MEANING IN HABERMASIAN COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

[a]*Emmanuel J. Ibuot*

&

[b]*Onwuama Emeka M. Ph.D*

[a&b]*Humanities Unit, School of General Studies,*
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. Nigeria
emmanuel.ibuot@unn.edu.ng & emeka.onwuama@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

Over several decades, meaning has been crafted in many ways such as logicality and scientificity, but meaning as sense seems to be rifer than any other sense of meaning. In contemporary times, a new formulation of meaning has been presented by Jurgen Habermas, who rejects the other systems of meaning (logic and empirical science) as defective and artificial. Communicative rationality or reason (a theory or set of theories that appreciates human reason as an indispensable product of successful human communication), as his substitute system, claims to break away from the weakness of the past systems except its adoption of meaning as sense in ordinary language such as in a sentence. This paper demonstrates that communicative reason in which meaning functions as natural or ordinary language fails to avoid the pitfalls of the artificial systems. It makes clear that Habermas' rationality, though apparently detached from the symbolism and artificial constructs of logic and empirical science, is but founded on the presuppositions of those systems he tried to fault; and challenges the logical possibility of social life, particularly as epistemic intersubjectivity.

Introduction

When Victor Frankl, a survivor of four Nazi Concentration Camps, a philosopher and psychiatrist, began *logotherapy* (therapy through meaning), which champions the possibility of attaining humanness or 'sane humanity,' little would he have suspected that he was encapsulating the yearning of man, of the empirical-analytic sciences (with its Deductive-Nomological Model) and the historical sciences for meaning. Unlike Frankl for whom meaning was located within man, the location of meaning has been narrowed to either the empirical-analytic sciences (experimental) or the social (and behavioral)

sciences today. Furthermore, the social and behavioral sciences have struggled to be patterned in accordance with the founding principles of the experimental sciences. But in Habermas' philosophy of argumentation or communicative rationality (a theory or set of theories that appreciates human reason as an indispensable product of successful human communication), meaning finds itself defined away from the above mentioned fields as one that goes across both fields,[1] namely the *intersubjective-linguistic or public-linguistic* meaning, that is, one other form of meaning. He recognizes the other forms of meaning as non-universal forms of communication, though he gives ontological and methodological superiority and preference to the intersubjective speech-act, which are grammatically regulated.[2] All other signs and symbols, such as gestures and intentions, must be transposed into the colloquial language in order to achieve meaning. But some symbols may resist such transposition, for example, pathological speech or neuroses, dream materials, mystical experiences and symbols.[3]

Habermas and Senses of Meaning

Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) is arguably one of the first major thinkers whose investigation into language laid a foundation for Habermas' communicative rationality. His distinction of a term or complex linguistic construction in terms of *Sinn* (reference) and *Bedeutung* (sense) is notable in this regard. Before Frege, there were similar distinctions. William Ockham (c.1323): the term in mental language linked to a word and its suppositions; Mill (1843), connotation and denotation of any name; Arnauld (1662), an idea and the extension of that idea. Frege's distinction stands out because it presupposes that the semantic value or meaning possessed by any complex linguistic construction arises from the simple ones, which serves as its building blocks; and that this formation of complex language structures from atomic ones is guided by mathematical rules, making for exactness or precision.[4] In other words, meaning, for Frege, is a mathematically rule-governed reality.

What does the sense/reference distinction of Frege mean? *Bedeutung* has been rendered as *meaning* by different translators. Other scholars, like Black and Geach (1952), and Beaney (1997) found *Bedeutung* as *meaning* to be a philosophically deficient translation. They preferred *reference* (or, *denotation* or *designation*) as a more accurate English rendering for *Bedeutung*. Frege's treatment of the notion of *sense* is very minimal as against the notion of *reference*. He likened the *sense* of any linguistic expression to the predicate of an atomic sentence just as reference accords with the single term or subject of an atomic sentence. The *sense* (of one linguistic expression or singular term) is that which carries or contains the mode of presentation; it is responsible for identifying the referent—the object of attention or referred to. It is usually perspectival5 and descriptive in nature, supplying features or characteristics that enables hearers and speakers have insight into what the word (reference or referring word) they hear or speak stands for. The

reference of any singular linguistic expression is any object (value-object) the term or expression (such as 'Plato,' 'mango,' and 'Socrates') stands for or represents; the singular term could only play such representational role because it was linked to that object, or because it describes the object in a very unique way. Does this imply that *reference* takes precedence over *sense?* No. Neither reference nor sense can exist without recourse to the other as none can be found in existence or operation without the presence of the other. They are coterminous with each other: if *Plato* (a singular term) refers to (is a reference of) a particular man who lived in ancient Greece, over two thousand years ago, then the *sense* of the term (Plato) would be what people normally assume to be the properties of (or, belong to) what they identify as Plato.6 So seeing that *sense* and *reference* are interwoven in any atomic linguistic formation, which are systems of arithmetical truths or logical sets[7], we can infer that, for Frege, the meaning (intelligibility) of any single atomic or linguistic construction is mathematical, logical and provable in nature. But Gödel demonstrated that not all mathematical systems are provable.[8]

Whenever meaning *(Sinnverstehen)* is understood as an empirical fact, the result of this understanding is that it turns into a problem of method (scientific model). The aim of this type of meaning – one based upon the empirical sciences – is the realization of objectivity. What is objectivity? It is the determination of meaning by means of calibration so as to expunge the interplay of the problematic of private space and its agencies that defy externalized examination and factual certainty, such as emotions, imagination, ambiguity, sex, body, soul, spirit, and will.[9] Whatever object cannot support a knowledge that is at once neutral, universal, precise, free of ambiguity or ambivalence and clear in structure is not a legitimate element in the process of determining objective knowledge and meaning. It involves "the abstract manipulation of symbols as found in the natural sciences, mathematics and logic .... Meaning itself was thought of and theorized in a way independent of context" as Luntley captures.[10] No matter the mode of articulating the 'facts' of the play especially by way of formalized statements or rigorous theories, we can gain the message only by way of translating it into ordinary language. We can move the foreign configuration into the realm of the familiar; in other words, ordinary language enables understanding, ability to capture meaning. As Habermas puts it: "…metalinguistic rules of constitution are part of formalised languages and with their help we can reconstruct given statements, that is, produce them again ourselves."[11]

With regard to the social sciences (and the behavioral sciences), meaning assumes the status of problem when treated as standing in need of being grasped through fact, that is when one tries to impose the methodology of the natural sciences upon the social sciences. To the extent that it rolls in the ambience of the Normative-Analytic Model, meaning seems to be a settled subject. Without any contravention of right taste, Habermas assumes that the structural ultimacy of meaning is linguistic within an intersubjective spectrum. If man knows, then it is linguistically. This ties up with Ricoeur's position that self-

understanding is always mediated by symbols and the interpretation of these signs and symbols.[12] The interpretation of these symbols is always grasped by individual subjects and thus, their understanding of themselves. Over the years of his philosophical activism, Habermas understands the identification of subjectivism with the philosophy of consciousness – be it as philosophy of mind or phenomenology. In order to avoid the question of privacy and solipsism, he ventured into the philosophy of language (open speech-acts between members of the knowing community). As he puts it:

> *Today the problem of language has taken the place of the traditional problem of consciousness: the transcendental critique of language takes the place of that of consciousness. Wittgenstein's life forms, which correspond to Husserl's lifeworlds, now follow not the rules of synthesis of consciousness as such but rather the roles of the grammar of language games….*[13]

Although he defends the epistemic subject by recognizing the place of the individual, who speaks, he avoids accepting the private angle of the individual whose speech or communication in linguistic intersubjectivity is epistemologically significant. He did this to avoid the question of privacy and solipsism, but defends the view of human language as being transcendental in that even the angles of privacy must be revealed in the open space of communicative speech. To this, I opine that the individual can never bring out his privacy into the open space of dialogue; this is because he alone can have a first-hand experience of his internal space. Like Agbakoba puts it, he is the "final epistemic authority"[14] of his private space.

While reflecting upon Habermas, one appreciates the necessity of the partners to an 'Ideal Speech Situation' having a common understanding of the propositions entered within the intersubjective register. For if there must be "fair play" in dialogue, the participants must be able to contest the veracity of the claims made via assertions. Thus, the participants to an Ideal Speech Situation have to be motivated solely by the desire to attain a consensus about the truth of statements and the validity of norms (meaningfulness, truthfulness, rightness, and sincerity).[15] Irony is one thing that is abhorrent to this environment; for irony, whether poetical or verbal, is known to be an embodiment of at least a double-meaning structure. Irony, for instance, gives room to some level of multiple meanings or ambivalence. Actually, in order to make his work more problematic, he describes as agrammatical any "emplotment" (usage) of symbols that possibly suggests opposite meanings for it is the preservation, at the linguistic plane, of the phenomenon of ambivalence. This ambivalence belongs properly speaking to another institution, which Habermas calls 'prelinguistic symbolism' – a symbolism that suggests the possibility of two meanings.[16] This will mean that one is locating ambivalence in language; and ambivalence belongs, in the Habermas' view, to other institutions like prelinguistic symbolism.

> *Representations through the opposite, or words with antithetical meanings, of course, are not merely examples of agrammaticality; they are probably the record as well of primal situations involving behavioural and attitudinal ambivalence, an ambivalence which has become chronic with the dedifferentiation of the impulse system and the breakdown of class-specific responses, and which has been caught up and stabilized through prelinguistic symbolism.*[17]

Prelinguistic symbols are emotionally laden symbols and rigidly focus on definite scenes. It makes no discrimination between gestural expression and linguistic symbols. As for him, communicative reason is very distinct in the precise clarification it makes about words and communication and so throws out ambivalence of any form. But irony has been a part and parcel of all known linguistic forms and human cultures.

Nevertheless, Habermas would want us to believe in the possibility of a one-meaning nature of every proposition as the proper function of language as propositions engaged in communication. Even though he purports to develop his communicative reason from the standpoint of colloquial communication or ordinary language, one of the major difficulties to his work arises as regards what sort of ordinary language was engaged in understanding his theory. Ordinary language is possessed as a language-manner that is employed in everyday usage; it is non-technical and non-logical as against the artificial language, which is nothing but logic, specifically symbolic logic. The structure of his ordinary language is unique on the ground that it demands 'monotony' in meaning to arise out of every declarative statement. This form of natural language runs radically against the popular understanding of language (that is, natural language as metaphorical). If there are things, events, entities that run transculturally, one of them is the metaphoricity of language. C.S. Lewis, writing in acquiescence with this, avers that 'human beings are incurably metaphorical" just as I.A. Richards views metaphor as "the omnipresent principle of language".[18] Probably, Habermas had to devise this idea to prevent the interlocutors from being evasive and thus, beef up the purity of knowledge gained within the Ideal Speech Situation. While this may have underlined Habermas' motive, he had no right to misrepresent the weave of language found to be transculturally pervading and accepted as such. This then evokes some questions: do men intend being evasive? Or is it language that compels men into evasiveness? These questions may have to wait for considerations outside this work. Suffice it to say that whatever way we follow the problems of ambiguity raised above, it will remain largely unsolved in that it is inherently enigmatic, probably in conformity with the etymological meaning of the Latin word for escape ('*evado*'). To study the problem of the metaphoricity of language is a requisite condition for appreciating these questions in detail. R. Sokolowski offers some possible direction in solving this problem:

> *…to recognise that there are two aspects to a situation is a mere rudimentary*

act of thinking than is inference. It is also a mark of greater intelligence … for example to appreciate that in difficult situation there is something insidiously desirable and to have a special flavour of both the threat and the attraction is a raw act of insight … This seat of thinking, this dawning of distinction, is at the origin of the categories that make up our common knowledge.[19]

Sokolowski's bifurcated view of every situation is narrow and dangerous because it attenuates human life. Human life cannot be faultlessly dualized in value just like two-value logic since every metaphorical incitement is a pronounced *testamentum* of man's non-factual, non-calibrated and seemingly limitless, but productive 'habits of thoughts'.[20]

Habermas and Colloquial Language

Following immediately from the form of Habermas' ordinary language philosophy are some problems against the system. It is one about serious inconsistency, the conflation of the identity of artificial language with natural language. The proponents of artificial language, like Bertrand Russell, Kurt Gödel, the early Wittgenstein, Charles Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and others held that philosophizing with everyday language was problematic since it was defective, ambiguous, vague, misleading and contradictory (at times). Thus, there arose the need for an ideal language for philosophizing to be constructed in the hope of attaining a knowledge that was characteristically precise, free of ambiguity and clear in structure. The model of this language was found in logic and symbolic logic that Aristotle began and was developed by modern logicians, respectively. Only pure, essential and universal knowledge, which is nothing less than the Cartesian 'clear and distinct ideas', ensues from this type of knowledge against which possibilities Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In truth, unambiguous, clearly structured knowledge is precisely the type of knowledge Habermas seeks to establish even to the extent of mutilating the generally held, tested and sound experience of natural language. Explicitly, he wants us to demonstrate disinterestedness in symbolic logic or artificial language, and he argues very well along this line in the theory on the universal pragmatism of language found in "What is Universal Pragmatics?" This argument is replicated in *The Theory of Communicative Action* and in "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality."

One of the things thrown out by communicative rationality is emotion; Habermas states that "pre-linguistic symbols are heavily laden with emotion and centre in each case on definite scenes."[21] Logic, as known from Aristotle and modern logic, prevents the entry of emotion and anything considered different from reason, vis-à-vis ambiguity – amphiboly, accent, equivocation, imagery, force and so, enables pure, objective, and essential knowledge or ideas. Another way of expressing it would be to say that logic provides a neutral language that is not emotionally-loaded and escapes the possibility of emotional distortion. The entire fabric of logic is built upon the presupposition that

emotion distracts from clear and precise knowledge and that while reasoning in a cool, objective and unbiased way (as logic is expected to cause) is desired, any surge in passion would simply becloud reason and render objectivity difficult, if not impossible. For Habermas, dispassionate and intersubjective knowledge that occurs in and around communication (with other people), the environment for proper knowledge, is sound, valid and beyond 'definite scenes' (that is, universal). In other words, communicative reason will occur as pure formality or pure thought. It seems to call for the arrangement of human communication along this line of artificiality, though he names his method 'informal logic.'[22]

> *Participants in argumentation have to presuppose, in general, that the structure of their communication, by virtue of features that can be described in purely formal terms, **excludes all force** - whether it arises from within the process of reaching understanding itself or influences it from the outside – except the force of the better argument and thus that it also **excludes, on their part, all motives** except that of a cooperative search for the truth.*[23] ***(emphasis mine)***

This means that any process of knowledge that encapsulates the emotions of man is an illegitimate part of epistemic interchange. Communicative reason upholds this posture. At this juncture, we may state that communicative reason assumes the identity of two historically competing forms of knowledge: formal logic and ordinary language. His argument that emotions are expelled in the open space of consensual (dialogical) reasoning is too superficial and demonstrates nothing because the character of ordinary (natural) language also defines the structural description of 'informal logic.'

Communicative action, supposedly based upon colloquial language, determines what enters into the 'flesh-pot' of consensus (intersubjective or 'democratic' reason) by the instrumentality of pure logic referred to in the above quotation as 'purely formal terms', or pure formality. Pure formality is generally considered intransigent against all types of possible forces that may try to enter into the process of argumentation such as emotion, imagination, musical sound, sexual harassment, status difference, threats and physical abuse; the list can be extended to include anything other than the force of better argument.

What is better argument? It is argument achieved in an Ideal Speech Situation where the interlocutors have equal opportunity to participate in terms of asserting, defending or questioning whatever factual or normative claim is made and is all geared to the attainment of one goal, 'truth' (of statement) or 'validity' (of norms). Truth is the only valid motivation for communicative reason. All other motives have no place in Habermas' theory. This mastery eliminates all other motives and makes all argumentations movements in truth. The force of argumentation lies in its being a strategy at truth achievement. Yet, *truth and validity are symptomatic of symbolic logic*, which Habermas, avowedly, does not pursue

or intend to pursue in his partially developed 'logic of argumentation' or 'informal logic.'[24] Habermasian logic is fraught with problems very much like formal logic in that it seeks truth on the basis of transcendental figures assumed to be inherently lodged in the fabric of colloquial communication employed in consensus reason. These transcendental features assumed to be present within colloquial communication are the claims to intelligibility, rightness, truthfulness, and meaningfulness; they are transcendental, not because they are outside human experience, but because as validity claims they can be raised in any natural language, that is they cut across or can penetrate any ordinary language. They may be described as 'translinguistic' and 'transcultural' – translinguistic, for they are not proper to any specific colloquial language; 'transcultural', for they can be raised in any cultural milieu. In artificial language, 'transcendental' is actually conceived as being beyond the defects, limitations and imprecision of the language of daily experience, which is ordinary language. These 'defects' have been barred from communicative reason – it is supposedly built upon the touchstone of unambiguous and monolithic meaning per declarative sentence. Thus, communicative reason is the conflation of colloquial language with symbolic logic.

Knowledge or understanding, for Habermas, is consensus or intersubjectivity in contested argumentation; it is always the project of meaning or representation of thought in open language. It is not necessarily the act of giving or receiving message (information).[25] Habermas' presentation of intersubjectivity seems fallacious because no concrete intersubjectivity exists. If intersubjectivity is a reality, then it must exist as a concrete entity (specific, not necessarily a material entity). But meaning or thought production is engineered by individuals and occurs within concrete individual humans, not any group of persons that have no faculty of knowledge. For this reason, Alfred North Whitehead argues that a social construct like intersubjectivity being given a function it does not possess is to be given a concrete status, which is fallacious. He calls it 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness'[26]—this fallacy values the whole as concrete while the individual is an abstraction. In other words, intersubjective understanding has no concreteness; it is an illusion, for understanding is always an individual's act. Inferentially, only individual human beings possess the faculty of understanding. Meaning at the end of the day is generated within individuals and their private faculties of thinking and understanding.[27] Even when we speak of the parties to an argument being in agreement concerning the understanding of a statement (the participants are expected to possess the same unambiguous sense of the expression in question by Habermas), we have no independent, fail-safe standard for confirming the possession of a unitary sense among the counterparts. We find ourselves challenged or baulked by the ineluctable 'surplus' or 'remainder' nature of language as Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Jacques Lecercle acquiesces to, respectively.[28] Every language use, therefore, always has an angle that eludes our total grasp.

Interactions of assorted forms can only proceed on the presupposition of the presence of a common ground between the partakers to a discourse. The degree of uncertainty of the common ground boundary varies with participants; it is higher among strangers than with friends. This common ground must be understood to be more than the shared experience of a specific linguistic exchange right to the moment of utterance. It is "a product of the interpenetrating biographies of the participants, of which common involvement in a particular ongoing interaction constitutes only a part."[29] Every speaker speaks from the repertoire of his historical linguistic build, which is not limited to that moment's interactive experience. Thus, imaginatively, he brings the past to bear on the present and so there is nothing like a pure and fresh present. There is only an affected present in man's earthly experience. As for the hearer, he interprets what he hears with the aid of the past and this imaginative work demands that he finds a way of bringing into his linguistic biography the elements of the moments that do not match with his historical record, for example through repetition. Although Habermas would expect his linguo-transcendental system to bypass emotion, the biographies we, each, bring to our dialogues are usually heavy with nostalgic feelings.

