

## **Democracy as Critique: Re-actualizing Jürgen Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere**

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### **Abstract**

Attempting to establish the theory of democracy as critique, this paper argues that Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere is itself a contribution to the project of emancipation. In carrying on the argument, I proceed by re-actualizing his theory of the public sphere mainly in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and *Between Facts and Norms*; then, I will try to make sense of the theory of the public sphere as critique, that is, democracy as the realm of critique.

**Keywords:** Jürgen Habermas, The Public Sphere, Democracy, Civil Society, Critique

## The Controversy

In this paper, I re-actualize Jürgen Habermas' key intuition on the public sphere, arguing that the theory itself is a contribution to the emancipatory critique of society. There are two essays whose positions, in my point-of-view, need to be reworked in order to present the theory of democracy and the public sphere based on Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and *Between Facts and Norms*.<sup>1</sup> The first essay is by Marijana Grbeša who, elucidating the insights in the 1962 text, views the "public sphere" as an *a priori* space for the emergence of democratic relations. According to Grbeša, the "public sphere" is a "useful concept because it provides the necessary condition for "deliberative politics" to take shape. Emerging as a sociological category, the theory of the public sphere provides a theoretical tool in framing political relation, broadly conceived, which embodies the communicative engagements between persons who enjoy specific rights to life, freedom, speech, association, and acquisition of property. In a democracy, these rights are secured by an over-arching constitutional framework. For Grbeša, the public sphere is "highly valuable in enriching democracy."<sup>2</sup>

However, Peter Hohendahl apparently downplayed Grbeša's optimism and instead proposes for a redirection of focus. Hohendahl notes that Habermas' theory of the public sphere should be properly read as a contribution to the interrupted project of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.<sup>3</sup> The theory of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996); *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Marijana Grbeša, "Why if at all is the Public Sphere a Useful Concept?" *Croatian Review of Political Science* 40, no. 5 (2003): 111.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Critical Theory, Public Sphere and Culture. Jürgen Habermas and his Critics," *New German Critique* (2001):

public sphere carries less of an attempt at framing a democratic relation than a pursuit of the project of emancipatory critique in the Marxian sense. For Hohendahl, the stress on the relevance of the communicative relations must not blur the point that it is the “disintegration” of the communicative relationship between political actors under the capitalistic pressure of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that Habermas attempts to disclose. Put simply, the theory of democracy that preoccupies Grbeša is but a secondary concern if not merely an implication to a critique of a consumer-culture which arises from the public sphere and eventually blurs the communicative relation.

So, is there really a theoretical chasm between Hohendahl’s and Grbeša’s reflection?

I contend that their reflections can be dialectically married. Habermas’s theories of democracy and the public sphere are in themselves the very blueprint for political emancipation, construed broadly. If democratic systems fail, they fail for certain reasons. And it is the task of theory to identify the failures and understand why they fail. To be sure, the attempt at addressing these conceptual problems is no less than a Herculean task. Keen about the possibility of carrying out a methodical error in a democracy, Habermas troubleshoots these lacunae in *Between Facts and Norms*. He posits that one of the threats to democratic success is the dominance of the “interests groups” in some regions of the public sphere. These “interest groups,” which may refer to the mass media, the business elites, large corporations, or to cite the Marxist thematic whip boy - Capitalism - take advantage of their social statuses and influence the course of the legislative-political deliberation to promote their particular interests.<sup>4</sup>

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91, 104; see also Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (USA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 364, 373-379.

This is where I think the emancipatory project of Habermas comes in. It is not odd to say then that actually there is no disagreement, at close inspection, between Hohendahl and Grbeša. Their split impressions of the theory of democracy and the public sphere can be dialectically interwoven. But Grbesa's simplistic reference to *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* falls short of qualifying the legitimacy of the public sphere in democratic discussions. The reason for this insufficiency is simple: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is according to Barbara Fultner not really a text about democracy but is "a critique of the commodification of culture," which ably infiltrates into "the sphere of a public debating culture" and causes the latter's "disintegration."<sup>5</sup> With this, I think Hohendahl is right: it is not the framing of a procedural democratic system which preoccupies Habermas in his 1962 work but how class interests influence the political discussion in the public sphere. It is not the broad conceptualization of democracy that concerns the emergence of this book but a critique, that is, an unmasking of how capitalism preys over and eventually "disintegrates" a communicative culture.

