



## RESEÑAS

**Amy Allen & Eduardo Mendieta (Eds.) (2019). *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9781107172029, online ISBN-13: 9781316771303, 850 pages.**  
**(por Alessandro Volpe, Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan, Italia)**

In the authoritative series of *The Cambridge Lexicons*, one dedicated to Jürgen Habermas could not miss. After the renowned *Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, published back in 1995, *The Cambridge Habermas Lexicon* stands out as one of the most comprehensive and extensive introductions to the German thinker. The volume, published on the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, is edited by Amy Allen and Edoardo Mendieta, both professors of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University and prominent scholars and philosophers, particularly engaged in the discussion and the academic divulgation of the contemporary Critical Theory<sup>1</sup>. The over two hundred entries of the volume are authored by an international editorial team, composed of a hundred acknowledged scholars, as evidence of the worldwide intellectual reception of Habermas' *oeuvre*, from Western Europe to South America (see, on this, also Corchia, Müller-Doohm, Outhwaite 2019).

In particular, the 205 entries of the volume explore the most known and discussed Habermasian notions and philosophemes ("Communicative Rationality", "Discourse

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to mention here the *Penn State Series in Critical Theory*, published by the Penn State University Press. Until now, the *Series* has released volumes on Rahel Jaeggi and Rainer Forst, edited by Allen and Mendieta.

Ethics”, “Formal/Universal Pragmatics”) as well as the least obvious and not yet sufficiently inquired ones (e.g., “Cultural Anthropology”, “Civil Disobedience”, “Race”). Each entry is completed by a precious suggestion of readings related to the specific topics tackled. For this reason, the *Lexicon* enables scholars to gain insights also on new lines of research and interest in Habermas studies, which are in continuous evolution and expansion. Moreover, the entries' index includes the names associated with his philosophy and the many and inspiring intellectual debates in which Habermas has been involved in, from Theodor Adorno to Karl Popper, from Karl-Otto Apel to John Rawls. Lastly, the book is enriched with an extensive bibliography with primary works and an excellent selection of secondary literature, and a chronology, compiled with the support of the major published biographies and with the input of Habermas himself.

Given the number of works, books, essays and articles written by Habermas in nearly seven decades, a *Lexicon* is a useful guide to orient scholars in his wide-ranging work, especially for those who are beginners or need to get updated their knowledge. The encyclopedic outlook offered by the *Lexicon* is also quite appropriate for introducing an author like Habermas: each entry recalls one another, as well as any of his concepts refer to others in a coherent, post-metaphysical and transdisciplinary “constellation” of thinking. Habermas's most practical themes are always connected to his broader philosophical perspective, so the readers can easily begin from the most urgent and concrete topics and get carried to the core of his thought. By doing so, the readers can also follow a personal research path, according to their aims and field of interest. For instance, the entries regarding the European integration, the citizenship beyond Nation-states' borders, and the diagnosis of globalization – topics for which the name of Habermas is also known to the general public – become privileged accesses to crucial categories, such as “Constitutional Patriotism”, “Modernity and Modernization”, “Juridification”, intrinsically linked to others, even more central (e.g., “Public Sphere”, “Deliberative Democracy”, “Communicative Power”).

The *Lexicon* also highlights how most of the Habermasian concepts and themes have been influencing Humanities and Social Science, by shaping the terminology of diverse

literatures, preserving their peculiarities and, at the same time, an essential connection to the German philosopher's fundamental assumptions. Indeed, his language, and consequently, his way of facing theoretical and practical issues, became a real *lingua franca* in the contemporary social and political philosophy (Allen, Mendieta 2019: XXI), especially in the area of Frankfurt School-style Critical Theory. However, as the editor of the volume Mendieta claims, the *Lexicon* is not only "a testament to Habermas's impact across many disciplines, but also, and more importantly, on the everyday language we use to weave the fabric of our social existence" (Mendieta 2019). This observation reveals, in some way, what intellectuals are called for, namely revising, enriching, and reshaping our common language, since thinking has mainly to do with words and their ability to disclose new ways to look at the world. In the case of Habermas, his words open up new perspectives to look at "society", the authentic key concept in which his different theoretical tools converge. By "cultivating the idea of the philosopher as an intellectual among citizens" (Petrucciani 2010: 60), Habermas profoundly influenced our political and social vocabulary, and the volume reflects this fact.

Following the publication of the last large opus *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* (*This Too a History of Philosophy*), the *Lexicon* might need a new edition to better cover new insights on the history of philosophy and on the relationship between faith and knowledge, including the developments of the Habermasian interpretation of the central figures of Western philosophy. Needless to say, as long as Jürgen Habermas will continue to produce and offer new ideas (and, of course, we hope so), a dedicated *Lexicon* cannot but be a work in progress.

Without any doubt, the *Cambridge Habermas Lexicon* considerably enhances our awareness of Habermas' vast intellectual legacy.

## References

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