

HABERMAS: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

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continuum

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INTRODUCTION

THE PERPLEXITY OF HABERMAS

Jürgen Habermas is difficult to read and often leaves students perplexed. There are three mutually related reasons for this. One reason is that Habermas was trained as a philosopher in the best German tradition, and so he writes as someone who knows the philosophical tradition and who expects his readers to do the same. Apart from philosophy, Habermas draws on sociology, political theory, psychology and other disciplines. The vocabularies and assumptions of these disciplines often make their way into Habermas's own work, thus making it more difficult to read.

Habermas is also difficult to read because he writes in an abstract and conceptual – we might say ‘philosophical’ – style. Among other things, this is due to the fact that Habermas is engaged in grand theorizing, for which he makes use of abstract and conceptual arguments. His theories are theories about society, language, law and democracy, rather than theories about this or that particular social phenomenon.

Finally, Habermas is difficult to read because of the language he writes in. He uses long sentences, packed with theoretical concepts, and so his style is difficult to comprehend for first-time readers. His style is systematic though, and usually his books are well translated from the German. This is especially the case with his later works.

Making sense of Habermas

To illustrate the difficulties in reading and understanding Habermas, take the following quote from Habermas's (1996a, xlii) most

important work in the area of political philosophy, *Between Facts and Norms*:

In the final analysis, private legal subjects cannot come to enjoy equal individual liberties if they do not *themselves*, in the common exercise of their political autonomy, achieve clarity about justified interests and standards. They themselves must agree on the relevant aspects under which equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally.

Although it is taken out of context, first-time – and even second-time – readers are excused for feeling perplexed at reading sentences like these. The quote is from the Preface to *Between Facts and Norms*, and Habermas is trying to explain the main point of the book ('in the final analysis').

The book is about law and democracy, and specifically about what makes law legitimate. That is, the book concerns this question: when can we follow the law out of respect for the law rather than just following it because we fear the reprisals if we break the law? The book – and the quote – speaks to long-standing debates in philosophy and in legal and political theory about equality and freedom. When can we say about citizens that they are free and enjoy this freedom equally? What does it mean to be free? And so on. These are questions addressed by philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant and, today, in the debate between liberals and republicans. If we know this background, the quote makes much better sense.

The quote also exhibits Habermas's abstract style of writing. He uses concepts such as 'legal subject' and 'political autonomy'. Only if we are already well versed in the terminology of legal and political theory will these concepts function as planks we can hold onto. The abstract nature of Habermas's writings, including this quote, can also be attributed to his aim, namely to devise a theory of law and democracy in general. Finally, Habermas's use of long and complex sentences – littered with theoretical concepts – is easily visible in the quote.

Any explication and explanation of Habermas's work will add to, but also take away from, the meaning of Habermas's own words. That applies to this book as well. Any explication and explanation is a bit like a translation; in this book, I will try to translate Habermas's

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language into a more easily accessible language. Things will inevitably get lost, but hopefully this will not outweigh the gain in understanding.

Here, for example, is a translation of the quote above from *Between Facts and Norms*. Habermas here says that the bottom line of his theory of law and democracy is that freedom has two sides. There is freedom from the interference from others (also called negative freedom); this is often expressed as individual rights to free speech, and so on. More generally, the law is what gives me my status as a citizen, including the rights that come with this status. But to be free, I must be able to see myself as not just subject to the law, but also as author of the law (this is what Habermas means by ‘political autonomy’ here). The underlying idea is autonomy, literally self-legislation (auto-nomy). We should give ourselves our own laws, which should not be imposed upon us by the rulers. If we have autonomy, then we have legitimate law; we will act in accordance with the law out of respect for it because we have authored – and authorized – the law ourselves. The law decides how to treat different citizens, sometimes equally (giving them identical rights), sometimes unequally (different rights). In the case of parental leave, for instance, the law may reflect relevant differences between women/mothers and men/fathers. Given the underlying value of autonomy, citizens themselves are the ones to decide what the relevant differences are. If citizens have given themselves their own laws, then we can say about them that they are free, and that they are free each in their way.