Precisely, this is why Hohendahl unhesitatingly identifies the text as a sequel to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, an infamous (post-war) 1947 text which exposes the so-called "soft fascism" of the American "culture industry." But if Hohendahl is correct, then Grbesa's reconstruction of Habermas' theory of democracy would now put some pressure on his part. It turns out that the theory of the public sphere now has the necessary potential in furthering the intentions of the so-called "critique of culture industry." However, because of this, Grbeša's point necessitates a reconsideration. Hohendahl must now recognize that both the theory of the public sphere and democracy is necessary in unmasking the phenomenon of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 376, 379; see Barbara Fultner (ed.), Introduction to *Jürgen Habermas: Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

“soft-fascism” which, in my opinion, under altered historical context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may no longer be limited only to the “culture-industry” but can also extend to any form of suppressive human or institutional conduct or tendencies as can formally be thought of.

Hence, in bridging this theoretical chasm which apparently sets Habermas’ social critique and theory of democracy apart, I propose for a reconciliation by arguing that the theory of democracy is itself a theory of emancipation. This paper argues that Habermas’ theory of the public sphere is already a contribution to the project of emancipatory critique of society. In carrying on my argument, first, I proceed by re-actualizing his theory of the public sphere (in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and *Between Facts and Norms*); then, I will try to make sense of the theory of the public sphere as critique.

### **The Public Sphere and Civil Society**

There is a need to provide a transitional link for the explication of, on the one hand, the concept of bourgeois public sphere and on the other hand, the emergence of the theory of democracy. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* could only offer so much discussion on this conceptual bridge despite its brilliance in cataloguing the pivotal events of the social condition of late modernity in Great Britain, France and Germany. Nevertheless, the last chapters of the same text could offer a transitional point for a discussion of Habermas’ later intuition on democracy. Accordingly, the public sphere started out as private. Habermas’ initial characterization is that “the public sphere is a sphere of private persons forming a public.”<sup>6</sup> This is an all too crispy description of what is supposed to be a very complicated concept. Dramatically, then, the public sphere was constituted of a group of private individuals who

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<sup>6</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 11.

initiated discussions that pertain to their peculiar taste that is, to their impression about a work of art, news about war, or about a new business venture, about those pockets of political upheavals, talks about scientific innovation, or simply anything about ideas. According to Habermas' "social history", these individuals who predominantly were of bourgeois origin met at the salons and cafés of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century France and Great Britain, and started to argue on the grounds of their reasonableness, that is, the capacity to dispense with one's ideas pertaining to social events in general. The same thing occurred in "the table societies" (*Tischgesellschaften*) of Germany in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. What is interesting is that Habermas claims that these social actors did not mind whom they were discussing with. In other words, it was in the public spheres of the salons, coffee houses, and table societies that the "dissolution of social classes" first took off.<sup>7</sup> Further, this dissolution of the social rank accompanies the emergence of what Habermas calls "the civil society" The civil society is a sphere constituted by male interlocutors, who had so much faith in the constructive characteristics of communicative rational engagement. It is the same sphere where an "interest constitutive reason" bows down to "the force of the better argument."<sup>8</sup>

While it is the "sociological blueprint" of a communicative relation of private individuals coming together in a public that receives a thorough elaboration in the first sections of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas highlights the relevance of "the communicative power" as the article of faith that "cuts across the official circuit of democratic decision making."<sup>9</sup> The nearly half-a-century distance that separates his central intuitions of the indispensability of communicative relations in the former text only provided him an ample opportunity to furnish his

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>9</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 330.

reflection in the latter work, that is, to ground even more firmly the thought that the actualization of democratic ideals is always mediated by linguistic relations.

Even with these fresh insights on a more developed or worse political condition of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Habermas is consistent with his position: that bourgeois society remains the invariant field of power struggle with which communication intending at consensus presses more ideally. However, there remains a difficulty in terms of pressing these magnificent works together since there is a good amount of conceptual revisions that came in between their publication. But despite this perceived difficulty a certain political reading remains lucid. While the difficulty lies in grounding the far more advanced reading of the thesis of democracy in *Between Facts and Norms*, a new look at democracy as welded with the “phenomenon of power” is necessary in order to see the difference between a public sphere where domination and control is simply and can’t be easily done away with and a public sphere where hegemony can be tolerated as it can be overcome by collective action as much desired. At close notice, this idea is carefully thought of since the discussion on power struggle is simply absent in the 1962 text. With this introduction of the phenomenon of power and its impact to the vicinity of the social actors, an alternative theoretical way out already finds an expression for our textual problematic. As Habermas puts it, power escalation is always a trouble for any democracy.<sup>10</sup>

The phenomenon of “conflict” is embedded in the relationship of power between social actors.<sup>11</sup> It portrays the Hobbesian “state of nature” where the supposed anthropological beginning motivates the ever renewed promotion of self-interests. This egocentric pursuit breaks into worse case situation where human individuals, each with specific egocentric motives under their sleeves, do not

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 357, 382-384 .

feel secure before the presence of the purportedly mischievous other. Although the Hobbesian “state of nature” remains only a postulate of social ontology, for this matter, it remains an exquisite account in positing the need for a democratic political condition albeit only very theoretically. Habermas is skeptical about the viability of the Hobbesian state of nature for the reason that civilizational progress, he notes, cannot be realized if, to begin with, the social actors cannot transcend their all too egocentric concerns and enter into a collective compromise, i.e., “consensus” through “rational will-formation.” According to Habermas, “it is especially unrealistic to assume that all social behavior is strategic action and can thus be explained as though it were the result of egocentric utility calculations.”<sup>12</sup> Later on, Axel Honneth expressed exactly the same sentiment. In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth holds that Hobbes’ description of the political actors who do not have the capacity for care and trust must be abandoned altogether not only because such idea would impede the intuition of intersubjective relations but also because it is counter intuitive to the realization of the “ethical life.” Hobbes’ picture of a perpetual struggle over self-preservation eventually explodes in the encounter with the phenomenon of altruism - in the Hegelian dictum, “mutual recognition” - especially one which is shared in intimate spaces of the family and friendship.<sup>13</sup> Transcending the Hobbesian postulate of power relation without necessarily abandoning it altogether, Habermas defends the indubitable supremacy of the “communicative rationality” as the sole faculty which can efficiently address the multi-dimensional aspect in the phenomenon of conflicting power-relation:

The rationally motivated coordination of action can only take the form of a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>13</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1995), 9-10.



negotiated agreement among strategically oriented actors. The process of rational agreement becomes equivalent to bargaining ‘the negotiation of compromises. Indeed such bargaining, which requires a willingness to cooperate on the part of strategic actors, is connected with the norms that take the form of empirical constraints or irrational self-binding.’ It follows that the task of politics is not merely to eliminate inefficient and uneconomical regulations but also to establish and guarantee living conditions in the equal interests of all citizens.<sup>14</sup>

In what could be a revolutionary consequence of the surge of the public sphere vis-à-vis the spontaneous emergence and transformation of political systems, democratic ties resemble no more but also nothing less than a sphere of “legitimation.” It started to enjoy that privilege as the most rigid condition in justifying matters that are of utmost importance, at least, to the engaged social-political actors. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas posits that even if the democratic spheres which arose in the cafés and salons of the 18<sup>th</sup> century France were composed primarily of the bourgeois strata, they nevertheless were the first instances of decentering the constitutional monarchies; the salons and the cafés of the late modernity initiated not only the public democratic discussions but also provided a sphere of tolerance for political critique of any sort as well.

