The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory

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Edited by Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff Since its appearance in English translation in 1996, JA1/4rgen Habermas's Between Facts and Norms has become the focus of a productive dialogue between German and Anglo-American legal and political theorists. The present volume contains ten essays that provide an overview of Habermas's political thought since the original appearance of Between Facts and Norms in 1992 and extend his model of deliberative democracy in novel ways to issues untreated in the earlier work. Habermas's theory of democracy has at least three features that set it apart from competing positions. First, it combines a concern with questions of normative justification with an empirical analysis of the social conditions necessary for the realization of democratic institutions. Second, at the heart of his model is the assertion of an internal relationship between liberalism and democracy. On this account, the rights of the individual that are central to liberalism can be guaranteed only within a constitutional framework that at the same time fosters democratic rights of political participation through the public sphere. Finally, Habermas defends a conception of universal human rights that is not only sensitive to cultural differences but also calls for legal and political institutions that facilitate the cultivation of cultural and religious identities within pluralistic societies. These essays demonstrate the extraordinary power of Habermas's theory of democracy through a further engagement with Rawls's political liberalism and through original contributions to current debates over nationalism, multiculturalism, and the viability of supranational political institutions.

The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory Details

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From Reader Review The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory for online ebook

Lixizh says

very good

Philippe-Antoine says

The MIT Press presents *The Inclusion of the Other* as "an overview of Habermas's political thought" that "extend[s] his theory of deliberative democracy in novel ways". Like most of Habermas's books since the publication of his two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), however, the book is more of a hodgepodge of loosely related odds and ends than anything else.

Several of the essays brought together here have been published elsewhere (e.g. Habermas's responses to John Rawls, Dieter Grimm, and Charles Taylor) or are reworked versions of earlier papers ("A Genealogical Analysis of the Cognitive Content of Morality"). And since they were not originally intended to be published together, there is *a lot* of repetition from one essay to the next. Moreover, very few of the essays present material that will be new or informative to readers already familiar with Habermas's discourse theory of morality and deliberative theory of democracy.

The broad lines of Habermas's theory are as follows. The conditions of modernity pose a problem of political legitimation. The public devaluation of traditional religious *ethos* and subsequent proliferation of individual value-orientations means that we can no longer appeal to the substantive contents of comprehensive worldviews to justify political decisions. To use Habermas's terminology, what is required is a postmetaphysical justification of binding decisions. In these conditions, the only common resource to which we can turn is the medium of communicative action — that is, to the linguistic practices that govern action geared toward mutual understanding in everyday lifeworld interaction and that allow for coordination between different social actors.

In everyday communicative action, speakers raise claims to normative rightness that presuppose the background of moral norms and customary practices that make up what Habermas calls "social reality". When one of these background assumptions is problematized, the only way to restore social coordination in an uncoercive manner is to proceed to the reflexive level of communicative action that Habermas calls "discourse" (*Disckurs*). At this level, participants must detach themselves from the everyday certainties of the lifeworld in order to submit the problematized norm to unreserved examination. By exchanging reasons for and against, they seek rationally to motivate each other either to accept the norm in question or to agree on a new norm.

From this, Habermas derives the discourse principles (D), which Habermas describes as an intersubjective or communication-theoretic reinterpretation of Kant's Categorical Imperative: "Only those norms can claim validity that could meet with the acceptance of all concerned in practical discourse." This serves as the basis of both his discourse ethics — which operationalizes (D) under the form of a universalization principe — and his deliberative theory of democracy, which adapts it under the form of a democratic principle: "Only those statutes may claim legitimacy that can meet with the assent of all citizens in a discursive process of legislation that in turn has been legally constituted."

Thus formulated, the democratic principle commands the creation of the medium of law itself. First, it

requires the institutionalization of the argumentative practices that alone can legitimate state decisions. This requires that it put in place a system of rights guaranteeing both the subjective liberties associated with the liberal tradition and the political rights associated with the republican. Second, it requires the creation of a state with the legislative, administrative, and judicial powers capable of deciding upon laws, of putting them into practice, and of enforcing them

On this account, the constitutional state in its entirety is conceived as transforming the communicative power generated by citizen interactions into legally enforceable administrative power. The result is what Habermas calls a variety of "radical democracy": the entire charge of legitimation rests upon the processes of democratic opinion- and will-formation that animate the informal public sphere of citizen interactions, voluntary associations, and mass media. Thus, the health of a democracy can be judged by the degree to which its institutionalized political deliberations are open to the considerations that come to it from such citizen interactions.

A left-leaning — and far more interesting — alternative to John Rawls's thoroughly centrist political liberalism and Robert Nozick's laissez-faire libertarianism, Habermas's discourse theory of democracy deserves far more attention than it has received, and certainly far more than the aforementioned works. Several of the essays collected in this volume, in particular "'Reasonable' versus 'True'" and "Three Normative Models of Democracy" provide good, simplified introductions to some key elements of Habermas's theory, and to that extent, they are worth reading. In order to grasp the theory in all of its complexity, however, the reader would do better to turn to the magnificent if daunting edifice that is *Between Facts and Norms* (1992).

Leonardo says

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