

## **CRITICAL THEORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL COMPARISON OF HERBERT MARCUSE AND JÜRGEN HABERMAS**

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**Abstract:** *This research addresses the contemporary global conflict surrounding transformations in social life through the lens of Critical Theory. The urgency of analyzing the thoughts of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas lies in their critical engagement with the rational foundations of the modern social system. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Marcuse’s and Habermas’s contributions to Critical Theory. The material object of this study is Critical Theory in social science, while the formal object focuses on the specific theories developed by Marcuse and Habermas. Employing a library research method and a comparative approach. Data processing in this study uses descriptive analysis, which means describing the data sources of Marcuse and Habermas’ Critical Theory, then analyzing the descriptive data sources from both Critical Theory thinkers. Marcuse’s key concept is the “one-dimensional man,” reflecting a critique of advanced industrial society, whereas Habermas introduces “communicative action” as a foundation for rational discourse in democratic societies. The differences in these concepts are shaped by their distinct philosophical and socio-historical contexts. The study concludes that Marcuse’s and Habermas’s theories represent a dialectical tension: Marcuse as a thesis with a monolithic representation of modern rationality (instrumental rationality that is adaptive with control, efficiency, and domination), Habermas as an antithesis with a typological representation of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. Habermas does not reject instrumental rationality, but limits it only to non-human objects. When applied to humans, instrumental rationality causes social pathology. Their synthesis lies in recognizing the role of identity and intersubjective recognition in fostering communicative action. This study implies that the Islamic context in Marcuse and Habermas’ discourse leads to conceptual prospects for social cohesion and justice.*

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**Keywords:** *Critical Theory, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Philosophical Comparison, Social Sciences.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini membahas konflik global kontemporer terkait transformasi dalam kehidupan sosial melalui pendekatan Teori Kritis. Urgensi menganalisis pemikiran Herbert Marcuse dan Jürgen Habermas terletak pada keterlibatan kritis mereka terhadap dasar-dasar rasional dari sistem sosial modern. Studi ini bertujuan untuk melakukan analisis komparatif terhadap kontribusi Marcuse dan Habermas dalam Teori Kritis. Objek material dari penelitian ini adalah Teori Kritis dalam ilmu sosial, sedangkan objek formalnya berfokus pada teori-teori spesifik yang dikembangkan oleh Marcuse dan Habermas. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dan pendekatan komparatif. Pengolahan data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif-analisis, artinya mendeskripsikan sumber data pemikiran Teori Kritis Marcuse dan Habermas, selanjutnya menganalisis data deskriptif dari kedua pemikiran Teori Kritis. Konsep utama Marcuse adalah “manusia satu dimensi”, yang mencerminkan kritik terhadap masyarakat industri maju. Sementara itu, Habermas memperkenalkan “tindakan komunikatif” sebagai landasan bagi diskursus rasional dalam masyarakat demokratis. Perbedaan konsep ini dipengaruhi oleh konteks filosofis dan sosial-historis yang berbeda. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa teori Marcuse dan Habermas merepresentasikan ketegangan dialektis: Marcuse sebagai tesis dengan representasi rasionalitas modern bersifat monolitik (rasionalitas instrumental yang adaptif dengan kontrol, efisiensi, dan dominasi), Habermas sebagai antitesis dengan representasi tipologis rasionalitas instrumental dan rasionalitas komunikatif. Habermas tidak menolak rasionalitas instrumental, tetapi membatasi hanya untuk objek non-manusia. Ketika diterapkan pada manusia, rasionalitas instrumental menimbulkan patologis sosial. Sintesis dari keduanya terletak pada pengakuan terhadap peran identitas dan pengakuan intersubjektif dalam membangun tindakan komunikatif. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah konteks Islam dalam diskursus pemikiran Marcuse dan Habermas mengarah kepada prospek konseptual terhadap kohesi sosial dan keadilan.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Herbert Marcuse, Ilmu Sosial, Jürgen Habermas, Perbandingan Filsafat, Teori Kritis.*

## **Introduction**

In the 20th century, Europe was confronted with a conflict of changes in the social life sector. With inflation signaling the failure of the capitalist system, the proletarian revolution was expected to lead Europe through the economic crisis. However, the notion of social democracy in socialism was realized through manipulative instruments (Tjahyadi 2007, 1).

Jürgen Habermas sees the deadlock experienced by the first generation of the Frankfurt School, which originated from a misconception of rationality. For the first generation of the Frankfurt School, rationality is viewed instrumentally. That is, a rationality that prioritizes control, domination of nature and humans in order to produce effectiveness, efficiency, and prioritization of maximum results. Instrumental rationality implies that humans become alienated because they are treated as things to achieve their own goals (Fajarni 2022, 82).

Herbert Marcuse’s position on social change is to develop Critical

Theory in the context of the ideological battle between communism and global capitalism (Winarso 2020, 6). More precisely, Marcuse's Critical Theory is the first generation of the Frankfurt School of thought that wants a dialectical method applied to social phenomena. Meanwhile, the position of Jürgen Habermas' thinking on social change is to develop Critical Theory in the context of a dialectical method, combined with the communication paradigm (Muttaqien 2023, 51).

A comparative analysis of the thinking of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory in social science is the formulation of this research aims to provide a comparative analysis of Herbert Marcuse's and Jürgen Habermas's Critical Theory in social science. Critical Theory in social science, in terms of historical development and conception of thought, is part of the material object of this research. In addition, the formal object of this research is, of course, the trajectory of Critical Theory's development in the social sciences of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, which is carried out a comparative analysis.

This research method uses library research and an objective study to produce replicable findings. This research uses a comparative approach. The classification of data processing from library research is divided into a theoretical framework and analysis. This research in the theoretical framework describes the development of Critical Theory in social science in terms of historical development and thought constructs, Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory, and finally Jürgen Habermas's Critical Theory. This research in the analysis explains the comparison and synthesis of the thoughts of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas.

The primary data sources for this study are valid and reliable, covering two main variables. First, the primary data sources obtained from Herbert Marcuse's thoughts include *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*; *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*; *Technology, War, and Fascism*; and *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Second, the primary data sources obtained from the thoughts of Jürgen Habermas, including *Knowledge and Human Interests*; *Communication and the Evolution of Society*; *The Theory of Communicative Action*; *Legitimation Crisis*; *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*; and *The Inclusion of the Other*.

Meanwhile, the secondary data sources for this study are relevant in nature, covering several studies discussing the thoughts of Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. The collection of primary and secondary data sources is, of course, free from the influence of the researcher's subjectivity, and the objectivity of this study's research problem does not contain any political bias. This means that this research is based on objective issues that have an impact on human involvement and cultural construction in creating scientific instruments, as well as critical

responses.

## **Critical Theory in the Social Sciences**

Critical Theory, in its narrow definition, refers to several generations of German philosophers and the Marxist tradition called the Frankfurt School. This is because Critical Theory aims to change all the circumstances that enslave human beings. They emerged in connection with many social movements that identified various dimensions of human domination in modern society (Rahman 2020, 51). The Frankfurt School of thought calls itself the 'Critical Theory of Society (*eine Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft*)' (Suseno 1992, 160).

The purpose of this way of thinking is to free humanity from the manipulation of modern technocrats. Critical theory in philosophy of science consists of several main themes. Firstly, the problem of scientific procedures, methods, and methodologies. Second, the reformulation of scientific standards and rules as logic in a historical context. Third, the dichotomy of object and subject. Fourth, the alignment of science in social interaction. Fifth, the development of science is the production of values. Sixth, science (especially social science) is a study of the past (Muslih 2016, 96–98).

Critical Theory was born with two related socio-cultural aspects. First, it is related to the social conditions in Europe, which experienced massive industrialization since the beginning of the 20th century. Modernization brought major changes in the social order and was the cause of the birth of a new industrial society in Europe that was capitalistic and filled with oppressive practices and socio-economic inequality. Secondly, the influence of German philosophical idealism. German philosophy, influenced by Immanuel Kant, is famous for its criticism. According to Horkheimer, Kant was the first critical philosopher. Kant emphasized how the individual economy can be built in shaping knowledge. Historically, the early school of criticism said that essential knowledge is not determined by objects or reality, but by human ratios (Sholahudin 2020, 75–76).

The birth of Critical Theory is also inseparable from the Vienna Circle. Firstly, the common origin in the interwar period. Critical Theory aims to provide a critique of culture rooted in Marxism and interdisciplinary social science. Whereas the Vienna Circle sought to promote a scientific approach based on logical analysis and empirical verification. Second, a shared scepticism towards metaphysics. Critical Theory seeks to ground social theory in historical materialism and empirical research. Meanwhile, the Vienna Circle seeks to reduce philosophical questions to matters of logic and empirical observation. Third, different philosophical orientations. Critical Theory adopts an interdisciplinary approach, including sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and political theory, to analyze social structures. Meanwhile, the Vienna Circle emphasizes clarity,

fixity, and rigor of philosophical inquiry. Fourth, critique positivism with critical theory. Critical theory emphasizes dialectical thinking, historical context, and social critique in matters of modern complexity. Fifth, dialogue and exchange. Frankfurt scholars such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno are familiar with logical positivism. So were logical positivists such as Rudolf Carnap, who expressed interest in Critical Theory's analyses of culture, ideology, and social change (Darwis 2024, 16–17).

The development of the first phase of Critical Theory in the social sciences is called the first generation of the Frankfurt School. The background of the first generation of the Frankfurt School was intersected by the trauma of fascism. The members who were Jewish experienced the bitterness of living under Hitler's regime. After Hitler came to power, they were expelled from Germany and fled to the United States. There, they built a reputation as sharp social critics and established research institutes in New York and Los Angeles. The ideas of the first generation of the Frankfurt School were influential among the New Left activists and students who emerged in the 1960s. One of their members, Herbert Marcuse, remained in the United States and continued to voice criticism of the dominance of capitalism. In contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno, who were considered by the New Left to be feckless, Marcuse was the inspirer of the great refusal against capitalism, especially related to the practice of consumerism, which was a concern for radical groups at that time. Fraser himself admitted that he first interacted intellectually with Critical Theory through reading Marcuse's work (Mudzakkir 2022, 35).

The enlightenment dialectic argument in *Domination I*, argued by Horkheimer and Adorno, criticizes all theories of modernity, including Marx's, for their indifference to the issue of domination. *Domination*, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, refers to Western society's penchant for seeing the world as an object to be controlled for human benefit. They also argued that this Critical Theory was more of a comprehensive critique of civilization than Marx's work, which only criticized capitalism. This dominance became known as the critical theory of identity (Akrom 2012, 4). The cultural industry argument in *Domination II*, Horkheimer and Adorno refer to the way of transforming mass media into industrial capitalism after World War II in terms of commodity circulation and manipulation of human consciousness. Some characteristics of the cultural industry include eight things. First, the false identity of the general and the particular. Second, pseudo-individuality. Third, under a monopoly, all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. Fourth, the objective tendency is incarnate in the hidden subjective purpose of company directors, the foremost among whom are in the most powerful sectors of industry. Fifth, the consumer becomes the ideology of the pleasure industry. Sixth,

commodities: art, music, film, advertising, radio, TV, and all above are a pure representation of social power and merge with the culture industry as well as economically. Seventh, the triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them. Eighth, today the culture industry has taken over the civilizing inheritance of entrepreneurial and frontier democracy (Arviani 2013, 134). The eight features offer an analysis of the enlightenment dialectic to explain the direction of positivism's conception into mythology, and the concept of the culture industry to explain the ideological aspects and cultural manipulation.

Max Horkheimer, Theodore W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse are recognized as the first generation to put into practice the ideas of the Frankfurt School of Thought. Mark D. Hayes mentions that in order to develop Critical Theory, such as Korsch, Gramsci, Mannheim, and also subsequent Neo-Marxian adherents, endeavored to restore Marx's original ideas. The Critical Theory developed by the Frankfurt School was initially based on the legacy of Karl Marx's critical thinking, and was further refined by his followers known as the Neo-Marxian group of thinkers. Karl Marx's core theory was that of historical materialism, which introduced important concepts in social science, such as proletarianism, socialism, communism, class struggle, and alliance. (Suswanto 2023, 50).

The next stage of development of Critical Theory in social science is called the second generation of the Frankfurt School. The second generation of the Frankfurt School began to leave the trauma of fascism behind. The main thinker of this generation, Habermas, offers a more optimistic view of the conditions of late capitalist society. Unlike the first generation, which is still thick with Marxism and the paradigm of work, Habermas' Critical Theory culminates in communicative reasoning, which actually tries to make peace with liberalism (Mudzakkir 2022, 35). According to Habermas, the first-generation thinkers of the Frankfurt School, including Max Horkheimer, Theodore W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, failed with the main reason being that they did not succeed in distinguishing between the work paradigm and communication. Ratio for Habermas' predecessors was understood as awareness to carry out revolutionary emancipation based on the work paradigm, while the ratio according to Habermas refers to the communication paradigm. (Thohari 2021, 86).

In an effort to develop Critical Theory, Habermas tends to open a dialogue between critical theory and philosophy and other social theories, such as the Hermeneutic school, systems and structural-functional theory, empirical social science, analytical and linguistic philosophy, cognitive theory, and finally the development of moral studies. Habermas, according to Honneth, reached the fundamental premise by referring to Hermeneutics and Wittgenstein's language analysis. With this

problem, Habermas comes to know the human subject *ab initio*, which leads functionally to being united with other aspects through efforts to understand language. Habermas synthesizes the various theories studied into a theory of communicative action, which represents the basis and framework of social theory in the Marxist, Weber, and classical Critical Theory traditions (Sugihartati 2014, 31).

The final stage of Critical Theory development is called the third generation of the Frankfurt School, with a tendency toward the construction of Axel Honneth's thinking. The further development of Critical Theory certainly continues to undergo dynamics through the thinking of Hartmut Rosa (Honneth's student), with his theory of resonance as a reaction to the theory of recognition (Schiermer 2020) (Malmqvist 2023). The difference between Habermas and Honneth lies in their attention. Habermas pays attention to the communication aspect, while Honneth recognizes the identity claims made by individuals and collectivities. Three themes stand out in Honneth's thinking, including: conceptions of history and society based on the struggle for recognition by social groups, contextualization of normative foundations of structures in subjective experience, and more attention to the other of reason (Bakry 2017, 138).

The focus of Honneth's thinking on the social lies in the central role of conflict between social groups. According to Honneth, his predecessors in the Frankfurt School still neglected the social dimension. In his view, what is needed is a social thought that emphasizes that society reproduces itself through often conflictual interactions between social groups. Honneth sees historical development as the emergence and struggle of social groups. In this regard, social groups are not only agents of social transformation but also provide the necessary conditions for human development. Joel Anderson's definition is central to Honneth's 'social theory with normative content,' which is his account of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, along with the modes of recognition by which they are sustained, and this will be the focus here. About each of these 'practical relations-to-self,' three central issues emerge: the precise importance of each for the development of one's identity, the pattern of recognition on which it depends, and its historical development (Honneth 1999, xii).

In addition to Axel Honneth, third-generation Frankfurt School figures include Lutz Wingert (Habermas' student), Josef Fruchtl, Martin Low-Beer, Forst, Hauke Brunkhorst, Micha Brumlik, Matthias Kettner, Wolfgang Kuhlmann, and many more. These third-generation figures not only address the conventional issues of the Frankfurt School (emancipation) but also focus on issues involving the development of new forms of social integration, civil society, social solidarity, and cosmopolitan multiculturalism (Bakry 2017, 139).

Critical Theory is thus dimensionally divided into ontological, epistemological, and axiological relationships. With these three dimensions, Critical Theory takes a more philosophical and sociological approach that criticizes modern society by focusing on the analysis of the culture industry, mass media, and the impact of capitalism on human life. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, Honneth, and others developed Critical Theory by emphasizing the importance of critical thinking in the face of media hegemony and encouraging a society that aims to be active consumers and able to understand specific messages spread through mass communication (Fuadi 2025, 25–26).

### **Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory**

Marcuse was born in Berlin in 1898. He was a German soldier in World War I before completing his Ph.D in literature in 1922 at the University of Freiburg. He was also a student of Martin Heidegger. In 1932, Marcuse joined an institute in Frankfurt, which focused on social science themes. However, Marcuse did not contribute to research activities while in Frankfurt until, in 1934, he went to the United States with Max Horkheimer to revive the Institute of Social Sciences based at Columbia University (Yahya 2022, 159).