### **The Prospect for a Critique**

Starting out as a critique of the arbitrary rule of the princes and as catalyst of the suppressive state regulations in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, “civil society” became the informal

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<sup>14</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 338.

birthplace of democratic ideals.<sup>15</sup> Here, “publicity” sits on the throne of the necessity for “legitimation.” No longer is a state policy or a moral norm treated as “just” or “fair” unless it got the unifying force of the public approval. But this affirming public, that is, the “sphere of private people forming a public,” is united by the persuasion that reason is universal. This acceptance about the universality of reason and not of the feeling of insecurity towards others, as Habermas puts it, can be elevated to a system through rational consensus. And so it became a fashion of this so-called “deliberative public” to discuss things within the bounds of their purported reasonableness. Here, the source of justification is decentered and is distributed to all in the belief that each one can dispense with one’s own reasonableness, aiming at the promotion of the interests of all before the “force of the better argument.” For Habermas, the recognition of the universality of reason is the very foundation of “democratic procedure,” which “filters arguments and gives legitimacy-producing reasons a privileged chance to come to play.”<sup>16</sup>

With reference to the thesis above, it is not, of course, the intention to posit that Hobbes’ “social contract theory” fails to suppress the power relations on the plane where the contributing human factors cannot escape their psychological default. On the contrary, a theory of democracy based on communicative interaction frames simply the idea that Hobbes lacks that optimism for the possibility of a society which is structured broadly by the goal for collective progress and not on mere struggle for self-preservation. With this renewed reading about the dynamics of the “integration” of the socio-political life as a whole, Habermas’ optimism holds that “law and politics have assumed a kind of surety for the cohesion of the entire system.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 340.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

Time and again, this in no way implies an abandonment of the model of an authoritative state but a “translation”, Habermas notes, to a “constitutional state.”<sup>18</sup> Whereas the authoritative state manifests extreme coercive measure to the extent of suppressing certain invaluable rights to freedom and freedom of association, the constitutional state initiates, to put it almost tautologically, a “reflexive spiral” in the task of determining the “good” for every participating member.<sup>19</sup> More important, since the “good” remains a hotly contestable category, as Michael Walzer and Michael Sandel argue, it now becomes a tremendous task, or rather a Herculean task to say the least and to make it a little bit distinct from that of Sisyphus, for state institutions to dispense with policies that are sensitive to the competing claims of the Good without necessarily actively promoting anyone of them.<sup>20</sup> The public sphere which now matures, to put it a little more dramatic than the usual, into a constitutional state as in democracy, is ascribed with the moral obligation of promoting no less than freedom itself through a critical scrutiny of a purported law and a fair implementation of them. After all, freedom and justice is what a democratic life always presupposes and seeks to protect. On this platform, it can be argued that democracy doesn’t anymore remain neutral to political events but is supposed to shred the imbalances in the relations of power which are the all too inhumane form of political garbage. In the end, Habermas emphasizes that democracy is a shredder and at the same time a catalyst, which “favors the constitutional channels for the circulation of power and thus actuates sensibilities for the constitutional allocation of political responsibilities.”<sup>21</sup> He writes,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice. A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (USA: Basic Books, 1983); Michael Sandel, “Justice and the Common Good,” in *Justice. What is the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2009), 244-269.

<sup>21</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 357.

... the constitution as an unfinished project. From this long-term perspective, the constitutional state does not represent a finished structure but a delicate and sensitive 'above all fallible and revisable – enterprise whose purpose is to realize the system of rights anew in changing circumstances, that is, to interpret the systems of rights better, to institutionalize it more appropriately, and to draw its contents more radically. This is the perspective of citizens who are actively engaged in realizing the system of rights.<sup>22</sup>

An open constitution, which means a framework of fundamental laws that is reversible, open to critique and revision, not only allows for a substantial modification of legal norms in coping with contemporary challenges but also prohibits those arbitrary norms to back one-sided class interests up. That the fundamental norms of the land should be absolutely preserved and frozen in time is an ideological positioning of the interests of the dominant class, not a commitment to render impartial service to the constituents and citizens beneath the coercive framework of the law.<sup>23</sup> Communicative attempts at challenging even the fundamental legal framework – an attempt that is tolerated only in democratic regimes – will do great service to realizing collective ideals which of course embody a legitimate amount of shared conception of the good. This does not imply however that constitutional measures ought to embody only the communitarian norms. Rather, seen from a different light, communitarian ideals are supposed to be heard and given a chance in the legislative deliberation.

Viewing state rules historically, one can argue that even the liberal declaration of constitutional democracies in

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>23</sup> Tim Heysse, "Freedom, Transparency and the Public Sphere," *The Public* 5, no. 4 (1998): 5-18.

the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are suspect of class-interest which may resemble a high-degree of feudal structure. Habermas argues that while technological advancement in the feudal society was less sophisticated than that of the current time, the predominantly bourgeois-interest of the past are deeply entrenched in the modern social-political setting. However, like in feudal societies, where political criticisms of the arbitrary rule of princes first manifest, the same potential for communicative engagement can be had in order to uncover the subtle form of domination in the contemporary political scene. Democracy, structured by communication engagement, has one token to preserve and ramify the condition for critique, that is, "public opinion." Habermas says,

Critical debate would have become dogma, the rational insight of an opinion that was no longer public would have become an authoritarian command... On the basis of the continuing domination of one class over another, the dominant class nevertheless developed political institutions which credibly embodied as their objective meaning the idea of their own abolition: *veritas non auctoritas facit legem*, the idea of the dissolution of domination into that easygoing constraint that prevailed on no other ground than the compelling insight of a public opinion.<sup>24</sup>

Habermas is consistent in optimizing the rational potential of the so-called communicative relation. If we extend the interpretation further, we might as well argue that since democracy is the fundamental structure of civil society that is the layer of the public sphere where rational discussion and critique of the arbitrary measures of state,

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<sup>24</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 87-88.

democracy is the realm of critique itself. Beneath it is an openly-structured constitution which backs up, at least ideally, the conditions for reversion and modification. It is not difficult then to understand the crucial point that criticism cannot be furthered if there were no a priori spaces that provide for rational determination. And this is true in every democracy.

### **Democracy: The Realm of Critique**

It came as no surprise that the theory of the public sphere ably connects the key concepts, namely, democracy and critique. However, it remains an issue whether or not a critique of domination is exhausted in both groundbreaking texts by Habermas. The question that preoccupies us now is whether it still makes sense to appropriate the central insights of the 1962 text in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century social-political setting. To be sure, the political landscape of the contemporary world has already gone to heights one never before imagined. The marriage between politics and the market has become grandiose that it will be very difficult if not impossible for an attempt of criticism to untangle these two. Such pessimism is not uncommon since the entrenchment of the market activities does not only penetrate into the porous region of the political space but even touches and redirects the reproduction of culture, broadly construed. Despite this, I contend, albeit briefly, that there are possible ways to view democracy as an essential tool to further the project of emancipation. First, democracy as platform; second, emancipation in this sense takes the semblance of an ability to criticize arbitrary political reasons; and third, that democracy is not to be construed as utopian space.

