

Specific points from the discussion with Jürgen Habermas, The University of Chicago, 7-8 October 1988

1. What Habermas thinks about religion and theology is, in a way, beside the point if the issue is whether his critical theory is or is not promising for "a theology of the public realm."

2. In his concluding summary, Habermas made clear how emphatically he repudiates the claim that his prescription for dealing with the problems of the Enlightenment is simply "more of the same." What he understands by communicative reason is something very different from instrumental reason.

3. Habermas also clarified the relation between philosophy and the life-world by arguing that philosophy mediates between the special~~s~~ sciences and the life world. His question, however, was whether there is anything corresponding to this that can be said for theology. On his analysis, there appear to be two main approaches to an affirmative answer to this question. On the one hand, there is an approach that looks to a philosophy both acceptable in a postmetaphysical context and able to provide cosmological, theological, and ontological, as well as anthropological, justification for religious claims. On the other hand, there is a kind of left-wing Hegelian approach that is either out-and-out utopianism or, in order to avoid that, offers more modest encouragement for rational thought and action.

4. In this connection, Habermas said something to the effect that all—repeat: *all*—that we have in the way of ideas of autonomy, freedom, solidarity, and so on is a secularized form of what was originally religious. But, then, it was here especially that he seemed to see no other content in religion than a properly moral content. He simply ignored religion's possible metaphysical content, presumably on the ground that there cannot be a valid metaphysical theory, because metaphysics as such is an illegitimate mode of discourse. This, however, clearly appeared to beg the question.

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