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Habermas and Liberal Naturalism

To some extent, the project of articulating Habermas's complex understanding of the relationship between philosophy and the natural sciences as well as his critique of scientism may be construed as problematic from the very outset. Firstly, from a purely technical perspective, in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas does not appear to make any ostensible references to the burgeoning tradition of liberal naturalism. Secondly, from a purely philosophical perspective, Habermas's transcendental pragmatist critique of scientism does not *in and of itself* commit him to liberal naturalism, so much so that Habermas himself may even resist being labelled any kind of 'naturalist' even if he tries to fuse Kant's transcendentalism and Darwin's naturalism. In these respects, rather than structuring this chapter around the question, 'Is Habermas a liberal naturalist?', I would like to pose and answer the following alternative question, 'In what ways can liberal naturalism benefit from Habermasian resources?'. While *Knowledge and Human Interests* is the principal site of Habermas's reflections on philosophy and the *Naturwissenschaften*, I also want to draw readers to how important aspects of his mature critical social theory play significant roles in the liberal vs. scientific naturalism debate.

I

Vivat Imperator Scientia Naturalis

For Occidental cultural theory, the age of modernity is the totalising prioritisation of and confidence in the normative authority of reason. Quoting Habermas, the guiding principle of the Enlightenment was the expectation that the emancipation of natural and normative sciences from religion "would promote only the control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings".¹ Given the macrosociological dimension and scope of the project of the Enlightenment, Weber famously argued that modernity involves the interrelation of *rationalisation* and *disenchantment*. The process of rationalisation involves humanity's attempt to make all features of reality intelligible, so much so that the cognitive desire to make sense of things invariably morphs into the "desire to increase mastery, control, over every aspect of the world".² However, the general process of the rationalisation of the world crucially involves increased exercises of discursive sub-processes: developments in 'substantive rationality' involve rendering values traditionally associated with religious forms of life and value-systems

¹ Habermas 2002: 9.

² Breen 2013: 9.

more coherent; and developments in ‘formal rationality’ involve methods and practices that increasingly codify and quantify attitudes and institutions.

The relationship between drives for substantive rational action and drives for instrumental/formal action invariably causes friction *within* reason, to the extent that the question for modernity would not be whether or not reason will be sovereign but *which pattern of rationality and action would emerge hegemonic in the general process of rationalisation*. For Weber, the task of sociology is to explore why instrumental/formal rationality has come to dominate in modern Western society, and why, by consequence, has nature been disenchanted (*entzaubert*) and culture faces “extirpation”.³ Construing modernity as eventually culminating in a state of “mechanised petrification”⁴ in an “iron cage” (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*),⁵ Weber articulates the connection between rationalisation and disenchantment in terms of a tragic dialectic of religion. While, of course, providing a complete explication of Weber’s social anthropology of religion goes far beyond the scope of this chapter, I think it would be helpful to briefly sketch his central narrative: in an effort to satisfy non-biological means of self-preservation, pre-historical human beings developed fetishist religious practices. Primitive societies often tended to imbue ordinary objects with magical significance under a form of polytheism, so much so that *nature was enchanted as the living embodiment of divine beings*. However, over the course of the development of societal psychology and the ways in which human societies considered how to satisfy their *cura animarum*, the fetishist framework gradually gave way to intellectualised monotheistic religions underpinning the Abrahamic faiths. “Judaism, Christianity and Islam ... sought to render suffering comprehensible”.⁶ This turn to rationalisation, as Weber put it, was motivated by showing that the world “in its totality is, could, and should somehow be a meaningful “cosmos””.⁷

With Christianity at least, the kind of systematisation of doctrine and the challenges raised to Catholicism by the Protestant movement during and since the Reformation establish the ironic grounds for the progressive secularisation of modern Western society. Although the rise of institutionalised religion and its correlative theological schema led to the abandonment of primitive fetishism, the disenchantment of the world is effected by the power of Protestantism and Puritanism, which did not simply wish to reject papal authority and revise

³ Karlberg 1980: 1176.

⁴ PE: 124.

⁵ PE: 123.

