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Design, Knowledge and Human Interests

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I

The conference title has a play on "Wonderground"; the title of my paper contains a reference to Jürgen Habermas's famous inaugural lecture at Frankfurt in 1965. (Habermas 1971) There is a connection in that my talk is also aimed at uncovering what I will call, not at all flippantly, the *wonderground of design*. But the wonderground to which I want to refer—and this is the reason for my Habermasian title—is that of thought, not practice. I am interested in looking at whether some of the wonder which design might offer us in the future might lie in what design offers to mind, and specifically as what it offers as a distinctive—and crucial—way of understanding concerning the relationship between knowledge, practice and human interests.

There are obvious problems with making such a claim. The idea that design might, even in potential, be an intellectual wonderground will be immediately felt as both counter-intuitive (for if design has a "wonderground" it is surely what it achieves in practice—or it lies at least in the capacities it encapsulates) and in any case un-productive—for there is little in the tradition of design (or so, at least, it would seem) to suggest the intellectual as against the practical richness of the field. Design, we know, is in any case peculiarly resistant to theory. In a way it finds its glory in this. The unswerving application of design to practical ends, mediated by criticism, but only in minor ways by self-reflection, accommodates almost too well that mode of propositional acting which design most powerfully offers. (In this respect there is a way in which design echoes Habermas' tart comments on the sciences—"From not knowing what they do methodologically they are that much surer of their discipline, that is of methodical progress within an unproblematic framework. False consciousness has a protective function." (Habermas, 1971, p.315). I take the project of design research as a whole to be an attempted counterpart to this intellectually protective, but perhaps ultimately self-defeating, stance).

But it is not only from the side of design that there is a problem with my claim. To propose design as a realm of thought is to fly in the face of the structure of theory and intellectual inquiry as we have received it across the European tradition. The attitudes we have inherited in this respect finds neat summation in some sentences by Schelling which Habermas quotes at the very beginning of his talk. Since I want to use the

arguments of this lecture as a springboard for re-defining the intellectual thrust that design offers, let me begin by quoting from Habermas—though the quotation will create, as you will see, a position from which it would appear *impossible* that design could be considered a theoretical activity, much less an intellectual wonderground.

II

 "In 1802, during the summer semester at Jena, Schelling gave his Lectures on the Method of Academic Study. In the language of German Idealism he emphatically renewed the concept of theory that has defined the tradition of great philosophy since its beginnings.

> The fear of speculation, the ostensible rush from the theoretical to the practical,
> brings about the same shallowness in action that it does in knowledge. It is by
> studying a strictly theoretical philosophy that we become most acquainted with
> Ideas, and only Ideas provide action with energy and ethical significance."

Habermas adds, as an immediate gloss: "The *only* knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests and is based in Ideas—in other words knowledge that has taken a theoretical attitude".(Habermas, 1971, p.301. All subsequent citations by page number are to this text).

These sentences are significant—not least for the way in which what Schelling describes can *also* be recognized in the recurrent ambition of design theory. It is precisely in large part in response to the "shallowness" of action that the impulse for theory arises, and it is with the hope of giving practice "energy and ethical significance" that it is pursued.

In that sense it is not difficult to see that Schelling's sentences set out the fundamental premise of theoretical activity as a whole. The thesis that theory occurs consequent to the doubled *separation* of thought and interests and the *distancing* of knowledge from action has its basis in the perception that interests pollute theory just as they weaken and trivialize action. Habermas's summary accurately catches the extent to which Schelling's sentences respond to the tendency of practice to be caught up reactively with the forces of the moment—to the detriment of more deeply considered forms of action. The generalized appeal of the thesis lies in the fact that, because it construes itself as *other* to interests, then the theory about which Schelling speaks is capable of standing back from immediacy, allowing thought to disengage itself from the vicissitudes of daily struggle and in so doing to reach a level (or a depth) of understanding that concern with immediacy can never achieve.

From the standpoint of design this is a deeply troubling proposition. Design is not other than interested and immanent. That design contains an objectivating or a distancing moment within its processes is in this instance of little account. Design is a practice that in its deepest structure is *interested* and engaged. The tension between design as a practice and the ambitions of theory with which we are all familiar is testament to this. The felt antipathy between design and theory therefore cannot easily be gainsaid.

But this is by no means the only difficulty raised by the theoretical stance. Schelling's proposition does not stand in isolation. It replicates, "in the language of German Idealism," the earliest demarcation of theory, the translation from *theoria* (which originally applied in the realm of religious spectacle) to theory (or philosophy). Its underlying axioms repeat the three-fold movement by which theory was secured. This movement begins with the demarcation between the realm of the eternal and the fugitive (of that which belongs to and does not belong to, theory). It passes to establishing the structured, self-subsistent nature of what-is, and it concludes by creating an internal relation (*ethos*) between the knowledge of eternal verities that theory achieves and theoretically informed action in the world.

Even allowing for the (limited) transformations science has wrought on this model, to a remarkable extent these moments continue to define the essential structure of theoretical reflection.(See Habermas, p.303).

The first of these moments—the demarcation between the realm of the eternal and the fugitive (of that which belongs to and does not belong to, theory)—takes the religious origin of *theoria* and translates this into the proposition that the work of theory is essentially the contemplation of the cosmos, the exploration of "what is" in the absolute sense. What theory discovers—or what it seeks to discover—are the laws that underpin existence as a whole. But the corollary of this idea is as important as the proposition itself. The argument that theory deals with "what is" in the absolute sense requires the prior demarcation of Being and time, the separation of the realm of the eternal and the unvarying (Being as such) from the realm of human actions (time). Only this differentiation, as Habermas neatly puts it, reserves to "*logos* a realm of Being purged of inconstancy and uncertainty," while leaving to *doxa* "the realm of the mutable and the perishable" (p.303). This separation of allows theory to claim ontological status—and to create Ontology as the study of eternal Being. But one consequence of this demarcation is that all that is within practice, all that belongs to the realm of the finite (and the historical), falls "below" theory—and therefore, to a degree, becomes that which *cannot* be theorized, at least in the classical sense.

The second criterion by which theory secures itself consists of the requirement that the realms which theory investigates must be a-priori understood as that which stands outside of, and subsists independently of us (p.307). What stands outside of us that can be known in this way are substantive self-subsistent entities (who become known in their otherness) or they are self-subsisting verities existing beyond appearance, yet accessible by theoretical reason. Conversely, what is not self-subsistent, or what is not structured, cannot be known by theory.

The third movement takes up the cosmological focus of the first in order to establish how theory, although standing outside of action, can nonetheless enter into the conduct of life. Habermas succinctly gives us the essence of what is traditionally involved here: "When the philosopher views the immortal order, he cannot help bringing himself into accord with the proportions of the cosmos and reproducing them internally. He manifests these proportions, which he sees in the motions of nature … within himself." The soul likens itself to the ordered motion of the cosmos and theory enters the conduct of life through this gate. Through ethos,

"theory moulds life to its form and is reflected in the conduct of those who subject themselves to its discipline" (p.302).

III

These considerations are salutary for my proposition. It is immediately clear that *none* of these criteria equate easily, if at all, with design. To the contrary, each throws up, sharply, the differences between theory in its traditional (or indeed in its technical) senses and design. It is worth reviewing these difficulties, beginning again from Schelling's thesis for they reveal in their contrasts more concerning both the structure of theory and the character of design-action.

Re (1) The argument that the only knowledge "that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests," runs counter to the fact that design can *only* be knowledge concerning human interests (since human interests are, *by definition*, what design is about; are that about which it is concerned). In so far than as knowledge must eschew interest design can be known in these aspects, only, at best, with difficulty. Conversely, human interests in design cannot—or can only with difficulty—be grasped theoretically. Taken together, these points suggest that the separation of knowledge from human interests vitiates theoretical knowledge as a mode of understanding adequate to design. But it also suggests that design passes beyond the sphere of understanding of theory (philosophy). Dewey once proposed that aesthetic experience constituted one of the greatest challenges to the limits of philosophical thought. Today it might be stronger to recompose that challenge in terms of design, for it would seem that design, which combines the objective self-formative process of the human species with the exploration of what, in relation to this process, artifice can be—and both of these with the human interest in pursuing, simultaneously self-preservation, utopic fulfillment and emancipatory cognitive and practical interest—provides the model for the ruin of, or at least the deepest challenge to, traditional thought.

Re (2) The proposition that theory is essentially the contemplation of the cosmos and hence that theory deals with "what is" in the absolute sense—and that it is here, and not in the realm of time that Being subsists—runs counter to the character of design. Design occurs, we know, not "as is," but through the event of its coming-to-be, through how it happens in history. In design, as in artefacture as a whole, there is no realm of being outside of time (design is *unable* to stipulate a realm of being outside of time, outside its own historical event). Second, while theory seeks to create a realm of Being (logos) "purged of inconstancy and uncertainty", design has no other choice but to accept the "the realm of the mutable and the perishable" (*doxa*, the finite). Design therefore has to insist that, for it, being lies *here*; i.e., that there is *only* finite being. Design thus *reverses* the stipulations that constitute theory.

At the same time, in insisting that, for it, being is finite and situated design effectively posits itself as "below" theory. On both grounds, knowledge which seeks to understand design cannot therefore do so in the form of theory traditionally conceived.

Re (3) The objectivated world that theory investigates presents itself (or is credibly constructed as) both structured and self-subsistent. However, the medium through which design comes to be is artifice. Artifice is neither structured (in the sense meant here) nor, despite its objectivating moments, is it self-subsistent. Artifice is relational, it has no independent existence. However "objective" it may on occasion seek to present itself (as in technology) artifice as a medium is dependent. Specifically, artifice is dependent on subjects and this is particularly true of design, which deals as its essential character with the interaction of things and world (persons). In design then we are acting in relation to a realm which is, at best, *ambiguously* external or self-subsistent vis-à-vis either ourselves of the world. Thus in relation to design the theoretical insistence on *a priori* determining its subjects of study as structured and self-sufficient introduces an objectivating distortion: it causes loss of sight as to that, which is, in the end, most crucial to explore—namely mediation. Finally, while in design we are dealing with potentialities and possibilities these do not constitute anything akin to an (ideal) realm beyond appearance. Potentialities and possibilities refer to capacities. An adequate "theory" of design is a theory of design as a capacity or a potentiality.

Re (4) Traditionally, theory enters life by replicating within itself the objective structure of the cosmos, forcing (transient and shallow) life into its (eternal) mould. This desire for a model of order larger than its own activity is what draws design, in some of its moments, to seek such models (e.g., mathematical, natural). But whatever claims are made on behalf of such models (and there is obviously a considerable history of such) the condition of ethos, which draws its normative power from its apparent discovery of an ideal world structure derived from its understanding of cosmic order, is fundamentally *only* allegorical. To put this another way, the cosmological analogy works *only* to the extent that theory is thought to have discovered "in the cosmic order an ideal world structure … the prototype for the order of the human world" (p.306). Insofar as cosmological understanding loses its force as a model for action so *ethos* disintegrates. But there is also a wider price that is paid here, which is that which theory pays all down the line, and that is that given *ethos*, activity is itself not thought nor is immanence constituted as that which could provide for ideal templates for practice. But the eschewal of action as that which in itself could contain Ideas (released through self-reflection) devalues practice: it is this rejection that deprives it of "energy and ethical significance."

IV

It is scarcely surprising, that in the face of these antitheses, that thought as a whole should presuppose design as that which *cannot* be thought. Indeed, what these last paragraphs have made clear indeed is the degree to which, at every point, design appears antithetical to the conditions of theory traditionally considered. Design, to put it bluntly, *rubs theory the wrong way*—and theory retaliates by declaring design a-theoretical. Are we to accede to this view? And if so, is my proposition—that design in some way constitutes an intellectual *wonderground*—therefore invalid?

On one level it is almost tempting to agree; to declare that if design cannot be thought theoretically, if theory is antithetical to design, then it must be "thought," i.e., it must be understood, in other ways—*including through the practice of design itself* (and after all this is how, in practice, design thinks itself). This attitude is replicated, we know, in a number of ways in the field—yet there is a problem here, and not merely at the level of thought.

Reactive practice only adds to the limitations imposed on an activity that generally lacks (as does design) an internal capacity for articulated self-reflection. The lack of depth that results echoes Schelling's accurate charge against the "rush to the practical" that "brings about shallowness in action." Conversely, the counter-proposition that "*only* Ideas provide action with energy and ethical significance" has weight. Looked at in this way theory may be the necessary counter-balance to distorted practice. This is all the more the case in that as commoditization helps withdraw from practice all self-reflexive capacity (substituting economic and technological instrumentalism for enlightened action) so the distortions that occur (above all the trivialization of design) cannot easily be accounted for (even sometimes perceived) by a critical consciousness that labours under the difficulties of articulating its case. The problem is this: as design is consigned intellectually to a subaltern space, the connection to the intellectual resources that it requires to adequately think itself retreats. Understanding, let alone critique, becomes more difficult. Conversely, the application of full attention to the situation out of which we might imagine depth understanding flowing cannot happen, consciously, without a depth-vocabulary through which to grasp practice. Can such a depth vocabulary be constructed outside of theory?

But there may be another loss here as well. And that is the loss to theory. That theory eschews design means that theory cannot access the realms with which design deals. Although from theory's point-of-view this means little—for by definition design is outside of its concerns and therefore is regarded as a realm that has no value—we cannot be so sanguine ("we" meaning here ourselves as participants in a world transformed, increasingly, into artifice).

Theory, in its traditional sense, had force when artifice seemed but of little account. Today, this condition is reversed. Whatever *intellectual* interest we may have in cosmological issues these cannot be regarded as containing the same force as once presupposed. By contrast, the problems that beset us—that about which we most urgently need understanding—are problems of artifice. The need that presents itself is therefore for a theory capable of reflecting (well or at least adequately) on artifice. What pre-eminently allows reflection on artifice *from a standpoint which includes human interests* is design.

These last points suggest a complex, doubled, need for an adequate *theory* of design—that is there is a need from the standpoint of design to be able to articulate design "theoretically," i.e., conceptually, and there is a need from the standpoint of understanding (theory) as a whole that it be able to grasp what design potentially offers to it, particularly with respect to understanding artifice, which is today a question of some urgency. But how are such theories to be constructed when it appears that design and theory belong to two antithetical realms?

One way that the problem of design and theory *cannot* be overcome is by trying to force design into the mould of theory in the traditional sense. This is, clearly, ultimately impossible—as the limits of those design theories which have attempted it attest. The costs—to the substantive concerns with which design essentially deals—are too great. The only chance that presents itself is to understand that in accepting that design is a counter-

point to traditional theory that it also offers the basis (not the foundation or the ground but the *basis*) of *another kind of theory.*

It is the possibility of this "other kind of theory," this "thinking other," which I would like to try to articulate in what is left of this talk. I will proceed through three argumentative stages; taking up again some the major propositions discussed above, but this time from the standpoint of examining how we can these moments could be deployed as ways of originating a "theory" adequate simultaneously to design and to the needs of theory today. The procedure, in each case, will be to draw from the moments of design the criteria for each theoretical step. What I can offer, in this space, will be extremely provisional, the project obviously awaits much fuller treatment.

Part Two

V

In his inaugural lecture, Habermas offers, in relation to the Greek experience, a counter-factual reading of the meaning of pure theory which has some bearing on this problem. *Reversing* a merely objectivating view of the derivation of pure theory he argues instead that the positing of a realm of disinterested theory was both strategic and emancipatory. "The release of knowledge from interest was not supposed to purify theory from the obfuscations of subjectivity but inversely to provide the subject with ecstatic purification from the passions"(p.306). At its origin theory provides therefore a space in which the enmeshing of consciousness with gods and superhuman powers; drives and affects, and the immediacy of contingent and inconstant empirical interests could be placed at a distance, permitting the development of reflective capacities which in turn allowed for the release of the subject from "dependence on hypostatized powers" (p.310). Ontological distinction played a parallel role in providing a space through which "consciousness, emancipated from archaic powers, now anchors itself in the unity of a stable cosmos and the identity of immutable Being." In relation to both cases the *illusion* of pure theory served "as protection against regression to an earlier stage that had been surpassed. Had it been possible to detect that the identity of pure Being was an objectivistic illusion, ego identity would not have been able to take shape on its basis. The representation of interest appertained to this interest itself" (p.307).

This formulation of the problem is suggestive in several aspects. "If this interpretation is valid, then the two most influential aspects of the Greek tradition, the theoretical attitude and the basic ontological assumption of a structured, self-subsistent world, appear in a connection that they explicitly prohibit: the connection of knowledge and human interest" (p.307). In other words, theory in its origin is not ontologically 'pure' but is, on the contrary, the historically and culturally situated a means of releasing the subject "from dependence on hypostatized powers."

This is significant. Today, the powers with which we deal are in large part technological—or more generally, they are the powers of artifice now generalized to a point where they constitute the horizon of our existence. The necessary purification from the passions which was required in the Greek instance the finds its contemporary parallel not in the release of knowledge from interest but in its *opposite*. Knowledge with an

interest in fostering emancipation, or at least of fostering the emancipatory cognitive interest necessary to the development of autonomy and responsibility, seeks to emancipate subjects not from the passions but from the debilitating limitations of technical and objectivist practice that remain *outside* of human interests. Whereas, for the Greeks, it was "only by means of ontological distinctions that theory could … take cognizance of a self-subsistent world purged of demons" (p.306) today the *reverse* applies. Consciousness, which once anchored itself "in the unity of a stable cosmos and the identity of immutable being" has now to find its living (and, if not its "anchor" then at least the site of its being) in the forms of historical emergence that artifice opens for us. Rather than immutable Being, the demarcation between Being and time dissolves. In this context subjectivity is re-discovered as historical being, i.e., not as that which "is," but as that which happens, or events.

VI

The consequences, for thought, are acute. First, the notion that thought can only address a realm of Being "purged of inconstancy and uncertainty" dissolves. Being, thought historically, as being, can, like design *do no other than* accept that it's realm is that "the mutable and the perishable" (*doxa*, the finite). This does not mean that being *reduces* to the given. What is, as lived existence, includes potentiality. To think historical being is to think being in its historical potential, not as the objective movement of history (being is without *telos)* but as the engagement of potentiality (possibility) with "the realm of the mutable and the perishable." But, second, today this realm *includes* artifice. If the latter now provides our effective horizon of existence then it is *only* through the interaction with artifice that being is disclosed. Design, which combines the objective self-formative process of the human species with the exploration of what, in relation to this process, artifice can be—and both of these with the human interest in pursuing, simultaneously self-preservation, utopic fulfilment and emancipatory cognitive and practical interest—provides not only the model for the ruin of traditional thought but the schema for how a thought adequate to this condition can be.

Another way of presenting this is to say that today design provides the space through which it is possible to explore (experimentally, propositionally, as anticipation) the *emancipatory consequences* of the enmeshing of artifice and human interests. What design potentially frees from—why it provides, *pace* Heidegger, the model of a "free relationship to technology"—is that it provides an alternative to the false identification of human interests with objectivated reasoning and practice. (As also from its converse, the denial of, and/or the inability to deal with, artifice). What design permits for subjectivity (and thus for consciousness) is the inhabitation of a realm of praxis in which the conditions of subjective experience, now indissolubly wedded to artifice, can be explored within parameters that include human interests as *internal* moment of that praxis and not, as in objectivating reason, as a merely secondary or past-hoc, "after-the-fact" consideration. Design is therefore a crucial space, perhaps even *the* crucial space, through which existence today can be thought.

VII

That design *objectively* has this role today is due, above all, to the place of artifice in our culture. The *projection* of a basic ontological assumption of a structured, self-subsistent world serves the interests of theory *and* of the subject in so far as it provides a basis for knowledge and the objectified counterpart of contingent subjectivity.

It is also congruent, experientially, with the "given" of the world as we receive it. In so far as, across the span of history, this assumption can be sustained—and until very recently it could be so—then the projective quality of this presupposition is of scarce matter. After all, on it are built, most obviously, the natural sciences. But today, with respect not only of human actions but also of nature as it alters in respect of these actions (climate change being the most obvious example), the projective or fictive quality of this presupposition becomes more apparent. To put it simply: the world can be thought of as self-subsistent *only* if we exclude artifice. If we include artifice in the world—and today we must—then the world cannot be thought of as self-subsistent (for artifice is self-subsistent neither with respect to subjects nor to the world). But then artifice is also without Ontology in the traditional sense, i.e., it has no being outside of history; outside that is, the forms it takes in any instance. We are faced then with grasping artifice *in terms of the relations though which it is constituted and which, in turn, it helps constitute.*

What we are speaking about in this process is the maturation (for good or ill) of the cultural break with nature. "The human interests which have emerged in man's natural history" (p.312) derive both from nature *and* from this break. Technology, or artifice, is the point at which this cultural break with natural interests becomes "absolute," not literally but in the sense that, in so far as artifice remains (i.e.. in so far as it does not destroy itself) then it represents the incorporated "tendency towards release from the constraints of nature" (p.312) at that point where this release has gained extra-ordinary freedom of action (to the extent where it reacts back upon nature, and on a scale that is global in its impact).

What is *now* placed on the table, as perhaps the most acute question we face, is the relation between the interests in self-preservation and towards utopian fulfilment and the new conditions of existence brought into being by artifice. Artifice both (potentially) threatens and permits self-preservation just as it threatens and (potentially) permits utopian fulfilment. What threatens and permits is the nature of the relationships between interests, artifice and nature/world. In that respect too, the position of theory (knowledge) changes.

VIII

It was as a result of theoretical development in the classical sense that knowledge is developed in the "three categories" thorough which in the social-scientific model, we apprehend reality—those that Habermas defines as "information that expands our powers of technical control; interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions; and analysis that free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers" (p.313). We need not take these too literally to see that it was perhaps inevitable that in constructing these modes of knowing the world that the focus should lie in the pursuit of the differentiated moments, the synthesis between these being left to a post-hoc condition and not itself theorized (or not adequately). Today, I think it would be obvious to all of us that the knowledge deficit at the societal level lies in the synthetic interaction of these three modes (allowing for the moment that these represent the crucial modes of grasping the world on behalf of action in it) and in the understanding of how these modes of knowledge interact in turn with the means of social and cultural organization through which they are realized—in Habermas' list, "work, language, and power," but *also*, in our own formulation, and crucially, artifice.

Two small, but not insignificant revolutions in thought are portended here. The first is the reversal of the axiom that in relation to the "categories of possible knowledge" (and action) concerning the world that the "configuration of knowledge and interest is not the same in all categories" (p.313). Without wishing to flatten difference, what now becomes of interest is finding that language of synthetic thought and action which is capable of configuratively negotiating incommensurability. Self-reflection is in this understanding not a passive process of critical judgment and evaluation—that which judges but leaves intact the structure that it reflects upon—but the *active* synthetic process of "judging"—*which now means transforming*—knowledge from the point of view of the doubled interest of self-preservation and emancipatory or utopic drives. The context of understanding is the assessment of what it is that artifice today offers, both utopically and dystopically.

One way of conceiving what design offers in this respect is to note that "Human interest in autonomy and responsibility" today travels *through* the question of artifice. Design matters in this respect because in it, in effect, artifice, language and self-reflection are conjoined. "In self-reflection knowledge for the sake of knowledge attains congruence with the interest in autonomy and responsibility" (p.314). In language, "through its structure, autonomy …responsibility … and the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus are already posited" at least as potentiality (p.314). Design takes these moments and unites them with artifice. Against the merely objectivating tendencies of technology, which press towards the instrumental, design pulls back artifice from instrumentality, insisting, against the grain (against force) that the "practical mastery of history" *cannot* be "reduced to technical control of objectified processes" (p.316).

IX

The movements discussed above are indicative. There is more, much more that could be said here, but let's us try to summarize where we have got to. The relationship between knowledge and human interests is, as Habermas posited and as we would anyway expect, internal. Knowledge is determined by emancipatory cognitive interests: self-reflection seeks to release the subject from dependence on hypostatized powers and to develop the capacities for autonomy and responsibility; the twinned concerns for self-preservation and (the movement towards) utopian fulfilments strive for those understandings which can enable realization of this dialectic. In an epoch of artificiality, such as that, for the first time, we are entering, design offers to knowledge neither simply theory, nor a subject for theory, but a transformed model of theory, which is also to say, a transformed model of reflection.

"That we disavow reflection is positivism": this was Habermas's battle cry at the beginning of *Knowledge and Human Interests*. In this he echoed the understanding of critical social theory from Heidegger to the Frankfurt School. The language has today faded, the conditions, in certain crucial respects, have changed. The "single question" with which Habermas began his book—"How is reliable knowledge possible?," (Habermas, 1971, p.3) has become instead the complex question of how *adequate* knowledge can *combine, actively,* with the understanding of human interests to create modes of praxis capable of dealing, in the context of artifice, with our twinned needs for self-preservation (the maintenance of a viable social system) and movement towards that which we recognize today as objectively possible, namely an emancipated world.

Indeed, it is telling that the "single question" that Habermas' characterized as *the* philosophical question of the modern period, should in this reformulation lose its neat economy. This is indicative not only of a genuine increase in complexity concerning that with which we must deal today but also of the fact that knowledge no longer stays, as it were, as knowledge. *The question of knowledge is today also a question of praxis.* But the question of action is equally no longer so. The inadequacies of merely instrumental approaches to activity—economic or technical—are today so manifest that their maintenance becomes scandalous if for no other reason than the unviable costs they ultimately force the society to pay.

In relation to both of these design provides *another* model. That other model will, in its widest formulation, ultimately be characterized as an-*other* economy, however at this stage we can more simply speak of what we have essentially already revealed—that design proffers model of a different kind of relationship between theory and practice. This model takes up the original Greek impulse whereby theory had the goal of emancipation. But in reverse of that theoretical "purification" today, we put forward a form of knowing in which interest is central; in which the work of theory is the active exploration (i.e., the exploration from the point of view of action-in-the-world) of the interaction of subjects and artifice, "world and thing," understood in a context where being is revealed not Ontologically as Being but through how it historicizes itself, how it comes to be through its own event, through how it makes the world. This understanding, and this action, is conceived in relation to finite being: to the world as "the realm of the mutable and the perishable" and it is from this realm, through ethical reflection, that (Schelling-like) we draw those ideas (criteria of acting) which can give practice "energy and ethical significance." Practice therefore no longer falls below theory and we have no need to invoke (to create, to manufacture, to *myth*) a cosmological realm. In the same way, we no longer stay with the myth of a self-subsistent world. We now accept—we now *can* accept—the dependency of the world on our actions. This is equivalent, at last, of the maturity to contend with (i.e., to take responsibility for) what we have made. It brings responsibility in line with power. Finally therefore, the accord we now seek is not that between "the proportions of the cosmos," the character of the soul and the forms of life, but between the needs and demands of subjects, world (including nature) and artifice. Design models this accord. Its wonderland is that it is capable, when it so understands itself, of so doing. Its second wonder is that it offers this to thought. The question is whether thought can recognize the gift that is proffered.

References

Habermas, J. (1971) *Knowledge and Human Interests*, (Schapiro J. Trans). Boston: Beacon Press, 1971. The lecture, "Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective," is printed as an appendix, pp. 301-317.