CHAPTER – IV
PERSON, PUBLIC SPHERE AND CIVIL SOCIETY: HABERMASIAN VIEWPOINT

The fourth chapter of the present thesis is purported to scrutinize the concept of public sphere as a prelude to the idea of public discourse within democratic societies. This chapter also intends to probe as to how the need of civil society emerged within public sphere. Or, what can be the reasons that have warranted the shift of civil society from private to public and the kind of wide-ranging implications in such a shift?

On the outset, let us seek to understand the notion of public sphere (mode of Democracy) as originally conceived within socio-political conditions which influenced the processes of public opinion formation. Such an understanding of public sphere will be helpful to develop the changing notion of public sphere and civil society which is not merely limited to neo-liberal tradition. Consequently, this chapter also intends to analyze certain other relevant concepts such as rationality, radical form of democratic attitude, autonomy, freedom, human rights etc where public sphere has become an act of agent as discursive discourse and are related to the idea of civil society through the history of ideas in the philosophical writings of Jürgen Habermas.

In the Habermasian conception of civil society, there is an emphasis on the role of the private persons who participate in public affairs as such and not as state officials and whose public discussions do not eventuate in binding sovereign decisions authorizing the use of state power; rather the civil activity eventuates in public opinions and critical commentaries on authorized decision-making that transpires elsewhere.

Habermas' early apprehensions came to light in the exposition of his thoughts with regard to the public sphere. At this stage, Habermas moved from a theory about the societal locations for democratic discourse and proceeded to ground his theory of society in language itself. In his work Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas attempts to scrutinize the way instrumental reason has
dominated modern thought. The main point of contention for him is the gradual decline of the significance of the epistemic subject resulting in the reduced capacity by the same subject to reflect on his or her activities, particularly in the face of the dissolution of epistemology and the ascendance of positivism. Therefore, Habermas was very particular in reaffirming the necessity of self-reflection for self understanding, if emancipation from domination should remain a project of humanity.

Habermasian conception of civil society is particularly relevant for our discourses on person and society in contemporary lines because it takes into account the elevated degree of social differentiation whereby we can no longer afford to talk of civil society as if it were one homogeneous entity to which people belonged or did not belong. With these preliminary observations, let us start with the historical background of the primeval concepts of public sphere and civil society.

Nature of Public Sphere and Civil Society

Generalizing the concept of public sphere from the developments in Britain, France, and Germany in the late 18th and 19th century, Habermas sketched out a model of the bourgeois public sphere. The "bourgeois public sphere" consisted of social spaces where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and public power. The idea of the bourgeois public sphere with the notion of public opinion and publicity (\textit{Offentlichkeit}), analyzes the social structures, political functions, concept and ideology of the public sphere, changes in its public functions, and shifts in the concept of public opinion before depicting the social structural transformation of the public sphere, changes in its public functions, and shifts in the concept of public opinion.

Public Sphere: Etymological and Historical Concerns

The term public is derived from the Latin word \textit{publicus} which means "pertaining to the people or open to all in the community"\textsuperscript{1}. The notion of public sphere has equal access to express opinion publicly which is unrestrained by
political bodies. It connects people who are not of the same families, communities, and clubs; people who are not the same as each other. It brings individuals closer with diversity or difference to achieve common goal remaining impartial to each other. It can be seen as authentic relation between first person and third person or considering other person as an end and not as means. Consequently, politically or normatively public sphere is an area of social life where people can discuss freely and identify societal problems. The discussion influence political as well as social actions of individuals of different background who share common concerns.

The concept of public sphere in the history of ideas is close to various thinkers; some of them like Hegel, Kant, and Hannah Arendt interpreted the notion of public sphere in their own way. In the case of Habermas, he has provided a distinct and different interpretation of this notion. The concept is central to Habermas's understanding of philosophy and thus provides a historical sociological account of the creation, and demise of a rational critical debate through the medium of discussion.

Habermas specifies that, due to specific historical circumstances, a new civic society emerged in the eighteenth century. This new society, according to him, was motivated by a need for open commercial arenas where news and matters of common concern could be freely exchanged and discussed. It was accompanied by growing rates of literacy, ease of access to literature, and a new kind of critical journalism. It can be seen as the emergence of public will formation and democratic participation on the one hand and birth of individual autonomy as autonomous citizen on the other. The reason of the evolution of the public sphere has engineered different sorts of developments in economic and capitalist mode of production or long distance trade, which afterwards lead to different political consequences within public sphere (in the form of civil society for example). Therefore, an investigation into the nature of public sphere with special reference to Habermas is to make out the historical trajectory of public will formation and civil society formation along with individual freedom.
Bourgeois Public Sphere: Habermas's Interpretation

To understand the notion of public sphere, let us focus on some of its main elements which are discussed in the writings of Habermas like the following:

- Domain of rational critical debate.
- Opinion or mode of public reason.
- Medium to recognise one's subjectivity in relation to others through recognising shared interests.
- Political consciousness as mode of recognizing shared interests in private as well as in public domain of human existence.

Rational critical debate through public sphere refers to the development of self-conscious bourgeois public in England, Germany, and France during seventeenth century onwards. The individuals through rational critical debate tried to question the authoritative powers of society because, the private sphere of individual was controlled by manorial or feudal obligation which made the individuals as peasants denied the right to trade or to have any land. They have also controlled one's public autonomy by putting obligation on the participation in state's political function, as there was traditional representation of particular class from ages. As a result, individual is like a peasant in private as well as in public domain with no rights, less freedom and no liberty etc. Here public and private powers over individuals were so confused that made them difficult to be divided. Such a perplexity brings the quest for private interest of people through critical discourse in public sphere. It was the first and foremost issue of public sphere among the bourgeois public in the beginning. And this replaced the different authorities of that time (like feudal powers, princely states, the nobility etc.), which were since ages sitting on the high position as state's authority. Later, the representatives of state authority monitored by the people have decided the critical discourse of debate. Thus he writes:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in
a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but
publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium
of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent:
people's public use of their reason (öffentliches Räsonnement). In our [German]
usage this term (i.e., Räsonnement) unmistakable preserves the polemical nuances
of both sides: simultaneously the invocation of reason and its disdainful
disparagement as merely malcontent griping.²

The bourgeois public sphere was to mediate within the private concerns of
individuals in their familial, economic and social life. The public sphere consisted of
organs of information and political debate, such as, newspapers and journals. And,
also the institutions of political discussion, such as, political clubs, literary salons,
public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces
where socio-political discussions took place. For the first time in history, individuals
and groups could shape public opinion, by giving direct expression to their needs and
interests while influencing political practice. The bourgeois public sphere made it
possible to form a realm of public opinion that opposed state power and the powerful
interests that were coming to shape bourgeois society. The public sphere thus
recognises a space for institutions and practices between the private interests of
everyday life in civil society and in the state power. The public sphere thus mediates
between the domains of the family (private) and the workplace (public) – where
private interests prevail – and the state often exerts arbitrary forms of power and
domination. As Habermas states:

The self-interpretation of the function of the bourgeois public sphere
 crystallized in the idea of ‘public opinion’. The prehistory of the latter, up to its
articulated meaning in late eighteenth century, was naturally quite long and
hitherto known only in its broad outline. Nevertheless, it will serve as an
introduction to that idea of the bourgeois public sphere (section 12) which, after
having received its classic formulation in the Kantian doctrine of right (section
13), was revealed as problematic by Hegel and Marx (section 14) and which, in
the political theory of liberalism around the middle of the nineteenth century, had
to admit to the ambivalence of its idea and ideology.³
The line between state and society, fundamental in our context, divided the public sphere from the private realm. The public sphere was coextensive with public authority, and we consider the court part of it. Included in the private realm was the authentic "public sphere," for it was a public sphere constituted by private people. Within the realm that was the preserve of private people we therefore distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labour; imbedded in it was the family with its interior domain (Intimsphare). The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; "[t]hrough the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society." This area can be seen as a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can be critical to state authorities. The public sphere is also different from the official economy and market relations. It is one of discursive relations, for debating and deliberating. The nature of public sphere centres on the idea of participation and how public opinion democratically becomes political action and morally relevant.