‘Iron cage’ is Talcott Parsons’s translation of Weber’s term. However, arguments have been made that ‘a shell as hard as steel’ is in fact a better rendering. For further on this debate, see Baehr (2001) and Chalcraft (1994).

⁶ Breen 2013: 10-11.

⁷ SPWR: 281.

Christian theology by rejecting divine mysteries. These movements also wished to construe religion as *allied* with formal reason and not merely residing within the bounds of sense: explanation-bearers were no longer an esoteric group of priests endowed with magical capacities for disclosing “mysterious incalculable forces”.⁸ If advances in physics and chemistry since the Renaissance had not already proclaimed scientific nomothetic rationalisation as *imperator*, the revolutionary impact of Darwinism consolidated natural science’s suzerainty through guaranteeing the disenchantment of the world by the construal of humanity in purely naturalistic vocabulary.

II

Habermas’s Transcendental Pragmatism in ‘Knowledge and Human Interests’

Habermas begins *Knowledge and Human Interests* with an excoriation of scientism, understood as the widespread neo-positivist trend across the Western world making philosophy the vassal of the *Naturwissenschaften*:

Science can only be comprehended epistemologically, which means as one category of possible knowledge, as long as knowledge is not equated either effusively with the absolute knowledge of a great philosophy or blindly with the scientific self-understanding of the actual business of research. Both equations close off the dimension in which an epistemological concept of science can be formed—in which therefore, science can be made comprehensible within the horizon of possible knowledge and legitimated. Compared with “absolute knowledge” scientific knowledge necessarily appears narrow-minded, and the only task remaining is then the critical dissolution of the boundaries of positive knowledge. On the other hand, where a concept of knowing that transcends the prevailing sciences is totally lacking, the critique of knowledge resigns itself to the function of a philosophy of science, which restricts itself to the pseudo-normative regulation of established research. Philosophy’s position with regard to science, which at one time could be designated with the name “theory of knowledge,” has been undermined by the movement of philosophical thought itself. Philosophy was dislodged from this position by philosophy. From then on, the theory of knowledge had to be replaced by a methodology emptied of philosophical thought. For the philosophy of science that has emerged since the mid-nineteenth century as the heir of the theory of knowledge is methodology pursued with a scientific self-understanding of the sciences. “Scientism” means science’s belief in itself: that is, the conviction that we can no longer understand science as one form of possible knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science. (K&HI: 4)

Rather than understand Habermas as a *reactionary* to the development of natural science over the years, to the extent that one interprets Habermas as *dismissive* of natural science as a source of knowledge and authority of justification, I think one should read this passage in the

⁸ SV: 139.

following way: as revealing nuanced Kantian (and Hegelian) concerns about philosophy's self-inflicted self-renunciation.

For Habermas, the central lesson of Kantianism is that philosophy is a *second-order* critical discipline. *Contra* positivism and scientism, philosophical engagement with the natural sciences does not amount to adopting the methodologies and basic results of natural scientific inquiry. Or, to put this another way, the legacy of Kantian critique is not in making metaphysics the vassal of physics. Rather, under Kantianism, the task of philosophical science is to engage in the *positive* practice of critique, namely explicating the logic and conditions of different kinds of inquiries. Crucially, this “quasi-transcendental”⁹ notion of critique involves disclosing the *historically*-evolving presuppositions of first-order disciplines, thereby revealing the necessary conditions for the possibility of forms of knowledge. As Habermas writes:

These systems of reference have a transcendental function, but they determine the architectonic of processes of inquiry and not that of transcendental consciousness as such. Unlike transcendental logic, the logic of the natural and cultural sciences deals not with the properties of pure theoretical reason but with methodological rules for the organisation of processes of inquiry. These rules no longer possess the status of pure transcendental rules. They have a transcendental function but arise from actual structures of human life: from structures of a species that reproduces its life both through learning processes of socially organised labour and processes of mutual understanding in interactions mediated in ordinary language. These basic conditions of life have an interest structure. (K&HI: 194)

Central to Habermas's argument is his rejection of a purely representational model of inquiry – i.e. a view of inquiry as disinterested from cultural or historical situatedness. In addition to claiming that a ‘view from nowhere’ is incoherent given how human cognition is both embedded and embodied through-and-through, Habermas goes further by claiming that the transcendental rules governing the practices of inquiry are born out of *our evolutionary tale*, specifically through the development of our anthropologico-epistemic *interests*:

Since it is posited with the behavioural system of instrumental action, this framework cannot be conceived as the determination of a transcendental consciousness as such. Rather, it is dependent on the organic constitution of a species that is compelled to reproduce its life through purposive-rational action. (K&HI: 133-134)

The concept of “interest” is not meant to imply a naturalistic reduction of transcendental-logical properties to empirical ones. Indeed, it is meant to prevent just such a reduction. Knowledge-constitutive interests mediate the natural history of the human species with the logic of its self-formative process (which at this point I can only assert and not

⁹ K&HI: 194.

demonstrate). But they cannot be employed to reduce this logic to any sort of natural basis. I term *interests* the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely *work and interaction* ... Knowledge-constitutive interests can be defined exclusively as a function of the objectively constituted problems of the preservation of life that have been solved by the cultural form of existence as such. (K&HI: 196)

These interests both govern and are receptive to our cognitive architecture, psychological orientations, and linguistic practices: different epistemic practices, vocabularies, and forms of action have developed out of different logics of inquiry, *because each particular practice works under a particular cognitive interest*: (i) an interest in instrumental control; an interest in communication; and (iii) an interest in emancipation.¹⁰

Instrumental action involves using reason for the sake of technical achievement, specifically achieving some particular goal of control. In this respect, instrumental reason aims at controlling/dominating the objects of one's concern. The natural sciences are instantiations of instrumental reason, insofar as they are typified by systematic practices of nomothetic reason aimed at subsuming phenomena under general laws. Physics, chemistry, and biology are bound together by exemplifying the way in which "the technical cognitive interest defines the framework of the empirical-analytic sciences".¹¹ As Michael Friedman writes, "... the possibility of reducing all of the appearances of nature to this basis, in accordance with the law of causality, is then 'the condition for the complete conceptualisability of nature'".¹²

However, by contrast, communicative action is not modelled on any kind of subject-object relationship and means-end framework. This is because communicative action is the variety of activity constituted by communicative interests, since the function of communicative action is to *interpret* and to bring about the intelligibility of normative concepts such as justice and goodness under *public* reason. Communicative action, therefore, is directed at ends-in-themselves and to realising an intersubjective relationship between agents as much as possible. In this respect, the *human* sciences – particularly hermeneutic and historical disciplines defined *eo ipso* by their concern for *how best to interpret events and intentional agents* – exemplify

¹⁰ Viz: "There are three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated. This demonstration is the task of a critical philosophy of science that escapes the snares of positivism. The approach of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporates a technical cognitive interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a practical one; and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the emancipatory cognitive interest". (K&HI: 308).

¹¹ K&HI: 178.

¹² Friedman 2013: 82.

pragmatic interests. Understood in such a way, Habermas can find kinship here with another Kantian pragmatist, namely Wilfrid Sellars:

Now, the fundamental principles of a community, which define what is ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘done’ or ‘not done’, are the most general common *intentions* of that community with respect to the behaviour of the members of the group. It follows that to recognise a featherless biped or dolphin or Martian as a person requires that one think thoughts of the form ‘We (one) shall do (or abstain from doing) actions of kind A in circumstances of kind C’. To think thoughts of this kind is not to *classify* or *explain*, but to *rehearse an intention*.¹³

Before moving on to the final human interest that Habermas details, namely *emancipatory* interest, I would like to establish what I take to be the first of two substantive connections between Habermas’s transcendental pragmatism and liberal naturalism. Knowledge-constitutive interests are part of a *wissenschaftlich* understanding of humanity, since they are the forms in which human *cultural life* is produced and reproduced – especially in modern society. However, there is nothing reducible or eliminable about knowledge-constitutive interests. In other words, human interests – what one may legitimately deem the steering drives of *culture* – are not the kind of phenomena that are candidates for re-description and translation into the vocabulary and grammar of the natural sciences. Crucially, recognising the irreducibility and ineliminability of knowledge-constitutive interests does not mean there is any ineffable mysteriousness or queerness to these ‘quasi-transcendental’ phenomena.

Much in the same way that John McDowell’s variety of liberal naturalism has argued there is no inherently *anathematic* connection between ‘first nature’ (natural scientific discourse) and ‘second nature’ (development of moral, socio-cultural, aesthetic sensibilities),¹⁴ Habermas should not be read as claiming that there is no room for thinking the heterogeneity of knowledge-constitutive interests is in square conflict with the claims of natural science. Insisting that knowledge-constitutive interests are conceptually irreducible to purely causal and descriptive kinds in no way disqualifies oneself from being scientific or from regarding the natural sciences as authoritative ways of making sense of things. This reveals Habermas’s nuanced critique of scientism in a way that is of particular use to liberal naturalism:

Because science must secure the objectivity of its statements against the pressure and seduction of particular interests, it deludes itself about the fundamental interests to which it owes not only its impetus but the *conditions of possible objectivity themselves*. (K&HI: 311)

¹³ Sellars 1991: 39-40.

¹⁴ Viz. McDowell (1997).

Scientism, construed as the tendency to establish instrumental technical interests as hegemonic over communicative interests, necessarily *presupposes* the grammar of the manifest image in an effort to excise it in favour of the *pure* scientific image. As Robert Hanna writes, “the basic natural sciences, as rational human cognitive achievements, and also natural scientists themselves, as fully engaging in pre-exact-scientific and trans-exact-scientific human rationality at every moment of their conscious and self-conscious lives, are necessarily irreducible to the physical facts known by those very sciences and those very scientists”.¹⁵

To those more rehearsed in critical theory terminology, Habermas’s transcendental claim about the logic of inquiry amounts to an *immanent critique* of scientism. On this subject, I previously alluded to Habermas’s rejection of a purely third-personal conception of inquiry, disinterested from cultural or historical situatedness. One can now see the full force of Habermas’s critique here: the harm of a purely third-personal conception of inquiry involves a radical form of dehumanisation. Our default self-conception as *geistig* is erased and replaced with a hermeneutically dissonant view of human beings as *unmittelbar natürliche*. For, what distinguishes *Geist* from mere *Natur* is self-consciousness and the ways in which *intentional* and *communicative* action renders human beings as thoroughgoingly active in the world. Such a position would be illustrative of Kant’s notion of *pragmatic anthropology*, which crucially draws a distinction between *die Welt kennen* and *Welt haben*: “the expressions “to *know* the world” and “to *have* the world” are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it”.¹⁶ Trying to establish a ‘view from nowhere’ as the *desideratum* of inquiry goes against the very logic of inquiry, a logic which reveals just how inquiry is mediated through-and-through by a plurality of *interests*.

III

The Emancipatory Interest: Liberal Naturalism and Critical Theory

The second substantive connection between liberal naturalism and Habermas can be explicated by looking at some detail at the third and final cognitive interest: the emancipatory interest. For Habermas, the emancipatory interest “aims at the pursuit of reflection”,¹⁷ conceived as the paradigmatic act of *autonomy*:

¹⁵ Hanna 2014: 756.

¹⁶ APPV: [120], 4.

¹⁷ K&HI: 198.

I mean the experience of the emancipatory power of reflection, which the subject experiences in itself to the extent that it becomes transparent to itself in the history of its genesis. The experience of reflection articulates itself substantially in the concept of a self-formative process. Methodically it leads to a standpoint from which the identity of reason with the will to reason freely arises. In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy ... The emancipatory cognitive interest in the undoing of repression and false consciousness corresponds to this self-reflective learning process. (K&HI: 197, 347)

Though Habermas broke away from the first-generation critical social theory of Adorno and Horkheimer, this passage helps indicate the extent to which Habermas retains a significant commitment to the Frankfurt School's Western Marxism. Like Horkheimer before him, Habermas insists that social inquiry ought to combine rather than separate the poles of philosophy and the social sciences to explain and transform *all the oppressive, repressive, and marginalising circumstances that enslave human beings*. The critical social theorist is, therefore, a "phenomenologically oriented sociologist",¹⁸ tasked with determining and revealing processes of social development that can be viewed as misdevelopments, disorders or 'social pathologies'. With this in mind, I now would like to develop the ways in which important features of Habermas nuanced Marxist-Meadian-Deweyan critical social theory can be deployed in conjunction with his transcendental pragmatism in *Knowledge and Human Interests* in relation to liberal naturalism's *critical* metaphysical orientation.

For Habermas, social conflict in late modernity is rooted in the struggle to resist the colonisation of the lifeworld by systems. Conflict is not now *principally* resulting from dissatisfaction with the material distribution of goods and services in a given society, but rather resulting from dissatisfaction with the encroachment by systems on the lifeworld's territory. Between *The Theory of Communicative Action* and *Between Facts and Norms*, the language Habermas uses to articulate how the lifeworld can and should resist the pathological effects of juridification is primarily *defensive*. As he writes:

The goal is no longer to supersede an economic system having a capitalist life of its own and a system of domination having a bureaucratic life of its own but to erect a democratic dam against the colonising encroachment of system imperatives on areas of the lifeworld¹⁹ ... it is a question of building up restraining barriers for the exchanges between system and lifeworld.²⁰

¹⁸ T&CT: 192.

¹⁹ TCA II: 364.

²⁰ Habermas 1992: 444.

As I understand Habermas, the way in which one can effect *resistance* to the system's colonial oppression is to act as a border-patroller and to maintain a protective barrier. Crucially, though, Habermas appears to be committed to the claim that instrumental capitalist structures must be accepted as having primacy over communicative ones and that the best one can hope for is to maintain the integrity of the democratic dam.

By analogy, the way in which one can effect resistance to scientism's colonisation of the normative space of reasons is to act as a conceptual border-patroller and to maintain a protective hermeneutic barrier. Recognising the hegemony of the natural sciences and nomothetic rationality's dominance requires those wishing to resist the totalising encroachment of the space of reasons by purely naturalistic vocabulary to erect a hermeneutic dam and maintain its structural integrity as best as one reasonably can. Crucially, though, this defensive strategy appears to be committed to the claim that nomothetic rationality must be accepted as having *primacy*. This insight into the socio-cultural problems of late modernity, typified by the inherent tension between capitalist drives and democratic impulses, translates rather elegantly to the debate concerning the Placement Problem.

As Huw Price (2004) suggests, the Placement Problem can be expressed in the following way:²¹

- (1) All reality is ultimately natural reality.
- (2) Whatever one wishes to admit into natural reality must be placed in natural reality.
- (3) *Modality, meaning, universals, norms, intentionality*, and so on do not seem admissible into natural reality.
- (4) Therefore, if they are to be placed in nature, they must be forced into a category that does not seem appropriate for their specific characters; and if they cannot be placed in nature, then they must be either dismissed as non-genuine phenomena or at best regarded as parasitic second-rate phenomena.²²

The Placement Problem problematises where 'odd' phenomena, such as norms and intentionality, might 'fit' in the world described by physics, chemistry, and biology. Natural science and fundamental physics *in particular*, therefore, are hegemonic, to the extent that they

²¹ Price's Placement Problem owes much to Jackson (1998), where it is dubbed 'The Location Problem', although Price endeavours to distinguish them (Price 2013: 27n).

²² I have chosen to use 'phenomena' here, as I am not keen on using expressions such as 'things' or 'entities', since they risk reifying normativity et al.

have become the focal points of dialectic. Why these ‘odd’ phenomena are viewed as *problematic* is principally because their status as central concepts of the *manifest* image’s web of belief means there is invariably *foundational* friction between them and the mathematisable and quantifiable features of the *scientific* image. Such is the latter’s epistemic authority that the Placement Problem, from the very outset, aims to *level out the idiosyncratic dimensions of the manifest image and the space of reasons in order for them to be deemed legitimate*. This is because both the structure and the discursive grammar of the Placement Problem frame the legitimacy of modality, meaning, universals, norms, and intentionality *in terms of whether or not they can be placed/located in the world described by the natural sciences*. Notions of *finding a place for mind in the natural world* and *making elbow room for intentionality in the world described by physics* both seem to presuppose that one ought to accept from the very outset the vocabulary and general *Weltanschauung* of the natural sciences, and then find some meaningful and coherent way of *fitting* in phenomena such as intentionality and normativity into that nomothetic picture.

