

JURGEN HABERMAS'S NOTION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE:

AN ANALYSIS

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

MAYENGBAM NANDAKISHWOR SINGH

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

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A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this dissertation entitled “**Jurgen Habermas’s Notion of the Public Sphere: An Analysis**” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Prakash C. Sarangi, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad.

I also declare to the best of my knowledge that this work has not been submitted either in part or in full to any university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

University of Hyderabad

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Date

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INTRODUCTION

Jurgen Habermas's notion of the 'Public Sphere' has been a subject of debate and analysis in Germany and in most of the English speaking world in the recent years. Habermas himself has brought about significant changes in his ideas in some of his later thoughts. This dissertation is an attempt to offer an analytical study of Habermas's both early and later notions of the public sphere. Along with it, this dissertation attempts to examine the reasons behind the transformations in Habermas's notion of the public sphere. This study also tries to provide a general framework through which Habermas' notions of the public sphere can be better understood and assessed.

Jurgen Habermas's notion of the public sphere has had a global impact with the publication of the translation of his classic book: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois Society*. Jurgen Habermas, the most renowned and influential second generation representative of critical theory, is widely associated with the contemporary concept of the 'public sphere.' It is even considered that the modern concept of the public sphere is rooted in the work of Habermas.¹ From his earliest published writings, Habermas has been concerned with the development and disintegration of the public sphere and with the principle of discursive

¹ John Guindy 'Public Sphere' in George Ritzer, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Social Science Theory*, vol 2 (London: Sage Publication, 2004). Also, Nick Crossly, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London and New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2005), p. 228.

will formation (constraint free discussion) on which it is founded. By Public Sphere, Habermas refers to a space in which citizens can confer in an unrestricted fashion, that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinion about matters of general interest.² It is a realm in which, in principle, political life can be discussed openly; debate proceeds in accordance with standards of critical reason and not by simple appeal to traditional dogmas and authorities. The procedures and presuppositions of free arguments are of the basis for the justification of opinions. It is these conditions of arguments that lend public opinion its legitimate force; public opinion becomes distinguished from mere opinion.

In a detailed historical study, Habermas traces the emergence of the public sphere to the eighteenth century.³ Forums for public discussions (clubs, newspapers, journals) developed rapidly in Europe to mediate the growing division between the state and civil society, a division which followed from the expansion of market economies. These centers of debate and information nurtured opposition to the traditional and hierarchical forms of feudal authority. The Public sphere anticipated the replacement of the rule of the tradition with the rule of reason. Public discussion, Habermas argues, grew out of a specific phase of the development of bourgeois society. A large number of private individuals (merchants etc.), excluded from the then dominant political institutions, became concerned about the reproduction of life in the wake of the developing market

² Richard R. Weiner, *Cultural Marxism and Political Sociology* (London: Sage Publication, 1981), p. 105.

³ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 122-7. And Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT, Press, 1989).

economy had grown beyond the bounds of private domestic authority. These individuals promoted and shaped the public sphere by maintaining as many newspapers and journals as possible in order to further debate about the nature of authority. As a result newspapers changed from mere institutions for the publication of news into bearers of public opinion. The public Sphere was thought to represent the general interest, although those who participated in it were generally of people with education and property. Members of the bourgeois were the reasoning public and they sought to change society into a sphere of private autonomy free of political interference, and to transform the state into an authority restricted to a limited number of functions and supervised by the public.⁴ However, with the discrepancies increased with the development of the capitalist economy, the bourgeois or liberal idea of free speech and discursive will formation was always at some distance from the reality. The press gradually becomes less and less involved in political struggles. Journalism altered from an occupation motivated by the conviction to one stimulated primarily by commercial interests. The general communication of the media eventually excluded political and practical questions from large areas of the public sphere.⁵ The growth of large scale economic organizations, the increase in state intervention to stabilize the economy, the expanding influence of science and more generally, of the instrumental reasons in social life, furthered the process of depoliticisation. Under these conditions, the public realm was transformed. In industrially advanced mass democracies, the public sphere was reduced and compressed. As a result

⁴ Christopher Pierson, 'Marxism, Democracy and Public Sphere' in Peter Lassman, ed., *Politics and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 30-45. Also, Jurgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere; An Encyclopedia article' in Stephen Eric Bronner, ed., *Critical Theory and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 136-145.

⁵ Jurgen Habermas, 'Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere' in Craig Calhoun and James Moody, eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publication, 2002), pp. 97-7.

of these processes, the original notion of public opinion was undermined. The creating and probing of public opinion through publicity, public relations work and public opinion research replaced discursive will formation. And the critical functions of the public sphere were thoroughly weakened.

The overall argument Habermas puts up is that capitalist society is undergoing a number of fundamental changes. State interventions grow; the market place is supported and replaced; capitalism is increasingly organized; instrumental reason and bureaucracy threaten the authentic public sphere and new types of crisis tendencies threaten the legitimacy of social and political order.⁶

In fact, what appears crucial in Habermas's model of public sphere is also its potential as a foundation for a critique of public authority based on democratic principles. According to Habermas, private persons assemble to discuss matters of public concern or common concern and these publics aim to mediate between societies via public opinion. For this, information about state functioning are made accessible so that state activities are subject to critical scrutiny and the force of public opinion.⁷ Constitutionally, the authority of the public comes to rest on the notion that all powers stems from the people. Their self legislation, their establishment of the participating freedoms of the press, of

⁶ Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (England: Blackwell Publication, 1983), p. 97. From Habermas' point of view, 'Instrumental reason' refers to reason concerned solely with the adequacy of means for the attainment of predetermined ends.

⁷ Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

opinions and assembly, of the individual freedoms of the patriarchal family, and of the economic freedoms of property and exchange, establishes the limits of state authority and institutionalizes as an organizing principle the continuing role of critical debate.⁸

Habermas also admits the fact that the idea of the public sphere can be traced back to the ancient Greek and Roman times. However, there is a sharp distinction between the modern liberal public sphere and ancient public spaces. Ancient publics were supremely political in the sense that its members not only discussed and debated issues of shared significance but also wielded powers. In the Polis, the debate swirled around and ultimately reached its conclusion in the competent decision-making body. In the early modern public spheres, people held discussion with one another to influence power, and not to exercise it. In other words, with the modern public sphere comes the idea that political power must be supervised and checked by something outside. What is new is the nature of this outside check. It is not defined as the will of God or the law of the nature, but as a kind of discourse, emanating from reason and not from power or traditional authority.⁹ As Habermas states it, power is to be tamed by reason. In addition to all, liberal public sphere is crucial dimension of civil society. Liberal modern public sphere locates within civil society and civil society without public sphere lacks opportunities for participation in collective choice.¹⁰ Further, it may sound absurd here if I am to

⁸ Peter Kivisto, *Key Ideas in Sociology* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2004), pp.74-80.

⁹ Charles Taylor, 'Liberal Politics and the Public sphere' in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Also, "Introduction" in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, eds., *Civil Society, Public sphere and Citizenship* (New Delhi: Sage publication, 2005).

¹⁰ Jurgen Habermas, 'Civil society and Political Public Sphere' in J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

differentiate between Habermasian public sphere and civil society as the literature on civil society is enormous and beyond the scope of this study. However, to put briefly, as for Habermas, Public Sphere refers to a communicatively generated space, while civil society is the institutional locates which permits the creation of this space. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will set aside this issue.

Habermas's model of the public sphere is also seen as a different approach to the old question of Hannah Arendt's 'Public Realm' which she means as that arena where everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.¹¹ The Public Realm is the world common to all of us and is distinguished from our privately owned place.¹² On the contrary to it, Habermas took his position that the public sphere in its simplest and ideal form is a realm where opinions particularly focusing on the needs of society are freely and openly exchanged between people, unconstrained by external pressures. It can be a virtual or imaginary community not necessarily existing in any one space. In today's world of ever increasing mass global communication networks, the media in its all forms whilst far from ideal is widely regarded as the closest thing the world community has to the existence and further attainment of a public sphere

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition* (Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1958), p.50.

¹² For Hannah Arendt, 'the world' here isn't identical with earth or with nature; it is related to the human artifact and affairs that go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. In contrast, to live a private life means to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others.

Different interpretations on Habermas's notion of the public sphere have also emerged; and it is interesting to see how differently his notion of the public sphere has been construed.

From the Feminists' perspective, Habermas concept of the public sphere was an exclusive bourgeois public sphere and it was never a public. It excludes women, the poor and migrants etc. In fact, feminists see Habermas' model of the public sphere as a way for bourgeoisie men to see themselves as a universal class who tried to assert their fitness to govern. Thus, this kind of public sphere also averts other groups from articulating their particular concerns. However, these so called marginalized groups who are excluded from the bourgeoisie public sphere also formed their public spheres and feminists term them as "subaltern counter-publics". Feminists accused Habermas of ignoring this phenomenon. Interestingly, they also wonder as to why Habermas never makes any attempt to develop a new, post bourgeois model of the public sphere.

From the Historians perspective, Habermas had overemphasized on the economic causality as the root cause of the rise of the public sphere. But historians are of the opinion that Habermas had glossed over other factors like culture and religion which might be also responsible for the rise of the public sphere. They further argue that it is hard to believe as to how few sections of the society connected in politics and arrived at political choices and actions in the 18th century. It is also equally hard to believe that

people gathering in the public sphere would only talk about politics. They further have the strong doubt over the fact that whether the talk about politics was just a gossip or was it a pure rational-critical debate. They further opine that people who gathered in coffee houses and salons would only talk about politics is questionable. The press, which Habermas himself regards as one of the main institutions of the public sphere, was not as competitive as today, and it is through the press that people see politics on partisan lines.

For the Linguists, Habermas' argument is that language itself contains norms to criticize oppression and domination. But linguists are of the opinion that Habermas' idea of language is too universal. They argue that language is often rationalized to serve the interest of few sections. So, Habermas notion of language is never universal. While Habermas propounds the idea that language and communication can promote shared understanding that can lead to a consensus in society, linguists differ from his idea. For linguists, language is integrally power related, because it is the instrument of a particular social group that constructs the discourse, conventions and practices. They further opine that it is difficult to accept the idea that discourse in the public sphere would arrive at a consensus when there is no mention of mediator in the Habermas model of the public sphere discourse.

From the Globalist perspective, the concept of the public sphere is not confined to an individual state. Today, it consists of a network of observations which refers equally to

individual states as to interdependencies and actions in the global system of states. Habermas' concept of the public sphere is too nation centric. In the contemporary high-tech societies, there is emerging expansion and redefinition of the public sphere. Today, public sphere is to be conceived as the site for information, discussion, political struggle, organization etc. Public access to electronic media of communication has expanded the idea Habermas' public sphere concept. So, the argument put up here is that radio, television and other electronic models of communication like internet are creating new public sphere of debate, discussion and information etc. Therefore, intellectuals, activists who want to engage the public are able to do globally.

The influences that Habermas' models of the public sphere have over various academic disciplines are considerable. It has recently become more evident in the English speaking world, with the publication of a translation of his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. For instance, the public sphere has been regarded as one of the major dimension of social change and therefore as a core topic of sociology. In addition to it, an important collection of essays edited by Craig Calhoun shows wide range of responses to his work: scholars in Political Theory, History, sociology, philosophy etc, respond in this volume beside several discussions on it.¹³ Responses are so varied because many different elements are present in Habermas's work. Even many writers and scholars have attempted to apply Habermas's model of public sphere to other countries and periods. Again, if the influences it has are so overwhelming, then,

¹³ Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

Habermas's model of public sphere is also not left aside by critics with innumerable contentious debates. To mention few of it, historians have been critical about it over the factual basis of many of Habermas' claims like the publishing industries, bourgeois culture etc.¹⁴ feminists scholars are of the view that Habermas neglects the importance of gender by excluding women from the public sphere.¹⁵ In fact, right from the beginning, Habermas' idea has been so contentious. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere that Habermas wrote as his second dissertation for the position of professor in German university system was first rejected by Horkheimer and Adorno in Frankfurt on the ground that Habermas's work was too politically engaged and insufficiently critical for them to support. It was later at the University of Marburg; Habermas submitted it under the supervision of German legal scholar Wolfgang Abendroth.

Now Habermas has changed many of his earlier stands on the public sphere. He has attempted to answer his critics by revising some of his earlier positions. He admits some problems with the historical basis of his work; he also suggests a reconsideration of the role of women in the bourgeois public sphere; a need to develop a less pessimistic view about the modern mass public. And most importantly, he has used two apparently new terminologies—'Lifeworld and System' in his further reflections on the public sphere.¹⁶ I will deal with these aspects in much deeper details in the following chapters as this thesis is itself an attempt to excavate the transformations in Habermas's notion of the

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 236-9.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.108-137.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.421-461.

Public Sphere. Obviously, the fact that Habermas's study of the public sphere has been subjected to intense critical argument which has clarified his earlier positions, led to revisions in his latter writings, and few theories has been so discussed and debated, criticized, or inspires so much theoretical and historical analysis etc, interests me to undertake this very research.

In the following chapter, I shall look through Habermas's earlier conception of the public sphere—explore its range of meaning, reveal its genesis, highlights its structures and functions, draw out its transformations with the reasons etc. Next (in chapter 3), I shall delve into Habermas's later/revised notion of the public sphere. Following it, in the next chapter, I will analyze as to how Habermas has shifted/transformed his earlier notions to his later notion of the public sphere and see the possible reasons why Habermas has changed many of his early standpoints. This dissertation ends with chapter 5 as the conclusion part.

Jurgen Habermas's Early Notion of the Public Sphere

The Concept:

The Public Sphere can be conceived as the sphere of private people who come together as a public to regulate against the public authorities by engaging in a reasoned and critical debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.¹ In the words of Habermas, 'The Public Sphere is a realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.' It is a discursive space in which individual and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, wherever possible, to reach a common judgment. It is not even so much an actual place as a social realm that developed within various structures. It only existed in conversation and discourse.²

Potentially, all citizens have the access to it; no one enters into discourse of the public sphere with an advantage over another.³ All citizens behave as public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinion about matters of

¹ J.Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 27.

² For Habermas, the public sphere also refers to the social space generated in communicative action.

³ Robert C. Holub, Jurgen Habermas: *Critic in the Public Sphere* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 3.

general interest.⁴ For Habermas, the success of the public sphere, however, was founded on the rational-critical discourse where everyone has the ability for equal participation and the supreme communication skill the power of argument.

The public sphere mediates between the private sphere and the sphere of public authority.⁵ According to Habermas, the private sphere comprised civil society in the narrowest sense—that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and social labor apart from family.⁶ Whereas the sphere of public authority dealt with the state, or realm of the police, and the ruling class.⁷ The public sphere crossed over these realms and through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society.⁸ In fact, the public sphere is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that is critical of state. Therefore, the public sphere is not an area of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a space for debating and deliberating. The public sphere is considered as a regulatory space against the authority of the state.⁹ What Habermas called the bourgeois public sphere consisted of social space where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and public power.¹⁰ The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was

⁴ Habermas states that when they enter into the discourse, they behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like the members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy.

⁵ J.Habermas, 1989, p.30.

⁶ J.Habermas, 1989, p.30.

⁷ Ibid., p.30.

⁸ Ibid. . p.31.

⁹ Ibid.. p. 27.

¹⁰ Detlef Horster, *Habermas: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Pennbridge Books, 1992), pp. 5-6. For Habermas, the basic purpose of the public sphere as an institution was to monitor and legitimate power via the medium of public discussions.

employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. The public sphere thus presupposed freedom of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision making.

Historical Genesis of the Public Sphere:

Habermas traced the development of the public sphere from the ancient Greek to the present modern day. The division between polis or city and household in the ancient Greece was the oldest form of public/private distinction, he opined. The polis was the sphere of discussion, but also of collective action. But one could not debate, fight, excel or be free in the private sphere because the household was the place of women and slaves. In fact, the idea that people could move into a public place or sphere because of their private status is central to Habermas's analysis about the genesis of his early notion of the public sphere.

The next stage that came after the classical period was the feudal period.¹¹ For Habermas, a social hierarchy of orders or estates characterized that period, with the king at the top, followed by the nobility and then the common men. The king was the only 'public' in the kingdom.¹² There were no private or public institutions, and hence there was no sociological basis for the public sphere. However, publicity existed in a

¹¹ Habermas felt that there was no indication that European society of the high Middle Ages possessed a public sphere as a unique distinct from the private sphere.

¹² J.Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopaedia Article' in Stephen Eric Bronner, ed., *Critical Theory and Society*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.136-145.

representative form.¹³ It was not exactly the competitive, but rather a display of status and power. In representative publicity, the king or noble displayed his status before the people in a ceremonial display.¹⁴ The people were merely required to watch and to acclaim the sovereign. But that representative publicity and the structured that surrounded it were dissolved by the development of the bourgeois, capitalist system.¹⁵ The emergence of a capitalist economy in the early modern Europe undermined the old structures. In that new development of bourgeois capitalist structure, news and commodities were key features. The merchants formed companies and began to promote their commercial interests. Initially, the trade in news was directly related to business needs as merchants needed information about ships, the weather and the political situation in other countries. Then those needs became more generalized, and news reached wider audience. And that was the very beginning of a critical and debating press/media. Habermas also stated that the state (modern state) also developed alongside the new kinds of business and economic structures. Its major components were systems of taxation to exploit the wealth of the new economy, systems of administration to control the population, and a more permanent army.¹⁶ In the process, the state began to take more and more functions, and to affect people's lives more directly. This involvement, however, provided the basis for critical debate. Habermas argues that in complaining about the tax officials, or debating with minor officials, people began to

¹³ Ibid., p.2.

¹⁴ Habermas argues that in the Middle Ages, kings represented themselves before the public and there was no discussion, any collective action was not taken place.

¹⁵ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 124.

¹⁶ According to Habermas, the modern state is basically a state based on taxation, the bureaucracy of the treasury the true core of its administration.

learn how to use their reason publicly and critically. Thus, the state was decoupled from the intersubjective fabric of everyday life.

Thus, Habermas says that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Europe, a distinctive type of the public sphere began to emerge. This bourgeois public sphere consisted of private individuals who gathered together in public places, like, salons and coffee houses etc., to discuss the key issues of the day. These discussions were stimulated by the rise of the periodical press which flourished in England and other parts of Europe.

The Social and Institutional Structures of the Public Sphere:

The bourgeois public sphere was the sphere of the private people who came together as a public. Habermas described the public sphere as private people transformed into a public. Private people came from the economic sphere of labour and exchange, but also from the family, and they oppose or debate with public authority. Habermas argues that their use of reason is 'public' because, it occurred in public, it was practised by the public and it was opposed to the actions of public authority.

The conjugal family was the first important structure. Essentially, Habermas's version of the conjugal family was a bourgeois nuclear family.¹⁷ It was patriarchal, or male dominated. However, it offered a way for private individuals to enter society. The family provided the economic credentials and emotional training necessary to participate in the public. It had its own autonomy, and it was derived from the fact that the conjugal

¹⁷ J.Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1989, p.44.

family was also a property owning structure. The state could not interfere with the private property and it made the family strongly independent. The independence granted by private property was the economic qualification necessary for a private person to join the public. But Habermas also argues that the family also provided the source of subjectivity or individuality and privacy. People were taught how to feel as a part of a family and this subjectivity was an important part of the structure of the private man in public. It acted as a training ground for critical public reflection.

The second key structure is the literary public sphere.¹⁸ The literary public sphere acted as bridge between representative publicity and the bourgeois public sphere. The literary public sphere prepared people for political reflection by giving them the chance to discuss art and literature critically.¹⁹ The political public sphere where the public challenged and criticized state authority developed from its literary predecessor. The shift away from representative publicity towards a literary public sphere happened with the decline in importance of royal courts and a related rise of towns. The various social institutions and structures that developed within towns promoted critical debate and the use of reason. Coffee houses in England, reading clubs in Germany and salons in France were the main places where critical debate about art, literature and reading materials took place. Habermas also pointed out that all these institutions had certain institutional criteria in common. They were: (a) they ignored status in their social relations; all that mattered was the authority of the better argument, (b) they discussed previously

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁹ Habermas says the literary public sphere expanded to encompass not merely fiction and novel, but also essays that stimulated the discussion of a range of practical, scientific and social topics.

unquestioned areas and (c) the public became in principle inclusive; everyone had to be able to participate.

The final and most significant structure is the transition from the literary public sphere to a political public sphere.²⁰ The public formed in coffee houses, saloons and reading groups shifted to discuss directly political questions. Habermas sees the roots of these political discussions in the traditional questioning of the absolute sovereignty and the power of kings. The political public sphere was not merely discussion about political questions that affected a particular section of society. The discussion as the ideas and needs of civil society was presented before the public authority. The public acted in the political sphere to secure own demands, but also created itself as a powerful force. As its demands were based on rational argument and criticism, public opinion could claim a kind of authority.

Also, the key agent in transforming the literary public sphere into a political public sphere was the media/press. Critical journals began to carry political articles and eventually specifically political newspapers and journals emerged. Habermas insisted that the power of the press was a force shaping the transformation of the literary public sphere. Then the public sphere began to debate critically rather than discuss common political tasks and activities.²¹ Thus, Habermas also puts forward the point that public sphere took changes in the structural transformations.

²⁰ Ibid., P. 51.

²¹ Habermas argues that questioning the absolute sovereignty and state secrecy was the beginning of criticism and he is again of the opinion that women and dependents were factually and legally excluded from the political public sphere.

The Political Functions of the Public Sphere:

Habermas analyses the political functions of the public sphere by taking historical approach first. He attempts to explain the unusual nature of English politics in the 18th century. Certain Political and structural changes occurred in England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that particularly favored critical public debate. After the revolution, the national level political opposition shifted away from resort to violence, so that, through the critical debate of the public, it took the form of a permanent controversy between the governing party and the opposition. Public opinion and its influence on politics grew steadily in England. Habermas considered the England reform bills of the 19th century as an evidence of the public asserting itself. By the 19th century, public involvement in the critical debate of political issues broke the exclusivity of the parliament.

In France, a public that critically debated political issues arose only near the middle of the 18th century. Even then, it lacked the capacity to institutionalize its critical impulse until the Revolution and there was nothing like the British Parliament. However, with the founding clubs and journals, the Physiocrats were central, and they were the first to combine activity in this public discourse and membership in the government—a sign that public opinion was becoming effective. Then the Revolution (1789) followed

quickly, and from the beginning it was a matter of bourgeois public discourse as much as mob action.²²

Germany lagged behind France, according to Habermas. There the public's rational-critical debate of political matters took place predominantly in the private gathering of the bourgeois. The nobility remained complete dependent on the courts and thus failed to develop strong enough lines of communications with bourgeois intellectuals to participate in creating a strong civil society separate from the state. Nonetheless, journals with political content proliferated and were debated in reading societies.²³

Habermas also opines that the actual function of the public sphere can be understood only in relation to a specific phase in the development of civil society where exchange and labor were largely freed from government control. Here, he gives a link between civil society and the public sphere.²⁴ The public sphere as an element in the political realm was given the status of an organ for the self articulation of civil society according to its needs. Its preconditions were a liberalized market and the complete privatization of civil society. Commodity owners gained private autonomy from the expansion of this sphere. Historically, the concept of the private developed from the concept of the free control over capitalist property. There was a strong association between the freedom of trade or the free market and political freedom. The private individuals' freedoms were linked to property. Like private property, market had to be

²² Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p.14.

²³ Ibid., introduction, p.15.

²⁴ For Habermas, the notion of civil society is basic to the existence of the public sphere as public sphere is a space within civil society. The public sphere depends on civil society, because it articulates its interests and civil society depends on a liberalized, free market.

protected from state intervention. It required a complex legal system administered by the state itself. Then there came the bourgeois constitutional state that established the political public sphere as an organ of state to ensure a link between public opinion and law.²⁵ Further, Habermas argued that law involved both reason and will, and public opinion was associated with rational critical debate. By linking it to the most powerful aspect of the state, one could legitimize the claim that state was not a dominating force. Thus, the constitutional state used the public sphere as a way of legitimizing its own powers. In return, legislation also established basic rights which concerned critical debate, individual freedom and property transactions. But Habermas strongly argues that the developed public sphere of civil society was bound up with complicated social preconditions.

Theoretical and Intellectual Foundations of the Public Sphere:

Habermas begins with the 17th century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes' 'Leviathan' is an argument for an all powerful state that guarantees the security of its subjects against war in the state of nature. The danger threatening the state is religious controversy that frequently leads to civil war and unrest. Hobbes seeks to resolve this problem in part by establishing a minimal Christian religion that the sovereign enforces. Subjects can believe whatever they like in private, but cannot debate

²⁵ The 'bourgeois constitutional state' is a 19th century invention formed as state's responses to institutionalize the public sphere as a part of the state apparatus by linking the public sphere to the idea of law. The constitutional state therefore used the public sphere as a way of legitimating its own power. In return, the functions of the public sphere were also protected by legislation.

their opinions in public, nor can they form organization to discuss the government.²⁶ Although they cannot debate in public, individuals have their private opinions protected from state scrutiny and control. For John Locke, the informal ideas, habits and opinions of other people restrict one's behavior.²⁷ They are often more effective than more official methods of control, such as state or church laws. However, Locke does not argue that this opinion which he also calls the law of private censure is a real law. It is not formed in public and does not depend on education or social status; anyone can have an influential opinion about others.

The 18th century French physiocratic thinkers debated the status of the French monarchy and the reform of the French economy. In Habermas's reading, the physiocrats prized public opinion as a positive force, but only within the context of the monarchical system.²⁸ However, Rousseau wanted a situation in which the people were sovereign, and the state acted according to the general will. Rousseau's idea of General Will is a complex term, and he does not want it to depend on public debate. He opposed democratic debate because it allows individuals and groups interests to control the general will.²⁹ In this way, Rousseau developed an influential concept of public opinion that is formulated in private.

²⁶ Habermas believes that these measures represented a restriction of the public sphere, but they also place great importance on the individuals' opinion.

²⁷ Habermas argues that Locke's philosophical work, the essay 'Concerning Human Understanding' lacks the idea of public opinion though.

²⁸ The physiocrats wanted absolutism complemented by a critical public sphere.

²⁹ Rousseau wanted democracy without public debate.

For Habermas, Kant's philosophy is the best description of the public sphere.³⁰ For Kant, Publicity is a mechanism to unite morality and politics, but the public itself must learn to use its reason. Kant's discussion of enlightenment centers on people emerging from self incurred intellectual infancy to think for themselves. Kant also argues that human progress depends on our own unsocial sociability in which conflicts between people drive the human race forward.

Now, Habermas moves to Hegel. Hegel in his 'Philosophy of Right' defined civil society as the location of economy, exchange and production.³¹ In Habermas's interpretations, Hegel saw it as a disorganized sphere; the economy tended towards crisis of under consumption which produced a mass of unemployed laborers who sank to the bottom of the society. This flaw within civil society needed to be corrected by state intervention or by the corporations of civil society. Hegel also exposed the problems of civil society and devalued it in comparison to the state. He felt that public opinion had the form of common sense; it was no longer the sphere of reason. Antagonistic civil society was not the place where autonomous private people related to each other. Then comes Karl Marx. Marx denounced public opinion as false consciousness, and criticized the social conditions that allowed it to function.³² Marx's critique destroyed all the fictions to which the idea of public sphere appealed. He saw that civil society was not all of society,

³⁰ Habermas here focuses on Kant's Perpetual Peace, his theory of a peaceful international system and his essay 'What is Enlightenment.'

³¹ Hegel, G. W.F, '*The Philosophy of Right*' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942).

³² 'False Consciousness' is Marxist term denoting the delusion and mystification that prevents subordinate classes from recognizing the fact of their own exploitation. And, Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (England: Blackwell Publication, 1983), p.218.

and that property owners could not be human beings. The bourgeois constitutional state was perceived as mere ideology.

Finally, Habermas comes to liberal ideas. Liberalism had an ambivalent conception of the public sphere as it believes that once the public sphere expanded, coherence and consensus ended and the public sphere became the arena of competing interests and violent conflict. Liberals like J.S. Mill and Tocqueville approved of extending the franchise, but both devalued the broadened public opinion. It was because the unreconciled interests which flooded the public sphere were represented in a divided public opinion and turned public opinion into a coercive force. Thus, they saw public opinion as a force that could limit power.

Finally, Habermas argues that in the 100 years after the heyday of liberalism, the original relationship of public and private dissolved. The contours of the bourgeois public sphere eroded, but neither liberalism nor socialism could diagnose the problems.

The Transformations of the Social Structures of the Public Sphere:

Habermas examines historical and social structures to chart the decline and decay of the modern public sphere in the modern period. He argues that this decline was due to a variety of socio-economic factors. Habermas gives a central concept to describe this phenomenon which he calls “Structural Transformation”. By this term, he means the process by which the public sphere shifts from being the centre of rational critical debate

to being a manufactured and rhetoric public sphere. When the bourgeois public sphere existed, state and society were separated. There was no state intervention in the economy. However, the separation was destroyed by the increasing statification of society and the increasing societisation of the state. This leads to a kind of 'refeudalisation' of the public sphere.³³ In a way it is a return of the unified state structure of the feudal period. State becomes so powerful and it begins to take control on the economic functions of the civil society. Then the interest of society began to involve themselves in the state. Thus, the two realms became blurred together and the image of civil society as an arena of economic and personal freedom is dented. In other words, what Habermas argues is that the increase state intervention or 'interventionism' repoliticised public sphere where the public/private distinction did not apply. Earlier, on the economic front, production was disengaged from public authority. But the trade policy shifted and the principle of free trade was restricted in favour of protectionism. Mergers became increasing in domestic and capital markets. Restriction of competition came to prevail in international commodity markets. During the late nineteenth century development, society was forced to stop claiming to be a sphere free from power. Besides, the antagonistic structure of civil society was increasingly revealed and there existed the greater need for a strong state. Only when new state functions arose, the barrier between state and society erode and this erosion turned the economy weak thereby making the way for using political means against stronger market competitors. Moreover, state had taken over new activities. State started to assume functions like strengthening middle classes and removing poverty etc. It also engaged in services which had formerly been private, that

³³ Habermas uses the term 'refeudalisation' to describe the process of a merging of the state and society, public and private that approximated to condition in the feudal state. He also uses it to describe the link of modern state and economy.

is, it intervened in the sphere of labor and commodity exchanged, and a repoliticised social was formed that fused state and societal institutions into a single complex web.

Changes occurred within a society as well. The family was separated from the economy. It was no longer the centre of labor and property. The conjugal family became dissociated from social reproduction. Institutional and bureaucratic structures produced a type of work that was very different to work in a private occupation. People became involved with large corporation. Self employed was no longer the norm. The distinction between working for oneself and for others was replaced by a status of function. Workers now gained status within an organization instead of having autonomy in the private sphere. Family lost its ability to support itself. The family became the consumer of leisure time and the recipient of public assistances. Thus individuals lack the autonomy they previously received from property ownership. It has lost its power as an agent of personal internalization. So, in the modern urban life, the trend of losing private sphere became typical which ultimately turned rational-critical debate into the fetish of community involvement.

The literary public sphere had lost its specific character too. Having taken by the advertising business, now the publicity was purposely created to manipulate people.³⁴ The non public opinions of the specific interest groups took over the public sphere. Thus, public sphere assumed advertising functions. Critical publicity was replaced by manipulative publicity. The consensus development in a rational critical debate was

³⁴ Habermas strongly argues that nowadays publicity is generated from above to give an aura of goodwill and publicity hides the domination of non public opinion.

replaced by a compromised between organized interests. From the nineteenth century, the institutions that guaranteed the coherence of a critically debating public were weakened: the family had lost its own role and the bourgeois salon went out of fashion. And the new bourgeois culture of sociability avoided being critical of public authority. Thus the remaining debate were carefully controlled and organized.

As the literary public sphere spread into the world of consumption, Leisure had taken its place. Leisure behavior was apolitical and could not constitute a public sphere. With the development of the leisure, rational debate was replaced by involvement in the local community and a range of non political and uncritical activities.

People also adopted to the new mass culture. They became dependent on the mass media and cultural consumption. Radio, T.V, films restrict the viewers responses, and Habermas believes that modern people prefer watching T.V. to talking about newspapers in public places. So, the world of mass media is a public sphere only in appearance.

Even higher status groups participate in the mass media world. Isolated intellectuals have been replaced by well paid cultural functionaries. The educated public is split into minorities of specialize who put their reason to use non publicity and the uncritical mass consumption. Moreover, they also lack the communication necessary for public.

Educated people also changed as the institutional changes took place. There was no basic similarity among educated people. They do not debate or criticize in public or enlighten others. Most of them simply consume.

Habermas message is that the liberal bourgeois public sphere depended absolutely on certain social and economical conditions. Once these conditions changed, the composition of the public and the nature of debate can not be guaranteed in any way.

The Transformation of the Political Functions of the Public Sphere:

According to Habermas, the shift in function of the principle of publicity is based on a shift in the functions of the public sphere as a special realm. This shift can be clearly seen in its key institution—the press. The press began as a key private institution of rational critical debate. It was previously protected from the state control because it was privately owned. However, it becomes increasingly commercialized and the mass media began to establish itself as a viable economic market.³⁵ To emphasize his point, Habermas argues that the history of the big daily papers in the second half of the nineteenth century proves that the press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialized. Ever since the marketing of the editorial section became interdependent with that of the advertising section, the press becomes the gate through which privileged private interest invaded the public sphere. Further, the relation between publisher and editor also changed. The selection of material became more important than

³⁵ Nick Crossly, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London and New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2005), p.233.

the lead article and therefore the rank and reputation of a newspaper were no longer primarily a function of its excellent publications but of its talented publishers. The publisher appointed editors in the expectation that they would do as they are told in the private interest of a profit oriented enterprise.

And as the press developed, a political function was added to its economic one. Papers became the carrier of public opinion. And, press began to shape debate rather than transmitting it. Here, the development of the advertising changed this situation. Advertising is the representation of private interest to the public in an attempt to influence people. It involves the manipulation of public opinion. The people believe that they are given all necessary information but they are being tricked into approving of whatever policy the politicians present to them. This increased and manipulative role of private interest in the political public sphere is matched by the state, which takes over the techniques of public relations itself. The govt. decisions are accepted with the justification that the matters at hands are governmental affairs and not for the public to comprehend and criticize. Thus, administrative authority increasingly becomes the public authority.³⁶ Besides, the state bureaucracy borrowed the techniques of opinion management, and social interest group took over some bureaucratic functions. When private interest assumed political, the public sphere became an arena in which conflicts must be settled and political decisions became a form of bargaining. All kinds of responsibilities for compromise were moved from the legislature to the bureaucracy.

³⁶ Detlef Horster, *Habermas: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Pennbridge Books, 1992), p.6.

On the other hand, the organizations that use these techniques are generally private associations having great power as they access and control the power of the public. However, the public that they manipulate has lost its power to criticize them.³⁷ Similarly, parliament is manipulated and sidelined by such large organizations. In modern times, parliament has been transformed into a committee for representing party lines as parties translate their organized interests officially into party machines.

The general tendency that Habermas identifies is that other forms of opinion manipulated exist in the modern public sphere. Political marketing aims to influence the public at election times. It aims to create a public ready to applaud whatever rubbish the politicians throw at them. Parties feel that political marketing depends on the empirical techniques of market and opinion research. Appeals to the public are calculated to give predictable results. So, political decisions are made to manipulate voters. Instead of joining with constituents in rational discussions, they attempt to garner the support only.

Apart from all, the establishment of the social welfare state (which is the norm in Western Europe) reveals the gap between the model public sphere and reality.³⁸ For Habermas, the constitution of the social welfare state is a complex mix of aspects of the bourgeois state and modern attempts to guarantee a commitment to state intervention in welfare questions.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁸ For Habermas, the mergence of the social welfare state is one of the reasons for decline of the modern public sphere, as increasing state interventions in people's lives, assuming their private concerns and interests on its own translate the relationship of the individual to state one of the client or consumer of service rather than citizen.

In the social welfare state, citizens also adopted an attitude of demand towards the state though they are entitled to services. And since their contact with the state occurred essentially in the rooms of bureaucracy, their political interest are reduced to claims specific to a certain occupational branches. Besides, the political public sphere of the welfare state shows two competing tendencies; staged and manipulative publicity and the critical process of public communication. This criticism conflicts with manipulative publicity. The more committed it is to social rights, the less a state will accept that the public sphere is a reality. And the extent to which staged publicity prevails shows how much the exercise of political and social authority is regulated.

In the face of such a negative picture of modern politics, Habermas suggests that the corrupted public sphere needs to be reasserting its true form. Organizations and institutions need to be subjected to publicity. Their activities and structures must be publicly known and rationally debated. Reducing the expanded public sphere by restricting the number of people eligible to vote is not the answer, he argues.

The Question of the Public Opinion:

Habermas propounds that public opinion has different meaning on whether it acts as critical authority in connection with a mandate that power be subject to publicity, or whether it as a molded object of staged display. Habermas view is that public opinion is of two forms. They are: critical publicity and a manipulative publicity. Critical publicity is what Habermas thinks that of the authentic public sphere and it is based on true public

opinion.³⁹ It existed in its proper form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but is still a central part of the modern democratic state. However, modern public opinion is something of a fiction. It is needed to legitimate the power of governments, but it cannot be accurately described and analyzed.⁴⁰ One can claim that a critical public exists surrounded by an uneducated, uncritical mass public. He also believes that the public opinion fully appeared as a problematic entity in the final quarter of the 19th century.

In Habermas's analysis, public opinion was formed by political debate and consensus in the bourgeois public sphere; but in the debased public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites which manage public opinion as a part of systems management and social control. Thus, while in the earlier stage of bourgeois development, public opinion was formed in open political debate concerning interests of common concern, in the contemporary state of capitalism, it is formed by dominant elites who only represented their private interests. There is no longer rational consensus of common goods among individuals. Instead, the struggle among groups to advance their own concerns characterize contemporary politics. So, Habermas opines that only meaningful way to study the public sphere is to analyze its development and structural transformations.

Finally, Habermas comes closer to the idea that although large scale public institutions are a dubious feature of modern society, they can do useful publicity work if

³⁹ For Habermas, public sphere serves to form public opinion and also designates an ideal of how public opinion ought to be formed.

⁴⁰ For Habermas argues that modern state rely on public opinion to legitimate and authorize its power. But it can not prove its existence.

they have an internal public sphere that communicates with the public sphere of the press and those of other organizations. In conditions of a large social democratic state, the communicative intercommunication of the public can be created only by critical publicity brought to life within intra-organizational public sphere. This is a long way from public opinion in its original form; but it does offer some possibilities for rational critical debate. Habermas ends here by arguing that the best chance we have of regulating power and domination in the modern world is the proper operation of the public sphere.

Habermas believes that the reassertion of the public sphere is possible and necessary, although his views on modern politics in general are pessimistic. He further argues that its success depends on the ability of the public to engage with and debate about new technologies and specialized bureaucracy such as the complexities of new weapons technologies or public finance.

Jurgen Habermas' Revised/Later Notion of the Public Sphere

In this chapter, we will examine the ways in which Habermas has revised some of his early views about the public sphere.

The Public Sphere:

In his later notion of the public sphere, Habermas says the public sphere is a social phenomenon just as elementary as action, actor, association, or collectivity, but it eludes the conventional sociological concepts of social order. The public sphere can not be conceived as an institution and certainly not as an organization. It can be best described as a network for communicating information and points of view, (i.e.; opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communications are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.¹ The public sphere is reproduced through communicative action, for which mastery of a natural language suffices; it is tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practice.²

Habermas says the public sphere is not specialized in systems like religion, education, family, science, morality and art to the extent that it extends to politically

¹ J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p.360.

² Habermas' 'communicative action' refers to the meaningful interaction between persons. It embraces both what he calls consensual action where the common assumptions are taken for granted, and action oriented to reaching an understanding.

relevant questions; it leaves their specialized treatment to the political system.³ Rather, the public sphere distinguishes itself through a communication structure that is related to a third feature of communicative action: it refers neither to the functions nor to the contents of everyday communication but to the social space generated in communicative action.⁴ Unlike success oriented actors who mutually observe each other as one observes something in the objective world, persons acting communicatively encounter each other in a situation they at the same time constitute with their cooperatively negotiated interpretations. Every encounter in which actors do not observe each other but take a second person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other, unfolds in a linguistically constituted public space. This space stands open, in principle, for potential dialogue partners who are present as bystanders or could come on the scene and join those present. Founded in communicative action, this spatial structure can be expanded and rendered more permanent in an abstract form for a larger public of present persons. For the public infrastructure of such assemblies, performances, presentations and so on, architectural metaphors of structured spaces such as forums, stages, an arenas, and the like recommend themselves. These public spheres cling to the concrete locales where an audience is physically gathered. Habermas says the more they detach themselves from the publics' physical presence and extend to the virtual presence of scattered readers, listeners, or viewers linked by public media, the clearer becomes the abstraction that enters when the spatial structure of simple interactions is expanded into a public sphere.⁵

³ Ibid.

⁴ There are three aspects of argumentative speech which can produce valid results, according to Habermas, and they are: 1a process of examining reasons which excludes forces and is immunized and against repression and inequality, 2 an interaction subject to special rules, and 3 the production of cogent arguments around a thematised problem.

⁵ Ibid., p. 361.

The diffusion of information and points of view via effective broadcasting media is not the only thing that matters in public process of communication, nor is it the most important. Only the broad circulation of comprehensible, attention grabbing message arouses a sufficiently inclusive participation. But the rules of a shared practice of communication are of greater significance for structuring public opinion. Agreement on issues and contributions develops only as the result of more or less exhaustive controversy in which proposals, information, and reasons can be more or less rationally dealt with. The success of public communication is not intrinsically measured by the requirement of inclusion either but by the formal criteria governing how a qualified public opinion comes about. The structures of a power ridden, oppressed public sphere exclude fruitful and clarifying discussions.⁶

Influences also develop in the public sphere. But this becomes the object of struggle there. The reputation of groups of persons and experts who have acquired their influence in special public sphere also comes into play. For as soon as the public sphere has expanded beyond the context of simple interaction, a differentiation sets in among organizations, speakers, and hearers, arenas and galleries, stages and viewing space. But the political influence that the actors gain through public communication must ultimately rest on the resonance and indeed the approval of a lay public. The public of citizens must be convinced by comprehensive and broadly interesting contributions to issues it finds relevant. The public audience possesses final authority.⁷

⁶ Habermas in his later notion defines the 'public sphere' as a communication structure rooted in the lifeworld through the associational network of civil society.

⁷ For Habermas, there can be no public sphere without public because it is constitutive for the internal structure and reproduction of the public sphere, the only place where public can appear.

The political public sphere can fulfilled its function of perceiving and thematising encompassing social problems only insofar as it develops out of the communication taking place among those who are potentially affected. It is carried by a public recruited from the entire citizenry. In fact, problems voiced in the public sphere first became visible when they are mirrored in personal life experiences. To the extent that these experiences find their concise expression in the language of religion, art, and literature, the literary public sphere in the broader sense, which is specialized for the articulation of values and world disclosure, is intertwined with the political public sphere.

As both bearers of the political public sphere and as members of society, citizens occupy two positions at once. As members of society, they occupy various roles and they are also especially exposed to the specific requirements and failure of the corresponding service systems. Such experiences are first assimilated privately in the context of shared lifeworlds. The communications channels of the public sphere are linked to private spheres and indeed they are linked in such a way that the spatial structures of simple interactions are expanded and abstracted. The threshold separating the private sphere from the public is not marked by a fixed set of issues or relationships but by different conditions of communications. Certainly, these conditions lead to differences in the accessibility of the two spheres. However, they do not seal off the private from the public. For the public sphere draws its impulses from the private handling of social problems. Besides, the public sphere also represent a highly complex network that branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, local and subcultureal arenas. Moreover, it is differentiated into levels according to the density of

communication, organizational complexity, and ranges. Despite these manifold differentiations, however, all the partial publics constituted by ordinary language remain porous to one another. In other words, boundaries inside the universal public sphere as defined by its references to the political system remain permeable in principle. The rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality built into liberal public sphere prevent exclusion mechanisms. The more the audience is widened through mass communications, the more inclusive and the more abstract in form it becomes. Besides, Habermas, also broadly categorizes three groups who are present in the public sphere as (1) persons who emerge from the people, (2) persons who merely appear before the public and (3) persons who are journalists, publicity agents, and members of the press.⁸

Lifeworld and System:

Habermas has further elaborated his theory of public sphere in his later works as he discusses the distinction between ‘lifeworld and system.’ **Lifeworld:** Generally, it may be conceived as a universe of which what is self evident or given a world that subjects may experience together. For Habermas, it is a concept complementary to that of communicative action.⁹ The Lifeworld is more or less the background environment of competences, practices, and attitudes represented in terms of one’s cognitive horizon. It refers to the ways in which our activities and ideas are related to the institutional, economic and cultural structure of the society in which we live. It is a general picture of social interaction in which ordinary members of society use the stock of skills,

⁸ J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 375-376.

⁹ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functional Reason*, vol.2 (Boston, Beacon Press, 1957), p.119.

competences and knowledge in order to negotiate their way through everyday life, to interact with other people, and ultimately to create and maintain social relationships. So, the lifeworld consists of communicative interactions which are coordinated face to face level by way of the mutual understanding achieved between agents, in dialogue and their common orientation towards shared norms and values.¹⁰ The lifeworld is held together by traditions and the various obligations and duties they impose and qua communicative space, is also the area of society wherein those traditions, along with other aspects of culture, knowledge and identity are reproduced. **System:** For Habermas, 'system' is basically society as a coercive force.¹¹ Social system elements emerge from the 'lifeworld' progressively overtime in tandem with social development and the increasing complexity of societies. The development of leadership institutions and expert systems creates pressures for sub-systems such as government and market to become detached from the 'lifeworld' and operate on the basis of codified law. The steering mechanisms of money and power cut through the need to achieve understanding through linguistic means. In large areas of society, social integration based on communicative understanding is replaced by system integration brought about through the operation of market and power.¹² Habermas's point is that, if society is just a system, then it is a bad society, for such a society will have significantly eroded human freedom and indeed rendered life more or less meaningless. The expansion of the 'system' inhibits one's

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 149-150.

¹¹ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.89. And, Habermas's idea of 'system' is opposite to the system theory of Niklas Luhmann for whom the term refers to regarding society as consisting not of individuals or institutions but of systems and subsystems. Austin Harrington, *Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 283-284.

¹² Derek Layder, *Understanding Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p.237.

freedom and it also inhibits one's capacity to give meaning to life.¹³ Habermas places society as a 'system' in tension with society as 'lifeworld'.

Further, Habermas distinguishes 'lifeworld' and 'system'. Habermas's public sphere is an extension of the lifeworld in many respects; system refers to the market economy and the state apparatus. Habermas divides System and Lifeworld where lifeworld refers to the public and private sphere and System refers to the economy and state administration. Lifeworld is constituted by way of direct communicative interaction between social agents, which are oriented towards mutual understanding, whilst the system is constituted by way of more impersonal and strategic exchange of money and power within the context of the economy and modern administrative state and judiciary.¹⁴ Both system and lifeworld perform essential functions for society. Lifeworld, in particular, is a source of legitimate norms and functions to reproduce the cultural patterns upon which society rests, while the state and economy function to produce and distributed basic material goods.

Colonization of the Lifeworld by the System:

Habermas states that the lifeworld presupposes a rationality that is primarily communicative, while the system is driven by instrumental rationality.¹⁵ In the tensions

¹³ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.154.

¹⁴ Nick Crossly, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p.37.

¹⁵ Instrumental rationality is the rational choice of the most appropriate means for the achievement of any given end. It appeals to knowable facts about the world, and in particular to causal relationships that can be established between mean and ends. Austin Harrington, *Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 281.

of rationalities between the lifeworld and the system, communicative reason is threatened by instrumental reason. After having uncoupled itself from the lifeworld, the system re-enters it and interferes with its operation and systematic mechanisms suppress forms of social interaction. Habermas terms this process as the colonization of the lifeworld by the system.¹⁶ Because, it resembles the way in which colonial overlords penetrate and dominate the indigenous societies they come to rule over.

In other words, the colonization of the lifeworld by the system refers to the imbalance between these two elements in which the system is increasingly impinging upon and thereby eroding the lifeworld. Colonization occurs when spheres of action that are essential to the operation of normative integration, i.e., either socialization or social control are switched over to instrumental action.¹⁷ Much of the Habermas's discussions of this process focuses upon the increasingly involvement of the state in everyday life. For instance, he refers to a process of juridification which entails both that more areas of life are now subject to legal regulation and that law is internally more complex. In addition to this, he points to the further extension of economy into everyday life, by virtue of such process as commodification. Our leisure lives, for example, are increasingly structured by a leisure industry and our personal lives and happiness by therapeutic and psychopharmacological industries.

This is problematic in Habermas' view because the impingement of economic and political structures upon everyday life destroys aspects of fabric of everyday life that

¹⁶ J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 196.

¹⁷ Nick Crossly, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London and New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2005), p. 38.

those structures are incapable of replacing or replenishing. Indigineuous cultures are destroyed and with them go both the narrative structures that lend meaning to people's lives and the normative frameworks they live by.¹⁸ But the economy and the state are incapable of replacing or rebuilding these essential aspects of lifeworld. Meaning and morality can not be legislated for or bought and sold. They can only be created by way of communicative action, that are, in Habermas's view, constitutive of lifeworld. Consequently, the colonization of the lifeworld has pathological consequences. At the level of the community, there is normative breakdown or anomic and this translates at the individual level into alienation. Integral to this process is a shrinking of the public sphere.¹⁹ What Habermas points out is that the use of systems in a modern society is necessary and indeed to a degree highly beneficial. But as economic systems and administrative systems intrude more and more into everyday life, so the instrumentalism inherent in systematic activity begins to erode the communicative skills that are grounded in, and that serve to maintain the lifeworld. However, he states that all is not necessarily lost. He believes that the communicative action in the lifeworld has the capacity to resist colonization by the system.²⁰ He identifies a possibility for replenishment of the lifeworld in the form of new social movement such as feminism, ecology, peace movement etc.

The following sections (a), (b), (c) and (d) are the revisions in his essay- 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere' - in the book *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992).

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Austin Harrington, *Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 281.

(a) The Genesis of the Bourgeoisie Public Sphere:

Habermas in his further reflections on the public sphere admits that his aim has been to derive the ideal type of the bourgeoisie public sphere from the historical context of British, French and German developments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He also accepts the fact that historians have rightly complained of the empirical shortfalls about the genesis of the public sphere.²¹

To validate his stand, Habermas first examines the case of Germany. By the end of the eighteenth century, there had emerged a public sphere where critical rational discussion was carried on although it was a small one in Germany.²² With the growth of a general reading public that transcend the republic of scholars and the urban bourgeoisie and who no longer limited themselves to a careful reading and rereading of a few standard works but oriented their reading habits to an ongoing stream of new publications, there sprang a relatively dense network of public communication from the midst of the private sphere. The growing number of readers, increasing by leaps and bounds was complemented by a considerable expansion in the production of books, journals, and papers, an increasing number of authors, publishers, and book sellers, the establishment of lending libraries, reading rooms and especially reading societies as the social nodes of a literary culture revolving around novels. The societies for enlightenment, cultural association, secret freemasonry lodges were associations constituted by the free, that is, private , decisions of their founding members, based on

²¹ J.Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere' in Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 422-423.

²² Ibid., p. 423.

voluntary membership, and characterized internally by egalitarian practice of sociability, free discussion, decisions by majority etc. While these societies certainly remained an exclusively bourgeoisie affair, they did provide the training ground for what were to become a future society's norms of political equality.

In the case of France, the French Revolution of 1789 eventually triggered a movement towards the politicization of a public sphere that at first revolved around literature and art criticism.²³ A politicization of associational life, the rise of a partisan press, the fight against censorship and for freedom of opinion characterize the change in function of the expanding network of public communication up to the middle of the nineteenth century. In fact, the French experience bequeathed a political vocabulary in which new aspirations could be engaged, a structured ideological discourse of rights and self governments in which new emergent intelligentsias might naturally insert themselves. The radical departures of the French revolution not only gave sympathetic intellectuals in more backward societies a new political consciousness, they then set about constituting a national public sphere in all the ways from literary societies, subscription networks the press, to gymnastic and sharpshooter clubs and the popular reading rooms that carried the activity into the countryside.

With reference to Great Britain, Habermas emphasizes that the process of class formation, urbanization, cultural mobilization, and the emergence of new structures of communications along the lines of those voluntary associations of the popular liberalism

²³ Ibid., p. 424.

of nineteenth century Britain was constituted in the eighteenth century.²⁴ Not only did the capitalist development created the structural opposition between private life and public authority; it also supplied the primary actors in the public sphere (bourgeois) as well as the issues. According to Habermas, the protection of a commercial economy impels the bourgeoisie to constitute the public sphere in Britain.

(b) The Question of Exclusion in the Public Sphere:

Habermas states that the plebian public sphere was a variant of the bourgeoisie public sphere for it takes it as a model that remained suppressed in the historical process. However, he argued that under the influence of radical intellectuals and under the conditions of modern communications, the traditional culture of the common people brought forth a new political culture with organizational forms and practices of its own. The emergence of the plebian public sphere thus marks a specific phase in the historical development of the life relations of the petite bourgeoisie and the strata below it. It also develops the bourgeois public sphere's emancipatory potential in a new social context. Thus, he argues that the exclusion of the culturally and politically mobilized lower strata entails a pluralisation of the public sphere in the very process of its emergence.²⁵

Again, with regard to feminists' critique of the exclusion of the women, Habermas responds by saying that by now, the growing feminist literature has sensitized our awareness to the patriarchal character of the public sphere itself, a public sphere that

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Habermas has revised his assessment of the bourgeois public sphere and he stresses the pluralization of the public sphere in the process of its emergence.

soon transcended the confines of the reading public and assumed political functions. He accepts that women were a constituting part of the reading public. However, both women and other group were denied equal active participation in the formation of political opinion and will.²⁶ He further elaborates that equality of civil rights that finally attained in the twentieth century has no doubt created for hitherto underprivileged women the opportunity to improve their social status. Yet women who managed to come to enjoy increased social welfare benefits did not accomplish the modification of the underprivileged status tied to gender. Unlike the institutionalization of class conflict, the transformation of the relationship between sexes affects not only the economic system but has an impact on the private core area of the conjugal family. It shows that the exclusion of women has been constitutive for the political public sphere. It is not merely in the sense that women have been dominated by men as a matter of contingency, but also its structure and relation to the private sphere has been determined in a gender specific fashion. Unlike the exclusion of underprivileged men, the exclusion of women has structuring significance.

(c) The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere:

In his further reflections on the public sphere, Habermas makes three revisions in relation to the repercussions of those complex developments toward social welfare state and organized capitalism in the western type societies.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 428.

In the first revision, he focuses on the repercussions on the private sphere and the social basis of private autonomy. According to the self conception of early modern bourgeoisie society, the sphere of commodity exchange and social labour as well as the household and the family were deemed to belong to the private sphere of civil society. The position and decision making latitude of private owners involved in production constituted the basis for a private autonomy whose psychological flip side lay in the conjugal family's intimate sphere. The realm of private life defined by family, neighborly contacts, social occasions was transformed differently for each social stratum in the course of long term tendencies such as urbanization, bureaucratization, the concentration of enterprises and finally the shift to mass consumption accompanied by ever more leisure time. Also, after the urbanization of equal rights, the private autonomy of the masses could no longer have its social basis in the control over private property. The masses could no longer gain control of the social preconditions of their private existence through participation in a system of commodity and capital market organized under private law. Their private autonomy had to be secured through reliance on the status guarantees of a social welfare state. This derivative private autonomy, however, could function as an equivalent of the original private autonomy based on control over private property only to the degree to which the citizens, as clients of the social welfare state, came to enjoy status guarantees that they themselves bestowed on themselves in their capacities as citizens of a democratic state.²⁷ Within this perspective, the political public sphere is reduced to function as a sort of adjunct for a legislator whose judgment is theoretically and constitutionally predetermined and who knows *as priori* in what fashion the democratic state has to pursue

²⁷ Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 433-435.

In the second revision, Habermas retrospect his earlier argument of state and society integration as one of the reasons for the structural transformations. He then argued that with the integration of state and society, the infrastructure of the public sphere has changed along with the forms of organization, marketing etc. It changed with the rise of the electronic mass media, the new relevance of advertising, the increasing fusion of entertainment and information, the greater centralization in all areas, the collapse of liberal associational life, the collapse of surveyable public spheres on the community level, etc. In conjunction with an ever more commercialized and increasingly dense network of communication, with the capitalist requirement and organizational scale of publishing enterprises the channels of communications became more regulated and the opportunities for access to public communication became subject to ever greater selective pressure. Therewith emerged a new sort of influence, i.e., media power. The public sphere that simultaneously dominated by the mass media , developed into an arena infiltrated by power in which a battle is fought not only over influence but over the control of communication flows that affect behavior of masses.

In this revision, Habermas admits the fact that his earlier interpretations are not sufficient. His diagnosis of a unilinear development from a politically active public to one withdrawn into a bad privacy, from a culture debating to a culture consuming public is too simplistic.²⁸ He argues that the new intimacy between culture and politics is no less ambiguous and is more complex than a mere assimilation of information to entertainment. At the time, he was too pessimistic about the resisting power and above all the critical potential of a pluralistic mass public whose cultural usages have begun to

²⁸ Ibid., p. 438.

shake off the constraints of class. He believes that there are critical potential of a pluralistic mass public who are internally much different.

The third revision is with regard to the public opinion. Habermas argues that as fictitious construct of constitutional law, public opinion continues, in the normative theory of democracy, to be endowed with the unitariness of a counterfactual entity, even though this entity has long been disassembled in the empirical investigation of media research. In a mass media dominated arena in which opposing tendencies clash, the degree of infusion of public opinion with power was supposed to be measured by the extent to which the informal, nonpublic opinions are not fed into the circuits of formal, quasi public opinion making by the mass media which state and economy try to influence or by the degree to which both realms are brought into conflict by means of critical publicity. But he could not imagine any other vehicle of critical publicity than internally democratized interest associations and parties. He believes that intraparty and intra associational public spheres appeared as the potential centers of a public communication still capable of being regenerated. However, he once again cautions that this model ran up against that pluralism of irreconcilable interest that already moved the liberal theoreticians to object to the tyranny of the majority. From the point of view of normative consideration, liberals were at most prepared to admit public opinion as a constraint on power. But they were not prepared to admit public sphere as a medium for the potential rationalization of power altogether. So, Habermas opines that it would certainly be

sufficient simply to charge liberal theory for having an ambivalent conception of the public sphere.²⁹

(d) A Modified Theoretical Framework:

In this modified theoretical framework, Habermas analyses about tensions between idea and reality that exists in bourgeoisie society, consequences of considering society as totality, and subsequently, he talks about a new theoretical approach as a solution to these problems.

Habermas starts by singling out a problem in bourgeoisie society that the dialectic of the bourgeoisie public sphere wears the ideology critical approach on its sleeve. The ideals of bourgeoisie humanism that have left their characteristic mark on the self interpretation of the intimate sphere and the public have infused the institutions of the constitutional state to such an extent that they point beyond a constitutional reality that negates them. There are tensions between idea and reality. To solve it, Habermas suggests normative foundations of the critical theory of society that must be laid at deeper level. He says the theory of communicative action intends to bring into the open the rational potentials intrinsic in everyday communicative practices. This will also ensure an empirical approach in which the tension of the abstract opposition between norms and reality is dissolved.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 440-441.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 443.

Further, he opines that it remained captive of a notion when society and its self organization are to be considered a totality.³¹ The holistic notion of a societal totality in which the associated individuals participate like the members of an encompassing organization is particularly ill suited to provide access to the realities of an economic system regulated through market and an administrative system regulated through power. Habermas strongly wants to differentiate between the actions systems of state and economy on the level of a theory of action. Habermas considered state apparatus and economy to be systematically integrated action fields that can no longer be transformed democratically from within without damaging their ability to function. The abysmal collapse of state socialism has only confirmed this, he argues. So he suggests a radical democratization which aims for a shifting of forces within a separation of power that itself is to be maintained in principle. The new equilibrium to be attained is not one between state powers but between different resources for societal integration. The goal is no longer to supercede an economic system having a capitalist life of its own and a system of domination having a bureaucratic life of its own; but to erect a democratic dam against the colonizing encroachment of system imperatives on the areas of the lifeworld. This radical democratic change aims at a new balance between the forces of societal integration so that the social integrative power of solidarity—the communicative force of production can prevail over the powers of the money of administrative power and therewith successfully assert the practically oriented demands of the lifeworld.

³¹ Habermas opines that the presumption of society as a whole can be conceived as an association writ large has been entirely implausible in view of high level of complexity of functionally differentiated societies.

So, Habermas feels, given the possible suggestions above, political public sphere is suitable as the fundamental concept of a theory of democracy whose intent is normative. In response to the critics who have irreconcilably argued how practical-political questions which are of a moral nature can be decided rationally, Habermas asserts that there are solid reasons available that can provide a foundation for a universalisation of interests and for an appropriate application of norms embodying such general interest. Beyond that he also developed a discourse centered approach to ethics that views the exchange of arguments and counter arguments as the most suitable procedure for resolving moral practical questions. This discourse centered approach to ethics does not limit itself to the claim that it can derive a general principle of morality from the normative content of pragmatic preconditions of all rational debates. Rather, this principle itself refers to the discursive redemption of normative validity claims, for it anchors the validity of norms in the possibility of a rationally founded agreement on the part of all those who take part in a rational debate.³² He further argues that empirical and evaluative questions are frequently inseparable and evidently can not be dealt with without reliance on arguments. Any negotiations must rely on the exchange of arguments and whether they lead to compromises that are fair depends essentially on the procedural conditions subject to moral judgment. So the discourse centered theoretical approach has the advantage of being able to specify the preconditions for communication that have to be fulfilled in the various forms of rational debate and in negotiations if the results of such discourse are to be presumed to be rational.

³² Validity claim implies the commitment that speakers make, often unwittingly, to justify what they have said and what they are doing. Habermas identifies four validity claims: to truth, to rightness, to sincerity or truthfulness and to meaning. Andrew Edger, *Habermas: The key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 167.

If discourse centered approach is made plausible, within the framework of a normative theory, then, the questions remain of how, under the conditions of mass democracies constituted as social welfare states, a discursive formation of opinion and will can be institutionalized in such a fashion that it becomes possible to bridge the gap between enlightened self interest and orientation to the common good, between the roles of client and citizens. In fact, an intrinsic precondition of communication of all practices of rational debate is the presumption of impartiality and the expectation that the participants question and transcend whatever their initial preferences may have been. Meeting these two preconditions must even become a matter of routine. Modern law's way of coming to terms with this problem was the introduction of legitimate legal coercion. Within a discourse centered approach, it must also guarantee the discursive mode by means of which generation and application of legislative programs are to proceed within the parameters of rational debate. These imply that the institutionalization of legal procedures that guarantees an appropriate fulfillment of preconditions of communicative required for fair negotiations of free debate. These preconditions demand the complete inclusion of all parties, their equality, free and easy interaction, no restrictions of topics and the possibility of revising the outcomes, etc.³³

Besides, within a discourse centered theoretical approach, decision by majority must remain internally related to a practice of rational debate and a majority decision must be arrived only in such a fashion that its contents can be claimed to be the rationally motivated. The expectation that rational results will obtain is based on the interplay

³³ For Habermas, in a just society, the people who are subject to the law must also be those who create that law. The law must therefore be grounded in public opinion so that it can be enforceable law that will constrain and direct the actions of citizens.

between a constitutionally instituted formation of the political will and the spontaneous flow of communication unsubverted by power within a public sphere that is not geared towards decision making but towards discovery of problem resolution.

There may be actually circumstances under which a direct widening of the formal opportunities for participations and involvement in decision making only intensifies generalized particularization (arguments of elitism). But this can be prevented by procedurally viewing the sovereignty of the people as comprising the essential conditions that enable process of public communication to take the form of discourse. The opinions must be given shape in the form of decisions by democratically constituted decision making bodies.

The Political Public Sphere in Advanced Capitalism:

Habermas was also very pessimistic about the existence of the authentic public sphere amidst the all encompassing functions of the modern welfare states. He could not find a way to ground his hopes for the realization of the public sphere very effectively in his account of the social institutional of advanced or organized capitalism. He was, in fact, pessimistic about his inability to find in advanced capitalists societies an institutional basis for effective political public sphere corresponding in character and function to that of early capitalism and state formation. Habermas responds to this problem in his later work. First, he addresses the consequences of extensive state intervention into the economy. For Habermas, Late capitalism or organized capitalism

refers to the process of economic concentration, the rise of national and subsequently, of multinational corporations—and to the organization of market for goods, capital and labor.³⁴ It also refers to the fact that the state intervenes in the market as functional gaps develop. Organized capitalism is distinguished from earlier competitive capitalism. The supplementation and partial replacement of the market mechanism by state intervention in economic process marks the difference between organized capitalism and earlier competitive liberal capitalism. What Habermas argues in this respect is that state intervention effectively prevents a focus on the contradictions of capital as such and thus orients political action away from the bases of potential fundamental transformation and towards the state itself. Welfare state democracy demands that states legitimate themselves by demonstrating that their policies serve the overall interests of their constituents. This is a result not only of state intervention as such but also of the transformation of the public sphere into an arena in which a wide range of social interests vie for state action. Because those interests conflict, states are left to face a crisis in which they are unable simultaneously to produce adequate motivation for work and loyalty to the existing regime.³⁵ On the other hand, the arrangement of formal democratic institutions and procedures permits administrative decisions to be made largely independent of specific motives of the citizens. This takes place through a legitimization process that elicits generalized motive—that is, diffused mass loyalty but avoids participation. This structural alteration of the bourgeoisie public realm provides for application of institutions and procedures that are democratic in form, while the citizenry,

³⁴ J. Habermas, 'Legitimation Problems in Late Capitalism' in Ben Agger, ed. *Western Marxism: An Introduction* (Santa Monica, California: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1979), p. 284.

³⁵ Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere' in Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 30.

in the midst of an objectively political society, enjoy the status of passive citizens with only the right to withhold acclamation.

Second, Habermas takes up the division between system and lifeworld. He argues that advanced capitalist society cannot be conceptualized as a social totality, because it is split into separate realms integrated on different bases.³⁶ The lifeworld is the realm of the personal relationships and communicative action. But to it is counterposed a system ordered on the basis of nonlinguistic steering media (money and power), integrating society impersonally through functional or cybernetic feedback. This split can not be overcome, he argues, because there is no immanent logic of capitalism to produce its dialectical transcendence and because large scale modern society would be impossible without such systemic integration; and hopes of doing away with such large scale societal integration is not only romantic but dangerous because reduction in scale can come about only in catastrophic ways.³⁷ Nonetheless, the lifeworld is the locus for basic human values and is undergoing rationalization processes of its own; it needs to be defended against the continual encroachment of systemic media.

Third, Habermas shifted his attention from the institutional construction of a public sphere as the basis of democratic will formation to the validity claims universally implicit in all speech. Habermas thus turns away from historically specific grounding for

³⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁷ For Habermas, 'system integration' implies the relationship between people, and between institutions within society which are seen as being governed by the sort of rules that governs a system. In this, they are more or less automatic responding to specific stimuli. In contrast to it, social integration refers to the organization of society in which the existence of a society is dependent upon the skills, knowledge and competence of its members if it is to retain stability and orders. In this integration, interaction between two or more people must make some sense to them if it is to continue.

democracy through the public sphere towards reliance on a transhistorical capacity of human communication. Communicative action thus provides an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration. He idealizes the directly interpersonal relations of the lifeworld as counterpoint to systemic integration with its dehumanization and reification. He believes, more generally, a radical democratic change in the process of legitimation aims at a new balance between the forces of societal integration so that the social integrative power of solidarity—the communicative force of production—can prevail over the powers of the other two control resources, i.e. money and administrative power, and therewith successfully assert the practically oriented demands of lifeworld.

On Democracy and Public Sphere:

Habermas explicates the close connection between his theory of the public sphere and democracy (a part of this aspect has been discussed above titled (d) A Modified Theoretical Framework). In some of his works, he tries to show how his theory of the public sphere can contribute to democracy that he had lightly hinted in his earlier *Structural Transformations*. With regard to the connection between his theory of the public sphere and democracy, he first describes the two polemically contrasted models of democracy and later gives a model of democracy whose ideals are to be in consonance with the public sphere.

Liberal Model of Democracy: According to this model of democracy, the state is concerned as an apparatus of public administration, and society is conceived as system of

market structured interaction of private persons and their labour while the democratic process accomplishes the task of programming the state in the interest of society. Here, politics has the function of bundling together and binding to bear private social interests against a state apparatus that specializes in the administration employment of political power for collective goals.³⁸ For liberals, the citizens 'status is determined primarily by the individual rights he/ she has vis a vis the state and other citizens. Citizens enjoy the protection of government as long as they pursue their private interest within the boundaries drawn by the legal statutes. Politically, citizens are also afforded the opportunity to assert their private interests in such a way that the composition of parliamentary bodies, and the formation of government, by means of election, can be finally aggregated into a political will that can affect the administration.³⁹ In this way, the citizens in their political role can determine whether governmental authority is exercised in their interests of the citizens as member of society.

However, Habermas argues that the Liberal Model of Democracy is not conducive for making collective and rational decisions. In this, politics is essentially a struggle for position that grant access to administrative power. The political process of opinion and will formation in the public sphere and in parliament is shaped by the competition of strategically acting collectives trying to maintain or acquire positions of power. Success is measured by the citizens' approval of persons and programs, as quantified by voters. Their votes have the same structure as the choices of participants in market, and the input of votes and the output of power conform to the same pattern of

³⁸ J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), p. 239.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

strategic action. Its focus is not so much the input of a rational political will formation based on the public sphere but on the output of successful administrative accomplishments.⁴⁰ Moreover, the democratic process takes place exclusively in the form of compromises between competing interests. Fairness is supposed to be guaranteed by rules of compromises formation. For this model, democratic will formation has the exclusive function of legitimating the exercise of political power. In fact, this model defends public autonomy in terms of its capacity to protect private autonomy, thus turning democracy into an instrument for the protection of private liberties.

Republican Model of Democracy: For this model of democracy (initiated by communitarians), politics is conceived as the reflexive form of substantial ethical life. it constitutes the medium in which members of community become aware of their dependence on one another and acting with full deliberation as citizens.⁴¹ This model also views political will formation aims at mutual understanding or communicatively achieved consensus is even supposed to enjoy priority. Besides, political rights do not simply guarantee freedom from external compulsion, but guarantee instead the possibility of participating in a common practice through which the citizens can first make themselves into politically responsive subjects of a community of free and equal citizens. For them, democratic government authority proceeds from the communicative power generated by the citizens' practice of self legislation, and it is legitimated by the fact that it protects this practice by institutionalizing public freedom. The state's *raison d'être* lies in the guarantee of an inclusive process of opinion and will formation in which goals and norms

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 247.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.240.

lies in the equal interest of all; but not primarily in the protection of equal individual rights. In addition to it, the political opinion and will formation in the public sphere and in parliament does not obey the structures of market process but rather the obstinate structure of a public communication oriented to mutual understanding.

However, Habermas feels this model is not so feasible for arriving at rational decisions because this model is too idealistic in that it makes democratic process dependent on the virtues of citizens devoted to the public weal.⁴² For politics is not concerned in the first place with questions of ethical self understanding. There is an ethical foreshortening of political discourse. Besides, this model tends to render liberty dependent on popular judgments about the best means of achieving collective aims or on the collective commitments contingently embraced by a particular community. For it, democracy is synonymous with the political self organization of society. This leads to a polemical understanding of politics as directed against the state apparatus.

Discursive Model of Democracy:

For Habermas, democracy is not simply a matter of selecting among competing elites through regular elections, nor simply a matter of ensuing through such selection, a protected framework of private liberties. Instead, democracy is a form of self rule and requires that the legitimate exercise of political power trace to the free communication of citizens, expressed through law.⁴³ The Discursive democracy, he argues, is founded on

⁴² Ibid., p. 244.

⁴³ J. Cohen, 'Reflections on Habermas on Democracy', *Ratio Juris*, vol.12 No.4 December 1999, p. 387.

the abstract ideal of a self organizing community of free and equal citizens coordinating their collective affairs through their common reasons.

Discursive democracy puts public reasoning, generated by the public sphere, at the centre of political justification. For it, democracy is a system of social and political arrangement that institutionally ties the exercise of collective power to free reasoning among equals.⁴⁴ However, Habermas conception of discursive democracy provides an idealized, normative account of democratic process. Set within a constitutional order that protects personal and political liberties, discursive democracy ties together two elements of a process of collective decision making: the informal discussion of issues in an unorganized public sphere that does not make authoritative collective decision, and a more formal political process, including elections and legislative decision making, as well as, the conducts of agencies and courts. In the formal process, candidates and elected legislators deliberate about issues, make authoritative decisions by translating the opinion formed in the informal sphere into legal regulations, and monitor the execution of those decisions by administrative bodies.

The discursive model of democratic process appears to be founded on a hypothesis about the connection between idealized discourse and actual democratic decision making. The central idea is that democratic procedures should produce rational outcomes. Informal communication in the public sphere provides a close to the ground and unregulated arenas for detecting new problems , bringing them to public view in a non specialized language, and suggesting ways to address those problems. The

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 396.

communicative structures of the public sphere constitute a far flung network of sensors that react to the pressure of society wide problems and stimulate influential opinions. On the other hand, formal political process-elections, legislations, agencies and courts-provide the second stage in an idealized problem solving system. They provide institutionally regulated ways to assess ideas: to deliberate about proposals under fair conditions, evaluate alternative solutions and make authoriatative decisions after due consideration.⁴⁵

Then the question comes, if this model of democracy is conducive for generating the collective and rational decision, according to Habermas, what is the connection it shares with the public sphere besides others? Habermas replies that in discursive democracy, outcomes are justified only if they could be accepted by people who give suitable weight to the reasonable objections others generated in the public sphere, assuming those others to be free and equal.⁴⁶ Discursive democracy then may seem as a natural way to achieve such impartially justified outcomes. For it is a form of democracy that aims to mirror hypothetical conditions of good information, attentiveness to reason through public sphere and regards for others as equals . Through public sphere, discursive democracy generates a stronger presumption or greater rational outcomes. The democratic procedure is institutionalized through the discourses of the public sphere and bargaining processes by employing forms of communication that promise that all outcomes reach in conformity with the procedure are reasonable. Discursive democracy also acquires its legitimating force from the discursive structure of an opinion and will

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 401.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 402.

formation of the public sphere that can fulfill its socially integrative function.⁴⁷ Moreover, through the public sphere, discursive democracy is connected to political community because the requirement of providing reasons for the exercise of political power that are compelling to those who are governed by itself expresses the full and equal membership of all in the sovereign body responsible for authorizing the exercise of that power and establishes the common reason and will of that body. And through the public sphere, it also presents an account of when decisions made in a democracy are politically legitimate and how to shape institutions and forms of arguments so as to make legitimate decisions.

In the following chapter, we will look through Habermas' early and revised notions of the public sphere in a comparative fashion alongwith the possible reasons which might have prompted Habermas to reflect further about his account of the public sphere.

⁴⁷ Habermas argues that in discursive democracy, the procedures and communicative presumptions of democratic opinion and will-formation function as the most important sluices for the discursive rationalization of the decisions of a govt. and administration bounded by law and statute. J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), p. 250.

An Analysis of Habermas' Early and Later Notions of the Public

Sphere:

In the last chapter (chapter 3), we have discussed Habermas' revised notion of the public sphere preceded by his earlier notion of the public sphere. In this chapter, we will look through a comparative analysis of Habermas's early and later versions of the public sphere. Along with it, we will also delineate the specific reasons that might have prompted Habermas to refashion/ revise some of his previous standpoints in some of his later works.

Taking critics' views seriously about his notion of the public sphere, Habermas has responded in his later works without ever spurning his own positions outright. He, instead has refashioned new explanations by linking his notion of the public sphere to his subsequent thoughts and ideas, besides broadening its scope. All of his later responses are in the form of giving new broader conceptions in addition to his early ones, or in the forms of reply to the critics, or in the form of his subsequent expansion of his earlier unanalyzed aspects. At times, Habermas defends himself without giving ample detailed explanation about some of his own argumentations which are abstract by nature. It is also quite noticeable that Habermas consistently tries to justify his own stands on the public sphere in his later works. As he clearly states in his essay 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere' that still, a mistake in the assessment of the significance of certain aspects does not falsify the larger outline of the theory that he has presented.

Habermas' Revisions on the Conceptualization of the Public Sphere:

In his early notion, Habermas has described the concept of the public sphere as a space of reasoned debate about politics and the state.¹ It is the arena of political participation in which ideas, alternatives, opinions and other forms of discourse take shape. In fact, the bourgeoisie public sphere in its classical form which is the central focus of the *Structural Transformations* was constituted by private citizens who deliberated on issues of public concern. The classical public sphere, as the means of mediating relations between society and the state, was characterized by a set of institutions that guaranteed equal access to all citizens to a critical and discursive process in which public authority and political decision making were to be subject to the rational scrutiny and reasoning public. The public sphere crossed over both the realms of private sphere and the sphere of the public authority as a sphere of mediating means between them.² This area is conceptually distinct from the state because it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. Besides, public sphere is also distinct from the official economy as it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations. The basic purpose of the public sphere was to monitor and legitimate power via the medium of public discussions. For Habermas, the public sphere came into being to check power through rational and critical debate.

¹ John Guidy, 'Public Sphere' in George Ritzer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Social Science Theory*, vol3 (London: Sage publication, 2004).

² J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 31.

In his later works, especially in his book *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas has modified some of his early conceptualization of the public sphere. There is a theoretical reason behind this revision on the conceptualization of the public sphere. In fact, Habermas had changed his focus and theory in the meantime and this is the reason why he has taken this modification on the conceptualization of the public sphere. Habermas has developed his most central theory; 'The Theory of Communicative Action' after he first published his book *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1962. In brief, Habermas's developed theory speaks about actions (the intentional and meaningful activity of a person) oriented towards understanding , that is, action based on a consensus of definitions regarding situations dependent upon the mutual recognition of perceptions of the environment , social norms, and the identities of individuals. His communicative action also refers to a meaningful interaction between persons. It is not just to communicate information between people. For him, it entails the establishing or maintaining of a social relationship between two or more individuals. Communicative action thus embraces both consensual action and action oriented to reaching an understanding.³

In the later notion of the public sphere, Habermas has heavily drawn the conceptualization of the public sphere from the Theory of Communicative Action. It is partly because he believes that communicative action involves validity claims and it can help to arrive at an uncoerced consensus where social actions are initiated not by intimidating or manipulation but by valid reasons. Habermas stresses the capacity of human communication to foster a more reasonable society which in fact is the principle

³ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: the key concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.21-23.

aim of his concept of the public sphere.⁴ We can clearly see that in his previous concept, Habermas did not mention the importance of the communicative rationality that becomes a backbone of his later thought. So he describes the public sphere as a space of reasoned debate about politics or the intermediary space between the state and private interests of the members of the bourgeoisie class. He then emphasized on the aspect that public sphere denotes a space in which individuals who are otherwise live privately and have their own private concerns come together to discuss matter of politics. However, taking his theoretical stand from his communicative reason, Habermas redefines his notion of the public sphere. So, he says that the public sphere can be seen as a network of communicating information and points of view about political aspects. He also mentions that communicative action also reproduces the public sphere.⁵ Further, he states that there are three aspects of argumentative speech. One of the aspects, that is, the production of cogent argument constitutes its third feature. According to him, this feature aims to produce cogent arguments that are convincing in virtue of their intrinsic properties and with which validity claims can be redeemed or rejected. Habermas says later that his conceptualization of the public sphere is related to this third feature.⁶

We will see how differently he redefines his conception of the public sphere. He says public sphere is a social phenomenon. It is different from the concept of social order because public sphere can not be conceived as an institution and certainly not as an organization. It is not even a framework of norms with differentiated competences and roles, membership regulations and so on. So, Habermas redefines public sphere as a

⁴ Austin Harrington, *Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.279-280.

⁵ J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, M.A: MIT Press, 1996), p.360.

⁶ Ibid.

network for communicating information and points of view. These streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specific public opinions.⁷ So he argues that the public sphere is reproduced through communicative action. For it, mastery of language suffices and it is tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practice. The public sphere is also not specialized in the fields like religion, education and the family. It is also not specialized in other fields like science, morality etc unless these systems extends to politically relevant questions. Rather, the public sphere refers to the social space stands open, in principle, for potential dialogue partners about political discussions. Founded in communicative action, this spatial structure of simple encounters can be expanded and rendered more permanent in an abstract form for a larger public sphere. However, as soon as the public sphere is expanded beyond the context of simple interactions, a differentiation sets in among participants and influence develops in the public sphere. In such case, he argues, political influence that the actors gain through public communication must ultimately rest on the resonance and indeed approval of a lay public. The public of citizens must be convinced by comprehensible contributions to issues it finds relevant. The public audiences possess final authority because it is constitutive for the internal structure and reproduction of the public sphere. Moreover, citizens also occupy two positions at once both as bearers of the political public sphere and as members of society. The communication channels of the public sphere are linked to private spheres. The threshold separating the private sphere from the public is not marked by a fixed set of issues or relationship but by different conditions of communications.

⁷ Ibid.

On the personal front, born in Gummersbach (Germany) 1929, Habermas grew up during the Nazi regime and the Second World War. The experience of the Nazi era had a profound effect on his thinking.⁸ As a teenager, Habermas was shocked by the Nuremberg trials and the discovery of horrors of the Nazi regime.⁹ His early experience might have been the main reason behind his early theory of the public sphere where he propounded a kind of politics which should be based on reason, and rational discussion rather than supporting a regime which is backed by irrational and illogical force. He strongly suggested that a just society should be one which must be regulated by the public sphere in which maximum numbers of citizens can take part in the political debates and political participation.

However, there is also a possible reason as to why Habermas has revised his concept of the public sphere. Habermas was so worried about the growing conviction of 'scienticism' in the west. With this conviction, he feels, people start looking at natural sciences not merely as one source of knowledge, but as the only source of knowledge. After the domination of technology has consolidated in the west, Habermas found that more and more technology are in the process of manipulation of society. So, in his later notion, Habermas terms this process as the, scienticisation of politics, where expansion of technology manipulate social administration besides it fundamentally transforming the

⁸ William Outhwaite, 'Jurgen Habermas' in W. Outhwaite, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Sociological Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), p.238.

⁹ 'Nuremberg Trials' were a series of trials, or tribunals or the prosecution of prominent members of the Nazi Germany after its final defeat in World War 2. The tribunals were held in the city of Nuremberg, Germany from 1945 to 1946.

way in which social life is understood.¹⁰ He also argues, technology consciousness has also found to become an ideology.¹¹ As a result of this, there is an increase process of depoliticisation that is upon the ways in which politics as a process of discursive will formation or active decision making is both practically and theoretically bracketed out of contemporary political life. The notion that society, especially as a political body should be understood by communication between its members is lost. As a consequence, political decision making, both by the professional politicians and the public that elect them is reduced to a more or less arbitrary decisionism. As the conception of the political community is undermined, professional politicians are confined increasingly to framework articulated by their advisors, and the public is depolitised, responding merely to the satisfaction of privatized and subjectively recognized needs. But Habermas stresses on the capacity of human communication to foster a more reasonable society. So, he believes that through deliberative argumentation and reflection, people can resolve issues and reach agreement. He also reemphasizes that the need to reproduce a kind of public sphere through communicative action in his later conception. Unlike his early notion of bourgeois public sphere, Habermas now emphasizes on the need to have the public sphere which can help in taking rational political decisions through communicative action.

In fact, in his early notion, he especially discussed the bourgeois public sphere that had existed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Germany, France and

¹⁰ Andrew Edger, *Habermas: key concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.136. And, J. Habermas, 'The Scentification of Politics and Public Opinion' in J. Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

¹¹ David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 264.

Britain. But in his revision, Habermas no more confines his focus on few European countries. He, in fact, talks about universal public sphere. In that sense, he sees the need to reproduce the authentic public sphere because he sees a process of the lifeworld being increasingly colonized by the system. Here, he again sees the public sphere as an extension of the lifeworld and system that of state.¹² In the second volume of *The Theory of the Communicative action*, he introduces a distinction between what he calls the 'lifeworld' and 'system' both of which involve different forms of integration. Habermas sees the 'lifeworld' as based on social integration; in contrast, the 'system' is based on system integration organized through the economy and through juridical administrative steering by the state. The lifeworld presupposes a rationality that is primarily communicative; whereas the system is driven by instrumental rationality. In the conflict between two rationalities of lifeworld and system, communicative reason is threatened by instrumental reason. This danger of system colonization results in distortion of communication and social pathologies.¹³ However, Habermas argue that communicative action in the lifeworld has the capacity to resist colonization by the system.

In what we have discussed so far is that in his early notion, Habermas had conceptualized the public sphere as a mediating milieu between the state authority and the social realm. In his revised version, he stresses on a point that a deliberate process should dominate the political activities. This, in fact, refers to the necessity of communication between participants, and realization of such a communication is

¹² Craig Calhoun, 'introduction' in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p.30.

¹³ Nick Cossly, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p.38.

indispensable in the public sphere. In addition to it, Habermas sees lifeworld as an extension of the early public sphere. He also addresses state mechanism, media, market and economy as part of system. Just as the public sphere is described to be the critical space of the state authority in his early notion, he explicates the tensions and conflicts between the 'lifeworld' and 'system' in his later notion.

Habermasian Public Sphere in the Historical Context:

We have discussed, in the last chapter as to how Habermas has shown a picture of the historical genesis of the public sphere. In his early notion, Habermas traced the development of the public sphere from the ancient Greece to the present day. By assuming the idea that ancient Polis had the root of the public sphere, Habermas next move to the feudal period where there was representative publicity. In that period, king was the only 'public' in his kingdom and people were merely required to watch and to acclaim the sovereign.¹⁴ However, with the development of the bourgeoisie capitalist system, the representative publicity and the structure that surrounded the feudal period was dissolved. The emergence of a capitalist economy in the early modern Europe undermined the old structures. Then new commodities and companies began to develop and merchants began to expand their trading adventures in other countries. So, news played a prominent role in that development. Along with this, modern states also developed. State began to levy taxes and it began to take more and more functions. Habermas argued that this state involvement provided the basis for the critical debate

¹⁴ J.Habermas, The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article in Stephen Eric Bronner, ed., *Critical Theory and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p.137.

among the people. And thus, public sphere originated in that fashion, according to Habermas. In fact, Habermas argued that there were different forms of the public sphere in different phases of its developments. First, he talked about representative publicity which was in the medieval times and where there was no collective political discussion. Then, he said, came the literary public sphere succeeding the representative publicity that for the first time represented a kind of the public sphere where people could critically discuss art and literature. And finally, the political public sphere came after the literary public sphere. The political public sphere represents private people who come together as a public to use their reason critically against the state authority. Thus, Habermas states that in the 17th and 18th centuries Europe, a distinctive type of public sphere began to operate.¹⁵ He also exemplified it by citing few places like coffee houses in England, reading clubs in Germany and salons in France where the critical discussion took place.

Habermas in his further reflection modified some of his early stand on the historical grounding of the public sphere. There are certain reasons that moulded Habermas to relook into the historical context of the public sphere. In fact, Habermas' historical account about his notion of the public sphere is critically questioned by the historians. In fact, historians often accused Habermas of his historical origin of the public sphere to be inadequate. They, in fact, argue that there have been no ample historical evidences to justify the existence of Habermasian public sphere in any periods of Europe. Historians also question as to why Habermas specifically concentrated on three core European countries as his area of study by ignoring other countries. Further, they counter

¹⁵ J.B. Thomson, 'Public Sphere' in H,p Chattopadhyya , S.K. Sarkar , eds., *Global Encyclopedia of Political Science*, vol5 (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2006), p. 1536.

pose the factual basis of many of Habermas's claims like the publishing industry, about economic history and bourgeoisie culture etc. They also express their doubt over the competitive nature of the press media and the publishing industry in the early Europe. Further they question the homogeneous bourgeois culture in Europe as shown by Habermas.

Habermas later expresses that his own attempt was to derive the ideal type of the bourgeoisie public sphere from the historical context of Britain, France and Germany developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁶ Admitting some of the views of historians over the fact that there have been some historical and empirical shortfalls about the genesis of the public sphere, he tries to respond to them. In fact, Habermas has not rejected his viewpoints about the existence of the public sphere in the 18th and 19th century Europe. In order to confirm his historical account of the public sphere, in his later notion, Habermas first examines the case of eighteenth century Germany. He argues that there had emerged a political public sphere in Germany which carried critical debate by the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁷ Though it was small in size initially, with the growth of a general reading public, scholars and urban bourgeois, it had expanded later on. Considerable expansion in the production of books, journals, and papers, increasing numbers of authors, publishers, book sellers, lending libraries, reading rooms and reading societies helped to increase the growing number of readers in Germany. Besides, societies for enlightenment, cultural associations which were based on voluntary membership and which were characterized internally by egalitarian practice of

¹⁶ J. Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere' in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 423.

¹⁷ Ibid.

sociability, free discussion, decision by the majority, etc. did provide the training ground for future societies' norms of political discussions.

About France, Habermas argues that the French Revolution of 1789 has eventually triggered a movement towards the politicization of a public sphere that at first revolved around literature and arts criticisms. In France, a politicization of associational life, the rise of a partisan press, the fight against censorship and for freedom of opinion changed the functions of expanding network of public communication up to the middle of the nineteenth century. He argues that the radical departures of the France Revolution gave intellectuals in more backward societies a new political consciousness. It also instigated intellectuals to set about constituting a national public sphere.¹⁸ And finally, with reference to the Great Britain, Habermas asserts that the process of class formation, urbanization, cultural mobilization, and the emergence of new structures of communications along the lines of those voluntary associations of the popular liberalism was constituted in the nineteenth century Britain. The capitalist development created the structural opposition between private life and public authority. It also supplied the primary actors required for the public sphere as the issues. For Habermas, the protection of the commercial economy impelled the bourgeois class to constitute the public sphere in Britain.

Overall, though Habermas has accepted the fact that there are some historical shortcomings about the origin/genesis of the public sphere, he never rules out the idea of the existence of the public sphere in the 18th and 19th centuries England, Germany and

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 424.

France. Early, he only focused on the existence of the public sphere in the few European countries. But as an empirical reply to some of his critics, he specifically takes up the historical genesis of the public sphere in the late 18th and 19th centuries Germany, France and Britain. In fact, Habermas's strong attempt to reply to some historical arguments put forward by historians against his theory made Habermas reflect further in this respect.

Habermas on Inclusivity and Pluralisation of the Public Sphere:

Habermas clearly said, in his early notion, that potentially all citizens have the equal access to discourse of the public sphere with no one possessing any extra advantage over another. The use of reason in the public sphere was also public because it occurred in public, it is practiced by a public and it is opposed to the actions of public authority. So, the public sphere was a space open to all citizens. However, Nancy Fraser, an eminent feminist in her essay 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' argues that Habermas's idea of the public sphere was never a public.¹⁹ In contrast to what Habermas claims about the disregard of the status and inclusivity of the public sphere, Fraser argues that the bourgeois public sphere discriminated against women and the importance of gender was also neglected in his study. Moreover, Habermas has been criticized for focusing exclusively upon the bourgeoisie publics and thus ignoring the possibilities of the plurality of the public sphere. Feminists also question the reasons as to why Habermas has not mentioned the role of women in any of his three phases of the public sphere

¹⁹ Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,' in c. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p.116.

despite his claim of the public sphere having the potentials to emancipate individuals from all irrational and illogical clutch.

However, Habermas later tries to respond to feminists' critics about the exclusion of the women in the public sphere. In fact, Habermas' reactions to the feminists and other critics have resulted in his further explanation on the role of women in the public sphere and the existence of the plebian public sphere.

In reply to his critics on the question of exclusivity in the public sphere, first, Habermas takes up the feminist argument. In his essay 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere' Habermas has argued that women were, in fact, the part of the reading public. However, Habermas still defends his early position that women were denied equal active participation in the formation of political opinion and will. It was because under the condition of a class society, there was the patriarchal character of the bourgeois society as a whole. Further, he argues that even equality of civil rights attained finally in the twentieth century, yet women did not therewith accomplish the modification of the underprivileged status tied to gender. The exclusion of women has been constitutive for the political public sphere was not merely because of the fact that they had been dominated by the men as matter of contingency, but because its structure and relation to the private sphere has been determined in a gender specific fashion. Unlike the exclusion of underprivileged men, the exclusion of women has structuring significance, Habermas argues.²⁰

²⁰ J. Habermas, 'Further Reflection' in C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 428.

In addition to it, taking critics' views about his exclusive focus on bourgeois public sphere, Habermas has stressed the pluralisation of the public sphere in the every process of its emergence. He said even the plebian public sphere was a variant of the bourgeoisie public sphere because it takes it as a model that remained suppressed in the historical process. He further reasons that under the influence of radical intellectuals and the conditions of modern communication, the traditional culture of the common people brought forth a new political culture with organizational forms and practices of its own. The emergence of plebian public sphere develops the bourgeoisie public sphere's emancipatory potential in a new social context. The exclusion of the culturally and politically mobilized lower strata entails a pluralisation of the public sphere in the process of its emergence.²¹

Thus, in his revised version, Habermas still maintains his early position that women were not part of the formation of the political will and public opinion in the public sphere. Nevertheless, he has not totally ruled out the inclusion of women in the discourse of the public sphere because he remains committed to the view that the bourgeoisie public sphere always carried with its potential for its own self transformation. And while stressing on the pluralisation of the public sphere in the process of its emergence, he pins his much hopes on the new social movements which includes the environmental, antinuclear, peace, feminists, and gay rights movements. It is because, Habermas believes, these new social movements carry normative consciousness of modernity and they have the potential to bring radical reforms rather than revolution.

²¹ Ibid., p. 426.

The Public Sphere and Factors behind Structural Changes:

In his early notion, Habermas has addressed the social and economic factors that brought the structural transformations of the public sphere. He also argues about the increasing stratifications of society and the increasing 'societalisation' of the state which had also led to a kind of 'refeudalisation' of the public sphere.²² In the social front, family was totally separated from the economy and self employment had lost as the result of the state expanding its activities massively. The family, therefore, became the consumer of leisure time and it became the recipient of public assistance. Besides, the literary public sphere has also lost its specific character too and no public opinions of the specific interest groups had taken over the public sphere. Even intellectuals had been replaced by well paid cultural functionaries. Moreover, he argued that the coming of the social welfare has been increasingly intervening the lives of people, assuming their private concerns and interests as its own. And more self interests groups have come to occupy ever greater role within the structure of the public sphere, and public sphere had been infiltrated by a range of private interests. With the blurring of state and society, much of the arguments and activities constitutive of the public sphere now take place within the confines of the state, between professionalized politicians. And most importantly, the press, which was the key institution of the public sphere, has been controlled and commercialized. Thus the mass media began to establish itself as a viable economic market.

²² J.Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article' in Stephen Eric Bronner, ed., *Critical Theory and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p.141.

Thus, in his early notion of the public sphere, Habermas had only exhibited how the public sphere declines due to various socioeconomic factors. In his further reflections, Habermas has become interested in analyzing the repercussions of those complex developments towards the social welfare state and organized capitalism in the western type societies. In particular, he was concerned with the repercussions on the private sphere and the social bases of private autonomy, the structure of the public sphere as well as the composition and behaviour of the public and finally, the legitimation process of mass democracy itself. Therefore, he makes few revisions about the structural transformations of the public sphere in his later notion.

In the first revision, Habermas says that during the early modern bourgeoisie society, the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor as well as the family were deemed to belong to the private sphere. The position and decision making latitude of private owners involved in production constituted the basis for private autonomy. However, the coming of social welfare state had blurred the separate functions of society and state. Thus, the realm of private life was transformed differently for each social stratum in the course of long term tendencies such as urbanization, bureaucratization, the concentration of enterprises and finally, the shift to mass consumption accompanied by ever more leisure time. Individuals lost their private autonomy and they no longer have its social basis in the control over private property. As a result, individuals are compelled to secure their private autonomy through reliance on the status guarantees of a social welfare state. And the relationship of the individual to the state has increasingly become one of client or consumer of services rather than citizen. With this perspective, the

function of a political public sphere is reduced to a sort of adjunct for a legislature whose judgments have been already predetermined.

Habermas made this revision because he believes that there is an increasingly complex development towards the social welfare state or organized capitalism in the western types of societies. He also believes that since early modern period, there has been the gradual ascendancy of capitalist mode of production and the emergence of modern state bureaucracies which in fact result in blurring the separation of the state and society.²³ Habermas terms it 'societalization of state' on one hand, and 'state-ification of the society.' This process in turn results in state taking up interventionist character which give individuals limited political freedom and no share in the political decision making power concentrated in the state. In Habermas' mind, this increasing phenomenon impacts upon individuals' autonomy which they had enjoyed once.

In connection with his early interpretation that state and society integration was one of the main reasons that caused the decline of the public sphere, Habermas in his second revision admits that his earlier arguments is not sufficient. He feels his early arguments insufficient because he admits that his diagnosis of unilinear development from a politically active public sphere to one withdrawn into a bad privacy, from a culture of debating to a culture consuming public is too simplistic. It is because, he gives his reasons, the new intimacy between culture and politics is no less ambiguous and is

²³ J.Habermas, 'Further Reflection' in C. Calhoun, ed., Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 432.

more complex than a mere assimilation of information to entertainment.²⁴ And he was very pessimistic in his early notion about the resisting power and critical potential of a pluralistic mass public. However, he had changed his view on it. He now believes that pluralistic mass public, though they are internally much different, are capable of being critical against the state authority. It also shows Habermas's shift of Eurocentric public sphere to a more cosmopolitan type of the public sphere.

Habermas takes up his further elaboration about the public opinion in his third revision. In his early notion, he had conceptualized two diverging public opinion as a result of the breakdown of the liberal public sphere and a normative aspect of a radical democratic vision. In that, he said that public opinion is of two forms. One is the critical publicity and another one is the manipulative public opinion.²⁵ Critical publicity is what Habermas calls the authentic public sphere as it is based on the genuine public opinion. It existed in its proper form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it was still a central part of the modern democratic state. On the other side, manipulative public opinion is something which is based on manufactured public opinion. By stressing his view on the modern public opinion to be a kind of fiction, Habermas asserts the fact that critical public, in the modern times, surrounded by an uneducated, uncritical mass public. So, he further argues that though public opinion was formed by a political debate and consensus in the bourgeois public sphere, but in the debased public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic, media elites which manage public opinion as a part of system management and social control.

²⁴ Ibid., p.439.

²⁵ J. Habermas, *'Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 236-237.

In his further reflection, he argues that as fictitious construct of constitutional law, public opinion continues to be endowed with the unitariness of a counterfactual entity. He says if one wants to grasp the mode in which the creation of legitimacy has come to operate in mass democracies constituted as social welfare states, one needs to look at the degree in which public opinion is infused with power. He suggests that the degree of its infusion with the power was to be measured by the extent to which the informal, nonpublic opinions are not fed into the circuits of formal, quasi public opinion making by the mass media, or by the degree to which both realms are brought into conflict by means of a critical publicity. Habermas made this revision on public opinion because; he believes that in the capitalist societies have the tendencies to abandon the cultivation of political discussion. And the rational formation of the public opinion is replaced in favour of merely eliciting aggregates of individuals' preferences (for instance, through votes on party manifestoes, or through public surveys and opinion polls). In effect, it is also assumed that what matters is the subjective opinions that individual citizens have separately, and not the possibility that such opinion could be modified or developed through rational debate.²⁶ Individual opinions and expressions of political preferences are merely treated. Beside, Habermas also believes that in capitalist societies, there have emerged a tendency to claim that value judgments, for example in ethics and political philosophy, and judgments about the values, are not susceptible to rational resolution, and so can be only resolved through more or less arbitrary decisions. He terms this process as decisionism. So he opines that any society that takes decisionsim for grated tend to ignore public debate. This is the reason why Habermas in his later notion suggestively argues that the degree of infusion of public opinion with power is supposed

²⁶ Andrew Edger, *Habermas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 37-38.

to be measured by the extent to which informal public opinion are not driven by the formal public opinion making by the media where state influence involve. While expressing his inability to imagine other means of critical publicity in this context, Habermas puts his hope on the potentials of intra-associational public spheres to regenerate it.

Degeneration of the Authentic Political Public Sphere in Late Capitalist Societies:

In his *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, Habermas has charted the gradual development of the public debate of issues which were of political nature, and the need of governments to make themselves rationally accountable to their people. He also expressed his concern about the possibility of public debate being eroded in contemporary societies, as the public is increasingly expected merely to choose between the election manifestos of the two or more competing political parties with no opportunity to debate more fundamental issues, or indeed for public debate and scrutiny to feed into the election process. The mere fact that a party has won the election according to the existing rules seems sufficient to guarantee it (and the political system as a whole) legitimacy.²⁷ This, for Habermas is not the correct way to acquire legitimacy by the state. In addition to it, in his earlier notion, Habermas could not find a way to ground his hopes for the realization of the public sphere very effectively in his account of the social institutional of advanced or organized capitalism. He was, in fact, pessimistic about his inability to find in advanced capitalists societies an institutional basis for

²⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

effective political public sphere corresponding in character and function to that of early capitalism and state formation.

Habermas responds to the problem of his inability to find a genuine public sphere in advanced capitalism in his later work by giving two reasons. Habermas opines that state intervention effectively prevents a focus on the contradictions of capital as such and thus orients political action away from the bases of potential fundamental transformation and towards the state itself. Welfare state democracy demands that states legitimate themselves by demonstrating that their policies serve the overall interests of their constituents. This is a result not only of state intervention as such but also of the transformation of the public sphere into an arena in which a wide range of social interests vie for state action. Because those interests conflict, states are left to face a crisis in which they are unable simultaneously to produce adequate motivation for work and loyalty to the existing regime. On the other hand, the arrangement of formal democratic institutions and procedures permits administrative decisions to be made largely independent of specific motives of the citizens. This takes place through a legitimization process that elicits generalized motive diffused mass loyalty but avoids participation. This structural alteration of the bourgeoisie public realm provides for application of institutions and procedures that are democratic in form, while the citizenry, in the midst of an objectively political society, enjoy the status of passive citizens.²⁸

²⁸ Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction' in C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p. 30.

Second, by taking into account the discrepancies involving between ‘lifeworld’ and ‘system,’ Habermas argues that advanced capitalist society cannot be conceptualized as a social totality, because it is split into separate realms integrated on different bases. The ‘lifeworld’ is the realm of the personal relationships and communicative action. But to it is counterposed a system which is constituted by way of more impersonal and strategic exchange of money and power within the context of the economy and modern administrative state. This split cannot be overcome, he argues, because there is no immanent logic of capitalism to produce its dialectical transcendence and because large scale modern society would be impossible without such systemic integration; and hopes of doing away with such large scale societal integration are not only romantic but dangerous because reduction in scale can come about only in catastrophic ways. However, he opines that the lifeworld is the locus for basic human values and is undergoing rationalization processes of its own.²⁹

Subsequent to the above mentioned reasons, Habermas proposes a probable means to bring social integration. Communicative action provides an alternative to money and power as a basis for societal integration. He idealizes the directly interpersonal relations of the lifeworld as counterpoint to systemic integration with its dehumanization and reification. He believes, more generally, a radical democratic change in the process of legitimation aims at a new balance between the forces of societal integration so that the social integrative power of solidarity-the communicative force of production- can prevail over the powers of the other two control resources, i.e., money and administrative power, and therewith successfully assert the practically oriented

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

demands of 'lifeworld'. In fact, what possibly prompted Habermas to make these moves is because of the fact that he is seen to have been persuaded more by his account of the degeneration of the public sphere than by his suggestions of its revitalization. He seems to have seen no bases for progress in social institutional as such, either of those of capitalism and civil society or those of state. It is because, Habermas continues to see development of the welfare state capitalism as producing impasses but destroying earlier bases for addressing problems. Further, he seems not to have full faith in the capacity of either the public sphere as such or of socialist transformation of civil society. And this is why Habermas believes in an evolutionary account of human communication capacity.³⁰

Habermas's Model of Radical Democracy and the Public Sphere:

Habermas' reflections on democracy emerged out of his experience of the reconstitution of democratic politics in postwar Germany and amount to a critical appreciation of actually existing democracies. In fact, in his early notion of the public sphere, he was not focusing on democracy and its relation with the public sphere. His focus was on the structural transformation of the public sphere that took place in the liberal bourgeois society, that is, the transformation of the public sphere from a space of rational discussion, debate and consensus to a realm of mass cultural consumption and administration by corporations and dominant elites. However, his book *The structural Transformation the Public Sphere* also draws a lot of attentions because of its possible contribution to the contemporary theory of democracy. Habermas, in fact, said that social welfare states can claim to continue the principles of the liberal constitutional state only

³⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

as long as they seriously try to live up to the mandate of a public spheres that fulfills political functions. Accordingly, it is necessary to demonstrate how it may be possible for the public sphere to set in motion a critical process of public communication through the very organizations that mediates it.³¹ This aspect draws readers towards the possible relation between the public sphere and the contemporary theory of democracy. As mentioned above, Habermas, however, did not address this aspect in his early notion.

Nevertheless, Habermas, in his later thought, asserts that democracy must be seen first and foremost as a process that results when a certain kind of social interaction prevails. Democracy should be seen as a particular way by which citizens make collective and rational decisions-a way that can be made dependent on a consensus arrived at through discussion free from domination.³² But if democracy is about free and open dialogue, where does such discussion take place and under what conditions? Where is the space in which democracy is nurtured? In response to these questions, Habermas says public sphere is the space necessary for the democracy which can ensure citizens' participation in political life with the spirit of cooperation and norm of reciprocity. Seen in this light, Habermas construes that public sphere is the space where citizens participate in reasoned debates about public goods.

Then, if there is a strong connection between the public sphere and democracy according to Habermas, what kind of democracy would be well suited to the structures of the public sphere? To this question, Habermas replies by referring to the idealized

³¹ J. Habermas, *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.232.

³² Peter Kivisto, *key Ideas in Sociology* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2004), p. 76.

distinction between liberal and republican understanding of politics which is also a part of political debate in the United States. Talking about 'liberal model of democracy' which according to him is not conducive for making collective and rational decisions because in this model, politics is essentially a struggle for position that grant access to administrative power. The political process of opinion and will formation in the public sphere and in parliament is shaped by the competition of strategically acting collectives trying to maintain or acquire positions of power. Success is measured by the citizens' approval of persons and programs, as quantified by voters. Their votes have the same structure as the choices of participants in market, and the input of votes and the output of power conform to the same pattern of strategic action. Its focus is not much on the input of a rational political will formation based on the public sphere but on the output of successful administrative accomplishments. Moreover, the democratic process takes place exclusively in the form of compromises between competing interests. Fairness is supposed to be guaranteed by rules of compromises formation that regulate the general and equal rights top vote, the representative composition of parliamentary bodies, their order of business and so on. For in this model, democratic will formation has the exclusive function of legitimating the exercise of political power. In fact, this model defends public autonomy in terms of its capacity to protect private autonomy. Democracy is regarded as an instrument to safeguard only liberties of individuals.³³ And, he takes up 'republican model of democracy' which according to him is also not feasible for arriving at rational decisions because this model is too idealistic in that it makes democratic process dependent on the virtues of citizens devoted to the public weal. For politics is not

³³ J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), p. 247.

concerned in the first place with questions of ethical self understanding. There is an ethical foreshortening of political discourse. Besides, this model tends to render liberty dependent on popular judgments about the best means of achieving collective aims or on the collective commitments contingently embraced by a particular community. According to this view, the citizens' political opinion and will formation forms the medium through which society constitutes itself as a political whole. But, Habermas argues that this understanding of politics is directed against the state because society is centered in the state.³⁴

Habermas then gives his model of democracy which is to be in consonance with the public sphere, that is, 'discursive model of democracy'. He also calls it radical democracy. The discursive democracy, he argues, is founded on the abstract ideal of a self organizing community of free and equal citizens coordinating their collective affairs through their common reasons. Discursive democracy puts public reasoning, generated by the public sphere, at the centre of political justification. For it, democracy is a system of social and political arrangement that institutionally ties the exercise of collective power to free reasoning among equals.³⁵ The central idea Habermas propounds in his democracy is that democratic procedures should produce rational outcomes. In achieving such reasonable results, the two tracks of deliberative politics play distinct roles, which correspond to different stages in an idealized process of problem solving. In the public sphere informal communication provides a close to the ground and unregulated arenas for detecting new problems , bringing them to public view in a non specialized language, and

³⁴ Ibid., p.244.

³⁵ Josua Cohen, 'Reflections on Habermas on Democracy,' Ratio Juris, vol.12 No.4, December, 1999, p. 396.

suggesting ways to address those problems. It is because information is not controlled and communication is unrestricted. Thus, in discursive democracy, the communicative structures of the public sphere constitute a far flung network of sensors that react to the pressure of society wide problems and stimulate influential opinions. It is also founded on a network of associations that specialize in discovering issues relevant for all society, contributing possible solutions to problems, interpreting values and producing good reasons. Besides, formal political process tries to deliberate about proposals from the public sphere. This process also tries to provide possible solution to issues related to politics. Justifying his viewpoints that his model of democracy has the roots of constituting authentic rational discussions through the proper channel of the public sphere, Habermas reemphasizes that in radical democracy people have the final authority and any decisions are collectively taken by considering all the reasonable objective and alternatives solution that are generated by the participants during the deliberation. So, in such conditions, rational outcomes have emerged and there is no question of influentially justified decisions. Further, he opines that through the discussions in the public sphere, the democratic procedure is also institutionalized. For the successful democracy, to have deliberation is so important. It is because, Habermas argues, the virtues of deliberative views are intrinsic and allied closely with its conception of binding collective choice, in particular with the role in that conception of the idea of reasons acceptable to others whose conduct is governed by those choices, and who themselves have reasonable views. By emphasizing the importance of reason acceptable to all citizens, the deliberative view expresses an especially compelling picture of the possible relations among people within a democratic order. Moreover, it also states a forceful idea of political legitimacy for a

democracy. It is again because the deliberative conception offers the idea that decisions about the exercise of state power are collective.³⁶

Certain reasons can be seen behind Habermas's propounding his idea of democracy in connection with the public sphere. From the point of his early notion of the public sphere, it has been discussed that Habermas did not focus on democracy and its relation with the public sphere even though his concept of the public sphere drew a lot of attention because of its possible contribution to the contemporary theory of democracy. In his later thought, Habermas propounds his idea of the public sphere. Habermas argues that democracy should be seen as a particular way by which citizens make collective and rational decisions, in a way that can be made dependent on a consensus arrived at through discussion free from any force or influence. It is because, to Habermas, the present day practices of democracy look as matter of selecting representatives among competing elites through regular elections or simply as a matter of ensuing through such selection.³⁷ And democracy as a form of self rule that requires the legitimate exercise of political power by government has not been practiced. However, Habermas believes that democracy is a matter of the people controlling the state. He argues through public sphere, democratic institutions can be made open to all equal citizens for the rational deliberation. He also believes that democracy and discursive reasoning are contingent upon one another. Democratic discourse through the public sphere develop the autonomy of participants—that is, their capacities to engage in critical examination of self and

³⁶ Ibid., p. 404.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 387.

others, engage in reasoning process, and arrive at judgments they can defend in argument. And it is precisely these capacities and dispositions that democracy needs to work well.³⁸

From the conceptual point of view, Habermas tries to devise his idea of democracy in his later thought. In the process, he finds shortcomings in two of the contemporary models of democracy: liberal and republican models which also mark the fronts in the current debates in the United States. For Habermas, the former neglect the need for a social solidarity obtainable only by a radicalization of public communication process, while the later seek to constitute such solidarity around notions of community that are too thick.³⁹ Therefore, he necessarily propounds his model of democracy. With regard to his theory of democracy, Habermas argues that democratic legitimacy should not be measured not just in terms of law being enacted by a majority, but in terms of the discursive quality of the full process of deliberation leading upto such a result. Discursively healthy process from the most diffused and informal to the most structured and formal are what maintain a sense of validity and solidarity among a constitutional community.⁴⁰ In a deliberative politics, Habermas argues, attention shifts away from the final act of voting and the problems of social choice that accompany it. The aim of the deliberative politics is to provide the transformation of preferences in response to the considered views of others and the filtering of irrational and morally repugnant preferences in ways that are not excessively paternalistic.⁴¹

³⁸ Mark E. Warner, 'The Self in Discursive Democracy' in Stephen K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 172.

³⁹ Stephen K. White, 'Reason, Modernity and Democracy' in Stephen K. white, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995),p. 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

⁴¹ Kenneth Baynes, 'Democracy and the Rechtsstaat' in Stephen K. white, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 215-216.

Conclusion

In the recent years, Habermasian concept of the public sphere has been a focal point in intellectual debates. The public sphere is not only intrinsically a complex concept, but it is bound with a number of other concepts and issues that are hotly contested, concepts such as 'democracy and community' and issues such as the pervasiveness and meaning of the globalization. In the recent times, discussions of the public sphere have turned toward theorizing the existence or possibilities of a global or transnational public sphere. These discussions are premised on the concern that the nation no longer is an adequate organizing expression for the public sphere; that new forms of 'the public' must be accounted for. The rising predominance of the internet and mobile technologies as a means of communication also suggests to many the possibility of developing a transnational public sphere.

This thesis is an attempt to analyze and highlight Habermas's theory of the public sphere and the transformations it has taken during the course of times. In fact, the main focus of this thesis is to explore the transformations in Habermas's notion of the public sphere from his early notion to the later notion and the reasons behind it. For doing it, we need to have a proper understanding of both his early and revised notions of the public sphere and also the reasons that have triggered Habermas to remodel it.

Chapter 1 of this thesis deals with a brief introduction to Habermas's concept of the public sphere, the impacts and controversies it has aroused over the period of time not

only in Germany, but also in the English speaking world since the publication of his book *The Structural Transformations of the Public sphere*. It also deals with how Habermasian conception of the public sphere has come to distinguish itself from other seemingly parallel concepts like ‘public realm’ of Hannah Arendt. Analyzing the influences that Habermas’s model of the public sphere spread over other academic disciplines, this chapter also gives different interpretations emerged from various circles on it. And by giving a glimpse of how contentious it becomes from the beginning, this chapter also briefly introduces his subsequent revisions on the concept of the public sphere. This chapter also guides us to a sketch of the succeeding chapters. Chapter 2 of this thesis tries to capture Habermas’s own early notion of the public sphere in detail. By giving the historical grounding of the genesis of the public sphere starting from the ancient Greece to the present modern day, it shows how public sphere has come a long way taking various forms corresponding to the surrounding socio-economic and political conditions it evolved, especially in Britain , France and Germany. This chapter also discusses the social and institutional structures of the public sphere followed by the detailed accounts of its political functions as well. In the sub section titled ‘theoretical and intellectual foundations of the public sphere’, it has highlighted as to how Habermas has traced and analyzed the theoretical foundations of the public sphere beginning with early 17th century English philosophers to some of the modern liberal thinkers. Moreover, it also discusses the main thrust of Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, that is, the transformations of the social structures and political functions of the public sphere with the ample analysis of the causes asserted by Habermas. This chapter ends with the

question of the public opinion, how Habermas views at it and, finally, a brief comment on Habermas's optimism about the possible reassertion of the public sphere.

Chapter 3 of this thesis is a discussion on Habermas's later notion of the public sphere. This chapter shows how Habermas has redefined some of his early stands on the public sphere. It also discusses how Habermas has tried to link his later concepts and ideas with his early concern of the public sphere even though he discussed them in different contexts. As a sharp reply to some of its critics, this chapter shows, Habermas has refashioned some of his early positions, especially with regard to the historical genesis of the public sphere, on the question of exclusion in the discourse of the public sphere, structural transformations of the public sphere and a few theoretical modifications. Besides, it also reasoned as to why he was not sure of the existence of the authentic public sphere in advanced capitalism. This chapter closes with Habermas's explication of the connection between his theory of the public sphere and democracy. And finally, chapter 4 of this thesis is an attempt to examine a comparative analysis of Habermas's early and later notions of the public sphere. