

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 038

SO 032 268

AUTHOR Belles, Donald A.
TITLE Habermas' Societal Critique and the Concept of Forgiveness:
An Exploratory Paper.
PUB DATE 1999-10-00
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Seattle Pacific University
Conference on the Social and Moral Fabric of School Life
(Edmonds, WA, October 14-16, 1999).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Individual Development; Integrated Curriculum; Models;
*Moral Values; Secondary Education; *Social Problems
IDENTIFIERS Character Development; Character Education; *Forgiveness;
*Habermas (Jurgen); Theoretical Orientation

ABSTRACT

Jurgen Habermas' concepts of the Theory of Human Interests, although a descriptive interpretation of history, fails to offer hope of freedom for the human race. This occurs because the components' technical interest, practical interest, and emancipatory interest are inherently conflictual. Habermas' use of Communicative Action Theory to harmonize the components also fails because of its heavy reliance upon rational thought and the requirement for yielding of personal gain in the name of humanity. The missing element in both theories appears as the ability, more than the desirability, of individuals, families, clans, and nations to experience and offer forgiveness. Forgiveness as an elemental form of human discourse represents the best of the species in terms of self-renewal and as such becomes the enabler of release from the baser components of human interaction. Insights gathered from the study of religion, sociology, and psychotherapy all form intricate and necessary understandings in creating a model for developing people who can forgive. Inclusion of forgiveness within the educational curriculum should be a part of the underlying structure of any activities related to character or values development. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/BT)

ED 447 038

Running Head: Habermas Societal

Habermas' Societal Critique and the Concept of Forgiveness: An Exploratory Paper

Donald A. Belles

The Boeing Company

University of Phoenix

Seattle, WA.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Donald A. Belles

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Seattle Pacific University Conference

Social / Moral Fabric of School Life

October 14-16, 1999

Donald.A.Belles@Boeing.com

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SO 032 268

Abstract

Jurgen Habermas' concepts of The Theory of Human Interests, although a descriptive interpretation of history fails to offer hope of freedom for the human race. This occurs because the components technical interest, practical interest, and emancipatory interest are inherently conflictual. His use of Communicative Action Theory to harmonize the components also fails because of its heavy reliance upon rational thought and the requirement for yielding of personal gain in the name of humanity.

The missing element in both theories appears as the ability, more than the desirability, of individuals, families, clans, and nations to experience and offer forgiveness. Forgiveness as an elemental form of human discourse represents the best of the species in terms of self-renewal and as such becomes the enabler of release from the baser components of human interaction. Insights gathered from the study of religion, sociology, and psychotherapy all form intricate and necessary understandings in creating a model for developing people who can forgive. Inclusion of forgiveness within the educational curriculum should be a part of the underlying structure of any activities related to character or values development.

Habermas' Societal Critique and the Concept of Forgiveness: An Exploratory Paper

Introduction

Recently the following cartoon appeared in a local paper. (McGruder) The young black student, Huey, is new to the classroom and school and meeting his teacher, Mr. Petto, at the J. Edgar Hoover Elementary School. The very fact that the school is the J. Edgar Hoover School has already raised concerns for the young militant student.

Opening Frame:

Principal: "Huey, this is Mr. Petto -- your new teacher.

Mr. Petto: "Uh -- nice to meet you, Huey."

Huey: "Mr. Petto --

Next Frame:

Huey to Mr. Petto and the Principal: "Public Education facilities such as this are the cornerstone of the institutionalized racism that continues to oppress black people. Not only will I refuse to succumb to your brainwashing -- I will dedicate myself to the eventual elimination of this abomination to the high pursuit of learning."

Final frame:

Mr. Petto to Principal: "I Quit. Effective immediately."

Principal: "Nonsense! Looks like it's going to be a great year! Have fun, boys."

This recounting is only a cartoon. It is only a statement of a limited perspective by a single artist. It is from a person who has an admittedly agendized view of the world.

His character Huey succinctly recounts the perspective of some influential people in the field of educational criticism. Besides the scathing critique of the educational system performed by Huey, this artist also presents the administrator - principal, as part of the problem. The principal does not want to hear that there is a problem developing between the teacher and the student. He merely "brushes off" the concerns of Mr. Petto.

Additionally he addresses both Huey and Mr. Petto with the term boys. Undoubtedly this is just part of the normal vocabulary of the principal. Unfortunately, it is the source of much tension between the white and black race. As such, this potentially inflammatory phrase demonstrates the carelessness with which people speak. Another component demonstrated is the need for people to step back from a language usage issue and view the context of the situation, to accept that there are differing perspectives and that not all apparent slights are slights at all.

Cultural Literacy

In this discussion, E.D. Hirsch's observation about cultural literacy and the need to understand it is extremely important. "Literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land: it excludes nobody; it cuts across generations and social groups and classes; it is not usually one's first culture, but it should be everyone's second, existing as it does beyond the narrow spheres of family, neighborhood, and region." (21) The clarity of his comment identifies the context of the discussion among the three participants in the cartoon. Each of them has a culture perspective, a limited point of view in relationship to the other participants, and a series of expectations that drive the conclusions. Both the

principal and Mr. Petto share a common vocabulary, but substantially different interpretations of that perspective.

The language involved also portrays the inter-relationship between cultural values and intra-personal conflict vis-à-vis, Mr. Petto versus Huey. In contemporary American schools, the teacher provides a form of address while the student's name is used. At the superficial level, this is an attempt to gain a standard vocabulary. However, at a deeper level, it is effectively a function of power and control over the "employees"; not together different from either a business where the manager or owner is addressed as Mister, or Ms, or a university where students are addressed by first name and professors by their titles. This practice, like many other subtle ones, is so ingrained that we seldom stop to think about them. They are part of the structure, ingrained and accepted as part of the way of doing business. This structural ingraining has led Boston College President Leo Botstein to conclude that the schools represent, at least, part of the problem in the current practice of unsuccessfully educating students. (Botstein. 74)

Although this discussion presents only the most superficial analysis of the dialogue in the cartoon, the discerning reader begins to find multiple levels of meaning buried in this terse dialogue. Conflicts between academic and social structures, relationship assumptions among powerful and powerless, and even the conflict between truth and turning a blind eye to the situation all appear in subtle forms -- most of which are unrecognized in the day to day activities of the educational world. Is it therefore surprising that former Catholic priest and social commentator Ivan Illich called for the end of the U.S. educational system. In Deschooling Society (1971) he argued the structures of the existing system is so much a part of the problem and so entwined with

the problem that it would be impossible for it to extricate itself. For the educational system, there is no neutral ground to which it can move for providing a position of self-evaluation, Illich would maintain. Thirty years later Botstein arrives at the same conclusion - the system is the problem.

The Theory of Interests

Social critic and observer Jurgen Habermas has been writing about the deterioration of the western system since the 1950s. His concepts offer a refreshing look at the consequences of the headlong rush to growth without the benefits of ongoing analysis and reflective knowledge of the predictable and destructive aspects of this effort.

Steven Seidman editor of Jurgen Habermas On Society and Politics A Reader, (1989) perceives Habermas as a proponent of the goodness of modernity. In this view he offers Habermas' thoughts on modernity, "this theory of modernization [*linking of western society ills on Enlightenment based rationality*] fails to acknowledge the achievements of modernity and its continued potential for yielding a more rational society."

"Habermas proposes an alternative model that conceives of modernization as involving social and cultural rationalization. The former relates to the progressive differentiation and complexity of social systems and involves enhanced levels of instrumental reason. The latter pertains to changes in the lifeworld: it involves the differentiation of the value spheres of truth, goodness, and beauty and their corresponding modes of knowledge (science, moral theory, aesthetic criticism), as well as the increasing secularization of beliefs and the institutionalization of the norms of reflexivity and

criticism." (Seidman. 24) Habermas sees the outcome of this integrated rationalization process, this continuing development of the Enlightenment insights, as yielding a society producing emancipation of humanity. For this belief, Habermas is viewed as a champion of "The Enlightenment" in contemporary times.

Habermas sees parallels between rational development and cognitive development. "Employing this formal schema of cognitive development, Habermas proceeds to recast Marx's materialist conception of history in terms of an account of the reproduction of the general modes of cultural life forming the basic context of human rational development. ... According to Habermas, these overarching worldviews perform a similar function for human communities as do the different phases of ego formation for the personality of the individual. ... Habermas further contends that human history can be understood as a process involving the progressive elaboration of the moral capacities of the species through the ongoing transformation of these general worldviews." (Whitten, 1992, 3) He maintains the real key to understanding and then interacting with contemporary events is an understanding of the role of rationality and honest communications, in the sense of a supra-enlightenment rational view. This might be described in discussions as the outcome of a conscious decision to place all of the cards on the table believing that the other person will then also do so. (Gaon) By fostering enlightened reason rather than self-serving posturing and falsity, Habermas brings us to the question of our own willingness, indeed capability, to act within and upon the best interests of all concerned. He calls us to act in the name of the global issues and to respond with this awareness in the regional situation. (Habermas, 1998, Peace Review) He asks a difficult question: can human beings perform at this level of honesty and

truthfulness. Can they be magnanimous enough and have enough altruism to set aside personal gain to allow social progress, particularly when the two seem to be diametrically opposed?

According to Ellis and Fouts, Habermas uses the term "privatism" to describe what amounts to a structural flaw in western civilization: the withdrawal of adults from interaction in the public arena. (1996, 108) For them this term carries with it extremely heavy consequential baggage: "this withdrawal is accompanied by an increasing tendency to criticize public figures and officials, whether politicians, clergy, school leaders, etc. This, he claims leads to a youth crisis of unprecedented proportions in which the young see consumerism, privatism, and a tendency to criticize leadership on the part of parents, while those same parents refrain from taking part in the ordinary behaviors of citizenship, neighborhood activities, involvement with children's learning, etc." This message seems quite clear; adults are creating the next generation, which may well lead to the destruction of the western society, since children will become adults having had role models offering no sense of values or morality.