Such a way of thinking about reality goes some way to explain why exactly the Placement Problem grips the philosophic imagination with such force: rational activity is *exclusively* articulated in terms of the kind of inferential patterns definitive of purely analytical thinking, namely the kind of thinking symptomatic of *instrumental* reason. This, in turn, leads to conceiving of the space of reasons and the space of nature as *fundamentally* in tension with another, and to regarding the manifest image and scientific image as metaphilosophical *antagonists*.²³

Conceived in this way, the vocabulary of the ideal scientific image becomes epistemically authoritarian and imperialistic by forcing other forms of enquiry to adopt the discursive recourses and grammars of *formal* disciplines that are different in various ways to the manifest image’s web of meanings.²⁴ Scientism, therefore, as a particular mode of

²³ Price also argues that a key presupposition of The Placement Problem is what he calls ‘the Semantic Ladder’, which derives from representationalism. This is “the assumption that the linguistic items in question ‘stand for’ or ‘represent’ something non-linguistic ... This assumption grounds our shift in focus from the term ‘X’ or concept X, to its assumed object, X” (Price 2013: 9). This assumption is required for the Placement Problem, for without it we cannot transition from merely studying human linguistic practices (such as ethics talk), to considering their implications for the world. So, one may evade the Problem by refusing to climb the Ladder.

²⁴ As Carl Sachs helpfully raised in conversation with me, in response to the concerns about imperialism and encroachment, a pragmatist may argue the following: because the unity of science thesis à la Oppenheim and Putnam (1958), *whether reductionist or eliminativist*, is not grounded in a careful examination of scientific *practice*, it risks opening the door to the charge of scientism. However, if one considers those philosophers of science who are looking at *science in terms of practices*, such as John Dupré, Nancy Cartwright, Steven Horst, and Joseph Rouse, careful explication of how scientific practices yield a pragmatically efficacious grip on reality, there is reason to reject any top-down commitments to the unity of science (as for example driven by some *a priori* commitment to mechanistic physics as the epistemic ideal of empirical inquiry). But, once we see that

disciplinary *ideology*, is diagnosed as having made the following error described by Windelband:

[T]he failure to recognise the autonomy of individual provinces of knowledge.²⁵

Recognising the autonomy and heterogeneity of the normative space of reasons in no way entails conceiving of intentionality, et al. as “imaginary skyhooks”. On the contrary, it *deepens* our way of viewing reality as intelligible by doing justice to our *geistige Einstellung*, our status as *self-interpreting amphibians engaging in multifaceted modes of sense-making*.²⁶

Habermas himself recognised the deficiency of overly defensive attitudes to system-encroachment, and the way he shifts to a far more positive and ambitious model of *resistance* in *Between Facts and Norms* is one which can and should be extended to the goal of *decolonising the normative space of reasons from scientific encroachment*. For Habermas in *Between Facts and Norms*, if one is to resist and eventually overcome juridification, one must develop deliberative democracy, in which legal power can be rooted in the communicative power of the lifeworld, especially a well-functioning public sphere and civil society.²⁷ Traversing “the long march through the institutions”²⁸ is progressively transformative, because debunking the legal positivist framework in favour of a discourse theory of law involves combatting and reversing the *unofficial* circulation of power in constitutional democracies. The official circulation of power in a constitutional democracy involves the public voting and providing input to legislative assemblies; legislative assemblies then makes laws; the executive enacts these laws; and the judiciary reflects on these laws in cases of conflict. The unofficial circulation of power, by contrast, involves political parties, etc. manipulating the public. For Habermas, “in a perceived crisis situation”,²⁹ the flow of power can be reversed to its official state once the public become *actively* aware of its unofficial circulation. This form of social consciousness reveals how one no longer deems current frameworks as *rationally satisfying*, thereby compelling agents to *radically* revise their socio-political sense-making practices.

pragmatic realism in philosophy of science does not entail - and in fact, strictly speaking, undermines - the unity of science thesis, ‘scientism’ just becomes a chimera.

²⁵ Windelband 1980: 171.

²⁶ The use of ‘self-interpreting’ is a nod to Charles Taylor; the use of ‘amphibian’ is a nod to Hegel; and the use of ‘sense-making’ is a nod to Adrian Moore.

²⁷ The 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” (BF&N: 110)

²⁸ TSTPS: 210.

²⁹ BF&N: 380.

By analogy, to resist and eventually get over scientism involves combatting and reversing the circulation of *epistemic* power. Paraphrasing Walter D. Mignolo, this decolonial way of thinking is “nothing more than a relentless analytic effort to understand, in order to overcome the logic of [epistemic] coloniality underneath the rhetoric of modernity, the structure of management and control that emerged out of the transformation of the [epistemic] economy”.³⁰ From this perspective, scientific naturalism is guilty of a *cognitive* variety of imperialism, one which is the theoretical equivalent of Iris Marion Young’s concept of *cultural* imperialism:

In societies stamped with cultural imperialism, groups suffering from this form of oppression stand in a paradoxical position. They are understood in terms of crude stereotypes that do not accurately portray individual group members but also assume a mask of invisibility; they are both badly misrepresented and robbed of the means by which to express their perspective. Groups who live with cultural imperialism find themselves defined externally, positioned by a web of meanings that arise elsewhere. These meanings and definitions have been imposed on them by people who cannot identify with them and with whom they cannot identify.³¹

In the 1990s, the politics of difference focused on questions concerning nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Under this approach, the value of cultural distinctness is *essential* to individuals and not something accidental to them: their personal autonomy depends in part on being able to engage in specific cultural practices with others who identify with one another as in the same cultural group. For Young, most modern societies contain multiple cultural groups some of which unjustly dominate the state or other important social institutions, thus inhibiting the ability of minority cultures to live fully meaningful lives in their own terms. The dominant group in society can limit the ability of one or more of the cultural minorities to live out their forms of expression. In other words, the dominant culture threatens to swamp the minority culture to the extent that particular cultural practices and different hermeneutic spheres – ways in which members of cultures interpret their experiences – are crowded out or erased. Under this analogy, the concern about scientific naturalism is that the vocabulary of the ideal scientific image becomes epistemically authoritarian and imperialistic by forcing other forms of inquiry to adopt the *discursive recourses and grammars* of formal disciplines that are fundamentally different in various ways to the manifest image’s ‘web of meanings’.

For Habermas, the lack of respect for the peculiarity and *sui generis* features of the normative space of reasons is a crisis of communication: the scientific model remains locked in the viewpoint of *instrumental reason* and is therefore inhibited from *radically revising the*

³⁰ Mignolo 2011: 10.

³¹ Young 1990: 59.

very notion of how sense-making ought to be constituted and practised. Given the difference between natural science and philosophy in terms of how they respectively make sense of things, it would be incorrect to suppose that natural science and philosophy should be understood in terms of a *Geistig* hierarchy. This is because the way in which natural science makes sense of things is so *different* to the way in which philosophy makes sense of things: conceived in this way, one ought not to regard natural science and philosophy as *rival* forms of intelligibility competing with one another to best satisfy our desire for understanding our world. On the contrary, they should be seen as *complementary* reflective practices, practices which are *jointly* indispensable for adequately and holistically engaging with our environment:

Reason's interest in emancipation, which is invested in the self-formative process of the species and permeates the movement of reflection, aims at realising these conditions of symbolic interaction and instrumental action. (K&HI: 210-211)

Reflection on our discursivity illuminates the particular kind of amphibian epistemic architecture we have for experiencing the world from our *Geistig* perspective. To quote Bernard Williams here, who elegantly expresses a similar claim: "... I take philosophy to be, part of a more general attempt to make the best sense of our life, and so of our intellectual activities, in the situation in which we find ourselves".³² For all of the indisputably important and impressive noetic achievements of the natural sciences, the march to scientism constitutes a type of 'self-renunciation' and a *failure of rationality*.

³² Williams 2006: 182.

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