Marcuse's Critical Theory leads to advanced industrial society, technological rationality, and the defense of radical social transformation (Darwis 2024, 36). Marcuse's Critical Theory thinking was influenced by Marxism, Freud's psychoanalysis, and Hegel (Sumarni 2024, 166). The influence of Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, Marcuse, with all psychoanalytic concepts (sublimation, identification, projection, repression, and introjection), connotes the mutability of instincts. But the reality that shapes instincts, as well as their needs and satisfaction, is a socio-historical world. The animal man becomes a human being only through a fundamental transformation of his nature, affecting not only the instinctual aims but also the instinctual values, that is, the principles that govern the attainment of the aims (Marcuse 1966, 29). The basic concept of Marcuse's Critical Theory thinking is one-dimensional man, meaning that the essence of man is entitled to his freedom. The realization of freedom depends on the satisfaction of his needs. For Marcuse, humans remain hindered from fulfilling their needs in modern industrial society because they are bound by a repressive atmosphere with the transformation of society in which they develop (Watloly 2013, 184–85).

Progress is not a neutral term, but moves towards a certain goal by the possibility of improving the condition of society. Advanced industrial society, according to Marcuse, is approaching the stage where continued progress would demand the radical subversion of the prevailing direction and organization of progress. An industrial society with this stage is reached when material products become automatic to the extent that

primary needs can be met, while the necessity of full labor does not run to its maximum marginal time. Then, technical progress would transcend the realm of necessity. This technical necessity, of course, serves as an instrument of domination and exploitation that limits rationality (Marcuse 1991, 18). Consumerism, for example, is a pathological social phenomenon that leads to existential degradation amid the hegemony of primary needs. Thus, freedom is better understood as a means of control over human life itself. As a result, primary needs become dominant over existential issues, and vice versa.

Meanwhile, the idea of technological rationality contains technological truth and critical truth. Firstly, technological truth and critical truth are not entirely contradictory or complementary. A lot of technological rationality is retained in critical rationality. Second, the distinction between technological truth and critical truth is not rigid. The content of each set changes in the social process, so that what was once part of the value of critical truth becomes technological truth. For example, the proposition that every individual is equipped with certain inalienable rights is critical, but it is often interpreted in favor of efficiency and the centralization of power (Marcuse 1998, 50). According to Marcuse, the idea of quantitatively different forms of technological rationality is part of a new historical project (Marcuse 2001, 57).

Marcuse's argument points to the oppressive nature of technological society that is not caused by materialism and technicals. Technological rationality is the core cause of the problem of oppression, as there is a restraint on the realization of values. Culture in the new historical projection depends on the continuity of its function to impose limits on technology. In detail, the culture controlled by global capitalism is a situation controlled by instrumental rationality, which Marcuse calls technological rationality. In this regard, the oppression is not by another human being, but something anonymous (technological system). This means that society is trapped in technological control, which is not always clearly realized (Widodo 2005, 6).

Finally, social transformation according to Marcuse is divided into industrial and technical order and intellectual culture. Social transformation in the industrial and technical order is the nature of progress towards greater prosperity. The nature of this industrial and technical order is stimulated by the accumulation of inventions, more efficient ways of working, and more rational administration. So, this process can be allowed to run its course, as it is a natural process - an organic evolution. On a side aspect, the problem of human control over change here boils down to the problem of finding the least intrusive form of administration, with as little interference and domination as possible (Marcuse 1998, 118). Social transformation in the intellectual culture is on the other hand, was the realm of conscious freedom,

especially of liberalistic freedom of thought, speech, and religion. Sifat intellectual culture adalah change here was the result of the unhampered development of human reason in the variety of its manifestations, and it was expected to be a rich reservoir of the ideas and norms which guided the organization of material progress (Marcuse 1998, 118).

Advanced industrial society, technological rationality, and the defense of radical social transformation are applications of the basic concept of one-dimensional man. Thus, one-dimensional society associated with one-dimensional man is the result of the historical erosion of individuality in Marcuse's critique. In detail, one-dimensional man can be defined as an extended protest against the decline of individuality in advanced industrial society. His cognitive crisis removes the ability to see other dimensions of possibilities that transcend thought and one-dimensional society (Marcuse 1991, xxviii).