The experiences of human beings at linguistic exchange – speech acts – have shown that men are still capable of not betraying, through speech, the intentions of their hearts. Human beings are most capable of hiding other intentions they may have from open speech. Habermas' theory of *Universal Pragmatics* can be no sure proof of a universal law capable of extracting intentionality. It is not always true that what is spoken is always an act of thought breaking through the space of 'privacy' into the public glare. Polanyi holds that there are forms of knowledge that are not conceptual due to a lack of boundary. In my opinion, the inability to put a thing into words or to fully express it in words does not mean the existence of non-conceptual knowledge. Rather, we may adduce other reasons. For instance, the person concerned may have a very small range of vocabulary or may desire to withhold some data from the open sphere.

Jacques Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* explains that the process of poetic invention involves among other things the emotions and imagination. Several scholars have explained the process too. Actually, there is no linguistic study that can lay claim to employing textual elements, for example words and sentences that do not defy meaning (its fixity or delimitation), that is, lay the intentions of a speaker all in the open. The entire essay, "What is Universal Pragmatics?" and known forms of logic have not succeeded in beating the metaphoric nature of natural language into which artificial language, too, has to be translated in order for it to be understood. Habermas' system runs into this problem due to its neglect of an important aspect of the human subject, consciousness except as public language or speech-act. According to Bernard Lonergan, most views upon human subjectivity are inaccurate or mistaken to the extent that one does not take into consideration the operations of consciousness and its interrelations. To study

the human subject is to study oneself in as much as one is conscious.[30]

The incomplete nature of Habermas' rationality must render the attempt to reach truth impossible because consensus or ideal reason as the path of arrival at truth cannot occur simply on its own. A variety of antecedents ranging from considerations of cultural traditions to the distribution of material resources come into play according to David Held. They have significant influence upon the possibility of rational discourse and the creation of a free society. The theory of Ideal Speech Situation does not account for these antecedent factors.

Assuming that an agreement is reached within an intersubjective space such as Habermas' communicative reason, there is no proof that the agreed posture is necessarily the truth. One direct view that has been read from this form of truth is 'democratic' or 'majority' concept of truth since it appears unreal to expect everybody to agree on a position. The opinion of the majority holds as the yardstick of truth. But a majority opinion does not always come out as the truth or true reflection of circumstances. Sometime in history, majority of the people seem to have viewed the earth as the centre of the universe. Galileo later showed that the earth was not the centre of the universe, but the sun. A thing is not identified as true by the majority or popular opinion. "Truth is not to be measured by majority opinion,"[31] according to Karol Wojtyla. Popularity does not make a thing true. It might appeal to us that so far as the subject is factual, then the agreement is corroborated by the fact. Quite against this view, Hume argues that no number of particular observations collected can verify any general statement. Karl Popper, to this, adds: there is no way a general statement can be partially justified or rendered as probable by particular instances of confirmation owing to the existence of many false theories that have indefinitely large number of confirming instances.[32]

Matters Arising

A) Greek Tradition in Habermas

The assumption of logic as the paradigm of knowledge has a long-standing tradition beginning with the Greeks. From that tradition, Habermas developed his consensus rationality. This rationality is based on everyday language and agreement among interlocutors, who assess and employ (declarative) statements. But as we have demonstrated before now, it is different from symbolic logic by way of nomenclature; in other words, the aim, content and operationality remain largely unchanged. As Ernst Cassirer notes, '*logos*' (λόος) suggests and supports the idea of a fundamental identity between the act of speech and the act of thought. How? Speech is constituted by words and propositions; and *logos* (λόος) means 'word' and 'proposition' in Greek thought. From Cassirer's exposition, we can deduce that to know speech is to know thought. The structural content of speech is nothing else than the structural content of thought. Any

attempt at studying thought could, therefore, be done by studying speech. For Cassirer, writing before Habermas, grammar and logic were conceived as concerned with the same subject, though they were different fields of knowledge. They were concerned with the question of the independence and 'self-contained' nature of language. Sapir claims that language is probably the most self-contained, the most massively resistant of all social phenomena. It is easier to kill it off than to disintegrate its individual form.[33] Habermas accepts this theory of the self-contained nature of language and from it develops his 'transcendental' properties of consensus speech-action—validity claims and their redemption.

In accordance with the argument that the theory of communicative reason is, in the main, purely a matter of name alteration and is internally operationalized by the nuts and bolts of logic, we would like to note also that this system is close to Wittgensteinian 'logical atomism', at least from the point that language contains within itself other things that could later be deduced and bypasses that deduced from it. In the early Wittgenstein (logical system), language essentialism is narrowed to a tribe. In Habermas' rationality, it cuts across the labyrinth of all human speech-types (actual and possible). The difference is that the separation between grammar and logic, as Cassirer notes, was eventually not taken into the account of speech by Habermas. For M. Heidegger, "the λόος was principally grasped as "proposition" (ἀπόφχυσις) and the fundamental structure of its forms and elements was elaborated. Furthermore, the foundation of grammar was sought in logic…."[34] We make to observe that Cassirer may be right to claim that logic and grammar have the same subject matter but he failed to show how they differed from each other. In Heidegger, the difference lies in logic being the foundation of grammar. In Habermas, logic is supposedly jettisoned while grammar was upheld. Yet, the preceding arguments have demonstrated that Habermas' rationality is a mix-bag of both logic and grammar. The study of grammar is nothing more than the examination of language as a closed system. It involves the relatedness of words in speech by way of propositions. So, for the Greeks, man is a being of speech in essence. For Martin Heidegger, he is 'the living being which speaks.'[35] Linguists view man along this line as strikingly the 'talking species' (*homo loquens*) over and above the 'rational' or 'knowing' species (*homo sapiens*).[36] So, Habermas's reliance on 'speech' as a built-in-system and as the essentially definitive epistemological system in man is a result of this long history.

B) On Intersubjectivity and Social Life

Discussing the possibility of objectivity, even as intersubjectivity, becomes pertinent here, however briefly, due to a major concern an earlier claim ('a thing is not identified as true by the majority of popular opinion') above may engender. Is objectivity, even of the intersubjective version possible, and under what conditions? To answer this question, it is

important to note that this paper furthers a position hinted at in "Is an Unexamined Life not Worth Living? Problematizing the Foundation of Doing Philosophy,"[37] namely the impossibility of objectivity (including that furnished by intersubjective agreement[38]) and may be said to, ultimately, negate social life. It argues that it is an erroneous contraption; 'erroneous' because objectivity is an impossibility just as intersubjectivity is an impossibility. In line with this thought, Alfred North Whitehead states that it is fallacious to hold the general (whether as whole or humanity) as the real, and the individual as an abstraction or unreal. For him, this is "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" – mistaking abstraction for reality and vice versa.[39]

The above comment could trigger undue restiveness. If objectivity (and its variant, 'intersubjectivity') is impossible, how do we explain social life and the fact that man lives in community? Or, are the subject-matters of the various fields of study in the social sciences ethereal or subterranean? Social life may be viewed as a space that encapsulates love, hatred, death, anxiety, religion (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, traditional or indigenous religions or nature worship), health, economics, sports, will-power, imaginative creations or arts, peace, conflict, politics and education take place; it is not a product of objectivity neither is it the brainchild of intersubjectivity. To us, *objectivity* and *intersubjectivity* are mere abstractions, trademarks of scientific methodology. And abstraction is the operational mode of logicality, scientificity and artificial intelligence but not of the concrete social sphere where variations may be noted. Social life as the relatedness of *subjectivities* (human beings) may be properly perceived as modified or transformed epistemology, one not defined by artificiality, that is one that encapsulates the various elements that constitute the social sphere as noted by Chukwuelobe in 'Heidegger and Transformation of Language at the End of Philosophy' such as 'death,' 'silence,' 'poetry,' 'dark courses,' 'Spirit,' 'conscience,' 'concealment,' 'un-concealment,' 'presence' and 'absence.'[40] Philosophy in the form of artificial construct (logicality and scientificity) cannot capture the social sphere in terms of oppositions and differences because the law of identity that founds it is monolithic, rejecting contradictions and whatever may be viewed as non-logic or 'nonrational'[41] such as the elements itemized above. But non-logic is a nomenclature for representing anything different from logic, though not necessarily mutually exclusive in nature. Ontological entities like the human emotion, concealment, imagination, faith, spirit, will, and power, for example, cannot be rightly termed contradictions because they are not mental realities; they are removed from the frame of objects that submit to logical descriptions, or ideas in the mind. Only mental entities may be descriptively handled as rational or irrational, logical or illogical. Let us also note that not all oppositions are necessarily contradictory in nature. In the social sphere, political parties may be opposed to each other on ideological grounds without ceasing to co-exist in the same society. In fact, opposition, in this sense, is necessary for societal development and organization. So, only opposition of the radical type – opposition as mutual

exclusiveness or contradiction – is traditionally captured by philosophy as logic. The *thesis – antithesis – synthesis* structure of Hegel seems to demonstrate this point. For Hegel, a *thesis* is opposed by an *antithesis,* not in such a way as to exclude each other or debar interaction. Rather, the opposition functions in such a productive way that a *synthesis* is borne out of the encounter between *thesis* and *antithesis.* From these insights, not all oppositions are contradictory in nature. We may, thus, say that there are two kinds of oppositions: contradictory opposition and non-contradictory opposition.[42]

Intersubjectivity is usually raised as a way of preserving the concept of objectivity (logical and scientific), though modified to provide like Habermas would say, a form of 'legitimation' of intellectual productivity and stamp meaning-production with some form of validity and soundness. This project throws caution to the wind by risking intellectual integrity. Intersubjectivity, a forum supposed to lie beyond man's private space, is not a faculty of knowledge, of speech, of writing, and ultimately, of meaning, and lies within specific subjects. If a meeting point exists between subjects, it is within the mental structures of particular subjects, not a generality [whether considered as a group of human beings such as a corporate personality (a notional being devised in the legal sphere) or the entire human race]. Logically speaking, philosophy cannot handle the coming together of different human beings as that would lie beyond the ability of its interpretive tool called logic (and its three laws of thoughts and the fallacies) and scientificity (to the extent it relies upon it). This may sound absurd until closely probed.

When we recall that philosophy expunges certain elements from its ambience as mentioned above, then we can recognize the limitations of philosophy; firstly, it can abstract from real human experiences, but those abstractions will remain dissociated from the real world of man, and secondly, since it excludes certain realities that define human existence and experiences, it means that it is a tool that is biased from the very start of discourse, and thirdly, this exclusion means it cannot judge, assess, or process the entire structure of human experiences. If it is incapable of processing the gamut of the social structure, how can it produce a knowledge that is at once sound, invariable and unbiased?

Because Habermas' rationality is designed in the intersubjective format,[43] its failure to explain and proffer workable solutions to social challenges [like Islamic terrorism and the increasing collapse of patriotism among some members and regions of African societies like Nigeria and in Europe as seen in the level of allegiance to the codes of Islam than of the state amongst Western converts to Islam, and the conversion of Europeans to Islam[44], even the rising interest in and commitment to extraneous covenants (blood-covenants) forged within esoteric, magical, and nature-based religious systems] that confront contemporary societies may be appreciated. Islam, as an expression of voluntarist ego, fundamentally falls under non-logic. Habermas' rationality cannot capture it because it is defined in terms of logicality. Objectivity as logicality and scientificity cannot capture the *bones* and *blood* of human life; one even wonders if it can capture the reality of human thought as such

without any tinge of artificiality.

Since intersubjectivity lies outside the social forum, we cannot even discuss social life (the intermingling of, or the participation of specific subjects with each other whose identities remain intact) as a logical object. To do that logic must be re-structured to capture the elements that objective knowledge jettisoned though these elements constitute human subjectivity. Such elements as emotion, imagination, will, sex, body, power, faith or belief and things not expressible (as opined by Hodgson[45]) were suppressed from the space of discourse by the defining presuppositions of logic.[46]

Although intersubjectivity may be identified with psychological interactionism, they are not exactly the same thing. Unlike psychological interactionism that may find support in the scientific writings of Karl R. Popper and J.C. Eccles, epistemic intersubjectivity is an illusion because it occurs at no point *in rei*. Meaning as such occurs only in individual human subjects, not in between them. Epistemic interactionism (as the meeting and the mingling of ideas) tends to occur within specific beings; if there is a meeting point of various human ideas, it is within personal private spaces.[47] So, objectivity, even of the intersubjective type, may not only be unreliable, misleading and an impossibility; it is but an absurd contraption.

Conclusion

Although the incompatibility of reason and emotion in Habermas' thesis is still a sticking point, it is worth stating that not quite unlike the Greeks, λόoς ('logic') is laid at the root of grammar as the study of human performance in speech. To examine λόoς is to examine speech and thought; to know speech is to remember the indebtedness of grammar or speech to logic. So, logic cannot afford to be an inconsistent system since its being a closed system enables it to defend its claim as the foundation of consistency; within its fibers one may deduce whatever exists and whatever is true. Whatever lies outside the ambience of logic is carefully tagged illogical or irrational. A closed system is a given and does not succumb to the vagaries of life like emotions, and the imagination. Logic shares this same presupposition with the physical sciences (that is, the world is a closed system of matter, open only to quantification and calibration), and communicative reason shares in this closeness too. So, rationality also holds that everything has to be opened up in language if it is an existent and real item because it is only in language that reality can be known and understood. It is only in language – a metacommunicatively rational language – that we can know truly. Therefore, the history of rationality up to Habermas has failed to explain the human mode of thinking befittingly and calls for modifications. For Habermas' rationality to be relevant, it must be modified to encapsulate the entire structure of individuals and community of individuals like imagination, will, faith, belief systems, love, silence, poetry, emotion, body, and intuition. The outcome will be something akin to Fayemi Kazeem's humanistic paradigm of rationality[48] where the well-being of the human

being as a whole is respected, and no part subverted. Then can the possibility of truth-determination be ascertained, and intellectually sound groundwork (beyond references to mere flexed spectres and emotionalism) for defining and sustaining the rights of human beings, even the marginalized such as children and women initiated.

Notes

1. Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences,* trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988), 89-170.

2. Ibid, 117.

3. Jurgen Habermas, "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality," in *The Hermeneutics Reader,* ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: The Continuum Publishers Company, 1985), 302-306.

4. Richard Mendelsohn, *The Philosophy of Gottlob Frege* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press 2005), xv, xviii, 13.

5. Ibid, 34.

6. Ibid, xv.

7. Ibid, xviii.

8. Ibid, xviii; J. van Jejienport, ed., *From Frege to Godel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931* (Cambridge, 1967), 593; Jacob Bronowski, The Identity of Man (New York: 1971), 121-123.

9. Emmanuel Ibuot, "Is an Unexamined Life not Worth Living? Problematizing the Foundation of Doing Philosophy," *Uche 16* (2010): 134-139.

10. Michael Luntley, *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

11. Habermas, "*On Hermeneutics' Claim,*" 294.

12. Paul Ricoeur, accessed June 05, 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu/ricoeur/

13. Habermas, *On the Logic,* 117.

14. J.C.A. Agbakoba, *Theories of Mind: A Case for Interactionism* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 2001), 11.

15. J.M. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 50-51.

16. Jurgen Habermas, "*On Hermeneutics' Claim,*" 308.

17. Ibid, 14n.

18. Gordon Jarvis, *Bloomsbury Grammar Guide* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1993), 150-153.

19. Robert Sokolowski, "National and Artificial Intelligence," *Journal of American Academy of Arts and Science 117*, no. 1 (1998): 60.

20. A.N. Akwanya, *Language and Habits of Thought,* 2nd ed. (Mgbowo, Enugu: New

Generation Books, 2005), 148.

21. Habermas, "*On Hermeneutics' Claim*," 308.

22. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization of Society, Vol. 1*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 22-24.

23. Ibid, 25.

24. Ibid, 22-24.

25. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944), 25.

26. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World: Lowell Lectures* (New York: The New American Library, 1925), 52, 54-59; William J. MacDonald, ed., *New Catholic Encyclopedia, XI* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book, 1967), 621-622. It is worth noting that the ideas on two kinds of opposition, the question of objectivity and its implication for social life were initiated in the MA dissertation of the first author in 2007.

27. This viewpoint was triggered off by some unique ideas found in a work titled "Habermasian Logic and the Search for Holistic Knowledge," *Nsukka Journal of Humanities, Vol. 22,* No. 2, 2014, pp. 51-51.

28. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 55; Jean-Jacques Lecercle, The Violence of Language (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 5-6.

29. Malcolm Coulthard, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis,* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1995), 106.

30. Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Longman, Darton & Todd, 1971), 14-20; Marc E. Smith, "Essential and Effective Freedom: Reflections Based on the Work of Bernard Lonergan," *20th World Congress of Philosophy Action*, accessed June 05, 2017, http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Acti/ActiSmit.htm

31. Kevin Ugwu, *The Sexual Revolution: A Twentieth Century Mistake* (Lagos: Criterion Publisher, 1999), 34.

32. Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 5&6* (New York: The Macmillan Company, The Free Press & Collier-Macmillan, 1967), 399.

33. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 126.

34. Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being,* introduced by Werner Brock, 3rd Edition (London: Vision Press, 1968), 58.

35. Ibid, 54.

36. P. H. Matthews, *Linguistics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 14.

37. Ibuot, "Is an Unexamined Life not Worth Living?," 129-139.

38. J.C.A. Agbakoba, "Logical Quantification of Values Religio-ethical Systems and Globalization. A Preliminary Evaluation of the European Scene," *Religion in a Changing Europe: Between Pluralism and Fundamentalism. Selected Problem,* ed.

M. Marczewska-Rytko (Lublin: Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, 2003), 44; J. C.A. Agbakoba, "Philosophy and Development: Metatheoretical and Methodological Consideration" *Uche 11* (2005): 26, 32; Habermas, *On the Logic*, 92-94.

39. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World, 52,* 54-59; MacDonald, 621-622.

40. Matthew C. Chukwuelobe, "Heidegger and Transformation of Language at the End of Philosophy," *Uche 16* (2010): 114, 116, 122, 124.

41. Ed L. Miller, *Questions that Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy*, 4th ed. (The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1996), 11.

42. This work adopts two kinds of opposition initiated in the MA work by the first author in 2007.

43. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, 10,* 42; Habermas "What is Universal Pragmatics?," *Communication and the Evolution of Society,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 3; Bernstein, Recovering Ethical Life, 50-51.

44. Soeren Kern, "Europeans Increasingly Converting to Islam," accessed June 05, 2017, http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/2790/europeans-converting-to-islam; Soeren Kern, 'Germany: "Islamists Want to Bring Jihad to Europe,"' *New English Review*, accessed June 05, 2017, https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3298/germany-islamists-jihad-europe; "'He was brainwashed': Desperate Belgian father searches for son fighting in Syria," last modified accessed June 05, 2017, http://www.rt.com/news/europeans-fight-syria-assad-343; "500 Europeans fight against Assad in Syria," accessed June 05, 2017, http://www.rt.com/news/belgian-father-son-syria-433/

45. David Hodgson, *The Mind Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 17.

46. Ibuot, "Is an Unexamined Life not Worth Living?," 132-139.

47. Agbakoba, *Theories of Mind*, 11; Coulthard, An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, 106; Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World, 52*, 54-59.

48. Fayemi Kazeem, "Proverbism and the Problem of Rationality in African Philosophy," *Uche 16* (2010): 87-88.