CHAPTER V

CRITICAL POLEMICS - I: HABERMAS' CRITIQUE OF RORTY AND DERRIDA: RESPONSE, COUNTER-CRITIQUE AND COUNTER-RESPONSE

The purpose of this chapter is to bring out a critique of Postmodern suspension of knowledge, communication and meaning through Habermas's re-assertion of the normative framework of communicative rationality. The main questions that I ask here are, whether the postmodern claim of holistic function of knowledge take care of the possibility of meaningful communication and whether modern concept of formal-procedural rationality explain the possibility of fuzzy forms of communication, that is, communication through unstable contexts of meaning? Though the two questions try to situate an answer in the other camp, these do not close the possibility of a fresh look into their own perspective in
meeting the uncomfortable situation pointed out by the logic of the other camp. Therefore, the questions are not merely directed towards the Achilles’ hill of the opponent camp, but they are also meant for some searching by way of addressing the ‘objection’ raised by other camps. To draw out a picture of what went between Habermas, Rorty and Derrida, this chapter focuses on Habermas’s critique of the other camp by taking his critique of Rorty and Derrida separately and then charting out Rorty and Derrida responses. Next, the chapter focuses upon Rorty and Derrida’s critique of Habermas taking each at a time and charting out Habermas’s responses to them. Finally, the chapter leaves open the scope of conclusively drawing a common thematic from this sequence of critique, Response, Counter-Critique and Counter-Response. The chapter tentatively concludes without reducing the battle lines into compromises and indicates at the open field of interpretation. For the purpose of the thesis, I draw the broad implications from the battle lines drawn between Modern and Postmodern critique of
knowledge by way of citing the irresolvable issues than by offering straight jacketted solutions.

**Habermas' 'Crisis’ Point of View**

Habermas' basic presupposition that the development of language is isomorphic to the development of community produces the idea that normative structure of the community finds its place in the very structure of language. Habermas' social theory aims at establishing this isomorphism by negotiating the divergence of developments in community and language, the former got differentiated into distinct spheres of cognitive, moral and aesthetic, while the latter assumed three different roles in correspondence with such a differentiation. But there are 'systemic' forces that integrate three different spheres necessitating that the language plays an unifying role through its various uses. Such a role of language brings forth an immanent critique of differentiation of spheres of society in terms of knowledge and action and goes for a re-construction of the life-world meanings, the basic stratum of normative structure of the society. Therefore Habermas posits a crisis of differentiation to be met by reconstruction of
meanings in language and his project consists of these two: reciprocal and interlinked poles. Interestingly, Habermas considers that the possibility of overcoming the differentiation of sphere through reconstruction in language re-suscitates an agenda of emancipation in the heart of modern social systems. Such an agenda for Habermas is worth pursuing both philosophically and politically.

In one of the poles where differentiation of spheres produces the threat of disintegration of society at large, Habermas assigns the role of mediation to philosophy, which could be possibly performed by it if it can ensure the conditions of differentiation are properly negotiated through some universal norms that found the society. Such a mediative role involves a critique of the rationality of differentiation compounded with a re-affirmation of those fundamental norms that can re-integrate the differentiated sphere. Both these aspects are rivetted together in Habermas' singular project of an unending print of modernity taking two different turns: one, in the form of an immanent/inside critique of differentiation/fragmentation, and the other, in the form
of reformulating these fundamental and common norms that are responsible for sharing of a common medium of communication that unites all the diverse factors and interest in the very act of communication. These two directions of critique are aimed at uniting the cognitive, moral and aesthetic dimensions of modern social life, which could only be known through its objectified nature and not through its essence as available in metaphysics. Knowledge of such an objectified nature of the life-world acts as the basis of reproduction of structures of life-world in communication. This is how Habermas grants a transcendental status to 'communication' and develops a 'leap of faith' in the potential of communicative action to arrive at mutual understanding between every member of the society through recognition of criticizable validity claims in equally participating in communication.²

Question arises on Habermas' 'leap of faith' in ascribing 'communication' the role of simultaneously binding up differentiated sphere of society and reproduction of structures of life world that implies a 'transcendental' role of language. By adopting such a
point of view, Habermas advances a critique of all those philosophers who do not envisage this kind of convergence between differentiation of society leading to a single communicative end of mutual understanding. For example, Habermas makes a critique of Rorty's notion of incommensurable discourses engendered by different criterion of rationality and his priority on belief to knowledge to which 'purposive action and linguistic communication play a qualitatively different role'. This critique of Habermas aims at counterposing the antifoundational postmodern stance of radical incommensurability between discourses and its abandonment of knowledge in favour of a freewheeling network of belief. Therefore two perspectives come at daggers drawn to each other, one, Habermas thesis of unending modernity carrying the possibility of discourses and the other, that of a radical postmodern possibility of recovering the human subject in the freewheeling of language. But this postmodern project gets divided into various strands like (i) denial of 'historical progress of human subject' (ii) confining human subject within a tradition, say, within liberalism (iii) engaging human subject within a process of endless self-overcoming. Habermas makes a
critique of all such strands because they surface a crisis of meaning of self-understanding and communication and neutralizes them in a project of normative re-integration of differentiated spheres.

**Critique of Rorty and Rorty's Possible Defenses**

Habermas makes a critique of Rorty pragmatic project of assuming 'unlimited freedom to convert the unproblematic background knowledge of our own culture' into objectified action and use of language. This leads to standards by which philosophy is criticized. These standards are taken from the self-sufficient routinized form of life in which philosophy happen to survive for now and gives a credo to Rorty for implanting such a standard. Habermas points at the possible consequences of such an implanting, such as a strategic differentiation between a narrowly objectivated science based upon reliable consensus and the other area of human sciences only interpret the world only through a holistic rational assumption of linkages between differentiated aspects of life. Such an abyss, for Habermas, marks a farewell to Philosophy. Rorty's celebration of such an 'abyss' in
term of 'interesting and fruitful disagreement' emanating from incommensurable discourses and his characterization of such a situation as edifying is debunked by Habermas. In his language,

Such Philosophical edification enjoys the benefits of all three types of farewell: therapeutic relief, heroic overcoming and hermeneutic ranking. It combines the inconspicuously subversive force of leisure with an elitist notion of creative linguistic imagination and with the wisdom of ages.¹

But the moot epistemic question that Habermas raises is that how can Rorty think of a community without having a consensus-building approach through rational argumentation in speech? Habermas has precisely pointed out Rorty's abandonment of criteria of truth and validity, even though he foresees a community based upon mutual agreement and understanding. But Rorty's quip 'edifying philosophers do not offer argument' is further debunked by Habermas, when in exploring the grounds of disagreement, he says,

Convictions can contradict one another only when those who are concerned with problems
define them in a similar way, believe them to be in need of resolution and want to decide issue on the basis of good reasons. But for Rorty a mere agreement on what is true, good or right has to believed is sufficient to hold a point of view, instead of resolution of differences of such views through good reasons. Contrastingly, for Habermas there is no other way to reach an agreement except by way of making oneself a party to the agreement 'on the basis of good reasons' which shall also serve the purpose of resolution of disagreements. Further, for Habermas, to raise a validity claim is to proclaim, 'This is so generally and not just for me or for us' and it is to point 'beyond the provincial agreements of the specific local contexts', while for Rorty 'belief are in touch with reality' which shows 'the causal, non-intentional, non-representational link between us and the rest of universe' and ascribes a pragmatic preference of describing belief in their own chosen way rather than the way the world is. Habermas contradicts such a casual and context bound agreement by pointing out that Rorty cannot 'consistently replace the implicitly normative conception of valid argument' with the descriptive concept of
'argument held to be true by us at this time' and in doing so, Rorty commit 'objectivitic fallacy'. In critiquing such a fallacy Habermas invokes the notion of a valid argument, presupposing 'a moment of unconditional' that makes an argument valid. It goes this way: either one has accepted the argument of someone else and sublated her own or vice versa and accepted the force of an argument as valid without conditions. The moments of validity brings in such a notion of unconditionality, without which an argument cannot acquire the status of validity. This notion goes beyond 'argument in a specific context' or even beyond a basic anthropological trust assumed to exist in a human society. Ironically enough, 'the notion of unconditionedness' comes close to Rorty's acceptance of an 'evidence transcendent notion of truth pace Davidson, even though he refuses to admit 'inner structure' of the 'true' sentences. For Rorty, the 'moment of unconditionedness' is not a condition that transcends 'human capacities' of recognising a statement to be true or false. Rorty's notion of 'evidence-transcendent' is borne out of two epistemic concerns: (i) not allowing a scheme of truth that makes particular instances 'true', and (ii) not allowing any tertia like
'states of affairs' or 'definition' to snoop between text and world. Going by such concerns, Rorty blurrs the distinction between subject and object, appearance and reality, scheme and content and this is how Rorty's holistic talk about agreement within a larger community stems out of the assumption of an always already coherence between belief of each other and between belief and world. Therefore, a separate criterion of validity is not required to decide on matters of agreement and disagreement, because such a decision already incorporate our direct contact with the world that gets our belief true. This does not require invocation of a notion of truth or an appeal to that which transcends human capacities. Rorty is arguing here at a metaphilosophical level of assigning belief as generally true that take care of all agreements, disagreements and validity claims. Putting such a metaphilosophical notion of validity before particular validity claims, Rorty formulates his pragmatic criterion of validity in terms of agreement within a community that does not any longer require a criterion of truth to testify its beliefs. It is interesting to note Rorty argument in disregarding the charge of 'objectivistic fallacy',
Our language conceived as a web of inferential relationship between our uses of vocables is not, on the view, something 'merely human' which may hide something which 'transcends human capacities'. Nor can it deceive us into thinking ourselves in correspondence with something like that when we really are not. On the contrary, using vocables is a direct as contact with reality (...) (as direct as kicking rocks, e.g.). The fallacy comes in thinking that the relationship between vocable and reality has to be piecemeal (like the relation between individual kicks and individual rocks), a matter of discrete component capacities to get in touch with distinct chunks of reality.¹⁰

Rorty eliminates the chance of relating vocables with pieces of reality by drawing a map of knowledge that already endows 'us' to recognize each other's belief in terms of its efficacy in practice. Justification for undistorted communication lies in such recognition of each other's beliefs locked in a sense of community. Habermas' invocation of a 'moment of unconditioned' shall be appropriated by Rorty in such justification in terms to 'detailed practical advantages' showed by members of a
society. Such practical advantages do not require a consensus as its legitimate basis nor an underlying normative structure to acquire gains flowing from it, as it is required in the case of undistorted communication. So, the 'moment of unconditionality' in Rorty comes through the holistic coherence of belief at a meta-level that operates in every context of belief while for Habermas such a moment comes through a 'moment of sublation' or a moment that 'opens us up to criterion from other point of view' which is supposedly not available with one's own domain of belief, which in Rorty's view would be something concealed in an alternative vocabulary or an 'incommensurable domain' with respect to the practices of a community. Rorty takes into account the other point of view to the extent that it brings in some practical advantages, but not in term of some common validity claims. But Habermas raises a notion of validity claim that takes into account the other point of view and this is possible only if we uncondition ourselves from our own point of view and look beyond the local context. This is what Macarthy contended as 'to place ourself in a moment of unconditionality',
which Rorty desires within narrow domains of local agreement.

McCarthy formulates the difference,

Rorty's position seems to be: as far as the borders of a language and no further. (Rorty would actually say: "the borders of a language game") Habermas' and Hilary Putnam's view is: there are no such impossible borders; truth claim can be contested indefinitely from an indefinite diversity of points of view, precisely because they claim unconditioned validity.\footnote{12}

Habermas reformulates this notion of 'unconditioned' in term of a touch with 'extraordinary'\footnote{13} which I shall raise to in my discussion of Habermas' critique of Derrida.

**Critique of Derrida and Derrida's Responses**

Habermas reads Derrida in two distinct ways, one, by identifying Derridean deconstruction as transcendental phenomenology, experience in 'disclosures' and two, by marking a departure from the ordinary and everyday use of
language to a self-referential literary form. In both these ways, the butt of Habermas's critique is Derrida's reification of reason to the height of a paradoxical mystique and then equating it with the subliminal powers of literature.

In his first mode of reading, Habermas conceived Deconstruction as a move beyond the temporalized philosophy of origin, similar to Heidegger's project of welcoming the origin of being in language but dissimilar in regard to the internal trace of difference between the 'disclosure' and its 'object'. The being, for Derrida, appears in a sequence of disclosures, each time with a difference of identity and this is what Habermas conceived as a different way of world-projecting and self-granting Dasein. But the crucial difference that Derrida produces is a simultaneous retention of a phenomenology of consciousness and straying of it in the process of linguistic representation. But just as being is disclosed through a sequence of exterior points in space and time, linguistic representation of such a sequence generates 'signs' that disclose this dynamic of 'spacing' and 'timing'. Habermas makes his basic critique
of Derrida in dirempting language in such a process of writing that resists communication of meanings showed by its users and instead curtailing it to generate an interminable sequence of signs. The movement of such signs in a disparate occultation of already established functions of speech and writing into a structure of difference in which the sign differs from itself not only by its 'spacing' and 'timing' but by defamiliarising itself from all possible references Habermas contends that Derrida's adoption of such a method is 'mystic' as it claim to 'reveal' what lies behind our attribution of sense and meanings and what remain as a transcendental unconditioned' behind the structure of thought, meaning and communication. In Habermas' opinion ,Derrida's grammatologically circumscribed concept of an arch writing whose traces call forth all the interpretations the more unfamiliar they become, renews the mystical concept of tradition as an event, delayed event and revelation.

Such a mystic mood, Habermas points out is all intended to experience an 'unbounded claim of what is outside the everyday', but it is self-stultifying as the
deconstructive enterprise produces more of refuse heaps of interpretations in order to get at the buried foundation of what is held commonly, and it never settles with what it gets, because it cannot accept those supposedly 'distorted' meanings. This self-stultifying moment of deconstruction becomes evident in its methodological tracts. Habermas cites the 'tract' like primacy of 'rhetoric' over 'logic', and the notion of a generalized context that submerges all specific 'text'. This is how he develops another history of Being, encoded into texts with the more disastrous consequence of foregrounding the 'ontic', so that, everything could be relegated to the ontologically unconditioned context to archewriting. This movement back into an ontology of the unconditioned is what produces a 'monotheistic revelation of Being' that Heidegger, Nietzsche and Derrida wanted to overcome. This rise of a 'general context' is coterminus with the notion of a universal 'text', which in Habermas' apt characterization lacks all performative function just as a 'promise' in its quoted form. Derrida's philosophical instrument of such a 'universal text', for Habermas, puts into question the very possibility of having various context of meaning and is involved in a
performative contradiction. Because, for Habermas one cannot put into question one's 'context' of affirmation by a generalized inclusion of all such contexts into a meta-context that does not admit a specific context.

So, one has to retain distinctions of 'genres', if one is to succeed in communicating a definite thematic or text, that is, one has to uphold a 'context' in order to make oneself intelligible. Habermas criticises Derrida for putting into question the very context of meaning and rational argumentation. In his words,

For Derrida, linguistically mediated process within the world are embedded in a world-constituting context that prejudices everything; they are fatalistically delivered up to the unmanageable happening of text production, overwhelmed by the poetic-creative transformation of a back-ground designed by arch writing, and condemned to be provincial.¹⁶

This reification of language produces even graver consequences, as it undermines the validity basis of action and understanding and relegates it behind the
world creating capacity of language. This is accomplished by Derrida by aestheticising language, produced with the two fold denial of the proper sense of the 'normal' and 'poetic' discourse.

Such critique of Habermas gets a critical response, as Derrida says,

(..) in pragmatically determined situation in which ( ) 'truth' is set forth (the questioning of the possibility of truth etc and the discourse attuned to that questioning) must submit (...) to the norms of the context that require one to prove, to demonstrate, to proceed correctly, to conform to the rules of language and to a great number of other social, ethical, political-institutional rules, etc.\textsuperscript{17}

But the crux question that Derrida raises is that by accepting the rules of a context, can we draw a necessary normative formulation of the stability of that context and determine all the linguistic, social, ethical, political conclusions? What is more important for Derrida is the condition of possibility of such a context and the built-in non-identity in the norms of intelligibility
drawn out of such a context. This is formulated by Derrida in the notion of 'double writing', which must inevitably partition itself along two sides of a limit', that is, it must follow the rules of the discourse while writing or deciphering the 'context' which has given rise to such a discourse. Therefore, it would attempt to encompass both internal perspective of a participant in a discourse and the external perspective of what produces the discourse. Deconstruction, in that sense, is a simultaneous decoding of the participation in the discourse and also that which encodes what made the discourse. Deconstruction plays one such aspect against the other in order to explore the opening of 'inside' to the 'outside' and closing of 'outside' to the 'inside'. This methodical operation of deconstruction unravels those norms of communication that go into making the very structure of language employed in a particular discourse. One can see implication of such a restitution of norms of communication in terms of structural aspect of language in Derrida's notion of difference that differs the meaning of a term used in a previous context to a newer context making meaning all the more context dependent. Habermas' notion of 'criticizable validity claims'
deciphered in a process of communication comes through such Derridean 'deferral'. A claim becomes criticisable only when it defers from its own meaning. Criticisability therefore, implies an interruption from another context, which precisely is the deferral of the previous context of the claim. Further a criticisable validity claim yields a place to a claim different than itself. Such possibilities of deferrel-difference emanates not as a transcendental condition of possibility of criterion of validity claims, but as a practical possibility in the process of communication. Therefore such construction accomplished the task of an immanent critique of validity claims that arise from differentiated spheres of society by exploring the possibility of criticising them from other context within the same sphere, but the crucial difference with Habermas comes in Derrida's deconstructive demonstration of the impossibility of arriving at those transcendental conditions of possibility that makes validity claims iterable in various context. Hence Derridean deconstruction exposes the elusiveness of deriving the rules and norms of discourse that operate as transcendental condition of possibility of a discourse. Such transcendental condition
of possibility of the discourse are not same as the normative structure of the life-world and hence Habermas’s claim of recuperation of the normative structures of the life-world in language sound more like a resuscitation of transcendental set of norms, which is simply irrecoverable in the discourse constituted by language. Because for Habermas, norms or rules of discourse are not constituted by language but are socially created to make validity claims in the process of communication. While for Derrida, such a distinction between norm or rules and the discourse is only arbitrary, because norms or rules of discourse could only be related to norms or rules of the society, not in one isomorphic way, but by way of difference.

Therefore what follows from Habermas’s critique of Rorty and Derrida could be put simply in this way:

(i) In case of Rorty, the lack of any transcendental basis for agreement takes away the substances from Rorty’s project of community-centred agreement, and
(ii) In case of Derrida, the unconditioned basis of particular contextual claims get attenuated into an endless harmeneutic deferral.

Such Habermasian critique has serious epistemic implications in terms of re-affirmation of the unconditioned basis of all knowledge-claims, which for him makes the normative aspects of such claims. He combines the unconditioned basis of knowledge-claim bearing an identity with the basis of normative structure of the society. Rorty’s response to such a critique and its implications re-asserts the nature of an already existing circularity between knowledge claim, belief, language and shared norms, all cohering in a responsible manner. This implies that any theory about holding of knowledge, norm, belief etc. cannot single them out and provide a linear explanation without taking into account the already existent coherence between them. Derrida’s critique of validity claims in terms of exploration of the possibility of the context signifies that no normative description can provide a sufficient explanation for agreement or disagreement in communication. Even though a theory of communication be
construed upon mutually agreed upon linguistic usage, such a theory is bound to fail in accounting for multiple possibilities of meaning and instability of context in which these meanings are produced.

To sum up, this open-ended debate between the 'modernist' and the 'post-modernist' epistemic perspective turn out to be a debate between two basic epistemic premises:

(i) Knowledge should have universal validity and such a notion of validity is derived from the transcendental conditions of knowledge.

(ii) Knowledge can have only contextual relevance and contexts are never stable. Such contexts only acquire a relative stability to give a specific meaning, while such meanings themselves are open to possibilities of intervention and change.

(i) & (ii) come in conflict in terms of determination of a stable meaning of the knowledge-claims. For modernist like Habermas, such stability is normative in character, while for Rorty and Derrida, no knowledge-
claim can give rise to a fixed normative conclusion and it can only give rise to an ongoing discourse of ever altering meanings.

**A Postmodernist critique of ‘Modern’: Rorty and Derrida’s critique of Habermas**

Rorty and Derrida independently develop a critique of Habermas’ derivation of transcendental-pragmatic ‘norm’ of argumentation from the nature of validity of the knowledge-claims involved in cognitive, moral and aesthetic spheres of life. For Rorty, derivation of normative procedure from knowledge-claims would be a functionalist enterprise as at the level of social theory it establishes ‘validity’ based upon such normative procedure. For Derrida, such a derivation would be an exercise in pre-determination of the ‘context’ and also a metaphysical ‘closure’ that suppresses the whole process of difference in the process of communication. For Rorty, Habermas’ separation of ‘normative’ as the basis for the ‘social’ is a form of dualism between world and word and what Habermas does is an inverse derivation of those norms from linguistic to practical and not the other way round. For Rorty both these ways would mean
continuation of the goal of 'hermeneutics'. Further, at the level of social theory it gives a universalisable status to norms and draws a naturalised equivalence to the operation of rationality. This is how Habermas erects a 'foundational' theory of society. For Derrida, Habermas whole project of communicative action is an under-determination of various context of speech and action and thereby turns language into a mere 'tool' of rationality. For both Rorty and Derrida, derivation of norms is a matter of taking 'decisions', decisions' are an act of 'choice' as well as they are an act of opening what has already come through, a matter of meeting the truth to which one has to be responsible. In choosing between plurality of norms, a postmodern society or an individual necessarily undertakes an operation of sharing with other what one decides to perform.\(^{19}\)

For sorting out the issues, let me briefly sum up Rortyean critique of Habermas a la a critique of some of the basic presupposition of modernist epistemology. Rorty's reading of Habermas tries to ease him out of the bracketing of every social action in term of a coherent 'rule following' moral order by way of historicising the
acceptability dimension of Habermas's claim. In doing so, Rorty tried to read the postmodern inklings in Habermas's thought by way of locating, only negatively, his effort for combining a rationality of science with that of primacy of 'reason' in the modern social order, which he interprets more clearly by citing Habermas agreement with Hegel in the 'need for unification' in order to 'regenerate unifying power of religion in the medium of reason'. Rorty combines this two aspect of Habermas's explanation: Rationality of Science with the unifying capacity of reason, in which Rorty sees 'unity' as a hidden telos in Habermas' social theory. In Rorty's understanding, this is an old Kantian problematique that puts human subject in the universalisable character of 'communication community'. Even though such a coherence between human subject, reason and communication emanate from 'Kant's Stubborn differentiation'. Still Rorty would grant that Habermas' notion of 'communication community' operates in a quite plausible way of making its presence felt in the liberal communities that are inclusive and open by nature. But Rorty reminds us Habermas' concern for a 'de-differentiating' effect of belonging to such community as it fails to give direction
to the sense of belonging in a 'constitutive' sense. Rorty finds it unnecessary to have such a 'constitutive sense' through impersonal normative qualification, as this will produce an 'alienating effect' on members of the society quite in the way the 'philosophy of subject' intended. Rorty especially cites Habermas emphasis on 'validity claims', which could be employed 'in the case of repression and emancipation of conscious', the shared intersubjective consciousness that Habermas stands for.

For Rorty such an emphasis on validity is nothing but a reiteration of the 'philosophy of subject' that only give rise to a historicist narrative of 'self-reassurance'. Such a narrative turns into a metanarrative when it aims at unity of the differentiated spheres of life by way of inserting an artistic urge to do so, an art that represents the atomized individual. Rorty's caution to this kind of an 'aesthetic of the beautiful' is that it can never 'present the fact that the unrepresentable exists'. Rorty proposes that such a presentation would be a quest for the sublime, instead of an already formed 'subject' or 'community' or a form of differentiated life, in which everybody could share their hopes and despairs. Rorty contends that the possibility of sharing
life by finding 'beautiful ways of harmonising interest' does not come in conflict with the quest of sublime in the way modern quest for the beautiful debunked the sublime for the sake of representation. Rather, the quest for the sublime and the quest for the beautiful go together, one giving rise to postmodernist form of intellectual life and the other giving rise to postmodernist form of social life. Seemingly, Rorty has agreed with Habermas on the quest for harmonising the social life by having a 'communication community' but differing in respect of his advocacy of a normatively regulated social order.

Habermas' obvious reply to such Rortyean critique would be a critique of Rorty's utopian liberalism that tries to erect this edifice without any commonly shared rationality. Further Habermas would debunk Rorty's dualism between 'sublime' and 'beauty' as a postmodern 'de-differentiation', as the linking up of the two would give rise to historical communities who struggle for changing an order.
Derrida's Critique of Habermas and Habermas' Response

Derrida's critique of Habermas would follow his critique of Austin, as Habermas merely re-interpreted Austianian notion of 'performative utterance' in terms of transcendental-pragmatic presupposition of universalisable validity claims. Derrida's critique of Austin for demanding a permanent value for the 'context' and for the claim of an 'intentional meaning' is relevant in similar adaptation of Habermas in his theory of 'communicative action'. Apart from this, Derrida's general critique of the notion of communication would be of greater relevance to gauge the possible Derridean critique of Habermas. So, I shall move from general critique to the aforementioned critique of Austin on the two counts in order to flash out the features of a Derridean critique.