From the perspective of Conflict Theory, social change does not occur through a process of value adjustment that brings about transformation, but rather as a result of conflict that produces compromises that differ from the initial conditions (Prayogi 2023, 38). Thus, the validity of Marcuse's vision for radical social transformation is a critical reaction to fascist ideology. Consequently, the socio-cultural changes that occur tend to be overtly authoritarian and require realization through the rejection of the one-dimensional man formed by capitalist industrial society and its mass culture as a manifestation of social change in resistance to the conditions of fascist domination.

### **Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory**

Habermas is the successor to Critical Theory as proposed by his predecessors (Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse). Critical Theory, as presented by his predecessors, ended in pessimism or deadlock. Critical Theory did not simply stop there, and Jurgen Habermas has revived the theory with a new paradigm. Habermas was born to father Ernst Habermas in Düsseldorf on 18 June 1929. Habermas grew up in Gummersbach, Germany. When he was fifteen years old, an influential event in his life occurred related to the atrocities of the Nazi regime, and made the biggest impression on him (Supartiningsih 2024, 1).

Habermas' Critical Theory leads to the social system as a way of social structure, and *lebenswelt* as social reproduction (Wirawan 2015, 263). Habermas' Critical Theory thinking is influenced by Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Marxism, and the first generation of the Frankfurt School (Fatih 2020, 33). Hegel's influence on the abolition of knowledge theory, for example, Habermas, with his cognitive model of instruments and media, reveals a series of implicit assumptions about the critique of knowledge that claims to be free of assumptions. The latter must always already know more than it can know according to its own stated premises. The

critique that knows knowledge to be mediated by an organon must include specific ideas both about the knowing subject and the category of correct knowledge (Habermas 1968, 12). The basic concept of Habermas' Critical Theory thinking is communication as a basic human action. That is, a concept that understands subjectivity and knowledge as the result of intersubjective communication processes (Menoh 2015, 50).

The social system consists of three segments, including: outer nature, the other social systems with which the society is in contact, and inner nature. From outer nature and inner nature are the processes that determine social dynamism. The position of outer nature is absorbed in the production process that extracts natural resources and converts energy into use value. Meanwhile, inner nature carries out the socialization process by forming members of the system who can speak and act (Habermas 1988, 9).

The challenge of modern society is dealing with a state that separates the private sphere from public authority (Habermas 1991, 24). In the absence of certain norms, it must rely on neutral facts structured in communicative life. Because the structure of this communicative life can direct itself to the normative value of mutual orientation (Habermas 1998, 40). The socio-culture created by a state positions the social system of modern society as an attitude of criticism. The involvement of communicative action leads to consensus (Hardiman 2009, 34), so that social systems that are adaptive to modern society create objective norms by adopting views and collective actualization legitimately.

Finally, in accordance with the processes of social reproduction, social integration, and socialization, there is a *Lebenswelt* structure that includes the components of culture, society, and person. The components of culture are as follows: the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world. Meanwhile, the components of society are the legitimate orders through which participants regulate their memberships in social groups and thereby secure solidarity. Finally, the components of a person are the competences that make a subject capable of speaking and acting, that put him in a position to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity (Habermas 1987, 138). The dimensions of communicative action consist of a symbolic semantic content, social space, and historical time. The interaction of each communicative practice is a medium in the process of culture, society, and person being reproduced. This reproduction process includes the symbolic structure of the *Lebenswelt* (Habermas 1987, 138).

The limits of Habermas's lifeworld theory are a constructive manifestation of the relationship between culture, society, and the individual. This means that humans do not construct their lifeworld in a vacuum, but within the context of their life circumstances (Kraus

2015, 5). Therefore, the dynamics of power and inequality are related to communicative theory and public space. Habermas sees that inequality arises when systems (such as the economy and bureaucracy) dominate the lifeworld and prevent rational dialogue from reaching consensus. Thus, legitimate power arises from inclusive communication, while inequality occurs when power structures hinder public participation in the formation of public opinion. Social integration, for example, is a socio-cultural synthesis of societal institutions that include social production relations. With social integration, the unity of the *Lebenswelt* can be reconstructed through values and norms. If system problems cannot be resolved in accordance with the dominant form of social integration, then the identity of society is in danger (Habermas 1976, 144). The distinction between social integration and systemic integration, therefore, demands a differentiation appropriate to the society itself.

### **Comparative Analysis of Marcuse and Habermas' Thought**

The position of Marcuse's Critical Theory is as a thesis. Meanwhile, Habermas' Critical Theory thinking is an antithesis to the thesis. From this correlation, there are certainly differences that are influenced by the background of thought, basic concepts, and the application of basic concepts. The comparison of Marcuse's thought as a thesis and Habermas's thought as an antithesis will produce a synthesis. This synthesis leads to the exposure of the distinction between the two thoughts and critical analysis with the process of combining two elements to create something new and complex.

**Table 1.** Comparison of Marcuse and Habermas Thought

	Marcuse	Habermas
Background of Thought	Marxism, Hegel, and Psychoanalysis: Freud	Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Marxism, and the first generation of the Frankfurt School.
Basic Concept	One-dimensional man	Communicative action
Basic Concept Application	<p>Prioritizing material needs over labor needs (advanced industrial society)</p> <hr/> <p>The event of oppression is the actualization of constraints on the form of manifestation of values (technological rationality)</p> <hr/> <p>Progress as a natural event and conscious freedom (social transformation)</p>	<p>Outer nature is correlative to society, and inner nature is a component of the social system. Implicatively, there is a process of social reproduction, social integration, and socialization that is representative of the <i>lebenswelt</i>-culture, society, and person.</p>

The basic concept of Marcuse's Critical Theory, which was influenced by Marxism, Hegel, and Freud's psychoanalysis, was a response to the traumatizing conditions of fascism. So, the idea of advanced industrial society, technological rationality, and social transformation as a representation of the basic concept has a comprehensive trend of thought. The tendency is to emphasize social transformation by freeing from domination and exploitative instruments, as well as technological rationality.

Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* profoundly reveals the negative effects caused by the proliferation of instrumental rationality in capitalist countries, total control over human thought, and the complete alienation of society (Gao 2021, 47). The one-dimensional man society is a new type of totalitarian society, which manifests itself as the manipulation of technological rationality in social life, the unity of political opponents, the suppression of language and culture, and the falsification of human needs.

In contrast to Habermas' Critical Theory, the background of thought is influenced by Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Marxism, and the first generation of the Frankfurt School. Habermas's theoretical framework is precisely a response to late capitalist society. So that the idea of the social system as a way of social structure and *lebenswelt* as social reproduction is a representation of the basic concept. The implication is, of course, that the tendency of thought is more towards communicative rationality as well as the public sphere by emphasizing the actual social system towards the process of social reproduction, social integration, and socialization.

Habermas rejects materialist determinism and shifts the emphasis to the spiritual aspects of society. According to Habermas, the process of reproduction encompasses the symbolic structures of the lifeworld and requires separation from the technical reproduction of the lifeworld for society. This contradicts Marx's basic principle, which bases social life on the material development of the technical components of economic productive forces. Therefore, Habermas draws three conclusions from his analysis of the relationship between culture, society, and the person. First, meanings personally experienced by people. Second, types of thinking are instrumental, communicative characteristics for different people, groups rationality. Third, types of instrumental action, communicative interaction of people, etc., depending on the types of thinking (Linde 2021, 1261).

So Marcuse talks about instrumental rationality (thesis), and then Habermas creates an antithesis by dividing instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. According to Marcuse, instrumental rationality is dominant with reason that leads to efficiency and technical control, and of course disregards moral and humanitarian values. This instrumental rationality becomes a social pathology of modern capitalist

society, and humans are created as one-dimensional beings. Habermas's thinking is an antithesis to Marcuse's, adding communicative rationality as the basis for a democratic and ideal society. Habermas's criticism of materialist determinism is a prospect that ignores democratic and ideal societies. Habermas emphasizes the possibility of human emancipation through critical thinking and communicative actions that can occur in public.

The synthesis between the thoughts of Critical Theory, Marcuse, and Habermas is that communicative action is progressive within its system, while there is an important component of recognition in forming identity and collectivity. There are two sub-analyses of this synthesis, including: the struggle for recognition and the contextualization of the normative foundations of structure in subjective autonomy, as well as its implications for the attention of the other of reason.

Recognition has two dimensions. Firstly, the coincidence of an actual perception with a knowledge that we already possess, as when we recognize a place, a person, a situation, or an argument. Secondly, from a moral point of view, recognition means that we respond to the claim of other individuals who demand that we treat them as autonomous entities or equal persons (Honneth 2016, 84).

