

# The Ethical Dilemma of Social Violence Under the View Valve of Habermas' Communication Theory and Its Correction Path: A Case Study of "Tangshan Beating Incident"

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**Abstract:** Late capitalism alienated the ethics of social communication, and the reconstruction of the "normative basis" of social communication, according to Habermas, lies in the return of noumenon to the "life world", and the occurrence of "communication behavior" in accordance with linguistic rationality, mutual respect, and dilution of instrumental rationality. The "Tangshan beating incident" as the typical social violence broke through the bottom line of the social ethics system based on the sensibility of rule by virtue and the rationality of rule by law, so that the people's "sense of security" in social communication was seriously threatened, specifically manifested as the individual "life world" was invaded by egotism. Daily "intercourse behavior" is colonized by sexual language violence; The moral climate of society is controlled by "passive moral indifference". In the case of "Tangshan Beating Incident", social communication ethics were so out of order. How can we reconstruct the normal social communication ethics and safeguard the social security of citizens? On the one hand, we should adhere to the "ethical discipline" of the principle of discourse, and On the other hand, we should strengthen the shaping of "moral and legal community" based on negotiation mechanism and the reconstruction of community morality by communicative rationality.

**Keywords:** Habermas communication theory, "Tangshan Beating Incident", Communication ethics.

## 1. 1.introduction

Communication has become the reality of modern people's existence. The vicious group beating of women in Tangshan City, Hebei Province is shocking. It not only challenged Chinese social laws, but also challenged the ethical order of social interactions, and seriously threatened the public's "sense of security". How to achieve normal and rational social "communication behavior" in the background has caused extensive discussion for a while. Habermas, the second-generation standard-bearer of the Frankfurt School, responded to the proposition of "how to achieve real social interaction" and put forward the famous "communication theory". Based on Habermas' theory of communication, to examine the "Tangshan Beating Incident", and to investigate and reflect on the ethical issues of social communication today, to seize the main contradiction and explore its corrective path, which is of great importance to revive the normal communication ethics of society and reshape the social care of citizens significance.

## 2. Habermas's Theory of Communication

"Modern capitalism, with the support of science and technology and the strengthening of state functions, has created huge material wealth for the prosperity and development of western society, but also caused the division of modern life world and the deterioration of living conditions." [1] Habermas criticized the weber instrumental rationality theory, on the basis of absorbing the elements of husserl's phenomenology, Marx will material relations as the most fundamental communicative behavior, complied with the western philosophy of language, the communicative behavior and purpose behavior to distinguish between other

social behavior, advocate communicative behavior is the foundation of all actions, Then he established his own unique communication theory.

(1) Four types of communication behavior

Habermas divides social behavior into four types: the first is purposeful behavior. Actors often choose the most effective way to achieve their goals. Whether purposive behavior has the purpose to achieve the reality desired by the subject, and to find the best means to achieve the goal, is the criterion of whether this behavior can succeed. Purposive behavior includes utilitarianism and strong instrumental rationality. The second category is regulatory behavior. The behavior of the group should be subject to certain value norms and constraints. Each member takes the common value norms of the group as the behavior standard and orientation to strictly regulate and control the behavior. The third category is dramatic behavior. Dramatic behavior refers to the behavior that each participant in the action becomes the audience of the other party in the action. The fourth category is communicative behavior. It is at least the mutual understanding and coordination between two or more subjects with language ability and behavior ability through the medium of language. Therefore, communicative behavior goes beyond the first three behavioral lineages with obvious pragmatism. Communicative behavior is not only a real interpersonal dialogue behavior with language as the medium and the purpose of understanding, but also an ideal behavior to pursue the symbiosis and harmony between individuals and society based on the consensus of actors.

Habermas believes that in order to ensure the effective communicative behavior must put forward three requirements of communicative behavior, namely the authenticity, legitimacy and sincere three requirements, the three communicative behavior effectiveness requirements are smoothly decisive premise, therefore, the above four kinds of

behavior, only the most reasonable communication, communicative behavior absorbs the advantages of the other three kinds of behavior, Social behavior is integrated in many aspects, and it is universally applicable to different citizens in different situations in the objective world.

#### (2) Space expansion of communication behavior

Husserl put forward the concept of "life-world" in the Phenomenology of Crisis and Transcendence of European Science, and Habermas' theory of "Life-world" borrowed Husserl's concept as part of his communication theory. Habermas believes that the world composed of communicative behaviors is the life world, and the life world, as the field for people to conduct public life, must exist before the real world specialized in scientific research and scientific practice. Zhu Songfeng (2015) pointed out that "the life world is essentially a storehouse of ideas, which is essentially composed of knowledge." [2] The life world of Habermas also has the following characteristics: First, the life world is a relational world. There is no difference between subject and object in the communication relationship between individuals. Both sides are subjects, and the focus of the communication process is not "I" or "you", but "we". The essence of communication is not profit or game, but the pursuit of a stable and real relationship. Second, for the communicator, the life world is not premised on the division of subjective and objective worlds, but the overlap of subjective and objective worlds. Thirdly, the life world is the place where the real communicative action takes place. On the one hand, it constitutes the real communicative action, and on the other hand, it is constructed by the actions of both parties. If the two parties want to have real communication, then their life world must be shareable to some extent, and at the same time, with the deepening of the communication, this shareability will be constantly strengthened. Therefore, the life world is not a rigid space, but a cultural reproduction world that is constantly in the flow of change. As Habermas puts it: "the life world is not the individual has to overcome its accidental impact environment, life world is just by the cultural tradition and the institutional order of appeared in the process of the socialization and identity, so, what the world is not life of individual members of organizations, nor the individual members of the collective. Instead, the life-world is the core of everyday communicative practice, the product of cultural reproduction, social integration, and social interactions rooted in everyday communicative practice." [3] Habermas pointed out that in modern western society, the system dominated by political and economic power invaded the originally beautiful and pure life world, resulting in the "colonization of the life world". Generally speaking, the subject of communication is overly keen on the pursuit of wealth, power and reputation, resulting in negative realities such as economic crisis, environmental destruction, moral decay, technology and consumption alienation.

#### (3) The language medium of communication behavior

In accordance with the "linguistic turn" of modern Western philosophy, Habermas defined language as the intermediary of communicative behavior. Modern Western philosophical thinkers pay much attention to the special role of language in human social communication. They have studied the basic nature, function, structure and meaning of language, and advocated to understand and reflect on the relationship between human and the world from the perspective of language. Habermas, on the other hand, "put more emphasis on the formulation of laws and social norms in the process of

discourse communication, and proved the legitimacy of social norms with appropriate reasons in dialogue." [4] "Intercourse tends to understanding, and human understanding must be aided by language." [5] Language describes everything in the world, but also plays an important role in the communication between subjects, people use language to express the original purest subject will.

Therefore, Habermas emphasized that the intermediary of communication must be language. He opposed Marx's view of material communication as the most fundamental communication, because that would destroy the "natural warmth" between human subjects. Communication in the life world starts from the spiritual level of language communication and moral norms in communication. Communication is the language exchange and communication between subjects, language can become the "spiritual bridge" of communication between subjects, because language establishes the initiative of human discourse, shows the subjective status of human, language is the manifestation of the true will of human. It can be seen that Habermas has been trying to construct a kind of universal dialogue ethics through language media to resist the invasion of the postmodern capitalist discourse hegemony. He advocates that "we should build a world of mutual understanding, mutual respect, pursuit of human freedom and liberation through the theory of discourse negotiation, so that everyone can live in a beautiful world of treating others with respect, showing affection and showing pity to the poor." [6]

### 3. Communication Ethics Disease in "Tangshan Beating Incident"

Peep "tangshan incident" ethical relationship problem and explore the outlet of the ethics is the research direction, if the violence as the process of the ethical conflicts of contacts, the "life world" of personal mercilessly by egoism invasion, and the normal "communicative action" is colonized by sex language violence, And the community is an accomplice to passive moral apathy.

#### (1) The individual's "life world" is invaded by egotism

In the field of violence, the "life world" state, which originally symbolizes the equality, friendship, mutual benefit and sharing of the communication subjects, has been "unified" hegemonically. The ideological reason for this phenomenon is that "egotism" gives birth to the abnormal subject behavior of "solving problems by violence". The concept of "egocentrism" was first proposed by the Swiss psychologist Piaget. It originally refers to the tendency of infants and young children to be strongly influenced by their own needs and feelings, and was later quoted as referring to the tendency of adolescents and adults to have this tendency: Judgment and behavior are strongly influenced by one's own needs and feelings. It is characterized by an inability to accommodate others, a lack of love, a lack of responsibility, and a lack of shame. It is also characterized by a focus or concentration on one's own self, and an interest in one's own hobbies, needs, and opinions. They "talk by themselves" and "talk about what they want to talk about, not caring what other people think." [7] In the event of beating people in Tangshan, the "beating person" suddenly broke into her "life world" during the dinner party of the victim woman, and put forward "drink a cup" and "I want to add your wechat" unreasonable requirements, after being clearly rejected by the woman, they touched the woman, and later become angry from indignation

to beat the woman. The abuser carried out irrational violence with extreme egotism, which seriously harmed the physical and mental safety of the woman, and did not care about whether the woman was willing or not. In the era of egotism, it seems that one-sided violence has become a common practice in society. Especially in Western civil society, which is characterized by "liberty", "equality" and "fraternity", from parliament to supermarket queues, there is an implicit atmosphere of toughness and violence. When one person tries to humiliate and subdue another, it is considered a show of strength. In "tangshan incident", the "life world" of the subject of both sides were ruthlessly hegemony after the first partition type completely "unification", the perpetrators of the "life world" is completely deformed, is filled with violence in self-centered thoughts as the instruction of supreme "will to power" of the world, and the innocent victim's "life world" was forced to open to others, Forced to accept abuse and trampling, the original "life world" of yearning for beauty is distorted into a monastery filled with violence, pornography, desire and power.

Therefore, egotism is the culprit of the behavior of "solving problems with violence". Under the guidance of the values of complete self-thought, the subject gives up the external bondage, goes to the extreme of rationality, and loses the human goodness, sincerity, self-discipline, equality and beauty. Habermas himself very opposed to such extreme egoism, and his "life world" theory is also established by security against egoism fort, fort relentlessly barbarous fire now be breached, a myriad of you and me is the "survivors", "tangshan incident" in the physical mechanism of irrational ideas of self alienation alienation to collapse, Where should modern people's "social security" go?

(2) Everyday "intercourse" is colonized by sexual language violence

Language is the instrumental medium of "communication behavior", and the "language" that Habermas said does not mean the instrumental language of extensive communication in the system, but the "language" representing the rational order of society, which excludes gender, The language in the category of class and power inequality, but the sexual language violence linked to the label of "slut" consciously or unconsciously eliminates the warm nature of language, and alienates language into an intermediary for the implementation of violent crimes. As for communicative behavior, only by restricting the common language used by the subjects from the structure, can the behavior move out of the purpose rationality that only pays attention to its own effect, and become a public category of communicative rationality. However, in the "Tangshan Beating Incident", the violent man alienated the essence of language through unreasonable sexual language violence, degraded women as "sluts", and demanded "communication" with women with distinct sexual ethics, "communication" behavior" is distorted by sexual and verbal violence, resulting in a "colonization of the life world." The occurrence of sexual and verbal violence is often linked to the "slut" label outside women. Here I have to mention the interaction between sociology professors Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton in the female dormitory of a large public university in the Midwest of the United States. Behavioral Research, which found that "the vast majority of those in the study had called others 'sluts,' 'sluts,' or denigrated other women's open sexuality. But they would have"[8] The accusations of "slutty" are mixed with other unrelated personality traits, such as being vitriolic or

unattractive." So insulting innocent women with "slut thoughts" happens not only between men and women, but also between groups of women, resulting in the violent sexual violence language violation that looks like a "joke". In the "Tangshan Beating Incident", the perpetrator took the initiative to stick the "slut" label to the victim, objectifying and degrading women, and then seeing sexual language violations Rejected by the victimized woman's life-world defense mechanisms, it escalates into unilateral physical beatings.

Qualitative language mechanisms constitute the communicative behavior used to be so alienated by nature language, unequal, and thus of violence, "the language of system" colonial modernity in the society can be seen everywhere: domestic violence, network violence, school violence, the patriarchal discipline and so on, we still live in foucault said "panoramic prison" and don't even know it. Even though we cannot distinguish the "violence" of the language in which communication occurs, we still yearn for it. Is Habermas's language mechanism a utopian fantasy? Or is it "language" that is to blame for all violence? As Zizek points out in *The Violence of Language*: "Perhaps the fact that reason and race share the same Greek etymology (ratio) tells us: Language, not primordial self-interest, is the first and most important division that allows us and our neighbors to "live in different worlds," even if we live on the same street. This means that verbal violence is not an insignificant distortion, but the ultimate basis for all special human violence." [9]

(3) The "passive moral indifference" of the social moral atmosphere

The purpose of Habermas' communication theory is to create a life world in which communicators communicate equally and ethics become the universal norm. He opposes the "moral indifference" of communicators. However, when the community in the presence of violent events presents a state of "passive moral indifference", the social moral atmosphere has to become rigid. Habermas pointed out in his article "Retalking the Relationship between Morality and Ethical Life" : "The political elites, with few exceptions, have lost their morale and courage to conduct a kind of gestaltende Politik because of a social complexity that has been made a big deal by people in ideology. At the same time, the nation-state public sphere, drained of almost all issues of real importance, has become either a platform for mutual fanning of nationalist resentment or a stage for diversion and indifference." [10] Habermas about Europe's people how to break the narrow national main body points to uphold the spirit of the public domain and open, the so-called "public domain open spirit" refers to the communicative subjects open "moral interaction", only the precondition of moral interaction of built on open communication to make the world body will get equality. But "moral indifference" in front of the violence is often the state of aphasia, "tangshan incident" passers-by "indifferent" is not active but forced, under the absolute overwhelming authority of violence, whether men or women often lose moral action, but this does not mean that lost its "moral intuition" or "moral judgment", As advocated by Kant, natural "moral empathy" is the origin of human nature, but people cannot leave afraid to be involved in the violence, make their own rights and interests are harmed, the analogy and benefit and the moral nature of the relationship, such as the famous "trolley proposition", we are on the question of "who" to save the trouble, This lies at the heart of the moral versus "interest" debate. If we save young people

and scientists first, it will be good for the overall interests of mankind, to maintain the reproduction of the population and promote the continued development of scientific and technological civilization. However, we may feel guilty for not following filial piety and neglecting some ordinary people. In fact, no matter what kind of ethical schools of thought, can not avoid the discussion of interest relations, or the consideration of morality and interest relations, is the logical starting point of moral problems, and this in turn forms the initial scope of the whole social moral field.

"Passive moral indifference" is indeed worthy of our criticism and reflection, but we should not criticize the passers-by with the mentality of "being wise after the event". The passers-by in the "Tangshan beating incident" were also victims. Should we ask ourselves whether we have the courage to keep the flow and openness of morality in the face of such a sudden crisis? Make morality, in due course, a realistic weapon in defense of violence? We need to keep thinking and exploring on the ethical level, to solve the conflict between morality and interests, and to balance the relationship between morality and interests, which will help human beings build a safe fortress of life.

#### **4. Reconstruction of Communication Ethics in "Sense of Crisis"**

The various predicaments existing in modern society have brought modern people a deep sense of "crisis" in communication. "Tangshan beating incident" is just a microcosm. "communication behavior". So how to defend our "sense of security" in postmodern society? Habermas believes that only by advocating a return to the life world to reshape the "sense of security". According to Habermas, since the important reason for the emergence of the "sense of crisis" is that the discourse communication in the life world cannot be achieved smoothly, then we must advocate a set of discourse principles to constrain the speech interaction behavior of both parties, but language principles are often insufficient. The construction of a "moral-legal community" should also be emphasized.

##### **(1) "Ethical Discipline" of Discourse Principle**

First, the subject must follow the principle of objectivity in verbal communication. This principle requires that what we describe in conversation must be a true reflection of objective facts. Indeed, many times, people are more inclined to accept a kind of "white lie" in communication, especially those communication actors with low self-worth, they will expect themselves to get a higher evaluation in order to achieve self-identification. In the "Tangshan Beating Incident", the perpetrator pursued the "high evaluation" of the victim by upholding egocentrism and achieved a false external value recognition of himself. If they are not in communication, they will be forced to meet the expectations of male authority, and they will behave insincerely, so as to seek normal communication behavior and "self-protection" in the life world. Habermas believes that such speech acts are not only present in individuals, but also often appear in mass media propaganda. Taking commercial advertisements as an example, Habermas pointed out that commercial institutions will meet the needs of consumers according to market principles, but it is easy to ignore whether the advertisement content itself conforms to the principle of objectivity. If consumers find that the advertising slogan is false, they will label the advertisement as "deceitful". If things go on like this,

consumers will not be able to agree with the marketing behavior of commercial institutions. In the "Tangshan Beating Incident", if the perpetrators could recognize the general objective facts, take the initiative to realize the unity of facts and values, and so on, would such violence be reduced? Therefore, Habermas advocates that the principle of objectivity should be promoted as a pragmatic principle in speech act communication, which is the premise of obtaining consensus in daily life communication.

Secondly, the discourse communication between subjects must follow a set of value principles. The communication between subjects should follow social norms. If a principle wants to be a social norm, it must be legitimate, that is, it stipulates which speech acts can meet social expectations, which is also the legal basis for the consensus to be obtained between subjects. This principle requires the subject to make a value judgment in the communication. If the two parties find that the topic and words of the other party exceed a certain social value, most of the communication will be interrupted. In "tangshan incident" initiative to interrupt the violent woman dinner party communication, forced to women's hostess to chat, even for the women's hands, is in contempt of value principle, the communicative behavior is completely wrong, make women feel violated, such "exchanges" nature is full of "crisis", therefore, One must think carefully about the topic of communication and the manner in which it is used.

Thirdly, the principle of sincerity, that is, the subject expresses his subjective world honestly. Different from the principle of objectivity, sincere declaration does not pay attention to whether the description of the communicator really reflects the social phenomenon, but emphasizes that we can make the other party understand and believe in the choice of words and sentence structure, which requires us to always pay attention to the attitude, tendency and even emotional state contained in the utterance of the communicator. Once we fail to actively pay attention to the content of the communication with the partner, they will form a sense of discomfort, they will think that we are perfunctory, indifferent and even hypocritical, so that the previously established dialogue relationship can not be maintained. In the "Tangshan Beating Incident", the abuser's tone was strong and the topic was sensitive (sexual topic). On the surface, the abuser hoped to communicate with the woman in a "friendly" way, but in fact, it was completely one-sided oppression by the patriarchal ideology, hoping that the woman would submit to the male power, which was full of "hypocrisy", "violence" and "coercion". If men can communicate with women in a more sincere way, the incidence of "Tangshan beating incident" will be greatly reduced. Therefore, if the communication is to proceed smoothly, the subject of action must be sincere expression, rather than unilateral "control".

##### **(2) The shaping of "moral - legal Community" based on negotiation mechanism**

Habermas is not limited to the restriction of communication by the universal principle of speech. He emphasizes the discussion mechanism as the occurrence mechanism of postmodern law, pays attention to the "morality" of law and the "legalization" of morality, and advocates the establishment of a moral-law community based on the discussion mechanism. Because "In Habermas's opinion, no matter interest union, moral community or Rousseau's ethical-political community are unrealistic and not suitable for modern complex society. In the interest union, the interest subjects only consider their own interests, are rational egoists,

and their actions are also interest-oriented. However, in the state of "war of all against all" preset by Hobbes, in order to preserve themselves as the fundamental starting point, they give up their natural rights, sign contracts, and establish an instrumental order outside themselves. "[11] Habermas regards negotiating principles as moral - constitute the basic principles of legal community, discuss the principle of the basic principles of why a community, this is mainly embodied in the law has not only produced by negotiation effectiveness fact, also with normative validity or legality, are all communicative subjects through negotiations by building the truth. Moral negotiation is placed in a prominent position. All laws must be written or occur through moral negotiation, and only legal negotiation based on moral negotiation can become the external norm of the life world. Such laws have both factual validity and normative validity, and become an effective tool for integrating the system-the life-world. In fact, the essence of such a mechanism is the legalization of morality on the one hand, and the moralization of law on the other hand. Only when the law is "atmospherized" in the society, the morality will not be lost. Only when the morality is "written", the law will not be broken, and the integration of this process must be negotiated through democracy.

"Social ethics problem in tangshan incident" indeed worthy of our reflection, moral atmosphere of the dark and legal force of temporary absence once let lose "security" in the secular society, modern people built a high wall barriers of communication between communicative subjects, mean, postmodern exchanges of temptation, hypocrisy, and oppression instead of sincerity, equality, mutual benefit, safety of the original communication mechanism, Habermas's theory of "moral and legal community" with negotiation principle as the mechanism can not help but trigger our new thinking on how to reshape the communication ethics.

(3) The reconstruction of social morality by communicative rationality

Communicative rationality only comes from the relationship mode of social communicators, so its important social function lies in the construction of community morality. When Weber explains the theme of instrumental rationality and value rationality, he often takes the social action of the subject as the research object of sociology, but he does not have the overall advantage of absorbing structuralism. Different FROM Weber, Habermas is a rebuildier of modern rationality, but his reconstruction of modern rationality also contains moral critical reflection. According to Habermas, there will be many forms of speech acts in the verbal and action interaction of multiple social subjects, but no matter what forms, they all involve the subject's reflection on himself and others, so it is possible to reconstruct morality in communication. In THIS sense, communicative rationality can overcome the narrow subject rationalism of the past and coordinate the "moral contradictions" between individuals and groups.

The formation of communicative rationality is the result of the multiple interaction of the subject of speech act, and the social violence is also the result of the vicious interaction of the subject. In order for real communication to take place and be sustainable, the consensus of actors must be "seeking

common ground while shelving differences". The result of seeking common ground while shelving differences between subjects requires multiple interactions. In the process of verbal communication, both sides of the interaction describe the objective state and subjective appeal of the event according to the principle of objectivity and sincerity. When there are differences or contradictions between the two sides in cognition of the situation, they need to repeatedly negotiate on an equal basis until the result acceptable to both sides is reached.

In social communication, the focus of communication is no longer their own gain and stop loss, but how to improve the interests and care between each other. It is precisely because of the advocacy of communicative rationality that the moral occurrence of the community is no longer a "castle in the air", but a moral-interest relationship jointly constructed by multiple subjects. It is a real social relationship with the collective presence. The moral consciousness of the community is strengthened, and relatively, social violence will naturally be reduced.

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