Derrida's critique of the notion of 'communication' stems out from his idea of a differential structure of writing that relates an absent addressee to 'here and now' contexts, which may not signify a stable, fixed and determined circumstance. Derrida extrapolates this notion
of writing in the analysis of utterances that are performative. It results into the notion that every performative utterance follows a model of 'citation', which is cited in necessary contexts and as such 'citation' determines its 'iteration' and not an exterior context determining 'citation' of a statement. Derrida circumscribes this notion of 'citation' within the notion of writing in order to show that the possibility of iteration, as in the case of written signs also inhabits the spoken word and this results into a process of repeatability of words in every utterance of itself. But with every utterance, the repeatable words produce a structure of difference and this structure in every repetition further becomes an act of citation. As because context will change in every repetition, so previously acquired meaning shall undergo a process of repetition to produce various meanings at various contexts. Derrida gives an example of citation of the same poem or a song assuming various 'meanings' at various contexts. What Derrida contends is the difference of 'intentionality' that leads to the failure of a citeable statement to mean identically in different contexts.
This whole critique of Derrida could be juxtaposed in Habermas notion of communicative reason. This juxtaposition would open up a close conception of communication that is conceived in terms of sharing of commonly understandable meaning of 'shared intentionality' in terms of reference. The first effect of this is exposure of the idealising condition of communication in term of absence of an addressee, a stable context of meaning. This opens up a renewed notion of communication in which Derrida's metaphoric description of an Envois' or postal message presents how linguistic expressions, utterances, talks etc. are directed to an 'other' who receives it, and how it lies between the sender and the receiver, that is, one who utters and one who responds. The question that arises here is that, does Derrida deny the communication of the same sense which the utterer intended the listener to receive? Derrida's approach is to answer this question by another question, from where does the speaker derive the command of communicating the same sense as she/he intended? If the answer to this question is that it is derived from 'shared conventions', then Derrida would say that the assumption of shared context and convention is a
'pre-determination', contrary to which 'context' of speaker and hearer is re-created in the process of communication, despite their sharing of a common code of meaning. The context is recreated in the process of hearing and responding, that is, in the process of 'exchanging'. In a direct address to a person, such an exchange originates and returns onto itself, but an address returns to itself only by changing 'hands'. So, Derrida would foreground his thesis that linguistic communication is a form of exchange that put speaker and hearer in a plane of sharing, but the act of sharing is a process of switching over the 'context' of utterance into a new context and so on.

The second effect of the critique is that what arises as moments of agreement and disagreement stems out of common and conventional meaning, but this is nothing but a play of difference, as what is agreed upon is just a matter of norm or convention and it will be different given the possibility that within same conventions, contextual variations shall produce difference. Agreement further, defers the meaning to different possible contexts, while it makes possible the employment of same
speech acts with a different meaning. What Derrida points out is that the possibility of agreement is conditioned by conventions and context, while the linguistic expression itself can exceed such conditions and produce a different meaning altogether. It means that the possible agreement could be deferred to a number of indeterminable contexts that will make communication interminable between addresses.

The third effect shall combine both the first and second, that is, a combination of change of context in the exchange between participants in linguistic communication plus deferring of meaning through iteration of speech acts produce the third effect of impossibility of deriving fixed norms of communication. Such a derivation of universal norm of communication is impossible precisely because change of context and the possibility of iteration imply an absence of addressee and thereby those who participate in the process of exchange merely assume them to be subjects of an exchange and assume a definite agreement on meaning. Such an 'assumption' is meant only for facilitating an exchange and not for closing the 'exchange' into certain norms and
convention between those participants. Therefore, from a Derridean perspective, what Habermas derived as norms of rational argumentation is an extrapolation of the assumed stability of the context of communication into general context of reason. Looked from another way, norms of argumentation are interpolated and into communicative exchanges by Habermas in order to give a rationalistic theory of communication. Habermas claim that communication must involve a universalisable rationality and normative structure could very well be disputed by the simple fact that rationality structures cannot be identified with culturally based norms of intelligibility. Further Habermas' distinction between 'undistorted' and 'distorted communication' based upon a universalisable condition of shared rationality appeals to a transcendental intersubjective agreement on rules of reason which are conceived as transcendental condition of possibility of communication. From a Derridean point of view, such transcendental condition of possibility of discourses can neither define rationality nor can be derived from rationality and even if it is done, it merely delimits the possibility of discourse and participation in that. But the act of communication
through the discourse must switch one from one context to another and must become iterable. Derrida exposes this transcendental naivette of such a view as Habermas proposed in his theory of communicative action.

Contrarily, Derrida theorises the multi-possibilities involved in communication in 'apocalyptic' themes, when he affirms, 'addresses without message and without destination, without sender or decidable addressee', what Derrida contends here is the iteration of signs in linguistic communication surpasses the fixed determination of subjectivities and sends it over to more iteration. Habermas' notion of 'distorted communication' can ironically be conceived here in Derrida critique of fixed subjectivities engaged in communication and Habermas' binding of such subjectivities within fixed rules of reason.

Habermas' reply to such critique of Derrida would consist in re-iterating the need of 'transcendence' that is more contentful and meaningful then the purely formal 'transcendence from within' to which we are exposed by 'the force of validity claims', which he advocated in his
theory of communicative action, Habermas with greater force of conviction asserted,

The inevitable canalization of everyday life in political communication also poses a danger for the semantic potential on which such communication must draw . . . Even that moment of unconditionality which is stubbornly expressed by the transcendence of validity claims of everyday communication is not sufficient. Another kind of transcendence is disclosed in the undiffused force (. . .) which the critical appropriation of identity-forming religious traditions, and yet another in the negativity of modern out. The trivial must be allowed to shatter against the sheerly alien, abyssal, uncanny (...) which resists assimilation of what is already understood, although no privilege can now install itself behind it."

Such problematization of the unconditionality of the transcendental norms of validity, argumentation, communication and rationality is Habermas' tacit allusion to those form of communication, which lies beyond his binary opposition between 'distorted' and 'undistorted' forms of communication and which are 'trivial', 'uncanny' and that which resists 'assimilation' to the norms of
ordinary communication, what Derrida characterized is the difference of linguistic communication as an affirmation of the decentred subjectivity through ‘iterability’ that subverts stable context of meaning and their condition of possibility and open the field of communication to an unlimited play of signifiers has been trivially reenacted in Habermas’ tribute to the uncanny or to the religious language that addresses transcendence. This is what has remained a key problematique of Derridean deconstruction which opens up a space of an ‘experience of the impossible’, which presupposes ‘hospitality without reserve’ towards the singularity of the event. This is what Derrida characterised, ‘apocalyptic’ or ‘messianic’. This is what he further called ‘a quasi-theory of ‘undecidability’.

So, deconstruction becomes an exploration of as many ‘instant’ of undecidability as the time itself. It always tends to say that only undecidability is permanent, the undecidability proceeds, follows and permeates the decision, that the undiciability is first, last and always, but that the decisions must be made and indecision broken. What this shows is the secret of an impossibility that goes along with every condition of
possibility and which remains as the other side of any affirmation of possibility.

To sum up, Rorty and Derrida's critique of Habermas points out the impossibility of derivation a structure of rationality that regulates both the society and human communication; while Habermas' critique of Rorty and Derrida point out the failure of their stances in rising above mere contextual possibilities without even giving it a definitive meaning. In terms of its interpretive implication, Rorty and Derrida's critique of Habermas explains why Habermas has fallen into a transcendental fold that fails to reconcile the experience of the uncanny. Habermas critique of Rorty and Derrida brings back the charge of aestheticisation of meaning and language to the extent that it becomes 'ineffectivo' in communicating any meaning.
NOTES

1. Jürgen Habermas, "Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking" in PMT, p. 36.


6. PDM, p. 231.

7. PDM, p. 231.

8. ORT, p. 83.

9. ORT, p. 144.


13. PMT, p. 51.

14. PDM, p. 192.

15. PDM, p. 194.

16. PDM, p. 205.


20. EHO, p. 169.


22. EHO, p. 170.

23. TCA, vol I, pp 330-31


27. FN, p. 377/630-38.