The conflictual and internally dynamic structure of recognition can be traced through the way in which the differentiation of the sphere of institutionalized recognition is not ahistorical, but the result of a historical process driven by the struggle for recognition. In addition, it consists of the way in which the re-expansion of recognition principles (ex., respect and appreciation) is the result of the dynamics of progress leading to more inclusive (in terms of subjects recognized) and differentiated (in terms of the quality of subjects recognized) forms driven by the struggle for recognition (Butler 2021, 236).

Meanwhile, the normative foundations of the structure of subjective autonomy at the recognition level include three types of social conditions. First, affective life is protected in the space of actuality of community relations, namely, love. Second, the subject can see himself as equal to everyone else, as a full subject by law. Third, the subject is able to see that his/her contribution to social life is recognized. These three types are distinguished based on the direction in which the meaning reaches the goal. Love is referred to as the medium of recognition, and law is the form that makes self-realization possible, while solidarity contains potential elements for the development of social morality in society (Runesi 2014, 333).

According to Honneth, the fundamental element of human development is intact identity (Fraser 2003, 224). In this regard, the contextualization of the normative basis for the subject's contribution to social life, for example, subjects can respect each other because they have the same

social position, and abilities that match the level of social status on the scale of community values. Then, among the status groups of society, the subject finds awareness of the implicating relationship to the members of society towards nature and the ability of the cultural character that contributes to the realization of value collectively (Honneth 1949, 123).

The issue of patriotism as a discourse of racial discrimination (Raghunathan 2017) is a contemporary example that illustrates the relevance of Marcuse and Habermas' thinking. A society composed of various races illustrates the alienation of certain individuals. This hegemonic patriotism becomes problematic as an excessively biased ideological discourse. This is because patriotism itself is an ideology of love for one's own country and is based on a critical understanding. This shows that from a moral point of view, societies that practice patriotism treat each other interpersonally, with racial differences as autonomous entities and equal in status. In this way, society has a medium of recognition and creates prospects for solidarity for the integrity of human identity development. This approach illustrates the dialectic of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality to free humans from the conditions that enslave them.

The two sub-analyses above describe communicative action as progressive in its system, while there is an important component of recognition in shaping identity and collectivity. This recognition theory focuses on social interaction, particularly communicative action, in creating normative foundations for the structure of subjective autonomy. In addition, the subject's own recognition is expressed through self-perception with the knowledge possessed and the claims of other individuals. The dialectic of Marcuse and Habermas' thinking in the constellation of social cohesion and justice reveals two theoretical constructs. First, society in interpersonal collectivity enforces freedom of expression. Islam, for example, considers the essence of justice in society to be freedom of expression, which will never be erased by time and will not be opposed by anyone, such as repaying kindness to those who do good, not hurting friends, etc. Second, freedom of expression in social cohesion represents a communicative society to achieve a fair consensus. Islam, in this case, points to the Medina Charter as the formation of civil rights and citizens' obligations with a consensus on the prohibition of crime and injustice.

## **Conclusion**

Critical Theory in the social sciences emerges from a Marxist-influenced tradition, aiming to liberate human beings from the domination of modern technocratic structures. Marcuse, representing the first generation of the Frankfurt School, critiques this domination through the concept of the one-dimensional man—highlighting how advanced industrial society

suppresses critical thought and individuality. In contrast, Habermas of the second generation offers communicative action as a foundation for democratic and rational discourse grounded in mutual understanding. The dialectical tension between Marcuse's critique and Habermas's reconstruction finds its synthesis in the recognition of identity and intersubjectivity as essential to forming authentic communicative action and collective life. This synthesis reflects the evolving project of Critical Theory: not only to critique, but also to reconstruct the social world through emancipatory dialogue.

The dialectical discourse between Marcuse's Critical Theory and Habermas's thinking is that society in interpersonal collectivity enforces freedom of expression, and freedom of expression in social cohesion represents a communicative society to achieve a fair consensus. Social cohesion and justice are important themes in instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. Thus, their correlation with Islamic principles has a system of justice with prospects that are easy to remember and will not be opposed by anyone. In addition, it correlates with Islam regarding justice that underlies consensus in the formation of sovereign civil rights and citizens' obligations.

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