Discussion based on the Habermas' Media Critical Theory

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Abstract: Since the 20th century, critical theory has developed in the Western intellectual community and has not only become an important social theory, but also a rather powerful academic ideological trend. Its critical objects include philosophy, political science, aesthetics, and literature in many areas, it has become a social feature. It is on such a huge academic stage that Jurgen Habermas came to the stage and attracted people's attention with his diverse ideas and outstanding academic achievements. Habermas has innovated critical theory from a grand and novel angle, outlined a new framework, and made critical theory get rid of the ideological imprisonment of the early Frankfurt School, which provided it with greater room for development and left a profound The influence is called "the second generation of bearers of the Frankfurt School". This article focuses on Habermas's critical theory and briefly analyzes and discusses it.

In the theoretical system of communication studies, when referring to the media critical theory, people often think of the Frankfurt School in the first place. Indeed, the Frankfurt Institute was founded in the early 1920s, and the leading members headed by Horkheimer were influenced by many Western philosophies such as Hegel, Kant, Freud, etc., and developed critical social theory and became famous in the academic world. Even in modern times, the school's critical theory of media still has important significance in communication. But in fact, the members of the Frankfurt School were not the first thinkers who put forward the theory of media criticism. As early as the 17th century Enlightenment swept across Europe, there were cultural critics and political reformers who liberated their thoughts to criticize the media However, because they were too loose and did not formally unite, this critical voice soon submerged in the wave of the Enlightenment [1]. Until the 19th century, thinkers regarded the media as the most representative object to criticize, and thus derived the theory of media criticism, which was then developed and perfected by the Frankish School. However, in the later period, the school's long-term criticism denies it but imprisoned the theory within a limit. At this time, as a late leader of the Frankfurt School, Habermas gradually changed from a radical standpoint, which also promoted the development of critical theory of media again.

1. The emergence and development of early media critical theory

The American scholar Wilbur Schram is recognized as the founder of the discipline of communication. He proposed that in addition to being able to multiply, control and spread information, the media can also indirectly promote social revolution after full contact with society. In the eyes of this father of communication, the information medium clearly has a powerful force that can transform society. He even connected paper media such as books and newspapers with the Enlightenment, thinking that it played an important role in the emancipation of people in the 17th and 18th centuries Role [2]. In today's view, this view is not unreasonable. After all, when capitalism rose, the bourgeoisie launched the slogan of freedom and equality in order to protect and develop their own interests. Freedom of speech became the most important one, but in philosophy It is easy to publicize rights and freedoms, and to advocate human rights and democracy in politics. It is easy to express these ideas. If you want to pass these ideas to more people, you must pass some kind of media. The two movements have played a huge role in promoting and occupying a profound significance.

Since the media occupies such an important position in the Western movement in the 17th-18th centuries and in the process of promoting social development, people have naturally ignored the

criticism issued by some thinkers. From the 15th to the 16th centuries, a kind of newspaper-like publication appeared in the West. Some people called it a tabloid. The news on it was as public as the newspaper. The content was true and false, and some content was even made up to attract the public's attention. For this reason, thinkers during the Enlightenment were more inclined to spread their thoughts by publishing books. Of course, there are also some thinkers who are reluctant to endure such false news and bluntly criticize it. Voltaire once called the newspaper a "scourge" and made no secret of his contempt. Diderot believed that newspapers were "the spiritual food of the ignorant" and "the scourge of laborers" [3]. Montesquieu, Rousseau and others all made negative comments on the newspaper. These evaluations may seem biased today, but it just proves that the critical theory of media did not originate from the Frankfurt School. Early thinkers have been keenly aware of the shortcomings of the media. However, the early enlightenment thinkers only criticized the media in terms of audience and communication effects, and did not form a systematic theory.

2. The Rise and Development of Frankfurt School's Critical Theory of Media

After the 18th century, the Western newspaper industry developed prosperously and gradually became a powerful weapon for the bourgeoisie to promote freedom and equality. After the 19th century, the newspaper gradually evolved into an enterprise, a mass media that people are familiar with. At this time, most thinkers looked at the newspaper from an optimistic perspective, and Marx even put forward the viewpoint that the newspaper "shares hardships with the people". However, when the masses were generally optimistic about the mass media, Nietzsche believed that the newspaper had deteriorated, and raised fierce doubts and criticisms about it. Frankly speaking, the newspaper showed a kind of "untouchable publicity" [4]. This kind of evaluation can be said to be quite sharp at the time, but in fact, it has nothing to do with the changes in the social trend of thought at that time.

Although the Enlightenment once swept through most of Europe with great speed, this movement did not achieve the ideal success of thinkers in France. Judging from the French Revolution, this revolution was brewing under the trend of the Enlightenment However, in the course of the revolution, the classes killed each other, and bloody displayed "irrationality" in front of everyone [5]. After the end of the Great Revolution, the so-called rational state established by the bourgeoisie still had class confrontation and oppressive exploitation. This phenomenon prompted people to reflect and questioned the "rationality" promoted by the Enlightenment. Under such a background, the irrational ideological trend represented by Nietzsche emerged and became the mainstream of society.

In response to this social ideological trend, the contemporary Marx Weber analyzed the reasons for its occurrence, and therefore put forward the theory of social action. In his theory, human social action is divided into two types, rationality and irrationality, and rationality is divided from the perspective of value and tools, and the early Frankfurt School's critical theory is based on its rationality Develop on the basis of principles. The thinkers represented by Horkheimer put forward the view that although enlightenment liberated people's minds, but also brought great misfortune to people, and believed that science and technology played a huge role in the enlightenment, but It has also become a tool for mankind to rule compatriots. Taking the media as an example, newspapers, radio, radio stations, etc. subtly affect people's thinking and value standards, and ultimately lead to social unity, transforming people into capitalism People "[6]. Under such thinking, the Frankfurt School criticized the media. In the process of criticism, the thinkers of the school gradually changed their views on reason, and finally even evolved into the belief that reason should be deposed. This ideological change eventually led to the logic of its media critical theory being separated from Marx's political economy the learning framework gradually moved towards skepticism and pessimism.

3. The Critical Theory of Habermas' Media

When the logical framework of the first generation of Frankfurt School's media critical theory was on the verge of collapse due to excessive negation, Habermas realized from the study of Theodore Adorno that this pessimism was not conducive to media critical theory. Development, and pointed out that the early media criticism theory has two major defects: First, the theory lacks scientific basis; Second, the principle of instrumental rationality on which the theory is based is too abstract, and the analysis of the contradictions of capitalism is insufficient. Habermas believes that the reason for these defects is that early thinkers did not fully grasp the concept of rationality, and at the same time they were too radical, so that the criticism of instrumental rationality gradually shifted to blame for rationality [7]. However, this one-sided understanding of reason actually stems from the influence of Descartes 'philosophical thinking. Habermas pointed out that the" I think, therefore I am "way of thinking proposed by Descartes established the dominant position of humanity and produced a profound Influence, this influence is deeply rooted in the minds of early Frankfurt School thinkers. It is precisely for this reason that instrumental rationality should have been subjective criticism, but in the end it has evolved into self-reflective criticism of the subject's self, which eventually led to the early pessimism of media criticism.

At the same time, Habermas believed that the philosophy of the thinkers of the early Frankfurt School was too narrow. In an interview, he pointed out that Horkheimer and Adorno were too focused on the philosophical thoughts of their predecessors, but had little contact with contemporary philosophy. Therefore, when perfecting the media critical theory, they repeated the mistakes of the old philosophy, so that the theory appeared dislocation. In view of this, Habermas decided to restart from where Hawkheimer and Adorno stopped, in order to break the ideological imprisonment of media critical theory and enable it to regain development under the new era background [8]. Essentially, Habermas' transformation of the early critical theory of media stems from rebuilding the foundation of his theory, that is, to recognize the rationality of rational existence. Habermas believes that it is not enough to understand "rationality" from the perspective of philosophy of consciousness, but also needs to understand it from the perspective of subject communication, that is, people's ability to use "rationality" can be based on their daily language and behavior Manifested in. As Habermas became more involved in the field of language philosophy, under the influence of Wittgenstein, Chomsky and others, he gradually realized that "rationality" is not only reflected through the interactive behavior of the subject, but also In this process, a deeper value orientation regarding freedom and justice is reflected [9]. From this perspective, the basis of media critical theory is scientific.

Habermas' understanding of "rationality" in the context of language communication and communication activities can be said to be a fundamental subversion of early media critical theory, not just a simple proposition change, but also a philosophical profound Thought change. Although in essence, media critical theory still points to instrumental rationality, it no longer takes the disastrous nature of the enlightenment's rationality as the starting point, but instead changes to the intersection of instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. This intersection in the real world not only It can be reflected in the political and economic fields that use power and currency as the medium, and can correspond to the cultural field that uses language as the medium [10]. Habermas pointed out that if communicative rationality can become a code of conduct in real society, then people can sincerely talk on the basis of equality, form a consistent value consensus, achieve mutual understanding and cooperation, and build a The "utopia" in human ideals has further liberated members of society.

Conclusion

The Habermas's reconstruction of the early media critical theory has the characteristics of anti-instrumental rationality, humanism, cultural criticism, etc. At the same time, it inevitably has a utopian color. It is undoubtedly the media critical theory of the early Frankfurt School An inheritance and continuation. But it is undeniable that it was Habermas 'multi-angled and diversified development of media critical theory that made this theoretical system free from the effects of pessimism and rejuvenated in the new era. Gradually developed and applied to many

fields of modern society.

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