This book will try to make sense of Habermas. I will try to make up for the difficulties in reading and understanding Habermas by translating Habermas into a more accessible language and give a systematic account of the main tenets of his work. Although I shall mention some of the criticisms that have been raised against Habermas, the aim of the book is not to find contradictions or oversights in Habermas’s work; rather, this introduction is meant as a friendly reconstruction of Habermas’s work.

To make better sense of Habermas’s writings, I place them against their relevant backgrounds: the philosophical debates and the political contexts into which he intervenes. I shall also explain key concepts and passages in detail. To shed light on more theoretical points, I use his political interventions. For instance, in Chapter 5 on Habermas’s theory of law and democracy, I use his writings on civil disobedience in Germany in the 1980s to explain how Habermas thinks about the

legitimacy of the law. Finally, I make links between different parts of Habermas's work and make comparisons with other thinkers so that the similarities and contrasts with other thinkers cast light on Habermas's own position.

Those readers who want to read more will find ample references to Habermas's own works as well as to further introductions and discussions of his work throughout the book, especially in the 'Further Readings' sections at the end of each chapter and in the bibliography. Hopefully this book is only the first step in reading (about) Habermas.

LIFE AND WORK

Martin Heidegger once said about Aristotle that all we need to know about Aristotle's life for understanding his philosophy was that he was born, worked and died. In short, it is not necessary to know anything about Aristotle's life in order to understand his philosophy. Jürgen Habermas was born in 1929, he has written a number of books, most important of which are *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987a) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1996a).

It would be a mistake to end the introduction to Habermas's life there, however, even if it is a common mistake. In academia, we usually make a distinction between the work and the person and look at the work in isolation from the life of the author. Often philosophy, theory and science are seen as literally disembodied: what matters are the thoughts, the insights and the truths, less who arrived at them and in what context. If they are true, ideas are supposedly universal and ahistorical. So we read books and articles by philosophers and about philosophical issues, but we do not usually study the sex-lives of philosophers. Similarly with Habermas. Very few introductions go beyond a brief sketch of Habermas's life, and Habermas himself only briefly touches upon his autobiography in interviews.¹

Although I shall not make a great deal of Habermas's biography, one of the assumptions of this book is that biography matters. This is so first of all for pedagogical reasons: it is easier to make sense of Habermas's work if we relate it to his life and to the philosophical and political context in which he is writing. But there is a more principled reason for highlighting Habermas's biography, namely that nothing is not influenced by its context. Habermas's work must be understood against different background contexts: philosophical

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debates, political debates in Germany since World War II – and his life story. Thus, I shall introduce some biographical information in this brief introduction to his life and work, and I will refer to it in later chapters when relevant.

It is important not to reduce Habermas's work to his biography though. I do not want to give the impression that we can explain what Habermas writes simply by pointing to the personal, philosophical and political contexts of his writings. This would suggest a strong causal determination of the work by the context, as if the work was already written before Habermas had set pen to paper. Rather, making sense of Habermas's work by putting it into context is always retrospective and proceeds in the clear light of hindsight. Any context is an open context. It presents certain possibilities to us as agents, and – according to how we interpret them – we pursue some of these rather than others, and in turn we influence the context.

What are, then, the facts about Habermas? He was born in 1929 and grew up in the small town of Gummersbach near Cologne. He grew up in a bourgeois, middle-class family, and he characterizes the political climate at home as 'a middle class conformity to a political environment with which one did not completely identify, but which one also did not criticize' (in Horster and van Reijen 1992, 77). His childhood and adolescence were relatively sheltered from the events during Nazism and World War II. Like other children of his age, Habermas joined the Hitler Jugend towards the end of the war, and he was sent to help at the western line of defence.

Habermas was born with a cleft palate ('hare lip'), which makes him difficult to understand when he speaks. In a recent essay, he addresses this for the first time. At home, his family could understand him, but he had difficulties when going to school. In the essay, Habermas (2008, 15) writes that this childhood experience could have inspired his communicative approach to society and morality: 'Failures of communication direct our attention to an otherwise unobtrusive intermediary world of symbols that cannot be grasped like physical objects' (ibid.). The thesis is that Habermas's problem with communicating has led him to consider what he calls 'the power of language to forge a community' (ibid.). For Habermas, language and communication take centre stage, and he arrives at his theories of discourse ethics and deliberative democracy through a theory of language and communication. One way to express this is to say that language and communication define us as human beings. We are

homo communicatus, and this – rather than *homo economicus* or *laborans* – is what distinguishes us as human beings.

Habermas mentions another related childhood experience: an operation he had immediately after being born. He writes that this experience ‘may well have awakened the feelings of dependence and vulnerability and the sense of the relevance of our interactions *with others*’ (ibid., 13). I am not interested in whether or not this was really the case. Rather, what is interesting is the link Habermas makes between this and what is a leitmotif of his work: every individual is a social being. We are born into a social environment, we become what we are through social exchanges, and so on. In short, we are *homo socius*. In Habermas’s work, this is expressed in the emphasis on intersubjectivity. What is important is what happens among subjects – hence also the emphasis on language and communication.

So much for Habermas’s childhood. After the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945, Habermas realized the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust. He says:

[I]t was the events of the year 1945 that set my political motives. At that time my personal life rhythm and the great historical events of the time coincided. There were reports on the radio about the Nuremberg trials, and in the movie theaters they showed the first documentary films, the films about the concentration camps that we are seeing again today. I am sure that out of these experiences, motivations developed that determined the further course of my thinking. (in Horster and van Reijen 1992, 77f.)

For Habermas, defeat became liberation. He came to see liberal democracy – as found in France or the United States – as an achievement in itself. In this, he distinguished himself from those who associated liberal democracy with the instability and frailty of the Weimar Republic. It also distinguished him from a later generation that came of age in the 1960s and took liberal democracy to be merely the mask of capitalist exploitation.

However, the immediate post-World War II period also brought disappointments for Habermas. On the political front, the disappointment was the lack of a clear break with the Nazi past. This was evident, for instance, in the continuity in the elites in the universities, in politics and in many other areas of German society.

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During those years, Habermas studied philosophy first at Göttingen, then at Zurich and finally at Bonn. He read German philosophy, but also the neo-Marxist Georg Lukács and the early Karl Marx. In 1954, he finished his PhD thesis on the philosophy of the German idealist Friedrich Schelling. During these years, Habermas was also a vivid reader of Heidegger. However, here too he became disappointed.

The disappointment was not with Heidegger's philosophy, but with the fact that Heidegger was silent about his collaboration with the Nazis. The disappointment was not that Heidegger had been wrong, but that he would not own up to his mistake. Heidegger became rector of the University of Freiburg after the Nazis took power in 1933, he joined the Nazi party and in some of his writings he linked his philosophy to central ideas in Nazism. After the war, Heidegger did what many other Germans did too: nothing. He simply kept quiet. Although Habermas still thinks of Heidegger as one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, Heidegger's silence gave birth to a suspicion about Heidegger's philosophy. Habermas's disappointment with Heidegger let him to recognize the interdependence between an author's philosophy and his or her politics. In Heidegger's philosophy, Habermas found a basis for Heidegger's political support for Nazism. Since then, Habermas has insisted that philosophy is always also political and must be so. Ideally, philosophy should be critical and should support an emancipatory politics. Later, Habermas charged post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida with leaving the door open for conservative forces because their approaches allegedly lacked critical foundations (Habermas 1987c; see also Kelly 1994; Thomassen 2006).

During the 1950s, Habermas became interested in political culture and the role of the media, among other things as a result of his disappointments with German political culture after Nazism and the Holocaust. After finishing his PhD in 1954, Habermas worked as a journalist. From 1956 to 1959, he worked as a research assistant for the philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno at the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt University. Together with Max Horkheimer, Adorno was one of the founders of the Institute in the 1920s. They belong to the first generation of what later became known as the Frankfurt School. Habermas would eventually become identified as the second generation of Frankfurt School theorists.

As Jews and leftists, Adorno and Horkheimer fled Germany in 1933 when the Nazis took power, but they returned to Frankfurt after the war and became influential in German intellectual life. In Frankfurt, Habermas was exposed to sociological theory (Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and others) as well as earlier Critical Theorists such as Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse and Walter Benjamin. However, Adorno did not accept Habermas's habilitation thesis, so Habermas moved to Marburg University to work with the historian Wolfgang Abendroth. At this time, Habermas was involved in two book projects, both of which examined political culture and the state of the public sphere in Germany.

First, together with other researchers, he examined the political culture of students in German universities (Habermas et al. 1961). Later, towards the end of the 1960s, Habermas became embroiled in debates about the 1967–68 student protests.

Second, in 1962, Habermas published his habilitation thesis *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989a), which I shall return to in Chapter 2. The book became immensely influential in Germany and beyond. Habermas argued that a public sphere emerged from the coffee houses in Paris and London in the 1800s. Although the ideal of a power-free public sphere never really materialized, the ideal was there nonetheless. What gained most tract, however, was Habermas's diagnosis of the contemporary German public sphere. He argued that the public sphere was increasingly dominated by vested monetary interests that reduce politics to a mass democracy where citizens are passive spectators rather than active participants.

In 1962, Habermas took up a position at Heidelberg University, and in 1964 he returned to Frankfurt to succeed Horkheimer as professor of philosophy and sociology. From then on, Habermas would become synonym with the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

During his years at Frankfurt until 1971, Habermas engaged in philosophical debates about the status of critical theory and social science. He criticized both positivists like Karl Popper and hermeneuticists like Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Habermas, both positivism and hermeneutics are incapable of supporting a social science that is critical of contemporary society and can point a way towards an emancipated society. The fruits of this work were published in two books in particular, *Theory and Practice* (1988a) and *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1987b).

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Parallel to this philosophical work, Habermas engaged himself with the student movement in Germany. His writings – including *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989a) – inspired the students, and he spoke out on their behalf. However, it came to a sort of break in 1967. While Habermas supported the students' demands for radical reforms of society and of the universities, he was wary of their tactics. Like the students, Habermas was critical of the political elites, including the Social Democrats, but he thought it premature to declare the students to be the new proletariat and, as such, the new revolutionary class. Instead, he argued, the students had to work on public opinion in order to create alliances with other groups in society, including workers. He criticized the students for what he called their 'actionism'. His point was that action for the sake of action (happenings, and so on) are not particularly effective in changing public opinion. Thus, Habermas's idea is that one must work through the public sphere to convince others and to create a more lasting change of political culture. Habermas eventually became vilified by the students as a defender of the system, and this image has to some extent stuck to him since. The student protests died out, however, although they did have a lasting impact on German culture and society (Habermas 1971, chapters 1–3; 1981, parts I–II).

From 1971 to 1982, Habermas took up a position as director at the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg outside Munich. It was during these years that Habermas developed his theory of language and, on this basis, his theory of communicative action and rationality.

In his inaugural speech at Frankfurt in 1965, Habermas had foreshadowed this turn to language and communication. He wrote: 'What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus' (Habermas 1987b, 314). I shall return to this quote in Chapter 1. Here I just want to draw attention to the constitutive nature of language. What distinguishes us as humans is our use of language. Looking at language and how we use language, Habermas finds that whenever we communicate, we implicitly assume that we can reach a universal and power-free consensus. This is the crux of his universal pragmatics that he developed in a number of writings during the 1970s (Habermas

1998a; 2001a). The idea is quite simply that if language is what defines us, then we must look to our use of language for an account of morality. Whenever we use language, so Habermas, we assume that, under idealized circumstances of the free exchange of reasons, it is possible to reach a universal, unconstrained consensus. Initially, Habermas referred to this as the ‘ideal speech situation’. The outcome is a rational consensus, which we can use as a critical ideal against which to compare any de facto consensus. So, Habermas’s critical theory starts from the analysis of language, and he finds a critical ideal in the way we use language.

At the end of this period, Habermas published the monumental – two volumes, 900 pages – *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987a). In there, he developed a theory of communicative action and rationality. The basic theses are these. First, social action is more than instrumental and strategic action where I try to manipulate the world and other people in order to achieve an end. There is another kind of action which is action oriented towards mutual understanding; this he calls communicative action. Second, and linked to this, there is a kind of rationality that is not a means–ends rationality. This is communicative rationality, which is linked to achieving rational consensus through rational discourse. Rationality is linked to the public use of reason; it is the quality of that reason giving that determines the rationality of the outcome. The argument is much more complex, and I return to it in Chapter 3.

In the late 1970s, and after some years of relative silence, Habermas (1981) again intervened in political debates in Germany. This time the debates were about the terrorism of the *Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF)* and *Berufsverbot*, the ban on communists to occupy certain jobs such as public school teachers. In the 1980s, Habermas too engaged in public debates, this time about civil disobedience, American nuclear missiles on German soil (Habermas 1985), and later about German identity and history and the Holocaust. Common to these debates and to the debates about German reunification in 1989–90 is the question of how Germans should understand themselves and their history. Habermas (1989b; 1997) argued that the Holocaust and the break with Nazism must be central to German political identity. Here there is a clear link to Habermas’s experiences in the post-war period.

Furthermore, he argued, German political identity must be just that: political. This became equally important in debates about

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immigration in the 1990s. What Habermas means is that a modern, pluralist society such as Germany cannot be held together by a substantive identity based on ethnicity, culture and so on (1997). Instead, society must be integrated through a common political culture. Habermas refers to ‘constitutional patriotism’ in this regard. In short, what should bind us together is allegiance to a common political culture expressed in the values and principles of the constitution (1996a, 500).

After *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas developed the theory of communicative action and rationality into a theory of discourse ethics. Put simply, for Habermas, the question ‘what is normatively right?’ cannot be answered by the philosopher, but should be answered through discourses among real people. That is, people should debate under circumstances that are free from inequality, manipulation and so on. The result will be a rational consensus (Habermas 1990).

From the late 1980s onwards, Habermas started developing a theory of politics, law and democracy. This is not to suggest that he was not concerned with politics before, on the contrary. But with *Between Facts and Norms* (1996a), Habermas developed his discourse ethics into a theory of deliberative democracy, which is the subject of Chapter 5. The central idea of deliberative democracy is similar to that of discourse ethics. Those who are subject to (moral or legal) norms should be able to see themselves as also the authors of those norms. In short, we are dealing with autonomy as rational self-legislation. The rationality comes from the fact that decisions are reached through deliberations (or discourses) that are free from domination. Given the emphasis on deliberation, the public sphere is absolutely central. Here we find again the red thread running through Habermas’s writings – the public use of reason – from the public sphere through communicative action and rationality to discourse ethics and then, finally, to deliberative democracy.

In 1994, Habermas retired from Frankfurt, although he remains professor emeritus there. He has by no means stopped working though. He gives numerous lectures around the world every year, and he also continues to publish. He has intervened in public debates about the European Union, 9-11 and the so-called war on terror, Iraq and the new world order, and many other issues (Habermas 2003b; 2006a–b; 2009). For over fifty years, Habermas has been the incarnation of a public intellectual.

His other recent writings have focused on philosophical issues surrounding the status of his theories, but he has also focused attention on more concrete issues. Among the latter is the role of religion in contemporary Western societies (2008, parts II and III). This includes an exchange with Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI (Habermas and Ratzinger 2005). Finally, Habermas has been involved in debates about new gene technologies and human nature, and the implications of these for the autonomy of persons (Habermas 2003b). In Chapter 6, I summarize Habermas's positions on these issues.

Habermas's work spans more than five decades and, for the moment, it shows no sign of abating. If there is one red thread running through it, then it is the idea of the public use of reason, that is, the idea that both philosophy and society are better off relying on the forceless force of the better argument. We find the idea of the public use of reason in Habermas's work on the public sphere, in his theories of language and communication, including the theory of communicative action and rationality, in his discourse ethics and in his theory of deliberative democracy. Whether the emphasis on intersubjectivity, communication and political culture can be traced back to Habermas's experiences as a child and adolescent remains an open question. What remains, however, is a thinker who draws upon a wide variety of sources from a variety of disciplines, brings them together in a theory of language and society, in constant dialogue with other thinkers and with developments in society, and brings them to bear on concrete contemporary issues.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book covers the most important topics in Habermas's work, and the most important aspects of those topics.

Chapter 1 situates Habermas in relation to other critical theorists. Habermas belongs to the second generation of the so-called Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, and I compare and contrast his work to that of the first generation, especially Adorno and Horkheimer. I explain what Habermas takes on board from them, but also what he criticizes in them and how he tries to move beyond the Critical theory of the earlier Frankfurt School. I introduce Habermas's idea of a critical theory of society, its aims and reach, and I explain his critique of scientism and hermeneutics. Central to Habermas's proposal for a critical theory is a turn to what he calls an intersubjectivist

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philosophy, that is, one that takes language and communication as its starting points.

In Chapter 2, I introduce Habermas's writings on the public sphere, especially his seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989a), which was first published in 1962. I also look at criticisms of this book as well as Habermas's partial reformulation of the earlier argument. Anticipating subsequent chapters, I explain the idea of the public use of reason, and how Habermas believes that this will solve a number of problems central to philosophy, morality, politics and law. The emphasis on the public use of reason is linked to the emphasis on language and communication and, later, to the reformulation of autonomy in terms of deliberative democracy.

The Theory of Communicative Action (1984; 1987a) is the focus of Chapter 3. I explain the main ideas of that work and how Habermas arrived at them. In particular, I focus on the notions of communicative action and rationality, and how these are grounded in a theory of the formal pragmatics of language. Also important is the way Habermas links a critical theory of society to language and communication through the account of communicative action and rationality. The critical upshot of *The Theory of Communicative Action* is a distinction between systems and lifeworld and the so-called colonization thesis. The idea is that systems such as the state and the market 'colonize' areas that are not usually integrated through power and money, and this has alienating effects in society. This is Habermas's attempt to update Critical Theory with a more contemporary critique of the bureaucratization and marketization of society.

On the basis of his theory of communicative rationality, Habermas proposed a discourse ethics (or rather, a discourse theory of validity). This is the subject of Chapter 4, which explains Habermas's theory of validity, including the validity of social norms. Habermas understands validity as discursive. What is normatively right is what people arrive at in discourses that are free from inequality, domination, etc., and where only the forceless force of the better argument rules. Habermas argues that it is possible to talk about a kind of objectivity in normative matters, and here he distinguishes himself from, among others, so-called post-modernists. He also argues against teleology and believes that his discourse ethics is a deontological theory where the right enjoys primacy over the good. In this, he distinguishes himself from communitarians who posit the good of the community as a whole as prior to the rights of individuals.

Habermas always engaged in political debates, and he was always attuned to the political implications of his philosophy. Only from the mid-1980s does he address political institutions head-on, however. He does so with a notion of discursive democracy that he refers to as a theory of deliberative democracy and law, which he develops in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996a). There he translates his discourse theory of validity into a theory of deliberative democracy. This is the focus of Chapter 5. The central idea is that law is legitimate insofar as the addressees of the law can see themselves as also the authors of the law. Thus, the central idea is autonomy, or self-legislation, but it must be rational, and this is where deliberation enters into the picture. If everybody possibly affected by a law have had the opportunity to have a say in the deliberations leading up to the law, then we can talk about deliberative autonomy. Rationality and legitimacy are located in communication and discourse, and so in this chapter I return to the public use of reason, which runs like a red thread through Habermas's work.

Chapter 6 examines three issues that have been the focus of Habermas's work since the mid-1990s. The first issue concerns the nation-state. Habermas argues that we must develop supra-national democratic institutions, both at European and world level. The second issue is the role of religion in contemporary societies. Habermas has written about tolerance, secularism and religion, and he argues for what he calls 'post-secularism' where religion is taken seriously as an equal partner in dialogue with reason. The third, and final, issue concerns the challenges raised by new gene technologies to our conception of what it means to be an autonomous human being. Thus, Chapter 6 shows how Habermas puts his theories of communicative action, discourse ethics and deliberative democracy to work on these more specific issues of contemporary relevance.

FURTHER READINGS

Martin Matušítk's (2001) *Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical–Political Profile* places Habermas's philosophy and politics in the context of German culture and society. The interviews in *Autonomy and Solidarity*, edited by Peter Dews, offer a useful introduction to Habermas's work and the way he links his work to contemporary events. Habermas's autobiographical essay (2008, chapter 1) is an interesting, retrospective view on his life and work.