Cover Page

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UNDERSTANDING HABERMAS' PUBLIC SPHERE: A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITION

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Abstract

The debate over the public sphere and its relevance in the present time is growing more complex as technology has effectively permeated many facets of existence. The emergence of various social media platforms as well as cutting-edge innovations like Artificial Intelligence (AI), have significantly changed the environment for democratic discourse. This digital era is undoubtedly becoming more and more reliant on the internet for one reason or another. The ability to think freely and rationally and to express oneself freely have been put to the test by the proliferation of false information and hoaxes, the exponential growth of biases through algorithmic targeting, and problems with commercialization, commodification, media ownership, and instructional technology. In this light, the element of critical publicity and the perceptible change that Habermas focused on with a greater feeling of responsibility is worth discussing. This paper attempts to assess historical understanding on Habermas' theory of public sphere with reference to the philosophical underpinnings of various thinkers and contends that the concept of public sphere would be significant in moulding democratic decisions only through openness, accountability, and basic standards of rationality.

Introduction

In a democratic state, the ability of the people to take action against the state's unfair and unjustified authority is critical to the public realm. Various historical and ideological perspectives from within the context of political philosophy have given rise to various renderings of the idea of the public sphere. It has been a typical approach of many socio-political philosophers to divide society into two different and independent worlds, 'public' and 'private', in order to conceptualise and define the public sphere.[1] The boundaries whereby we have ordered our lives have significantly shifted in light of technological advancements and a rapidly expanding population. Indeed, in modern industrialised countries, the implementation of a distinction between public and private no longer does seem to be a sufficient means of describing or accounting for the growing complexity of the communication between humans, communities, and institutions.[2] The growth of the bourgeoise public sphere in the history of political philosophy occurred as a result of their relative position in society established by their critical mindset and the ability to influence society, allowing the middle-class people of eighteen-century Europe to expand their development further. Therefore, the ability of the general public to participate in rational, critical discourse as well as the socio-political reforms that support it are crucial to the public sphere's continued survival.

Political philosophers from Aristotle through Hegel and beyond have interpreted and depicted political engagement, leading to multiple definitional modifications related to the concept of public sphere. This chapter focuses on various ancient, modern, and contemporary thinkers such as Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, and Hannah Arendt whose thoughts provided a theoretical and philosophical framework for Habermas's interpretation of public sphere theory. This study further reflects on the ability of the citizens to influence the state by gaining property and adopting a critical mindset with the advent of early capitalism in European feudal systems. 'Public opinion', a commonly accepted and agreed viewpoint came to the surface as an outcome of the rise to power of middle-class citizens

[1] Brigid Mahoney, "Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements," (PhD diss., Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 31. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/80545/2/02whole.pdf
[2] *Ibid,* 31-32.

Cover Page

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and their ability to participate in rational discussions and contest political activities.[3] In modern terms, the broad idea of a public sphere can cover any "sphere within which any group learns to grasp what it is, what its unifying needs and ambitions are, and how it could work in the world in order to meet these wants and realise these goals."[4] In this manner, newspapers, journals, and magazines, as well as radio and television, are all considered public-sphere media.[5]

In view of traditional conceptions of the role of the public and private worlds, the representation, and understanding of public spheres is particularly significant in shaping how modern societies are perceived to be organised.[6] This classic public/private duality shows a number of intriguing complexities in the way Habermas conceptualises and theorises contemporary industrial society. Hence, this chapter also seeks to emphasise the distinction between the 'public' and 'private' spheres. Questions regarding how social order, whether perceived or real, is still divided along gender lines are also raised by the public/private argument. This entails not just looking at how revolutionary movements and new communication technologies have widened the public landscape, but also how much governance discourses have contributed to the entrenchment of practices that make the conventional private sphere 'public'. In doing so, it shows how the public-private separation is undermined by domestic law that is becoming more "normalised" and preserved discursively.[7] The key argument is that the public sphere is expanding despite the fact that institutional and social categories are becoming more flexible. According to this idea, the classifications themselves are more intricate than a straightforward basic arrangement. One factor for this could be the growing conflict between a modernist and a postmodernist worldview.[8]

A threefold framework of social and institutional division replaces the primary opposition in the Habermasian theory of the bourgeois public sphere. This chapter examines some of Habermas' primary theoretical influences in an effort to provide some context on his public realm. This chapter addresses the theoretical implications of ancient Greek thinkers such as Aristotle, modern political theorists such as Hoppes, Locke, and Rousseau, and modern and current philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Hannah Arendt, all of whom have either affected Habermas' work or have interacted with it in some detailed way.

The discourses underlying the concepts of public and private frequently become apparent in discussions between individuality and collectivism, although the different societal frameworks do not always perfectly correlate to the boundaries between public and private. Individuals who are dedicated in their efforts to preserve the idea of civil society for use in contemporary circumstances define it as 'the domain that can perhaps mediate between the state and the private sector and offer people with a field for action that is equally personal and public; a realm that unites the virtue of the private sector, liberty, with the virtue of the public sector, concern for the general good.'[9] A deeper analysis of many notions of the public sphere, both historical and contemporary, indicates that its role is more complicated than many of these theoretical expressions allow for. The conceptual ambiguity that the usage of various terminologies may inevitably result in will also be resolved via this process of explanation.

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[3] Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Calhoun Craig (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 421-461.
[4] Ross Poole, "Public Sphere," in *Australian Communications and the Public Sphere*, ed. Helen Wilson (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989), 13.
[5] Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," in *New German Critique*, vol.1, no, 3 (1974): 49, reprinted in A. Mattelart and S. Siegelaub, (eds) *Communication and Class Struggle 1: Capitalism, Imperialism*, International General, New York.
[6] Brigid Mahoney, "Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements," (PhD diss., Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 30. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/80545/2/02whole.pdf
[7] Brigid Mahoney, "Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements," (PhD diss., Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), pp. 25-26. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/80545/2/02whole.pdf
[8] *Ibid,* 25-26.
[9] Benjamin R. Barber, "Searching for civil society," *National Civic Review* 84, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 114. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed August 15, 2023). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A17388311/AONE?u=anon~4eca7127&sid=googleScholar&xid=9508c5c0.

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Aristotle's Concept of the Public Sphere

The principle of teleology, according to which everything in nature exists for a reason, is the foundation of much of Aristotle's political theory. In 'The Politics' he contends that happiness, which is connected to the ability of reason in humans, is the ultimate objective of existence. The goal of Aristotle's Politics is essentially to ascertain what sort of political organisation is most effective at ensuring the satisfaction of its constituents.[10] The human community, in Aristotle's view, is made up of three distinct types of communities that are intricately interconnected, with the smallest communities teleologically developing into the more complex. The main social unit is the family or home, followed by the village as a collection of families or households and the state or polis as a collection of villages. According to Aristotle, humans are first and foremost social creatures, and as such, they are also by nature political animals.

The Polis is Aristotle's most significant organisation for two more reasons: First of all, Aristotle contends that the state, as opposed to the family or the community, is better suited to put in virtue in its citizens because it permits a larger degree of the manifestation of reasoned action. Because of the emphasis on preserving biological demands like breeding and labour, etc., free will and reason are restricted in subordinate groups. In contrast to subordinate communities where connections are hierarchical in nature—the 'Oikos'[11] or the householder relative to children or wives, master relative to slaves—states are built on the fairness of relationships among all its citizens or members. As a result, according to Aristotle, the state must be governed constitutionally, which calls for equal participation from all citizens, unlike the family, where inequality calls for one person to be in charge. Aristotle views freedom of expression as the most important political virtue, and it is because of this right that individuals may participate equally in the state's decision-making (later emphasised by Arendt as well). As a result, a public sphere can develop when free and equal individuals can communicate with one another in a way that allows for the transmission of reasoned arguments.[12]

Aristotle describes a domain in "The Politics" that he called politike koinonia.[13] This has been translated to mean membership in or affiliation with a political body, i.e., a community of citizens.[14] Although the notion "public sphere" wasn't used until Jurgen Habermas' STPS, it has been argued that Aristotle's politike koinonia, which has been defined as a "public ethical-political community of free and equal citizens under a legally defined system of authority," is the first representation of the concept.[15] In fact, politike koinonia was seen as an area of social engagement, affiliation, and collective identity that assumed the presence of an "organised solidarity body of people capable of performing action which are entirely united."[16] The term "civil society" has also been used to refer to a certain class of political organisation that provides lawful order and effective governance by subjecting its members to the laws of the system in which it operates.[17] Being a part of civil society in this sense meant acting in accordance with the rules of the land and enjoying the paternalistic protection of one's rights given by the state. This served as a model for a participatory democracy where each individual had a direct say in how their society was governed. When classical liberalism first appeared, this concept of civil society's role underwent

[10] SparkNotes Editors. "Politics," *SparkNotes.com.* Accessed on November 11, 2022. www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/politics/section2/
[11] Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A, Sinclair, revised and re-presented by Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 54-105.
[12] Sleepyclasses editors, "The public sphere can function only where there is equality," *Sleepyclasses.com.* Accessed on 11-11-2022, https://sleepyclasses.com/the-public-sphere-can-function-only-where-there-is-equality-comment/
[13] Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A, Sinclair, revised and re-presented by Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 54-105.
[14] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 97.
[15] *Ibid,* 84-85.
[16] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 84-85.
[17] John Keane, "Despotism and Democracy: The Origins of the Development of the Distinction Between Civil Society and the State 1750 – 1850," in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, ed. John Keane (London & New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 34-35.

Cover Page

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some adjustment. At that point, the Aristotelian idea of politike koinonia underwent modification, and civil society began to be seen as a domain where "there was a definite distinction between public life and civil society, an intermediary realm between the polis and the Oikos."[18]

The relationship between the distinct sectors of the private family and the public state characterised both Aristotle's politike koinonia and the civil society of classical liberalism. The normalisation of sex-role was indeed a part of the defined social domains. The polis, which consists of people debating and carrying out public affairs, is indeed the arena in which men can indulge in the highest acts of which individuals are capable. Within a well-organized city-state, women as well as slaves are not components of the polis, but rather conditions of it, for example. The polis wouldn't exist without their labour, yet they are not involved in its operations.[19] As of today, the theoretical ambiguity however was determined such that both the family and the commercial spheres are to be regarded as private. The "public sphere" or "civil society," however, is opposed by both. Thus, the idea of "civil society" or the "public sphere"[20] as a domain of public space has conjured images of distinct lines separating the public and private spheres from very early on.

Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau's Notion of Public Sphere

Thomas Hobbes

The concept of "public opinion" served as the focal point for the bourgeois public sphere's activities. The concept of the bourgeois public sphere, which had its basic articulation in the Kantian notion of right, was introduced through public opinion.[21] The word "opinion," in Habermas's view, has two distinct meanings. First, it might refer to an unproven judgment or "mere opinion," which lacks assurance. The second is using one's viewpoint as a "reputation" in terms of what it stands for to other people.[22] As it carries the idea of "collective opinion" and emphasises the social nature of the public domain by attempting to relate to the other, the later definition of opinion is more closely related to the theory in the area under study. The meaning of the word "reputation" makes it clear. However, the term "public opinion" did not simply develop out of opinion. In the late eighteenth century, the term "public opinion" was used to describe the "critical reflections of a public to make its conclusions."[23] For the conception of the theory, Habermas read the writings of Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke.

Researching English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who lived in the seventeenth century, Habermas started to formulate the notion of the public sphere. In his conceptions of the rights of sovereigns, which developed during the Civil War period, Hobbes is recognized for his absolutism.[24] His political ideology, "Leviathan," demonstrates his absolutism. The "Leviathan" is a political theory for an all-powerful state that assures the safety of its subjects against the state of nature as it exists in man by restricting individual liberties in order to prevent upsetting and erasing the decisions that have been made

[18] Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 5. https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/62096/9781501740831.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[19] Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1990), p.38; also see, Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 52-55.
https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/62096/9781501740831.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[20] Brigid Mahoney, *Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements* (PhD thesis, Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 36.
[21] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 89.
[22] *Ibid,* 89-90.
[23] *Ibid,* 90.
[24] Tom Sorell, *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

Cover Page

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about the state.[25] Given that he believed this political theory lacked a reasonable foundation for its ideological and normative claims, Hobbes had a negative view of religious mysteries. He said that it might be challenging to "accept" religious riddles sometimes the more you consider them or think about them.[26]

In addition, he painted the religious institution as a powerful organisation.[27] In light of this, he claimed that a religious debate poses the biggest threat to the state. He, therefore, made a crucial move when he equated "conscience" and "opinion."[28] His observations of "religious civil warfare" impacted him, and he promoted the idea that the state should be in charge of the church.[29] In agreement with Hobbes, Patricia Springborg notes that "there are some religious ideas that are detrimental to the peace and stability of society, since they may inspire people to rebel against their sovereign."[30] Hobbes regarded religion as a personal subject and a private viewpoint that shouldn't be spoken in public because of this.

Habermas's interpretation of Hobbes, conscience is comparable to an idea that has no place in public life and should be completely disregarded.[31] The citizens of Hobbes' "Leviathan," however, are prevented from debating and settling their private ideas in public, and their private opinions were outlawed from the realm of politics. As a result, the citizens' private opinions were amplified since they were not subject to governmental oversight or control. People only share their thoughts in private settings or their homes, and never in the open. As a result, the sovereign was unable to follow such changes since they were so deeply ingrained in everyday life among the people. Though citizens' beliefs and ideas may have only emerged in secret, since they were not under the absolutist state's control, they still grew to be quite strong. Despite Hobbes' discounting of religious commitment, all private convictions were evaluated more favourably as a result.[32] There may be limitations and prohibitions in Hobbes' political concept, "Leviathan," but such boundaries and limitations had given people's private opinions a high priority, and these conditions marked the emergence of "opinion" as a powerful force when voiced in public.

John Locke

The concept of "private opinion" that was emerging in Hobbes' political philosophy "Leviathan" was strengthened by one of John Locke's philosophical works, "The Essay Concerning Human Understanding." According to Locke, state law and the "Law of Opinion" are categories of equal standing. Additionally, he said that "the law of opinion judges virtue and vice; in fact, virtue was judged exactly in terms of popular regard."[33] According to Locke, one's behaviour is restricted and, in some ways, controlled by habits, informal beliefs, and other people's opinions. The "informal network of folkways whose indirect social control was more effective than the official censure" is what is meant by opinion.[34] The legislation was sometimes referred to as the "Law of Private Censure." Although the legislation was not created in a public forum, every person has the right to voice an opinion that might be considered authoritative. The "consent of private persons who lack

[25] *Ibid,* 9.
[26] Laurie Johnson Bagby, *Hobbes's Leviathan: Reader's Guide* (London & New York: Continuum, 2007), 73.
[27] Laurie Johnson Bagby, *Hobbes's Leviathan: Reader's Guide* (London & New York: Continuum, 2007), 76.
[28] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 90.
[29] Airon Jeunne B. Amosin, *Jürgen Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere and its Transformation in the 21st Century* (B.A. degree, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Santo Tomas, May 2017), 45. also see, Patricia Springborg, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan* (United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 309.
[30] Patricia Springborg, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan* (United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 310.
[31] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 90.
[32] *Ibid,* 91.
[33] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Quoted in STPS, 91.
[34] *Ibid,* 91.

Cover Page

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sufficient authority to enact a law" served as its foundation.[35] To put it another way, it acts in a sense as a societal check on residents' behaviour. Locke contends that the "law of private censure" is not a rule that is required by the constitution. It was only an "unsaid standard" that existed in each citizen's mind so that they may all act morally and in line with what was thought to be the accepted practice. However, the "law of private censure" accomplishes its primary goal of creating citizens—albeit indirectly—through the influence of another citizen. In other words, citizens' behaviour is influenced by the effect they have on their fellow citizens through the expression of their beliefs. Having reached this stage in his formulation of the theory, Habermas was able to recognise that people's lives, particularly their public lives, are influenced by their opinions.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

For the first time, a philosopher used the term "opinion publique" (public opinion).[36] Like in the ancient polis, a world where social activities were political in character, was how Rousseau described a society "committed to public affairs."[37] In his ideal world, the people would be sovereign, and the government would carry out the will of the people as a whole. Later on, this 'will', came to be referred to as the "General Will." By establishing a citizens' common will, he laid the groundwork for the public's democratic self-determination. Rousseau's social contract has one drawback: "Everybody must give to the community his person and property together with all of his rights so that from then on, a participation in the rights and obligations of all via the mediation of the common will."[38] According to this criticism, his idea of the "General Will" has drawbacks because of its implications, i.e., that citizens must give up their possessions and rights before they may join in and participate in the general will of the people. "Public opinion is the type of legislation whose censor is the minister," as maintained by Rousseau.[39] He desired democracy, but one that was independent of the public discourse. Instead, it should be a "representative democracy," as it is known today.[40]

Despite having a democratic structure, Rousseau's social compact nevertheless reflected Hobbe' political doctrine's absolutist state. A public dialogue without democracy was required under the physiocratic interpretation of the "enlightened monarch."[41] Furthermore, Rousseau's theory of democracy eventually posited that the general will should not depend on people's capacity for deliberation and rational analysis of socio-political issues, but rather on citizens' capacity for persuasion via the use of their collective will. The "General Will" is therefore more of a "manipulative use of power."[42] The "General Will" is hence non-welfarist and non-communal.[43] In addition to the drawbacks of Rousseau's "General Will," Habermas proposed a crucial idea in the conception of the public sphere: since public opinion is such a potent force, the public sphere must include it. To maintain their autonomy as individuals distinct from the state body, citizens who come together to collectively create this "public opinion" must still be in possession of their property rights. To put it another way, neither the state nor any one citizen should be able to readily persuade the public.[44] So, rather than being founded on will, "public opinion" should be formed via deliberation and reasoned argument.

[35] *Ibid,* 91.
[36] The phrase "opinion publique" was used by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his well-known "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences." He accomplishes this by fusing the definition of opinion with the qualities of public.
[37] Patrick Riley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau,* (United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72.
[38] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. & ed. Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 33.
[39] *Ibid,* 33.
[40] Luke Goode, *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy and Public Sphere* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 12.
[41] *Ibid,* 12.
[42] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 98.
[43] Andrew Levine, *The General Will: Rousseau, Marx, Communism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34.
[44] Airon Jeunne B. Amosin, *Jürgen Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere and its Transformation in the 21st Century* (B.A. degree, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Santo Tomas, May 2017), 49.

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Immanuel Kant's Idea of Publicity

Habermas's conception of the philosophy of the public sphere depended heavily on Kant's principle of publicity. The major parts of the concept's theoretical and philosophical underpinnings were developed by Habermas through careful reading of Kant. With Kant's development of the concept of publicity in his theory of justice and philosophy of history, Habermas claims that "the notion of bourgeois public sphere acquired its theoretically completely formed framework."[45] In accordance with Kant's idea of publicity, politics and morals might be reconciled via the use of publicity.[46] Kant believed that the goal of public opinion was to morally justify political behaviour. This is true because the public is attracted to public opinion, and the public wants to be free of manipulation and compulsion, which can occasionally lead to unethical behaviour.[47] Furthermore, Kant argued that politics and morals should take a back seat in a critical "public sphere."[48] Therefore, according to his theory of publicity, politics and morality may merge if people employed critical thinking and formed themselves into public in order to express their concerns.[49] However, it is necessary to first educate the general populace before they can engage in a logical and critical debate in public.

The power of a man to break free from "his self-incurred tutelage"[50] is how Kant characterised enlightenment in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" In addition, tutelage refers to a person's "inability to employ his understanding without assistance from another."[51] Liberation from this self-imposed tutelage meant enlightenment, and this in turn would prompt people to consider their personal lives. Because the goal of the public sphere is to attain a consensus view, people's capacity for autonomous thought would first result in variety but would ultimately contribute to the formation of a "public opinion." In contrast to Rousseau's General Will, Habermas maintained that the most crucial means of coming to an understanding is through allowing reason to speak out in public, not by compulsion or mere will but solely through reason. Politics should not, however, be seen as subordinate to morality, nor should morality be seen as dominating politics; rather, they should converge while remaining separate from one another. Even if it exists independently of the state and society, the public sphere needs to be able to connect them both. Habermas was motivated by Locke's principle of publicity to frame the public sphere theory in a way that is independent of outside influence and can only be governed by citizens' reason.[52] A need for citizenship in the Kantian republic is, furthermore, the autonomy and independence of the people from an outside power.[53]

Kant's idea of publicity seeks to create a truly "free" civic society. Although people have a certain amount of liberty, it is crucial that they comprehend that pursuing their interests requires first meeting those of society and humanity as a whole. To avoid thinking of themselves as distinct individual citizens must rather think as members of the public.[54] Because Kant's principle united the worlds of politics and morality, which is advantageous for society, it strengthened the theoretical and intellectual underpinning of Habermas's thesis. In addition to discussing socio-political concerns, citizens should also discuss moral ones. According to the preceding remark, people should address political issues that have moral underpinnings rather than only those that are purely political in the public realm. The theoretical and philosophical underpinning of the public sphere hypothesis was firmly established by the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant together. Kant connected morality and politics by using public opinion as an argument for the public's use of citizens' reason in a way that

[45] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 102.
[46] *Ibid,* 102-117.
[47] Luke Goode, *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy and Public Sphere* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 12-13.
[48] *Ibid,* 12.
[49] Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans. & ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1957), 128.
[50] Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. Lewis White Beck, (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 83.
[51] *Ibid,* 83.
[52] Luke Goode, *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy and Public Sphere* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 13.
[53] *Ibid,* 13.
[54] *Ibid,* 13.

Cover Page

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Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau did for both the comprehension and significance of thought as well as public opinion. A true public sphere requires an unrestricted citizen, which Kant's definition of enlightenment helped Habermas realise.

Hegel's Theory of Civil Society in relation to the Concept of the Public Sphere

As the earliest modern philosophy of civil society, Hegel's idea has been claimed to be influential.[55] Hegel discusses the confluence between the public functions of the state and civil society, even if he doesn't specifically mention the idea of a public sphere in his writings. According to this perspective, civil society, or bürgerliche Gesellschaft, is primarily described as a social setting that is quite different from both the household and the state, where individuals – more notably, men – pursue their unique and individual interests.[56]

Many thinkers used the phrase and its numerous related terms (politike koinonia, societas civilis) as synonyms for "political society" prior to Hegel, including Aristotle, Kant, and Locke.[57] But in Hegel's opinion, the two words were quite distinct from one another. Hegel saw the creation of a distinct social realm where people conducted their activities for their particular objectives, without being involved in political issues when he distinguished between civil and political society.[58] Or, as Hegel claims, "everyone's particular private interest confronts everyone else's" on the "battlefield where civil society meets society."[59] The phrase "market economy" quickly spread over this new area, creating a terminological overlap. Hegel's concept of civil society, although being categorically outside the political state, was also the area in which Hegel conceived of "ethical life" in society, thereby constituting an "ethical community."[60]

Ethical life itself is differentiated in a way (unique to Hegel) that combines the two dualities of Oikos/polis and state/society in the three-part framework of family, civil society, and state. Civil society (burgerliche Gesellschaft) is defined variously, but most revealingly as ethical life or substance in its bifurcation (Entzweiung) and appearance (Erscheinung).[61] Despite the fact that the state and civil society share some institutions (the administration of justice and the public authority, for example), they may nevertheless be separated from one another due to what Hegel views as their unique determinations or specific goals.[62] The goal is to advance "the specific" or the personal objectives of people or groups, in other words.[63] According to Hardimon, "the primary reason why public authority and the administration of justice count as fundamental components of civil society is that they are explicitly engaged with the distinctiveness of the individuals (their political rights and welfare) and as such partake the determination of this realm."[64] However, Hegel states that "the contemporary state's objective is to encourage the common benefit of the people or what he terms the universal."[65] "He takes the fact that

[55] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory (*Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995), 91.
[56] Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 189. Also see: G.W.F. *Hegel, Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 122, [para 182-184].
[57] *Ibid,*190.
[58] *Ibid,*190.
[59] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 189, [para. 289].
[60] Brigid Mahoney, *Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements* (PhD thesis, Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 38. Also see: Victor M. Perez-Diaz, *State, Bureaucracy and Civil Society: A Critical Discussion of the Political Theory of Karl Marx (*Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978), 10. Also see: G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 189, [para. 289].
[61] *Ibid,* 38.
[62] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 122-23, [para. 182-84].
[63] Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209.
[64] Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209. Also see: G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of the State and of History,* ed., George S. Morris (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1902), pp. 55- 65, pp. 79-80.
[65] *Ibid,* 209.

Cover Page

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the modern political state has this universal end to be one of the features that distinguish it from civil society. Although the institutions of civil society aimed at promoting the private ends of individuals and groups, they do not aim at promoting the good of the community as such."[66]

Hegel's idea of civil society also includes its role as a "process of mediation of particularity."[67] In this way, people become aware of their shared pursuit of personal goals with all other people. Therefore, the fundamental principle of political economy governs Hegel's "particularity."[68] A domain entirely committed to market-based economics is not what Hegel's idea of civil society suggests. Hegel was clear that civil society "is not only the arena within which people should follow their distinct and individual objectives but also the sphere through which people can establish voluntary groups and take the extra life of the civic association."[69] According to Hegel, a civil society body is:

> "... an association of members as self-subsistent individuals in a universality which, because of their self-subsistence, is only abstract. Their association is brought about by their needs, by the legal system - the means to the security of person and property - and by an external organization for attaining their particular and common interests."[70]

Putting it elaborately, civil society demonstrates how distinct individual and shared interests may develop in the same setting. Any association that is not directly connected to the public or private sectors of society is considered a civil association that contributes to civil society. In this way, the idea of civil society does take on the role of a mediator between the public and private sectors.[71] These civil institutions include venerable organisations including foundations, schools, churches, public interest organisations, and social movements. In the same way, the media is better regarded as a component of civil society as opposed to the private sector when they prioritise their public duties over their business goals.[72] Hegel's idea of civic society and Arendt's idea of "society" as a mediating sphere are both grounded in this tradition.

Arendt's Notion of the Public Sphere

One of Hannah Arendt's primary concerns in "The Human Condition" is the preservation of a clear distinction between the public and private spheres. The public and private domains, according to her, "can only flourish in contradiction to one another."[73] Arendt believes that the historical division of the domestic and political realms must unavoidably correlate with the divide between the public and private spheres.[74] For instance, according to Arendt, "The private domain of the family was the area where the essentials of life – of self-preservation as well as that of the continuance of the species – were taken account of and assured."[75] She also passionately defends the concept of the traditional political community, politike

[66] *Ibid,* 209.
[67] Bernard Cullen, *Hegel's Social and Political Thought: An Introduction (*Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979), 74.
[68] Brigid Mahoney, *Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements* (PhD thesis, Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 39. Also see: Bernard Cullen, *Hegel's Social and Political Thought,* p. 74. Also see: G.W.F. Hegel *Lectures of the philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree, Henry G. Bohn (London: Covent Gardens, 1867), pp. 22-30.
[69] Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 190.
[70] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 110, [para. 157].
[71] Benjamin R. Barber, "Searching for civil society," *National Civic Review* 84, no. 2 (Spring, 1995): 114. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed August 15, 2023). https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A17388311/AONE?u=anon~4eca7127&sid=googleScholar&xid=9508c5c0.
[72] *Ibid,* 114.
[73] Brigid Mahoney, *Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements* (PhD thesis, Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 48. Also see: Shiraz Dossa, *The Public Realm and the Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt (*Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), 65.
[74] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 28.
[75] *Ibid,* 45.

Cover Page

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koinonia, as well as its clear distinction from the Oikos or private sphere, opposing modernity, especially against the contemporary state (institutions) and modern (mass) society. She bases her normative criticism on what she believes to be the principles of traditional public life (political equality, open dialogue, and honour) and personal affairs (uniqueness, difference, individuality).[76]

> ... mass society not only destroys the public realm but the private as well, deprives men not only of their place in the world but of their private home, where they once felt sheltered against the world and where, at any rate, even those excluded from the world could find a substitute in the warmth of the hearth and the limited reality of family life.[77]

The word "private" when used in this context, really refers to either one of two things: personal privacy or domestic private economics. From Arendt's perspective as one between individualistic and collectivistic, it is easy to see the division between the public and private spheres. Two distinct, although related, definitions of "public" are present in Arendt's work. Firstly, it can be perceived as publicity. In its simplest form, the public refers to everything that can be "seen and heard by everyone and has the largest possible publicity."[78] The second is that "the term "public" means the world itself, primarily since it is universal to everyone and distinct from our individually owned position in it."[79] Accordingly, the public sphere in this sense encompasses both the world we share and the sphere of how things are.[80] Arendt clearly distinguishes between the "private, natural, and detached from the common" and the "public realm."[81] Additionally, Arendt's concept of the public sphere has the unique quality that "[it] never quite loses its prospective character" since "it ultimately depends on action and speech."[82] A public domain is therefore possibly present wherever people congregate, "but only potentially, not necessarily, and not forever."[83]

Arendt's concept of the public domain, therefore, alludes to both a robust common world as well as to something even more brittle and fleeting.[84] For instance, Arendt argues:

> For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects. Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can only offer the prolongation of multiplication of one's position with its attending aspects and perspectives."[85]

In other words, the meanings that makeup Arendt's public realm are derived from constantly changing viewpoints. But there are distinct system boundaries in this viewpoint. Arendt focuses her main criticism of the notion of modern civil society "specifically on the concept of "society" as a realm that stands between household and political life."[86] However, Arendt views the formation of a social world that is neither public nor private as a "relatively recent phenomenon" whose origins

[76] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 177.
[77] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 59.
[78] Ibid, 50-52.
[79] Ibid, 50-52.
[80] Maurizo Passin d' Entreves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt (*London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 140.
[81] Shiraz Dossa, *The Public Realm and the Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989)*, 73.
[82] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 200.
[83] *Ibid,* 200.
[84] Maurizo Passin d' Entreves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt (*London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 143.
[85] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 57.
[86] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 177.

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occurred alongside the advent of the modern era and which gained its political shape in the nation-state.[87] Indeed, according to Arendt, "the development of the social" assures that modern society are institutionally divided into two distinct spheres: the strictly political on the one hand, and the economic market on the other. These changes allow economic activities that were previously restricted to the "shadowy sphere of the family" to become public issues.[88]

Conclusion

The emergence of society - the rise of housekeeping, activities, problems, and organizational devices - from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, but it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen.[89] Accordingly, from this angle, Arendt's "society" might be seen as a domain of dialogue where private interests, actions, and institutions take on public roles while public organizations take on private "housekeeping" tasks.[90] The two groups occasionally crossed over and merged, even in the earliest examples of public/private distinction. A division between the two groups did, in fact, serve the purpose of shielding one aspect of people's lives from these types of examinations at first.[91] As a broader term, civil society may be seen as more of an issue of economic and specific interests than one of politics and generally applicable interests.[92] In this sense, "The family is doubly distanced from political systems." In fact, as a result of the natural course of events, the family may exist entirely outside of society. The engagement of civil society with commercial and private concerns rather than a discussion about political goals and the common good demonstrates Arendt's concern about the collapse of the public sphere in contemporary times.[93]

[87] Brigid Mahoney, *Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere: A Critical Engagements* (PhD thesis, Politics Department, University of Adeliade, November 2001), 43. Also see: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 28.
[88] Seyla Benhabib, "Feminist theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space," in *History of the Human Sciences,* vol. 6, no. 2 (993): pp.97-114.
[89] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 38.
[90] Jean Cohen & Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 177.
[91] Ross Poole, "Public Spheres," in *Australian Communications and the Public Sphere,* ed. Helen Wilson (Melbourne: MacMillan, 1989), 10.
[92] *Ibid,* 10.
[93] *Ibid,* 10.