In the primary stage of bourgeois development, public opinion was formed in open political debate concerning interests of common concern that attempted to an agreement in regard to general interests. The nature of public opinion also got changed due to power structure of public sphere from time to time. In the public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites, which manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control. Now in the contemporary stage of capitalism, public opinion is formed by dominant elites and thus represented by their particular private interests. No longer is the rational consensus among individuals and groups get predominant place in the interests of articulation of common good. Instead, struggle among groups to advance their own private interests characterizes the scene of contemporary politics.

In view of the above, it may be stated that the use of opinion is considered as common sense or habit of an individual to maintain his/her identity as well as subjective freedom. It is the right of every individual to express what is desirable.
Person, Public Sphere and Civil Society: Habermasian Viewpoint

according to need. It enhances the open use of reason. And one’s opinion is not tied to preconditions of education or property. It is “…simple uttering of precisely those ‘habits’ that later on public opinion would critically oppose as prejudices.” Therefore, through public opinion individuals behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion with the guarantee of freedom. One of the main reasons of the emergence of public opinion (as a cornerstone of public sphere) can be the excessive pressure of the major tendencies of eighteenth century. In contemporary times, opinion in public sphere to vote or elect can be seen through the right to express in mass media such as in news papers, on television, on internet etc. Is it done in valid or invalid way may be still debatable? By quoting Hegel, Habermas affirms that:

The formal subjective freedom of individuals consists in their having and expressing their own private judgments, opinions, and recommendations on affairs of state. This freedom is collectively manifested as what is called “public opinion”... In other words one’s freedom dwells on the collective expression of individual in public sphere or in inter subjectivity (of “I” and “you”). The footsteps of this sort of freedom can be seen through the clear and distinct medium of public use of opinion/reason in public sphere of the world of letters (literarische Öffentlichkeit) as expressed in the following way:

It preserved certain continuity with the publicity involved in the representation enacted at the prince’s court. The bourgeois avant-garde of the educated middle class learned the art of critical rational public debate through its contact with the ‘elegant world’. This courtly noble society, to the extent that the modern state apparatus became independent from the monarch’s personal sphere, naturally separated itself, in turn, more and more from the court and become its counterpoise in the town. The ‘town’ was the life centre of civil society not only economically; in cultural contrast to the court, it designate especially an early public sphere in the world of letters whose institutions were the coffee houses, the salons, and the table societies.

In earlier days, there were not a prior differentiation between private and public. Like for example, domestic violence which used to be matter of private
now have become the common concern/issue in public sphere. It amounts to saying that there is no definite definition of what a “common concern” entails. Even a person with a limited knowledge of history would agree that the public schema has changed thoroughly over the time. Like for example in India, there used to be sati pratha in older days, or immense number of female infanticide, low rate of literacy among girls; but as the time passed on, all these issues have become the issues of public sphere and of common concern(moved from private to public as social disparities). The issues which were matter of private concern of one’s religion, culture, tradition or one’s faith started becoming a matter of public interest or issue for all. In a society, one’s matter of faith/convictions should not be the reason to restrict others actions. Thus, normatively and ideally, above sorts of inequalities (of gender, class, caste,) should be eliminated, rather than just being bracketed or explicitly articulated as issues of public concern, alarm and anxiety. Today public spheres hold intrinsic or even instrumental value. It certainly seems to suggest that Fraser focus towards an ideal post bourgeois, democratic public sphere(s), which make the differences to Habermas's historical account of the bourgeois (eighteenth century Europe) public sphere.

Political Consciousness and Public Sphere

Political consciousness can also be seen as one of the significant aspects of public sphere that results from the immense discussion taking place in private as well as public realm of individuals’ life. This domain of political consciousness have lead individual as a citizen or agent toward the notion of “rights bearing individual” in different institution of society such as the political, economic, and social. Society became means of mutual understanding of each other’s subjectivity and interests. Political consciousness can also be seen as one of the significant elements to move toward the other new/modern notion of public sphere again. Towards that end, the first sign can be getting from the upcoming notion of civil society.

A political consciousness developed in the public sphere of civil society which, in opposition to absolute sovereignty, articulated the concept of and demand for general and abstract laws and which ultimately came to assert it (i.e., public opinion) as the only legitimately source of this law. In the course of eighteenth
The political consciousness in people brought a twist in the nature of public sphere, where public sphere from the social realm moved towards political realm. It was political consciousness about fundamental rights of an individual against state authority and market. In eighteenth century, public opinion through civil society demanded for legislative competence for every one as the notion of human rights through liberal tradition. Thus, the turn and twist on the idea of developing the notion of public sphere of civil society signifies to the changes that have been occurring due to the implication of both capitalism and state structure through the period of western modernity. Like the rise of large corporations, there emerged growth of social — welfare state and mass democracy. Both the notions have tried to replace the frame of excessive power, money and non-discursive modes of co-ordinations.

This historical understanding of public sphere tries to enhance or help in grasping the modern category of 'publicness' or different modes of rationality as well as the way of putting individual/collective autonomy and opinion. Simultaneously, civil society can be seen as the locus to enhance the common concern of individuals collectively and democratically before the state or any governing institute of the society. We may also note here that the comparison of the conception of public sphere according to Habermas in 1962 with the present times has profound divergence. Habermas is only talking about one sort of public in his conception of public sphere. But as in the second part of 'Structural Transformation', he writes about the decline of public sphere due to culture — consuming public. Accordingly, there began to build the importance of civil society worldwide because the boundaries of state and nation have started expanding due to various reasons like multiculturalism, cross boundaries trading etc. On the other hand, there started withering of state's role due to the emerging of civil societies which deal with issues like alienation, gender problem, human rights, child labour and poverty in developing countries. We may also take into consideration on the fact that there is difference in the notion of civil society in developed countries and developing one. The difference lies in the particular issues of particular culture or traditional societies.
The only common feature which is universally applicable to the notion of civil society is its shift from *private* to *public*. It can be seen clearly that the issues which civil society handle is more of private concern in public realm, which have become the common concern globally.

**Civil Society from Private to Public**

A critical discussion on public sphere and public sphere of civil society necessarily implies the distinction of private and public which are comprehensible and go along with it. Public sphere and its dimensions are nothing rather than as seen as reflections of issues, concepts and ideologies of private realm of individuals' life. It can also be perceived as quest of individual's contestations about their identity/existence in society in relation to others. As of now, the discussion of public opinion, rational critical debate, public use of reason, political consciousness about shared interests and such are the means to solve this contestation that lies in the inter-subjective relation of a person with outside world. Indirectly, it is the critical way of interpreting the meaning of human existence in a given condition and also in relation to one's background. Consequently, Habermasian approach of explaining the transformation of public sphere implies a phenomenological and hermeneutic nature.

**Public and Private: Two Complementary Elements**

The “private” and “public” are categories, origin of which can be seen in Greek Language. Like in the Greek city-state “…the sphere of the *polis*, which was common (*koine*) to the free citizens, was strictly separated from the sphere of the *oikos*; in the sphere of *oikos*, each individual is in his own realm (*idia*).” 10 The private or public are used to designate two separate parts of our life in middle Ages. In the middle Ages, the “publicness” was used to conjoin with the “*publicness (or publicity) of representation*” 11 which is more about status attribute of manorial lord or the courtly knightly representation in Greek polis. Like in Europe, the feudal authorities such as Church, princes and nobility got disintegrated during the long process of polarization. By the end of the eighteenth century, they broke up into private elements on one hand, and into public on the other. Religion became a private matter and consequently, the so called religious
freedom became the first area of private autonomy. The polarization of princely authority is manifested in separation of public budget from the private household expenses of ruler. It may also be noted that nobility get transformed into public authority, as part of parliament, trade union etc. Traditionally, the notion of private is explained under the institution of family and the public signifies a body of citizens under domination.

Subsequently, due to the mode of rational critical debate/public opinion, both public and private got interpenetrated as two complementary elements in the process of public discourse in which individuals can exercise their choices freely and create subjective moral values. The public sphere of civil society as a platform was instrumental in strengthening the autonomy of political consciousness among individuals/citizens of state-society.

The public sphere as a functional element in the political realm was given the normative status of an organ for self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs. The social precondition for this “developed” bourgeois public sphere was a market that, tending to be liberalized, made affairs in the sphere of social reproduction as much as possible a matter of private people left to themselves and so finally completed the privatization of civil society.

The notion of public sphere began to change in public discourse of opinion and public will with the concept of laissez-faire which has favoured free market access to each and every person (as an initial agenda of civil society). This approach has enhanced or empowered the public sphere and from here the shift took place from private to public. Civil society became the path way between voice of people and state. In brief, it started focusing on the collectivist approach to issues through open discussion. It has also provided a pathway to make people aware about their rights on the one hand and the political affairs of society on other in which people have right to participate. At this stage, the notion of consensus over issues, rational attitude for different opinions and free/equal participation in public processes can be seen as other milestones of public sphere of civil society.
These milestones and shift of civil society from private sphere to public is the reason that worked behind the other relevant notions like, democratic attitude in practice, democratic thoughts of people, and the idea of human rights, dialogical rationality, Gender equality, Justice and the likes. Civil society from private to public is all about moving from procedures/obligations to participation in more dialogical way. On other hand, it is the way of implementation of discursive rationality through the interaction and action. The specificity of civil society becomes significant to resolve the issues concerning the public and private realm.

The expansion and contraction of civil society in public and private domains needs to be analysed in a given period. After tracing the shift of civil society from private to public, the pre-modern and modern thought on civil society seems to be intelligible presently. As pre-modern thought, both Hobbes and Locke set forth a system that coexists among human being which is ensured through social contract. They considered civil society as a sphere or the realm where civic virtues and rights were derived from natural laws. They recognised the co-existence between the state and civil society. Their attempts to explain human nature, natural laws, social contract and the formation of the government challenge the divine right theory. Apart from divine right theory, Hobbes and Locke have claimed that human intellect can design its political order. This idea had a great impact on the thinkers in the Enlightenment period. On the other hand, in enlightenment period of modern thought, "Hegel made the distinction between civil society and state in his Elements of the Philosophy of Right. In this work, civil society (Hegel used the term "buergerliche Gesellschaft" though it is now referred to as Zivilgesellschaft in German to emphasize a more inclusive community) was a stage in the dialectical relationship that occurs between Hegel's perceived opposites, the macro-community of the state and the micro-community of the family. Broadly speaking, the term was split, like Hegel's followers, to the political left and right. On the left, it became the foundation for Karl Marx's civil society as an economic base; to the right, it became a description for all non state aspects of society, including culture, society and politics. This liberal distinction between political society and civil society was followed by Alexis de
Civil Society: Part of Public Sphere

The idea of civil society hearkened back to the sort of social life that emerged among the free citizens of medieval cities because this was largely self-regulated as distinct from direct rule by ecclesiastical or military authorities. It also suggested ‘civility’ in interpersonal relations. This means not just good manners, but a normative order that facilitates harmony or at least reliable and non-threatening relationships among strangers; in general it was meant for all those who were not bound together by deep private relations like kinship. Equally important is the idea of civil society which included in some versions as the notion that communication among members might be the basis for self-conscious decisions about how to pursue the common good. This notion is basic to the modern idea of public sphere.

The public sphere when united with civil society and the state is the centre of the notion of public good which is distinct from private interest. It was however clearly rooted in civil society and indeed the distinctive kind of privacy it allowed and valued. This ideal of the public sphere has never been fully achieved by most accounts. As ethnic, gender, and class exclusions were removed during the 19th and 20th centuries, and the public sphere has approached its ideal more closely, Habermas identifies a concurrent deformation of the public sphere through the advance of social welfare, the growth of culture industries, and the evolution of large private interests. Large newspapers devoted to profit, for example, turned the press into an agent of manipulation: It became the gateway through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere.

The bourgeois public sphere, which began appearing around 1700 in Habermas’s interpretation, was to mediate within the private concerns of individual (in their familial and economic) and social life of individuals which was contrasted to the demands/concerns of social and public life.

Civil society has been characterized as aiming for the expansion of the active participation of citizens. It aims at challenging authoritarianism and
allowing the free development of voluntary organizations. It is seen as conceptualised effective instrument for the realization of democracy. One useful way of understanding the concept is to consider the problem as to how self-conscious individuals could freely develop their capacities and realize themselves starting from private to public. At the same time creating and re-creating values, practices, and institutions that make up communities will provide environments for those who come after to realize themselves too. Thus we can identify the conceptual issues of civil society reflecting through the political consciousness of individuals. And the nature of this political consciousness can be interpreted as the radical mode of thought.

In any given society and certainly from a global perspective, there are always multiple publics; many are associated with particular groups or interests, and some are in opposition to others. Some analysts speak of multiple public spheres; but one finds it better to think of multiple publics, using public sphere in the singular as we use civil society in the singular, even though there are many different groups, arenas of activism, and social networks in civil society. Civil society is first and foremost a realm of freedom from politics. In a way, public freedom is freedom in politics. This calls for action that creates new forms of life, rather than merely attempting to advance interests or accommodate to the existing conditions. Such an understanding is able to distinguish Arendt’s view and republicanism generally from liberal thought. Thus it has become almost axiomatic even in political theory to understand by political freedom not a political phenomenon, but on the contrary, the more or less free range of non political activities which a given body politic will permit and guarantee to those who constitute it.

Habermas and His Critics

Habermas's critics argue that he idealizes the earlier bourgeois public sphere by presenting it as a forum of rational discussion and debate when in fact certain groups were excluded and participation was thus limited. Habermas concedes that he presents a "stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas 1989a: xix), and should have made it clearer that he was establishing an
"ideal type" and not a normative ideal to be resuscitated and brought back to life (Habermas 1992: 422f). Indeed, it is clear that a certain idealization of the public sphere was present in Habermas's text, but we believe that this accounts both for its positive reception and a good deal of the critique. On the affirmative side, precisely the normative aura of the book inspired many to imagine and cultivate more inclusive, egalitarian, and democratic public spaces and forums; others were inspired to conceive of more oppositional democratic spaces as site of the development of alternative cultures to establish institutions and spaces. Habermas thus provided decisive impetus for discussions concerning the democratization of the public sphere and civil society, and the normative dimension helped generate productive discussions of the public sphere and democracy.

Nevertheless, Habermas's idealization of the earlier bourgeois public sphere as a space of rational discussion and consensus has been sharply criticized. It is doubtful if democratic politics were ever fuelled by norms of rationality or public opinion formed by rational debate and consensus to the extent stylized in Habermas's concept of the bourgeois public sphere. Politics throughout the modern era have been subject to the play of interests and power as well as discussion and debate. It is probably only a few Western bourgeois societies that have developed any public sphere at all in Habermas's sense, and while it is salutary to construct models of a good society that could help to realize agreed upon democratic and egalitarian values, it is a mistake to overly idealize and universalize any specific public sphere as in Habermas's account.

Moreover, while the concept of the public sphere and democracy assume a liberal and populist celebration of diversity, tolerance, debate, and consensus, in reality, the bourgeois public sphere was dominated by white, property owning males. As Habermas's critics have documented, working class, plebeian, and women's public spheres developed alongside of the bourgeois public sphere to represent voices and interests excluded in this forum. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge criticized Habermas for neglect of plebeian and proletarian public spheres (1972 [1996]) and in reflection Habermas has written that he now realizes that "from the beginning a dominant bourgeois public collides with a plebeian one" and that he
"underestimated" the significance of oppositional and non bourgeois public spheres (1992: 430).

Hence, rather than conceiving of one liberal or democratic public sphere, it is more productive to theorize a multiplicity of public spheres, sometimes overlapping but also conflicting. These include public spheres of excluded groups, as well as more mainstream configurations. Moreover, the public sphere itself shifts with the rise of new social movements, new technologies, and new spaces of public interaction.

Habermas is right that in the era of the democratic revolutions a public sphere emerged in which for the first time in history ordinary citizens could participate in political discussion and debate, organize, and struggle against unjust authority, while militating for social change, and that this sphere was institutionalized, however imperfectly, in later developments of Western societies. Habermas's account of the structural transformation of the public sphere despite its limitations, points to the increasingly important functions of the media in politics and everyday life; It also points to the ways that corporate interests have colonized this sphere and thereby using the media and culture to promote their own interests.

Rethinking the Public Sphere

Nancy Fraser has exposed that “the bourgeois conception of the public sphere, as described by Habermas, is not adequate for the critique of the limits of actually existing democracy in late capitalist societies. At one level, the argument undermines the bourgeois conception as a normative ideal. It has been shown, first, that an adequate conception of the public sphere requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of social inequality. Second, a multiplicity of publics is preferable to a single public sphere both in stratified societies and egalitarian societies. Third, that a tenable conception of the public sphere would countenance not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels "private" and treats as inadmissible. Finally, it is clear that a defensible conception would allow both for strong publics and for weak publics and that it would theorize the relations among them. In sum, we have
argued against four constitutive assumptions of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere; at the same time, some corresponding elements of a new, post bourgeois conception are identified."  

At another level, the argument enjoins four corresponding tasks on the critical theory of actually existing democracy. First, this theory should render visible the ways in which social inequality taints deliberation within publics in late capitalist societies. Second, it should show how inequality affects relations among publics in late capitalist societies, how publics are differentially empowered or segmented, and how some are involuntarily enclave and subordinated to others. Next, a critical theory should expose ways in which the labelling of some issues and interests as "private" limits the range of problems, and of approaches to problems, that can be widely contested in contemporary societies. Finally, our theory should show how the overly weak character of some public spheres in late capitalist societies denudes "public opinion" of practical force. In all these ways, the theory should expose the limits of the specific form of democracy we enjoy in contemporary capitalist societies. Perhaps it can thereby help inspire us to try to push back those limits, while also cautioning people in other parts of the world against heeding the call to install them.

The Public Sphere (Offentlichkeit)

*If Logos*, in the traditional Greek philosophy, metaphysically and logically expresses the ultimate cause, far beyond the reach of human practices, then the reason which Socrates pleaded emerges in the form of *polis*, *forum*, dialogue and debate etc.... The reason of Socrates' death-sentence is not simply politically motivated, but rather because he refused to accept the onto-theological logos as reason. His understanding of reason as democratical consensus had a great impact on modern understanding of reason, especially by the Frankfurt School. To be sure, these two different modes of understanding reason are still visible in the struggle between conservatists and liberalists, and consequently, in the social structure of the eighteenth century analysed by Habermas in his *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit*. First, society is conceptualised and understood as class society, a self-developed society by means of class-struggle dictated by an out-side
factor, and not an homogenous society or better, community. The absolute Ego of Descartes, the transcendental subject of Kant or even the metaphysical God ... are constructed or remodelled to defend this social status quo. After the Nietzchean destruction of God, the Cartesian Ego, and the Kantian subject also collapsed. In fact, they can no longer claim to lay foundation to society. Earlier than Nietzchean, Hegel, aware of this fact, had tentatively posed a solution by reconciling the dichotomy of classes in the model of a Universal Ego. His reconciliation of subject and object had however a reversed effect: it stops the revolutionary march of history instead of furthering it, because the entire democratic consensus is reduced arbitrarily to subjective, even if it is self claimed universal consensus. Marx for instance has rightly ridiculed the Hegelian solution, but even Marx’s self-proportion of the proletarian universal class as the authentic Aufhebung of class conflict and serves with the rather solipsistic monopolisation of the proletarian class. Evidently, as a class society without any visible concrete and reasonable solution of conciliation, conflicts are inevitable. Worse still, the conflict of interests, ideologies, reasons and belief etc.... are often superficially diagnosed. Thus, the solution offered by Hegel and Kant or even by Marx is not only ineffective but dangerous. The mono-logical, solipsist methods used by them turn out to be a new dogma. Kant’s belief, for instance, in the magic power of formal ethics as the unique solution turns out to be unpractical. His emphasis on the infallibility of transcendental reasons confirms only the status quo of conflicts and thus suppresses any desire of consensus. Hegel’s reconciliation between subjectivism and objectivism is subjective and artificial to such a degree that, like Kant, he eventually succumbs to the domination the subject. Obviously, his consensus happened only in the thought of the subject. In the same manner, Marx’s radical dissolution of class society turns to be utopian, anti-historical and even anti-dialectical. Habermas sought another way to deal with these conflicts, which he calls the dialogical way of the public sphere or consensus. First, he turns toward the ideal polis of the Greek and discovers that polis understood as the community of the city represents the common interests of the people. Politics (zoon politikon), the manifested form of polis, is the realization of human nature. In this context, Habermas understands the public sphere as a “realm of social life
Person, Public Sphere and Civil Society: Habermasian Viewpoint

in which something approaching public opinion van be formed." David Hell describes the Habermasian public sphere as "it is sphere in which citizens can confer in an under restricted fashion- that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions-about matter of interest." In short, according to Habermas, like the pre-Socratic society, public spheres is a realm in which political life can be discussed openly, in which debate proceeds in accordance with standards of critical reason and not by simple appeal to traditional dogmas and authorities. In the same manners of Socrates’ dialogue, the procedures and presupposition of free arguments are the basis for the justification of opinions. But a such public sphere is hardly to be found in our society today, not because of a lack of debates or forums, say a complain for election, but because of the fact that we possess neither standards of critical reason nor the necessary (transcendental) condition of such a public sphere. It too early to talk about a public sphere without establishing these standards (reasons, or conditions. . . ) Habermas is certainly conscious of these facts when he embraces reasons or transcendental conditions. One needs first to diagnose the Marxian critical attitude: in order to discover standards, the malaise of our society must be wiped out. As a matter of fact, the Habermasian analysis of society points out the various distorted form of debates, i.e. manipulated, dictated debates, and a lack of commitment to rational self-determination in politics, for the following reasons:

a) If the public sphere is thought of to present the general interests expressed in the form of consensus of all parties involved, then such consensus is found in both capitalism and socialism as Weber and Wellmer rightly demonstrated. the fact is that, after the abolition of the political monopoly of monarchism in the French revolution, a new form of totalitarianism, has emerged, this time as mere fetishism (as Luckacs called it), or in the form of dictatorship of the proletariat etc. . . They are the nouveaux raisons d’etras which claim consensus to themselves.

b) The form of consensus as a self-conscious determination is replaced today by a decision based on instrumental, purposive and calculated reason
(Zwecksrationalitat). It means that consensus is no longer determined by the human factor but by technological factor. All consensual determinations are guided and determined by such a Zwecksrationalitat. In this sense, what Weber describes as Zwecksrationalitat could be understood in its modern sense as a form of instrumental consensus.

c) The liberal ideas of free speech and discursive-will-formation are at some distance from reality: the discrepancy increased with the development of the capitalist economy. If free speech was promoted in Socrates’ time, fully independent from the State and market etc…, if the press after the French revolution was mainly concerned with public opinion, then our press today is motivated rather by profits and opportunity. In a word, the public sphere, “which now mediates these demands, becomes a field for the competition of interests.”

The above difficulties make any rational consensus apparent but impossible nowadays. But supposing that these difficulties are overcome, there are still a certain number of problems concerning the claim of rationality in consensus still unsolved: first, how do we know that the public sphere in pre-Socratic time is rational, i.e. is unmanipulated, ideologically free speech possible? Consequently, how can we build the ideal conditions for consensus? These two problems forced us either to accept the transcendental criteria, existing a priori elsewhere in mathematics, or in natural science, or fully a posteriori criteria. That is to say we return to old problems still unsolved in Kantianism and empiricism. Secondly, is consensus sufficient to determine that rationality in social science? What about the claim of truth (based on natural science) which contradicts the consensus of community (the case of Galileo Galilei)? Of course we do not talk, about many public opinions which are basically misled by ideologies or naïve beliefs. The point is here that to determine the inner relationship between rationality and consensus, we need first to demonstrate the inner and rational relationship between human activities and the other nature. Being aware of such problems, Habermas sought to look for an objective standard of consensus in language which he partly found in the philosophy of Wittgenstein and particularly in the communis consensus of Hans Georg Gadamer. Like Gadamer, Habermas accepts the unique role of the language as the “house housing Being”(Heidegger’s expression), i.e.
language expresses the common and fundamental characteristics of human acts. It expresses also the inner relationship between inner and outer nature.

**Sensus Communis**

On the relationship between Gadamer and Habermas, Thomas McCarthy noted that Habermas agreed with Gadamer on necessity for a *sinnverstehenden* access to social reality, but he was not fully satisfied with the type of dialogic understanding characteristic of the Gadamerian hermeneutic approach. We think, McCarthy is not quite right. As a matter of fact, Gadamer has never ruled out the possibility of a theoretical grounded analysis of symbolically structures objects. A careful look at the dispute on the problem of understanding between Gadamer and Habermas shows that they share its fundamental characters the nature of *Verstehen* manifested in communication. The Communicative acts however are not entirely accepted by them. As such, it is no surprise to learn that the type of theoretical empirical knowledge described by Habermas bears a clear mark of the Gadamerian description of *Sinnverstehen*. Their differences as seen in their manner of describing these aspect:

- Habermas looks at a general theory of socialization in the form of a theory of the acquisition of communicative competence.
- A general theory of communication which would require the “universal pragmatic infrastructure” of speech and action.
- A theory of social evolution which would make possible a theoretical reconstruction of the historical situations of the interpreters and their objects.

The above aspects, summed up by McCarthy, are in fact constructed on the sensus communis of both the subject and the object, a sensus communis that bears the quasi-transcendental character of science pleaded by Gadamer in his *Truth and Method*. According to the Gadamerian study of Vico’s *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, sensus communis means first the general faculty in all men, and then “the sense that founds community”. To Vico, “what gives the human will its direction is not the abstract generality of reason but the concrete generality that represents the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human
race." In other words, the sensus communis is deeply rooted in *praxis* and *phronēsis*. It is not abstractly but concretely constructed in social circumstance as St. Thomas Aquinas expressed in *De Anima* and *Summa Theologica* the sensus communis is the common root of the outer senses, i.e. the faculty that is given to all men. Thus, Vico interpreted the sense communis in a more liberal manner, as “the sense of the right and the general good that it is to be found in all men”, a sense that is acquired through living in the community and is determined by its structures and aim. The research of Gadamer reveals the same understanding if sensus communis in other philosophers such as Shaftesbury’s *sensus communis* as the evaluation of the social significance of wit and humour, Bergson’s *sensus communis as le bon sens*, Öttinger’s *sensus communis as Vitae gaudens*.

No doubt, there is undeniable common character in *sensus communis*, i.e. the social character as Shaftesbury expressed in a phrase: “the love of community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness”. In this contest, Habermas shares with Gadamer’s *sensus communis* as the universal character serving as the common ground to any consensus and to understand rationality. However, Habermas still has some reservations. He maintains that it is insufficient to deal only with a historical description of *sensus communis*, and that the historical proofs are not enough to satisfy the rigorous requirement of exact science. The *sensus communis* must be tested. Precisely here lies the divergence between Habermas and the followers of Gadamer. To Habermas, interpretation is insufficient in dealing with rationality, and understanding is not bounded historically and completely. The claim of truth is not wholly vindicated in sensus communis without a rational foundation. His theory of universal pragmatism is an effort to implement hermeneutics and to render it more scientific, by demonstrating the objectivity of consensus.

**Rationalization and the new structure of society**

With Kant and the Enlighteners, rationalization is a process of mathematization of knowledge, while with Hegel, it is the process of the self-realization of consciousness in the world. Marx reversed the order of the Hegelian
rationalization into a process of concretisation in terms of transformation of
economic conditions. Max Weber stands between Kant and Marx in the sense that
he follows Kant’s conviction of the process of mathematization as the inevitable
process of modern mind, but he also accepts the Marxian emphasis on the
inevitable mathematization in economics as a modern characteristic of capitalism.
As a matter of principle, he reluctantly accepts the Kantian plea for a strong
apriorism or transcendental philosophy, and Kant’s sharp distinction between
transcendental and empirical analysis and the primacy of transcendentalism.
However, he was not quite sure of the success of such a mathematization process.
Like the older Kant, he too doubted the fruitfulness in terms of social praxis of the
process of mathematization, even if it is inevitable. The rise of purposive
rationality and its application in economics, and the Marxian failure in detecting
this error in modern economics, is seen to confirm the mechanization process of
history. Since it is not our aim to delve deeply into the theory of Weber, it is
sufficient to note that his analysis of rationalization and its dangers could shed
more light on the understanding of the Habermasian position with regard to
rationality and consensus. With the concept of rationalization, Weber attempt to
grasp a whole complex of tendencies related to scientific and technical process and
its effect on the structure of a society. As noted, the first meaning of
rationalization comes directly from Kant as the growth in mathematization of
experience and knowledge to such a degree that all practices are shaped according
the model of natural science. The rationalization of normatives, laws, codes etc... is seen in the context of the continuum of pure reason in practical reason. That
means, even our conduct of life (normative world) could be scientifically
regulated.40 In this sense, the so-called intellectualisation, secularisation and
disenchantment of the world etc... promoted by the Enlightenment are parts of this
rationalization.41 The second meaning of rationalization is taken rather from
Marx’s critique of political economy, and specially from Marx analysis of the
relation between and labour, labour and profits42 etc.... adopted by the capitalist.
Such kind of relation is modelled after the growth of means-ends-calculation. The
more precise a calculation is, the more rational it is. The more rational a way of
doing business is, the more profits one gains.43 Weber describes it as purposive
ration (Zwecksrationalität). The third meaning of rationalization is synonymous to the growth of rationality in terms of development of “ethics that are systematically and unambiguously oriented to fixed goals”\textsuperscript{44}. In short, the rationalization analysed by Weber reflects the process of mathematization of human activities: a process of transforming and structuring all activities into diverse functions of the same structure of society. Consequently, rationality itself is now understood as what confirms to the process of rationalization. Accordingly, the various forms of industrialisation, bureaucratisation, automatization and computerisation... could be regarded as the modern forms of rationality. Similar to his description of the process of rationalization, Weber understood rationality, first, in the sense of technically rationalising actions “which are made reproducible by methodical guidance and which thereby take on a regular or even a systematic character.”\textsuperscript{45} Second, rationality is formal in the sense of the rationalization of economic life, of technique, scientific research, education war, jurisprudence, and administration.\textsuperscript{46} Third, rationality is meant as value rationality in the process of evaluation guided by means-ends sense.\textsuperscript{47} Fourth, rationality is seen from the modern understanding of the world and the inner logics of the spheres of values.\textsuperscript{48} Finally, rationality is identified with the methodical conduct of life.\textsuperscript{49}

Of course, the Webrian analysis of rationality is far from complete. Rationality is only a product from the process of mathematization. Thus, it is no surprise that he seems to be pessimistic about such rationality. His pessimism inspires Lukacs to interpret rationalization as a form of reification. Similarly, Horkheimer and Adorno’s destructive critique against rationality comes from their misreading of Weber’s pessimism. For us the Webrian description of rationalization has an important value. It indicates that the process of rationalization bears a certain similarity to the social structures: rationalization leads to the modern forms of social structure such as bureaucratisation, industrialisation and even mobilisation. The mechanical features of the modern social structures, as a consequence of the process of rationalization, manifest clearly a certain inner relationship between rationalization and social structure. On the one hand, rationalization and structuralisation are guided by an impersonal,
universal principle and as such have nothing to do with the human act of consensus. The apersonal, neutral, and dominant principle in determination justifies the domination of the so-called instrumental reason in capitalism. However, on the other hand, the inner relation between rationalization and social structures, in contrast to the mechanical understanding, can be only possible if it is constructed on consensus, i.e. if it is based on communicative rationality, on interactive rationality as claimed by Habermas. This mode of rationalization and structuralisation is embodied in language.

The critique of instrumental reason aims primarily at the new myth of reason created by the Enlighteners and then at the domination of rationalization in modern societies. Before explaining the motives of Habermas' critique of so-called instrumental reason, it is worthwhile to note that he is not quite happy with the simple-minded critique of rationality of his predecessors, especially Marcuse. He does not share their pessimism and negative attitude. On the contrary, he sought to reconstruct the concept of reason. In the same way, even if Habermas does share the Weberian conviction of the total rationalization guided by purposive reason, he does not reject it but incorporates it into his theory of communicative action. Habermas contends that unlike the rational technical action, the communicative action presupposes always a certain a consensus and that social structures as well as linguistic structures are basically constructed on this consensus.

As stated above, his critique of instrumental reason aims first at a demythologisation of the reason of the Enlighteners. According to his analysis, reason after Kant has become the new myth having the absolute power. This kind of understanding of reason is rooted in the disenchantment of the world of tradition (Weber) of the overpowering of the religious world and of the myth of the state. But a disenchantment with the old world does not yet mean a liberation of its absolute power and domination. The dissatisfaction may force us to seek a new power in replacing the old one, such as Nietzsche had done. Precisely here Habermas sees the danger of such an understanding of reason: the danger hidden in a masked domination or Will to Power (Nietzsche). There is an intrinsic relation
of instrumental reason of domination, not only in the capitalist system but also in
the communist system. Weber has pointed out the new tendencies incorporated in
the process of rationalization such as the standardisation of production and
consumption, the mechanisation of labour, the development of mass transportation
and communication, the extension of training and the dissemination of knowledge
about the execution of jobs etc. But he does not accept rationality as such, i.e. as
a specific form of acknowledgment domination, as Marcuse earlier commented.
The domination of technical reason is seen in:

- central control over individual decision-making
- technical considerations of general efficiency and rationality over
  traditional single-minded concern for an individual unit's profitability.
- bureaucratic deliberation over local initiative.
- planning of resources over the market allocation on resources.
- the so-called industrial culture.
- the justification of the ends deciding the selection of means.

The institutionalized growth of the forces of production is following from
scientific and technological progress: it becomes the basis of legitimation for the
social system: even the existing relations of production present themselves as the
technically necessary organisational form of rational society. As such, the
function of reason as critique disappears. Reason become instead the ideological
basis of its legitimation and an instrument for its perfection. That means, reason,
like that of Kant, remains aloof, abstract, unrelating to human beings. In the same
way, the process of the universalization of technical reason reduces *praxis to
*techne, and extend the purposive-rational action to all spheres of life.

The above critiques of the instrumental reason come mainly from
Habermas' conviction of lack of consensus in instrumental reason, i.e. a lack of
human consensual decision. As a matter of fact, Habermas acknowledges that in
the process of scientific discovery, the scientists do not need any consensus in
decision, but, he insists that, they all need to have a consensus in language, and in
the way they are engaged in arguments etc. That, means, even in the rigorous
sciences, consensus must be taken into account, as the transcendental conditions of
research. In the practical sphere moreover, even the result must be reached on the basis of consensus. To enforce his arguments, Habermas shows that practical reason is unpracticable mainly because it is based on pure reason and not consensus. That means, Kant ignored consensus in practices. To relieve the antinomie of pure reason (in science) and practical reason, Habermas proposes two different kinds of the same reason based on different practices.

- the purposive rational reason with its rational action governed by technical interests and,
- the practical, hermeneutical reason with its communicative action or symbolic interaction governed by binding consensual norms.

**Reason as Dialogical Communication / or Consensus as Rationality**

These two kinds of reason are formulated by Habermas as follows: “By work or purposive-rational action I understand either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by technical rules based on empirical knowledge. In every case they imply empirical predictions about observable events physical or social. These predictions can prove correct or incorrect. The conduct of rational choice is governed by strategies based on analytic knowledge. They imply deduction from preference rules (value systems) and decision procedures; these propositions are either correctly deduced or not. Purposive-rational action realizes defined goals under given conditions. But while instrumental action organizes means that are appropriate or inappropriate according to the criteria of an effective control of reality, strategic action depends only on the correct evaluation of possible alternative choices, which results from calculation supplemented by values and maxims.

By interaction, on the other hand, I understand communicative action, symbolic interaction. It is governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects. Social norms are enforced through sanctions. Their meaning is objectified in ordinary language communication. While the validity of technical rules and strategies depend on that of empirically
true or analytically correct propositions, the validity of social norms is grounded only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions and secured by the general recognition of obligations. Violation of a rule has a different consequence according to the type. Incompetent behaviour which violates valid technical rules or strategies, is condemned per se failure through lack of success; this punishment is built, so to speak, into its rebuff by reality. Deviant behaviour, which violates consensual norms, provokes sanction that are connected with the rules only externally, that is by convention. Learned rules of purposive-rational action supply us with skills, internalized norms with personality structures. Skills put us into a position to solve problems; motivation allows us to follow norms.\textsuperscript{56}

The first kind of reason as purposive, rational or instrumental is again divided into two moments of reason: rational decision and application of technically appropriate means; The second kind of reason is intended to be the intersubjective social action or the social interaction which is also divided into two sorts: the social interaction governed by traditionally valid consensual norms and social interaction in spheres set free for the strategic maximizing of the individual’s own pleasure or advantage.\textsuperscript{57} The latter sort of reason is visible in economics: rational action is identified with strategic action. Actually, in mathematical economics, strategic action is idealized as rational choice.

The distinction between rational-purposive action and social interaction conforms with different human interests and distinguishing characteristics, as well as with different modes of life. Both are based on consensus, but on different levels:

- The purposive-rational action aims at grasping technology, at dominating nature etc. It is naturally and scientifically oriented. It aims at an exact result governed by the claim of truth. However, this kind of reason is not completely value-free, as the positivists believe. Habermas argues, the scientist cannot begin their research ex nihilo. Even by taking the purposive-rational action as the only one given means, they must accept the fact that a common linguistic tool must be available beforehand. Actually, these common tools and languages are rarely examined by scientists.
themselves. They accept them as an a priori unconditioned fact. These common tools or languages are in fact the first kind of consensus, the common understanding. They serve as, using the Kantian language, “the a priori condition”, or the quasi-transcendental conditions.

The result of the purposive-rational action is however mixed: on the one hand, it could be successful in claiming the truth (a universal truth of mathematics or physics for example) which is accepted by all men without any discourse. The acceptance act is in fact an unreflected or reflected consensus: unreflected consensus in the sense that it is accepted without any verification while reflected consensus with verification. On the other hand, by claiming the universal truth in social science, purposive action is oriented toward the idea of domination. Truth, rightness are incorporated in their claim itself. Habermas used to say that the purposive-rational action is oriented toward success which is measured by the degrees of exactness or truth.

The second type of action, i.e. communicative action deserves out attention because it carries the nucleas of consensus. It is the type of social interaction that orients toward reaching understanding. Of course, communicative action is far broader than speech-acts. Here Habermas focuses his attention particularly on the communicative actions that are exhibited in speech. He explains it: “The goal of coming to an understanding is to bring about an agreement that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Agreement is based on recognition of the corresponding validity claims of comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness”.

From the above analysis, one detects some relevant ideas relating to concept of consensus as rationality:

a) In communicative action, there are not only a priori conditions to be accepted (the rules of language for example) but also the point that even its aim is consensus itself.
b) The a priori consensus is shared intuitively, i.e. not by means of discourse, while the a posteriori consensus (i.e. a consensus attained by means of an analytical, empirically analysis) is usually reached by means of discourse, mutual trust and accord.

c) The a posteriori consensus is possible only if a priori conditions, or agreements (transcendental consensus) are accepted by all interlocutors before-hand. The acceptance of language for example include the acceptance of comprehensibility in language, truthfulness of the speaker and the hearer...

As a consequence of the distinction between a priori and a posteriori consensus, we come to another idea developed by Habermas in his universal pragmatics: Consensus itself enjoys a triple position:

- Consensus as a social category, i.e. as rationality (rules, norms, grammar…). In the language, it is the linguistic structure (a form of a priori consensus) which serves as rationality.
- Consensus is the necessary condition to reach any understanding of practical activities: such as morality, laws, social norms, customs, social organizations. In this sense consensus is the reason and rationality alike: it satisfies both questions of “why” and “how”. It is reason because (like the Aristotelian reason) it can satisfactorily answer the questions of “why” and “what”. It is rationality because it serves now as the a priori conditions to reach new agreement or consensus, and thus it satisfies the question of “how”. The consensus as rationality could be changed in case that consensus become irrelevant or unpractical. The change of laws, customs, morals etc. is a case in point. As a matter of fact, in all speech a new consensus or agreement must presuppose background consensus, i.e. norms, laws, belief, which is typically taken for granted. This type of consensus can be broken down or be challenged.
- Finally, consensus is the goal of practical discourse. A practical discourse aims at reaching a commonality among interlocutors. The commonality here is understood as the generalizable or common interests: technical,
practical and emancipatory interests. In technical interests, consensus is typically constructed on the claim of truth and its action is purposively oriented. In practical interests, consensus is constructed on communicative intersubjective action, i.e. interaction. The goal of such interests is to reach an understanding (comprehensibility) and to attain the practicability (norms, rightness). The emancipatory interests serve as the problems-solving toll in case of consensus-conflicts (social norms and individual decision, technical interest and practical interests...). It is based on the human faculty of self-reflection and self-critique. Its method is empirically-analytically oriented.

As presented above, consensus is implicit in the concept of reason and rationality, it is a form of rationality. In order to have a clear view of the relation between consensus and reason, reason and rationality, consensus and rationalization, the various levels of consensus need to be reconstructed: a priori, quasi-transcendental consensus, consensus as reached goal, consensus as method. The division of the degrees of the consensus is only tentative in a strict sense.63

- As an a priori, transcendental principle: consensus has the status of reason understood in traditional philosophy. It serves to clarify the question of why and what, but in an intuitive, undiscoursive manner. It is undemonstrable but also irrefutable.
- As rationality, or transcendental conditions. Consensus serves to clarify the question of how. It is approved as universal, as conditio sine qua non in understanding. The Kantian categories, the grammar of language are the best examples of kind of consensus.
- As method, consensus serves to clarify the communication in politics and economics, in reaching understanding and agreement. In short, consensus enjoys a triple level of rationality: the metaphysical reason, the epistemological rationality and the communicative reasonableness. The degrees of consensus are also in conformity with the Weberian classification of rationalization in distinct categories:

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Rationalization can be understood in terms of: empirically, an efficiency of technical means (consensus as method and consensus as structure), and in terms of consistency of choice between names (the logical way described by Popper). Habermas calls it the instrumental reason and the solipsist consensus of sciences.

Rationalization as the realisation of consensus, an a priori, quasi-transcendental consensus which is considered as rationality. This kind of consensus is to be used to understand technical utilization, as well as empirical knowledge, and to test the inner consistency of value system. Rationalization as the process of disenchantment of tradition. It corresponds to the Hebraian consensus of emancipation which serves to solve the conflicts consensuses, or of reconciling its differences.

As seen above, the Hebraian theory of consensus as a kind of rationality seems to be an ambitious project to substitute scientism for a new credo in human capacity of creating rules scientifically according to human nature. It also adds new light to understanding the nature of society. For many reasons, it has a number of advantages: it avoids the a-human and formal character of Kant’s principles, the rigidity and neutrality of science; it restores the human factor in decision-making-process and tends to principle, and pragmatic. Its most important contribution is probably its emphasis on social reality and human idealism at the same time. As such, it supresses the Marxian radical emphasis on society as a unique reality. Of course, we can add many other positive aspects of Habermas’s theory of consensus, which are not of our concern in this chapter. Despite all these advantages, Habermas’ still cannot escape from numerous shortcomings which Habermas himself openly acknowledged. We do not need to mention here these shortcomings in detail, because it does not help much in understanding Hebraian rationality. Basically, Habermas repeats the same errors of Kant in adopting the Kantian program of setting the transcendental laws in social science. Like Kant, Habermas believes in possibility of a synthetic a priori, this time, in praxis. By saying that consensus is the means and the aims of human praxis, Habermas is going too far: he states that all human practices are oriented toward...
consensus, and that a unity of theory and praxis is best seen in the act of consensus.

Actually, Habermas did not resolve the conflict between theory and praxis, because he had not sufficiently explained the inner relationship between theoretical consensus and practical consensus. A theoretical consensus does not correspond exactly to a practical consensus. The Kantian categorical imperative of "You ought not to lie" does not mean that you cannot lie. We can lie and say "you ought not to lie" at the same time; that means, consensus cannot claim its scientific or transcendental status so long as it cannot resolve the contradiction between theory and praxis. Since he cannot adequately resolve the conflict between theory and praxis, it is too early to identify consensus with rationality and rationality with reason. Whether consensus could be regarded as rationality and whether rationality in a moral field could be equivalent to the scientific principles (scientific laws, assertions...) is still to be proved. In fact, even the most universal consensus can not completely be identified with rationality as principles, or as Reason, Logos. That is to say, the meaning of rationality is not simply identified with principles, at least is social science. Consequently, we must take into consideration the fact that, on the one hand, we face now a dilemma: rationality as principle, or better rationality as only a form of pre-principle. Similarly, it is doubtful to identify consensus with reason or rationality. Consensus, to be rationality, must be proved as scientific principle. In fact, consensus is not yet principle; indeed it serves only as a pre-principle leading to principle. On the other hand, if rationality or consensus is different from scientific principles then it is hard to establish a social rationality. Habermas has studied various branches of human activities such as language, psychology, psychoanalysis etc... to demonstrate the validity of his thesis, but he left out the most important and crucial question concerning the ontological meaning of man himself: what and who is man? The link between Being and reason, reason and rationality is insufficiently treated by Habermas. It is true that he has treated consensus, partly as a metaphysical reason. But this understanding of metaphysics is rather, Kantian, namely, he denies any transcendence as such, any transcendent reason in the sense
of the primordial in Heidegger’s theories on authentical Being and Confucian’
harmony.

By the way of Conclusion

Let us conclude by recapitulating what we have accomplished in the
previous pages of this chapter. It has been shown in these pages a clear account of
Habermas’s point of view on civil society and public sphere. We have also
discussed on the nature of the transformation of civil society from private realm to
public realm, its relation with public sphere. It has been made evident in these
pages that a vibrant civil society requires a effervescent, responsible and powerful
media. The unbiased media plays an important role in establishing political will
which in-turn makes the public opinion count as an essential part of public sphere.

With the passage of time there has been change in public sphere as the
vehicle of communication ie media that got into the hands of elite class to serve their
private interest. Media, however, has been used by powerful elite class to their
advantage. Habermas limits his arguments only to the formation of public opinion
but does not give a directive which could empower to translate such "opinion” into
authoritative decisions for promoting public good. This has been very well
highlighted by Nancy Fraser. Habermas’s theory on public sphere has been
criticised for many reasons. Habermas has been advocating the inclusion of
particular strata in the formation of public sphere. Women, working class, plebeian
have been ignored as a part of bourgeois public sphere. The other reason is that,
there should be multiple and overlapping public spheres which would result in a
better representation of all sections of society in the formation of public opinion
rather than have single public called bourgeois. In Habermas’s discussion, rational
debate and consensus are the tools for running the democratic politics of bourgeois
public sphere where as latter the politics have been subjected to play the interests
and power.

We have also discussed in the chapter about the reasons for decline of
bourgeois public sphere. It is understood that the inability of the world of letters to
penetrate amongst the marginal or unprivileged people who could not skim out the
relevant and important information played a pivotal role in decline of bourgeois public sphere. One of the reasons of decline of public sphere is the conflict of interest between powerful corporations and general public. This made powerful corporation influence and control the media to their advantage.

We have seen in the chapter the limitations and criticism of concept of bourgeois public sphere. We have also tried to understand the function of democratic politics in capitalist setup. From the above discussion, it is clear that the notion of public opinion and public use of reason can survive only through the democratic attitude, which should be building up on the bases of fair interaction to get rid of any sort of domination.
Notes and references:

3. Ibid., p. 89.
4. Ibid., p. 31.
5. Ibid., p. 92.
6. Ibid., p. 117, as quoted by Habermas from Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, sect. 316, p. 294.
7. Ibid., p. 29.
8. Ibid., pp. 29 – 30.
10. Ibid., p. 3.
11. Ibid., p. 7.
12. Ibid., p. 74.
18. As Marx himself had stated in The Manifesto (1848), p. 1
19. TP, p. 42
20. Habermas, Zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus, p. 271-303 “Legitimation in Modern State”.
21. Habermas, Strukturwandel, p. 49 Held, p. 260
22. Held, p. 261
23. Id.
25. Habermas, Strukturwandel, p. 53
26. Id., p. 54 Held, p. 262
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27 Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp. 19-29
29 McCarthy, id., pp. 57
30 Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 20
31 Gadamer, id., p. 21
32 Id.
33 Thomas Aquinas, De Anima, in Aristotelis Librum de anima Commentarium, 425a14 Gadamer, Truth and Method, note 28
34 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1.3 ad. 2, end. 78, 4a1. Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 22 and note 29
35 Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 22
36 Id., p.24
37 Id., p.25
38 Id., p.27
39 Id., p.24
40 As seen in his Knowledge and Human Interests and esp. in the Theory of Communicative Action. (hereinafter TCA), trans. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), see preface of TCA, p.144 and 159
42 Easton-Guddat, The Writings of the young Marx, p. 400: “..., the totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”
44 Giddens, p. 44
46 TCA, p. 182 Weber, The Protestant Ethics. . , p. 26
48 TCA, p. 183
49 TCA, p. 184
50 Held, p. 68
52 Held, p. 64
53 Horkheimer-Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, pp. 120-167 Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, p. 115 Adorno, “Culture industry reconsidered".
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54 McCarthy, Habermas, p. 21
55 Habermas, Technology and Science as Ideology, p. 84
56 Toward a Rational Society, p. 106 McCarthy, Habermas, p. 24-25
57 Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, p. 110 McCarthy, p. 25
58 KI, p. 156
59 “What is Universal Pragmatics”, p. 3
60 Legitimation Crisis, p. 110 “Reply to my Critics”, in Habermas Debate, pp. 254-260
61 KI, p. 146-147, Habermas, Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschafte, pp. 306-307
62 TP, p. 22-23 KI, chap. 9 esp. pp. 197-198
63 Held, p.283 see the table of rationalization of action