Habermas in his "Theory of Human Interests", according to Ellis (1998), sees these consequences: adults withdrawing from traditional interaction within social and political situations and a lack of focus upon historic familial situations and responsibilities. These consequences are, perhaps fostered and at the least, accelerated by the breakdown of the social structures which have until recently formed the foundation of the bourgeois society which, at least in theory, offered remuneration for labor - a relatively equitable trade. Habermas writes of this crisis: "Such a conjecture is supported by several behavior syndromes spreading more and more among young people--either

retreat as a reaction to an exorbitant claim on the personality-resource; or protest as a result of an autonomous ego organization that cannot be stabilized without conflicts under given conditions." (Seidman. 283)

When viewed from the highest philosophical levels the three main components of this destructive spiral are "technical interest, practical interest, and emancipatory interest". In order to appreciate the inter-relationship of the three components it must be understood that Habermas approaches the dialogue from the position of the transformation of society -- from one state of being to another. Each of these three components forms one leg of a contemporary interplay leading to the next structural change in society. Although each of these components has corollaries on the personal level with specific personal consequences the focus of the discussion is inherently upon the social and cultural implications of various mass actions.

Technical interest develops as society moves into greater and greater levels of regulation and management based upon models and structures described and enforced by technocrats and bureaucrats. This merger of science and technology exists across the infrastructures of society thereby creating sectors of elitism and democracy vacuums whose entry criteria is an outcome of special memberships or rights of passage not normally open to the average person, such as education. Therefore, the citizenry loses its power to cause change in the political arena by becoming depoliticized thus leaving every larger portions of the area of contention open to the specialists. As Habermas sees the situation: "Today, it seems as though utopian energies have been used up, as if the have retreated from historical thought. The horizon of the future has contracted and has changed both the *Zeitgeist* and politics in fundamental ways. ... What is at stake is

Western culture's confidence in itself" (Seidman. 286) For Habermas the lose of vital energies is related to the shift away from the labor for money trading system - social labor which exists within a free market ideal. Yet today this is not possible in the classic sense of the free market trade. (Seidman. 287) Therefore, the spiral of destruction of society must continue with increasingly autonomous authority aggregating to the technocrats and bureaucrats.

Practical interest demoralizes society by forcing the withdrawal of the person from the search for understanding. Meaning is inherently tied to culture for Habermas. Since the state, in its movement to take charge over greater and greater portions of the public and private arenas, seeks to self legitimize its movement towards a welfare state, it is necessary to diminish the sets of culturally transmitted responsibilities and accountabilities. He writes: "An awareness of contingency is created not just for contents of tradition but also for the techniques of tradition--i.e., socialization. Among pre-school children, formal schooling is already competing with family upbringing. The new problems afflicting the educational routine, and the widespread awareness of these problems, are reflected by, among other indications, a new type of pedagogical and psychological writing addressed to the general public. We have seen that the state can not simply take over the cultural system and that, in fact, the expansion of areas for state planning creates problems for things that are culturally take for granted. 'Meaning' is an increasingly scarce resource." (Seidman. 276 & 277) Habermas is not alone in his observation about the importance of cultural transmission. Rothman maintains: "The evidence around us in the culture suggests that many of those in the middle and upper middle classes, having lost the internal gyroscope (and metaphors) that gave the lives of

previous generations structure and meaning, feel torn between the desire for power and gratification on the one hand and the fear of losing control on the other." (32) For Bruner (1996)- if we accept the validity of his recent work on cultural communications and the importance of socialization within a cultural context - the taking over of the responsibility for cultural transmission to the next generation by the state with its domination by the technocrats and bureaucrats means an end to personal accountability and a lack of a personal role models - effectively signaling an end to the transmission of specific cultures. Without overstating this consequence, Habermas described the situation: "The more complex the systems that require steering become, the greater the probability of dysfunctional secondary effects. We experience on a daily basis the transformation of productive forces into destructive forces, of planning capacities into the potential for disruption." (Seidman. 286) Since it is the transmission of culture that carries with it the associations of initial meaning that can then be translated to the second or literate culture, as Hirsch described it, the death of the initial culture also means the death of meaning.

Emancipatory interest focuses on the development of freedom for the entire human race. It is reflective in nature at the personal and social levels and can only occur when autonomy and responsibility are balanced. The sense of freedom from drudgery and labor appears as leisure and the capability to enjoy the leisure. The western democracies are attempts, in Habermas' view, to help foster this sense of humanity's emancipation, but from the wrong approach. "Since World War II, all the governing parties in the Western countries have won their majorities more or less explicitly under the banner of welfare state objectives. Since the 1970s, however, awareness of the

limitations of the welfare state project has been growing, without as yet a clear alternative in view." (Seidman. 288) Indeed a major problem is looming as the welfare state attempts to redirect funds to those for whom work may not be a future option based upon education or related disadvantages.

Several pages later Habermas observes: "In short, a contradiction between its goal and its method is inherent in the welfare state project as such. Its goals is the establishment of forms of life that are structured in an egalitarian way and that at the same time open up arenas for individual self-realization and spontaneity. Nevertheless, evidently this goal cannot occur via the direct route of putting political programs into legal and administrative forms. Generating forms of life exceeds the capacities of the medium of power." (Seidman. 292) This lack of work, if Muller's observation about Europe is correct linking work to self-respect, will create major problems limiting the ability of people to experience emancipation. "The lack of self-respect, and the consequent demoralization that is bound to afflict so many, is likely to lead to a sense of alienation and purposelessness so acute as to touch off any number of morbid cultural trends. As for leisure as a burden, there is already evidence that among the first human responses to an abundance of leisure and unused energy is a craving for sedation." (205 & 206) Apparently, the concept of emancipation, at least as it seems to head in Habermas area - European Union, is at best a mixed blessing. Emancipation will not appear within the context or direction of the modern western democracies.

Even with the various models currently in use, the ability to balance simultaneously technical, practical, and emancipatory interests creates a requirement outside the realm of the current structures ability to produce. More directly, as seen thus

far, all three components of the Theory of Human Interests fail because of the non-rational nature of human beings to bring about, individually or collectively, a world filled with the potential of making a better place for all. In fact, if Habermas is correct, the western model, as it seems to be evolving, will be forever unable to move beyond the social morass it has created attempting to redistribute wealth and resources because the present model rests upon a faulty assumption thereby skewing the results.

In order to create a world where humanity's interest contravene personal issues it would take a world in which all countries, for instance, accepted each other as equals with the population then supporting the outcome of negotiations among the various state representatives. Countries with disparate goals, objectives, beliefs, etc. would all gather as equals with clean agendas. Citizens would accept the validity of the results because everyone enters the discussion to promote the general welfare and work to ensure domestic tranquillity. Habermas, here too inadvertently admits to the difficulty of balancing this view by using the reunification experiences of the German peoples as an example. "The 'Alliance for Germany' already seems to have opened up this fallow emotional field, and already the arrogance of economic power has caused nationalist weeds to sprout." (1991, 4) If the emotional components, forming the more base parts of the human experience, are so easily surfaced certainly the vision, at least as he articulates it - as an extension of the enlightenment view of rationalism, must fail.

This lack of balance occurs because there are various levels of control on society (Seidman. 297), various competing structures seeking legitimization of their own issues, (Seidman. 249), and multiple interests (previous discussion) all seeking to gain ascendancy simultaneously and while being inter-related. The answer to this is for

Habermas the Theory of Communicative Action in which the participants make specific choices to speak openly and honestly.

Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas sees an evolutionary model leading humanity to the higher moral ground, but is unable to maintain that position according to Whitton. (5) His view of Communicative Action falls short simply because it presupposes a world in which rational response seeks the highest good. C.S. Lewis wrote critically of this view in The Abolition of Man nearly 50 years ago. (1944) For him it was groundless and presupposed an existing unjustifiable moral basis existing outside the rational process. Indeed, Whitton sees a similar problem: "Focusing as it does on the intentional speech acts of rational speakers, this model offers a high abstract, disembodied understanding of the nature of human discursive practice. ... Preoccupied with a narrow intellectualist conception of the function of human discourse, this universal pragmatic model of communicative action ultimately divorces language from its basic connection with sensuous human subjectivity." (8) Despite the loftiness of the Habermas ideal, it seems impossible to achieve it - given the historical presence of human nature.

"Communicative action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective (*as the totality of entities about which true statements are possible*), the social (*as the totality of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations*), and the subjective worlds (*as the totality of experience to which a speaker has privileged access and which he can express before a public*), even when they thematically stress only one of the three components in their utterances."

(Seidman. 166) This means that the situation is pregnant with potential, often unrecognized by those present. Hirsch agrees with this position vis-a-vis the objective and social environments when he states: "In order to speak effectively to people we must have a reliable sense of what they know and what they do not know." (16) This sense of what they know and what they do not know is part of the cultural view which individuals and societies bring to the discussion. Unfortunately, as Hirsch's book points out, this is altogether absent in many of the current school curriculums. And without this common background - this second culture - it becomes difficult to understand the steps involved in developing skills related to secondary communications or a cross cultural perspective which ultimately yields a joint definition of reality. Without this, there is no "feeling for" another person. Without the experience of seeing life from another point of view, without struggling to understand something outside of everyday activities and bringing that awareness into the present day experience people are unable to participate fully in the Communicative Action view proposed by Habermas: wherein "only practices that permit truly undistorted and uncoerced communication are capable of generating legitimate controls over conduct." (Simon. 5)

In the case of not developing the common culture knowledge, the ability to distinguish between the objective world and the subjective world is impaired thereby eliminating the development of legitimate controls over conduct. The limitation of parochial experiences creates false assumptions about the objective jointly shared reality. "The explicit meanings of a piece of writing are the tip of an iceberg of meaning; the larger part lies below the surface of the text and is composed of the reader's own relevant knowledge." (Hirsch, 34) This for Habermas appears as a series of links or flows moving

through the entire context of the communication activity. (Seidman. 170) Thus without the relevant background of self-awareness whatever is brought to the negotiation and communication table is doomed to failure. How then, given Hirsch's dislike of the present educational system for not inculcating meaningful knowledge for a child to build upon, and Habermas' implicit admission of the inherent failure of both the Theory of Interests and the Communicative Action Theory can the inherent challenge of overcoming the baser components of human experience be accomplished?

Indeed this problem, the consistent historic practices of human nature, also thwarts Habermas' attempt to redefine history into a Theory of Human Interests, which might lead to a "better world". As previously discussed the inherent conflicts between the interests, both within and without a labor based society, provide such intra and inter component incompatibilities that it becomes impossible for the welfare state structures to resolve the problem. The current system is incapable of solving the problem because it is part of the problem. "This dilemma boils down to two issues. First, the economic problems of affluent societies can be explained by structural changes in the world economy, now commonly known as 'globalization.' Second, this transformation restricts national governments, rendering them less able to 'cushion' undesirable social and political side-effects of transnational economic transactions." (Habermas, 1998, 2) Thus not only is the system unable to solve the problems leading to emancipation of humanity, but the system, as it is presently constituted is part of the problem inhibiting resolution.

Forgiveness

E. D. Hirsch sees a clear but different link, between education and economic prosperity. He takes a much more traditional view linking education, as does Mortimer Adler in The Paideia Proposal (1982), to social justice and effective democracy both topics dear to Habermas' heart. Consequently, the choices made in the educational arena either support or detract from the emancipatory goals espoused by all three writers. Habermas' discussion of communicative action theory focuses heavily upon the ability of the participants to share a common social awareness. This is not to say it must be the same upbringing or even the same concepts. However, there must be both a self-awareness that allows for description of the subjective realm and also a self-awareness that describes and can articulate the shift from the subjective to the social arenas, the area Hirsch calls literate culture. Having both the literate culture and personal awareness then allows the participants to create a new environment where the problems of both parties, individuals or structures, can be identified, addressed, and resolved. Unarticulated in this process is the requirement for negotiation - the capability for each side to diminish a portion of its requests in support of receiving some reciprocal acquiescence, of creating a world in which both views overlap forming a common world. (Seidman. 167) Moreover, implicit in this view is the willingness, as well as the knowledge of external factors in the bigger picture which may render either party's positions weak or unattainable, to accept lower returns than those requested. Here is where the role of education becomes paramount to peaceful resolution of this issue.

In an environment where the educational system consciously chooses which sets of information it will transmit to create a literate culture, the students learn the difference between the subjective and social - literate culture - realms. They are able to extrapolate

the once learned process into other areas and build upon the general knowledge database to begin the process of dialogue. Hirsch believes this point to be the crux for developing this literate culture: "These stable elements of the national vocabulary are at the core of cultural literacy, and for that reason are the most important contents of schooling. ...

Most of us know rather little about these people (*a long list of prominent American leaders*), but that little is of crucial importance, because it enables writers and speakers to assume a starting point from which they can treat in detail what they wish to focus on."

(29) Indeed, this core knowledge and particularly the process of understanding its relevance to any situation, pre-dispose the person to understand a similar situation within a different nation or culture. Consequently, people with different backgrounds can sit and choose to create together a third literate culture.

Habermas is correct when he posits that this process, thus far, could in fact be based upon a rational approach and the morality of the issues be governed by what is best for the race. Despite the discussion of C. S. Lewis, Habermas has not erred in this arena. At the highest levels, the choice of race survival versus individual survival seems clean and direct. After all, will not a grown man rush onto a busy street to save a small child in traffic? At some deep level, this is recognized as the appropriate response and we would castigate and make a pariah of him who would let the child die. So at certain levels of discourse the solutions are genetically coded into the race.

However, Habermas has missed the mark when he believes that rationality will determine which issues will willingly be negotiated and which will be held as unassailable by any particular person, society, or culture. This decision is based not upon the literate culture but the personal, or subjective, lifeworld of the people involved. He

tells us, "what binds sociated individuals to one another and secures the integration of society is a web of communicative actions that thrives only in the light of cultural traditions, and not systemic mechanisms that are out of the reach of a member's intuitive knowledge." (Seidman. 184) Therefore even if a negotiator were under specific orders based upon a rational enlightened self-interest view, the nuances of the experience would be a consequence of personal interpretation, experience, and the output of the entire subject realm. The people involved must bring a subjective realm that includes emotional clarity to the discussion. Differences built upon trauma must be identified, diffused, and cleared as blocks to the process.

Within the United States the welfare system has failed as has the "War on Poverty". (Molitor, 8) This observation codifies two major concerns: the creation of a societal or culture norm of unresponsiveness to survival issues, and personal experience of life failure. The society has failed in helping some groups and individuals which has been a target of its actions. A repository of resentment has been created by the system intending to solve the problems it has helped create. Additionally John Fund observed that, "It is the intention of big government to eliminate educational standards and to discourage citizens from thinking for themselves." (4) Putting these two components together creates an extremely volatile scenario: feeling of abandonment and alienation held in check by a dam of powerlessness. When the barrier breaks the feelings flow without regard to consequences since the system creating the problem has never encouraged individual thinking. Yet failure and abandonment have historically not been part of the literate culture of the United States. Apparently the breakdown in the educational system which Hirsch and Adler have been concerned about appears not just

in a loss of information content, but also in the lessening of participation in the democratic processes just like they have maintained. However, in this case the potential consequences are more severe than a loss of income. The potential in this case is a disruption to society itself.

Fund continues: "We have a personal and moral responsibility to ensure that everyone in this country receives a sound education. We can't simply worry about the school across the street either; we have to worry about the schools across the nation." (7) It seems we can not discuss education, societal growth, or ultimately emancipation of humanity without involving some aspect of morality - not ethics. In the final judgment it is as Lewis maintained we must base our values statements upon an underlying structure of a moral starting point. In addition, this moral starting point is the only viable solution to the extended social consequences of the failure of the western welfare state.

"If we are to break the cycle of conflict continuing from past to present, forgiveness is the only path. Forgiveness represents a new road, a path to peace because calls for revenge and just punishment simply perpetuate past conflicts into the future." (Rodden, 3) Rodden ties this hope for the future to the educational system. For him the concept of forgiveness is integral to the idea of character education. He argues character education is about creating a vision of individual potentiality. Part of the process of becoming this vision is the ability to remove baggage that has as its major component dis-incentive to achieve potential. (3) Forgiveness helps a person to move forward. "The question is not 'Does he deserve my forgiveness?' But do I deserve to be someone who consistently forgives, who walks unburdened." (6) Yet it is not just the person that Rodden sees as being involved and needing forgiveness skills. For him the problem goes

from individuals to families, to immediate groups, to society at large. "We are confronted daily, in our own lives, with anti-models as well as models of forgivers. And indeed, our openness toward forgiveness must include a willingness to forgive not just others, but ourselves for our mistakes, for our insecurities, for our manifold imperfections." (5 & 6) Each of these items requiring forgiveness of self or others sounds surprisingly like the problems identified with and needing resolution to allow communicative action theory to move forward, to be effective.

Forgiveness is a component of nearly every major religious system presently on earth. Over the thousands of years of organized religions billions of people have been introduced to some related concept, yet there is surprisingly little empirical data about it. (Johnson) Presumably this occurs because science wants little to do with religion except to draw lines of demarcation, or more tolerantly because religion deals with areas not easily amenable to mechanistically based inquiry. Yet something so powerful as religious history must contain at least crumbs for the hungry mind. Indeed most religious systems contain some component describing ways to engage members of other groups; for example, dialogue, discussion, military action, or avoidance. Therefore, forgiveness as a religious phenomenon must therefore include not merely personal concepts but also group interactions. Nevertheless, here too, there seems a dearth of information, even among the social scientists. Tom Trzyna observes: "While there are not many studies of the sociology of forgiving, those sociologists who have addressed the topic have shown an interest in understanding forgiving as something that might occur between groups." (226) In fact he declares: "the limit of what is morally meaningful is socially constructed, not analytically determined by study of the meaning of forgiveness as a

universal concept. This is the essential lesson the sociological study of forgiveness contributes to our understanding. A corollary is that the scope of forgiveness should not be limited on the one hand to dyadic interpersonal (or small group relations) or on the other to the universal action of God, with no alternatives in between, such as large group forgiveness or national forgiveness." (240) To him it seems clear that the lessons of forgiveness derived from religious study are applicable to all sizes of need.

Psychologists Vitz and Mango categorically declare, "It is the present thesis that pathological object-relations, trauma-related depression and severe hatred for example, are never really resolved without two normally religious processes: repentance and forgiveness. Therefore, we propose that sorrow (repentance) for the harm one has done is not capable of true resolution without forgiveness, and forgiveness of the self requires God's action-or at the very least, a belief in god's action." (74 7 77) For them these normally religious aspects bear strongly on the maintenance of psychic health. It might even be argued based upon this work that mental wellness demands an external source of forgiveness. (77) The need for an understanding of the religious phenomena exists in psychology/psychiatry, sociology, and in economic theory -- if Habermas is correct about the need for Communicative Action Theory to resolve the decline of contemporary western democracies. (Trzyna recognizes the problem Habermas is struggling with. "The moral and also the theological significance of these sociological studies is that they demonstrate how an imperfect and provisional forgiveness actually functions to produce equilibrium and some measure of justice in the world, in groups of many sizes, and across cultures." (240)) Additionally, each of these disciplines, although capable of adding insight must defer to the religious arena if Vitz and Mango are correct.

(77) An interesting point, not elaborated on, in their conclusion is the question: "Did [the patients'] parents admit when they were in the wrong and ask for forgiveness and change their behavior positively?" (79) What makes this curious is that it implies the presence of a role model to facilitate the various aspects of forgiveness. Two questions later they ask, "If the patient believes in God (that is, a personal God, not an impersonal higher power), what is his or her image of God and of God's forgiveness?" Here too, the question is curious and nearly out of place. It is almost begging for an inquiry: What is the relationship between having role models of forgiveness - requesting and accepting - and the ability to experience external forgiveness from a deity? Remembering their position on the need for viewing God as offering forgiveness, this question becomes even more important. Without more data it can go no further. However, at some future point it must be answered.

Karen Johnson (1986) offers a four-stage model of forgiveness: awareness, change, interaction, and reconciliation. These stages require four successive decisions to be made relating to; judgment, vulnerability, intimacy, and trust building. Her observations echo those of Vitz and Mango: "If, at stage two, a decision is made not to acknowledge or deal with the violation, a course of false forgiveness is taken, involving the four stages of denial, superficial acceptance, continued hurt, and deterioration of the relationship." Even though the thought context of her observations are individual focused, a little reflection will quickly demonstrate the applicability of these concepts to groups of all sizes. Likewise Duane Elmer reporting on his work with the survivors of the civil war in Liberia noted similar phenomena. However, "I quickly realized that they longed for someone to stand before them who would know their suffering, identify with their

struggle to forgive, and be a worthy pioneer for them to follow." (32) Elmer observed the need for a role model like Vitz and Mango implied.

Rodden's discussion of forgiveness addresses the four stage model developed by ethicist Lewis Smedes but creates a new perspective: name the injury and the injurer, accept the injury as permanent, choose to forgive, expect no repayment (7) This process is not about forgetting what has happened, but rather about choosing to remember without clinging, of knowing without re-experiencing. It is this ability to know without pain that ultimately frees the forgiver. How many people can actually do this, particularly when the insult or injury is substantial? Where will the role models to do the teaching in the schools, K-12 and universities training the teachers, come from?

Elmer's observation about the need for a role model strikes directly at the important aspect. The people he supported were the result of an extremely bloody and destructive civil war. The forgiveness required was not an exercise in abstraction: friends, neighbors, and family had been brutalized and massacred by former friends and family. As a result, the issues were not just personal forgiveness of another individual, the issues involved forgiveness of families and tribes or clans and existing governments. Thus the forgiveness included forgiveness of self for all of the anger and hatred felt towards these former intimates who had done such savage things and the existing power structure that allowed, or even supported, this action. Indeed, the forgiveness included the concept of geo-political considerations, much like Rodden suggests. (11)

summarizing Trzyna's work it seems that in order to facilitate forgiveness of the self following any type of error, technical (skills related) or normative (community standards violation) a person of high status within the community in question must re-interpret the

offending action in a manner that; provides guidance for all members, indicates the vulnerability of all community members to the same consequence, and offers absolution to the individual through the absolution of the community via its vulnerability. In the arena of Habermas' propositions this is similar to the German government stepping forward after the end of World War II and apologizing for the war and its associated consequences.

This geo-political forgiveness forms the missing link in Habermas' proposals. This is the vehicle allowing both The Theory of Human Interests and the Communicative Action Theory to be completed. The baser human elements, such as hatred and the desire for revenge, which would interfere in globalizing discussions could be eliminated. Personal animosity forming the underlying interpretative structure for compromise would disappear. There would be no inhibitors to implementing a form of enlightened self-interest or rational discourse. Motivating energy could be directed to resolution of the current and potential barriers. Personal and collective ownership would be facilitated enhancing the probability of mass acceptance of the negotiated results.

Additionally, since forgiveness touches individual, societal, economic and historical arenas, it could very easily form underlying substrata for the development of an integrated curriculum in the educational community. Rodden's view of offering it as a subset of character education or part of the history/social studies curriculum falls short of the potential offered by an integrated curriculum. Given the potential breadth of applications for forgiveness and the potential for achieving the emancipation that Habermas, Dewey, Adler, Hirsch, etc. have all sought for humanity, it must be incorporated as a worldview. It must form the structural view in which people begin to

view their individual and collective participation in the world. Since true forgiveness is a learned activity rooted in the deep internal psychic mechanisms of being human, people must have a consistent and continuous experience of forgiving and forgiveness. It must become part of the manner in which the world is viewed. How better to do this than to incorporate the training and modeling as part of the educational experience?

Conclusion

Historically education, because of its own various unforgiving self-interest oriented blocks has failed in the task of emancipating the race, even when given a clean slate to do so. It is time to step forward and begin the process of educating the next generation of role models. Success begins with the universities training their staffs in giving and receiving forgiveness to act as a role model for the next generation of educators and administrators. Future teachers will then be able to observe and practice these skills in the security of a limited environment learning the moral implications of actions as well as the distinction between true and false forgiveness.

In today's world the global force of change is based upon an economic driver for emancipation. Redistribution of wealth across the globe occurs via organizations such as the World Trade Organization or other globally and regionally empowered organizations. To participate in this movement it is necessary for the educational community, at all levels, to step forward with a plan and structure to facilitate this change process. This must be accomplished not as a slave of some economic agenda, but as a driving force for emancipation - the primary goal of nearly every major educational thinker during the last 2500 years. An integrated curriculum reaching across all disciplines facilitated by teams

of educators modeling forgiveness and providing social support and content knowledge for all students represents the peak of the rising crescendo of the winds of change. Are we able to step up to the challenge? Are we willing to pursue what is needed and right? The time is now. Seize it we will or lost we will be.

References

- Adler, M. (1982). The Paideia Proposal an educational manifesto. New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Botstein, L. (1999). "Enough already college president Leon Botstein has a radical idea about high school: Get rid of it." People Weekly. 52(1). 73-74.
- Bruner, J. (1996). The culture of education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ellis, A. and Fouts, J. (1996). Handbook of Educational Terms & Applications. Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.
- Ellis, A. (1998). Lecture notes at Seattle Pacific University 7/25/98. Education 7101.
- Elmer, D. (1994). "A severe forgiveness." Christianity Today. 38/2. 30-32.
- Fund, J. (1998). "The cyberspace economy." Vital Speeches of the Day. 64/19. 587-590. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-7).
- Habermas, J. (1991) "Yet again: German identity -- a unified nation of angry DM-Burghers?" New German Critique. January 1 (Winter). 52. 84-102. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-13).
- Habermas, J. (1998). "Beyond the nation state?" Peace Review. 10/2. 235-240. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-4).
- Hirsch, E.D. (1987). Cultural literacy: what every American needs to know. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Johnson, K. (1986). "A model of forgiveness: Theory formulations and research implications." *Information Analysis*. February. (Abstract provided in ERIC No. ED273893).

Lewis, C. S. (1944). The Abolition of Man. (Reprinted: New York: Touchstone, 1996.) MacMillan Publishing.

McGruder, A. (1999). "The Boondocks". Printed in "The News Tribune: Soundlife". Tacoma, WA. September 7.

Molitor, G. (1997). "Anticipating change: Socio-political global trends and issues." Vital Speeches of the Day. 63/23. 721-724. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-8).

Muller, S. (1997). "Time to kill". (reprinted in Contemporary Issues in American Business. ed. Haney, B. (1999)) The National Interest. Summer. 26-36.

Rodden, John. (1997) "Dimensions of forgiveness: An untried step toward character education." Vital Speeches of the Day. 63/23. 712-718. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-14).

Rothman, S. (1996). "The decline of Bourgeois America". (reprinted in Contemporary Issues in American Business. ed. Haney, B. et.al. (1999)) Society, January/February. 9-16.

Seidman, S. ed. (1989). Jurgen Habermas on society and politics a reader. Boston: Beacon Press.

Simon, J. (1994). "Between power and knowledge: Habermas, Foucault, and the future of legal studies". Law & Society. 28/4. 947-962. (Provided by EBSCOHost: 1-12).

Trzyna, T. (1997). "The social construction of forgiveness." *Christian Scholar's Review*. 27/2. 226-241.

Vitz, P. and Mango, P. (1997). "Kernbergian Psychodynamics and religious aspects of the forgiveness process." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 25/1. 72-80.

Whitton, B. (1992). "Universal pragmatics and the formation of western civilization: a critique of Habermas's theory of human moral evolution". *History & Theory*. October 31/3 299-314. (Provided by EBSCoHost: 1-13).



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>Habermas' Societal Critique and the Concept of Forgiveness: An Exploratory Paper</i>	
Author(s): <i>Donald A. Belles</i>	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: <i>10-99</i>

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) and paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
 If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: <i>DBelles</i>	Printed Name/Position Title: <i>Donald A. Belles</i>	
Organization/Address:	Telephone:	Fax:
	E-mail Address: <i>DONALD.A.BELLES@BOEING.COM</i>	Date: <i>10/3/00</i>

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM: