedure of the discourse. Participants cannot coerce others to accept or refute a claim, and the only force that can do that is the force of rational discourse. Fourth, speech act is inherently free from deception. This means participants are free to state their honest claims. No deception of self or others is intended. The only opinion they can express is their true and honest opinion. Authenticity of their opinion is a crucial part of this framework.

The speech act participants, according to Habermas also should have three fundamental goals in mind. First, participants have to make intelligible arguments, so that they are understood by others. This means that manipulative or rhetorical language cannot be considered as a speech act as they are open to various interpretations. Any argument that undermines intelligibility should not be used here. A good example would be the way human babies communicate in order to make their parents understand them. They have no hidden agenda but simply to make others aware of their needs. Habermas argues that if everyone does make themselves understood the consensus-building process will become smoother and more efficient as a result. Political campaigns and commercial advertisements are fundamentally misleading according to Habermas since they inherently aim to cloud people's judgment and they are strategically placed to elaborate the positive side of a party or a product. Understanding, after all, is at the heart of language, not manipulating. The second goal of a speech act is cooperation. Language inherently demands cooperation from its speakers in terms of their agreement in regards to the syntax and semantics of that language. This means that language in fact is, first, a tool for cooperation rather than competition. A third goal for speech is world relation. Participants have to have the intention to communicate a belief on the matter at hand. In other words they should state their opinion in relations to other participants and the external world, not some-

thing so abstract that cannot be understood by others or unrelated to the external world. Stating one's belief that relates to the outside world determines that such belief intends to create a relationship with other participants.

Determining the truth of a claim has become problematic in a post-conventional world, as Dostoevsky stated the problem of self-referential individuals in the absence of universal moral system. Habermas offers four basic rules in regards to the truth of a claim made by a speech act participant. The first rule is that the validity of a claim made during deliberation is solely based on rational argument. Participants have to use rational arguments in order to prove the truth of a claim. This means claims argued on rational arguments are truthfully solid. Habermas claims that "truth and rightness are identified with the rational consensus produced within discourse" (West, 1987[30] : 149). Second, all claims are open to criticism and justification. Pre-determined or sacred claims have no place under this discourse ethics. All participants have the right to challenge or justify any claim. Third, the truth of claims should not be judged solely based on empirical evidence. For instance claims that are not proven on scientific grounds may still be true if it is morally correct, ethically righteous and reasonably authentic. Scientific evidence shouldn't be the benchmark for any moral decision. As such justification may lead the deliberation process to become too specialised therefore inaccessible for ordinary people. A claim, empirically proven is valid as long as the participants are well informed about it. On the other hand if a claim cannot be proven empirically should not be excluded, if it is morally righteous and authentic. Fourth, a hearer is convinced of the truth of a claim only through the force of reason. This is important as appealing to emotions, sometimes, may convince a hearer of certain claims. Emotionally-charged agreement, however, is temporal, whereas a rational argument leads to a more permanent and solid agreement.

Peace can be achieved through various means such as appealing to certain emotions, religion, through force, bribe or incentive. But all of these methods of resolving conflicts have inherent flaws in themselves as they all rest on something that is neither universal nor permanent. In other words, over time emotions wane, bribe or incentive money runs out, force shifts, and religious faith may fade. Hence, a true peace can only be achieved through communicatively-rational agreement. In fact Habermas argues that a rationally-agreed consensus is more dynamic since it is always open to criticism and justification. Also participants are always bound to utilise language in order to fix the problem. Communicative rationality ensures that a peace is always an evolving phenomenon in the same way conflict changes, whereas all other methods of achieving peace rely on a certain element of temporality and certain value system (i.e. a particular religion). Communicative rationality, on the other hand, empowers all participants despite their social status, gender, religious belief, or age. The only tool available to all participants is the power of rational argumentation, and according to Habermas this is inherent in everyday language therefore all possesses such power.

Criticisms

Communicative rationality is not without its criticisms. The main criticism is the very idea that it tries to remedy i.e. inequality. Not all participants have the same linguistic ability ; therefore the process of deliberation would favour the more eloquent speakers. Given that social inequalities exist in society, linguistic inability is a by-product of such disparities, as a result communicative rationality can do little to counter or compensate the problem. However, given that there is a fair and hon-

est deliberation such inequality can have little effect in the way people make their authentic and honest arguments. If ordinary people are given the chance they do not need linguistic eloquence to deliberate on something that is honest and fair. This critique assumes the linguistic inability as a starting point, therefore, is based on a stereotypical assumption that those who hold higher status have better linguistic abilities. Strategically better placed, perhaps, but communicative rationality is the very theory that moves away from such strategy-driven environment. Given the chance anyone can participate within the rules of communicative rationality.

Another criticism is that communicative rationality is Euro-centric. It has evolved from a European philosophical tradition, i.e. Marx and Kant as well as Habermas are all Germans. Also this theory assumes that all individuals utilise rationality (if thought as one entity) as an instrument of personal gain. This may apply to Western cultures more than Eastern philosophical tradition, where socially-speaking, community is given precedent over individuals, and individually-speaking, endurance of and adapting to the rigid system as courageous deeds. First, despite cultural differences all communities around the world possess deliberative language. In other words every language is equipped with deliberation mechanism. Therefore, culture has little to do with communicative rationality. Second communicative rationality as a framework, utilising language of argumentation in order to resolve differences, is a valuable tool in today's globalised world. Even within communitarian cultures, communicative rationality can be a force for the good of all. Reciprocal altruism is at the heart of the theory of communicative rationality. Making individual sacrifices for the benefit of others is not at odds with communicative rationality. What communicative rationality does is to counter the force of selfish power of instrumental rationality that causes deprivation and conflicts.

A third criticism is that certain individuals have no desire to communicate with others therefore communicative rationality is obsolete in such situation. There are some who feel no need to participate in the deliberation on an issue or reach an agreement with others. However, since co-existence is inevitable nobody can avoid communication with others altogether within a community. The force of globalisation has brought cultures and people ever closer, therefore, the need for dialogue and communication is ever more pressing. Cross-cultural communication is becoming more and more prevalent these days. The more honest the discourse between cultures, the easier it is to resolve socio-cultural differences.

Conclusion

Communicative rationality not only shifts the role of language beyond its cognitive use, it also offers an answer to the problem of relativist dilemma, how to reach consensus in a post-conventional society by providing pragmatic steps in reaching consensus through an open, honest and rational discussion. This goes against the conventional wisdom that only specialists i.e. bureaucrats and technocrats are capable of solving difficult social issues. Instead communicative rationality empowers ordinary citizens to utilise their linguistic abilities to counter the process of instrumental-rationality-driven erosion of public participation.

Language education tends to focus on the strategic use of language for participants' gain and often ignores the communicative aspect of language that allows individuals to effectively participate in their communities and societies as responsible citizens. Honest argumentation based on genuine concern can be used as a guiding principle in education. Teaching consensus-building strategies

through communicative language can benefit them, not only on an individual level, but more so on an international level. Unsaid rules do not work in the international arena ; therefore the demand for a vigorous argumentation in the establishment of international rules is fundamental. Within a particular culture tacit or unpronounced rules might be effective but when it comes to inter-cultural conversation, the rationally-argued rules are the more effective ones.

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