Democracy is the platform of every civil society. It is essential to understand that despite the indispensable presence of the so-called “interest-group” in the public sphere, such domination does not eliminate the capacity of the same sphere to deliberate and actualize certain norms

which pass through the rigorous process of deliberation. A communicative space is necessary in order for civil societies to carry on course of actions which may in effect help promote a certain goal covering both political and social benefits. But this communicative space cannot exist if there were no tolerant overarching constitutional structures in the first place. Luckily, in a democracy, the said structure exists. Although there remains a possibility for setbacks in terms of implementing constitutional laws, still it remains a surety for any civil society to remain free in airing out both political and social concerns in the public sphere. This is something that one can appreciate in a democracy for history has shown that the contrary is true in both the socialist and fascist states. The exercise of state violence toward the dissenting political actors is less manifest in democratic regimes than in the authoritarian ones.<sup>25</sup>

This leads to my second point: democracy is the deliverance from arbitrary political reasons. Having secured their practical existence under the constitutional protection, any civil society, regardless of qualification, can now hold public discourses and launch staunch criticisms aimed at state policies that may bypass legal procedures. This rather bold potential of the communicative engagement in the form of protest or collective demonstration is the extent to which democratic ideals can be fully associated with the communitarian aspiration for a form of the good. When at the realm of deliberation, rational exchanges deem insufficient, one may take the matters to the street in order to show a certain form of discontent, that is, disagreement. Disagreement is however essential to the formation of political institutions and is in every case underpinned with a specific degree of rationality. When parties disagree, they

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<sup>25</sup> See Kevin Anderson and Iring Fetscher, "On Marx, Hegel, and Critical Theory in Postwar Germany: A Conversation with Iring Fetscher," *Studies in East European Thought* 50, no. 1 (1998): 1-18; also see the discussion 'on the concept of practice' in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "Towards a New Manifesto?" *New Left Review* 65 (2010): 33-61.

prove themselves to be within the bounds of the communicative realm. Here, reasoned discourses are thrown to the counterpart until the core of the matter is brought up. For this reason, disagreement is loaded with rational potential that may have been deliberately undermined in the process of communication, that is, in the realm of speech. Nevertheless, disagreement shows that there is a certain sense of “injustice” perceived from the phenomenon which caused its existence. In the realm of the political, this perceived “arbitrary reason” is “unjust” so that it is now the task of critique underpinned by the communicative logic to identify the origin of this not only arbitrary but is also unjust political reason.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, in light of the argumentation above, “democracy” must then not be taken as a utopian concept of equality, freedom, liberation, just and orderly society. Democratic ideals, to be sure, can only be embodied within the framework of the political, not in the level of theory. Habermas’ view of an open-constitution can only mean that the content of our political intuition continually changes as soon as practical challenges come to fore. Together with this transmutation of our cognitive idealization is the acceptance that democracy will always be a work-under-construction in as much as the concepts we have today are still subject to the approval of the not only consenting but also critical subjects of the public sphere. What emerges from this light is the intuition that the recovery of the communicative relations is key to the identification of aspects of domination which may also cut across historical and temporal borders should the neglect to conceptual clarification gets blinded by the prospects for immediate control. With civil society’s practice of engaging rational discourse, the relation between social actors struggling over power-control remains a manageable variable since there always is a way to diagnose the forms of

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<sup>26</sup> Rainer Forst, “The Ground of Critique: On the Concept of Human Dignity in Social Orders of Justification,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 9 (2011): 965-976.



power-relation with the aid of communicative critique, that is, a shared determination of the dominance of the “interests-group” over the deliberation of political matters. Habermas is right: democracy is the realm where constant criticism of the powers that be sheds light for further clarity, although not necessarily for a solution. Hence, civil society is not a utopian site but an open host for both theoretical and practical determination.

## Conclusion

The disclosure of domination which is the central theme of every emancipatory politics is a trademark of the theory of democracy in works of Jürgen Habermas. The promise of communicative reason may be far from what can be had in the present but surely the means to arrive at this is already at hand. In the very dynamic spaces of the public sphere, civil society acts as the catalyst of human affairs that seem innocent about forms of control but actually are not. The discovery of the dominant interest-groups which enjoys the reception of power by influencing the process of political deliberation is a conceptual achievement that can be raised as blueprint for the attempts at purifying political relations from the hegemony of control.

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