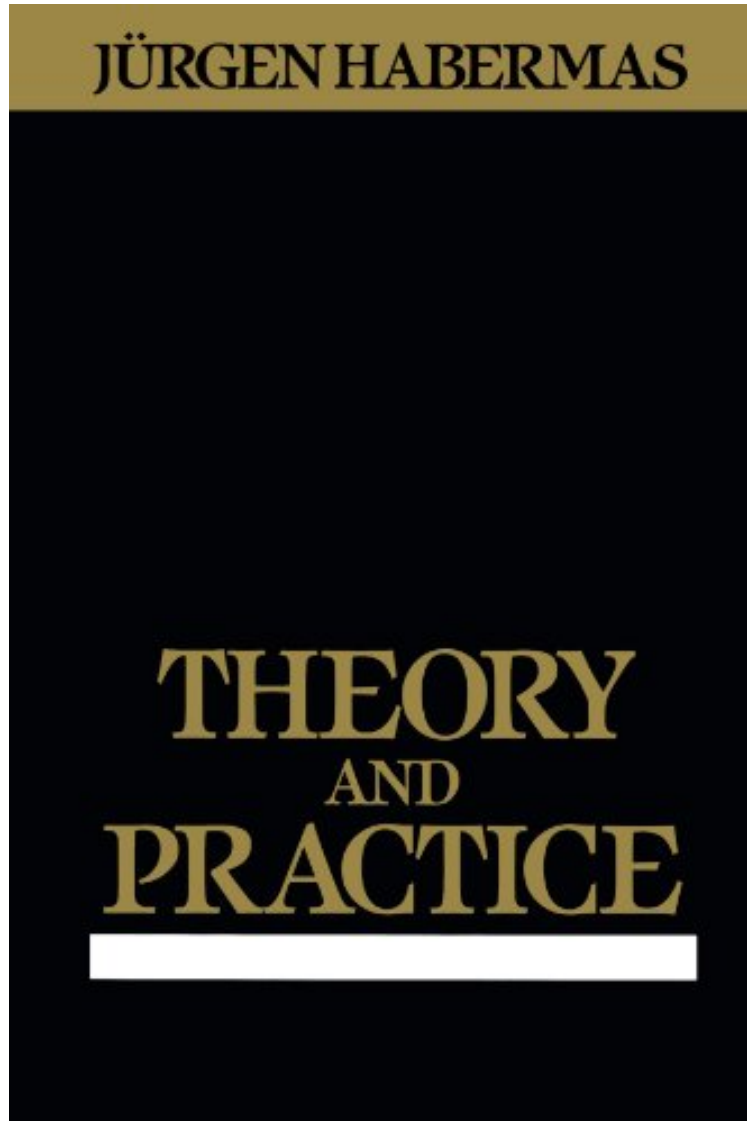


## Theory and Practice

*Juergen Habermas*

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**Juergen Habermas : Theory and Practice** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Theory and Practice:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. HABERMAS MASS SYSTEMATIC INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRAXIS By Steven H Propp Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) is a German philosopher and sociologist who is one of the leading figures of the Frankfurt School. He wrote many books, such as The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, The Theory of

Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Truth and Justification, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, etc. He wrote in the Introduction to this revised edition of the original 1971 book, In the preface to the first German edition I held out the prospect of a systematic investigation into the relationship between theory and praxis. I have not progressed much beyond this announcement of intent but this does not mean that since that time I have neglected this theme. On the contrary, my published work since then shows that the problem has in no way relaxed its hold on me. This new edition presents a welcome opportunity for me to ascertain in a retrospective view where the studies I have undertaken up to this point have led me. The investigations collected in this volume, in which the orientation has been predominantly historical, were to develop the idea of a theory of society conceived with a practical intention, and to delimit its status with respect to theories of different origins. (Pg. 1) He outlines, a tendency had developed which is to be extensively investigated in this volume: the attempt to explain why the ideas of the bourgeois revolution necessarily had to remain ideology, and could only be realized by those who, due to their position in the process of production and the experience produced by their class conditions, would have the disposition to see through bourgeois ideology. (Pg. 27) He suggests, In the face of various sectarian enterprises, one might point out today that in advanced capitalism changing the structure of the general system of education might possibly be more important for the organization of enlightenment than the ineffectual training of cadres or the building of impotent parties. With this I only wish to state that these are empirical questions which must not be prejudged. There can be no meaningful theory which per se, and regardless of the circumstances, obligates one to militancy. In any event, we can distinguish theories according to whether or not in their structure they point toward possible emancipation. (Pg. 31-32) He notes, Today instruction derived from social-technical expertise has become indispensable. The consequence of this has been a scientification of government praxis: the social sciences which now are consulted for this no longer proceed hermeneutically, but rather analytically. They can furnish technical recommendations for effective instrumentalities, but can no longer normatively give any orientation with respect to the goals themselves; they abstain rigorously from any cogent enlightenment about practical necessities in given situations, about the selection of aims, the priority of goals, the application of norms. (Pg. 114) He observes, The meaning of history as a whole is revealed theoretically to the degree to which mankind practically undertakes to make with will and with consciousness that history which it has always made anyhow. In so doing, critique must comprehend itself as a moment within the situation which it is seeking to supersede. For in the end a philosophy of history, with this materialistic self-involvement in history, finds the legitimations for its presuppositions after the fact, presuppositions as a consequence of which it substitutes the contradictions in history itself. (Pg. 248-249) He continues, Two final conclusions suggest themselves. On the one hand, the tendencies described here have grown stronger. On the basis of industrial society and its technically mediated commerce, the interdependence of political events and the integration of social relations have progressed so far beyond what was even conceivable two centuries ago that within this overall complex of communication particular histories have coalesced into the history of one world. Yet at the same time, mankind has never before been confronted so sharply by the irony of a capacity to make its own history, yet still deprived of control over it, as is the case now that the means of self-assertion by force have developed to such a degree that their deployment for attaining specific political ends has become highly problematical. Thus the immanent presuppositions of the philosophy of history have not by any means become invalid; on the contrary, it is only today that they have become true. That is why all the counterideologies, which allege that the way the philosophy of history poses the question is now outdated, must arouse a suspicion of escapism. (Pg. 250-251) He argues, Positivism is as little capable of distinguishing between these two concepts of rationality as it is capable, altogether, of being conscious that it itself implies just what it seeks to oppose externally---committed reason. But on this, or the proper distinction between these two forms, depends the relation of theory and praxis in a scientific civilization. (Pg. 268) He concludes, the danger of an exclusively technical civilization, which is devoid of the interconnection between theory and praxis, can be clearly grasped: it is threatened by the splitting of its consciousness, and by the splitting of human beings into two classes---the social engineers and the inmates of closed institutions. (Pg. 282) This book will be of keen interest to those studying Habermas thought.

Theory and Practice is one of Habermas's major works and is widely recognized as a classic in contemporary and social and political theory. Through a series of highly original historical studies, Habermas reexamines the relations between philosophy, science and politics. Beginning with the classical doctrine of politics as developed by Aristotle, he traces the changing constellation of theory and practice through the work of Machiavelli, More, Hobbes, Hegel and Marx. He argues that, with the development of the modern sciences, politics has become increasingly regarded as a technical discipline concerned with problems of prediction and control. Politics has thus lost its link with the practical cultivation of character, that is, with the praxis of enlightened citizens. Theory and Practices includes a major reassessment of Marx's work and of the status of Marxism as a form of critique. In an important concluding chapter Habermas examines the role of reason and the prospects for critical theory in our modern scientific civilization.

"For almost twenty years now Juergen Habermas has been perhaps the most consistently (as distinct from fashionably) influential thinker in the philosophy of the social sciences and in the area of socially oriented philosophies" Times Literary Supplement "It is not altogether easy to assess the work of a scholar whose professional competence extends from the logic of science to the sociology of knowledge, by way of Marx, Hegel, and the more recondite source of European metaphysical tradition ... At an age when most of his colleagues have painfully established control over one corner of the field, he has made himself the master of the whole, in depth and breadth alike." George Lichtheim "Strongly recommended for students of philosophy and social thought." Kirkus sLanguage NotesText: English, German (translation)About the AuthorJrgen Habermas (born June 18, 1929) is a German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism.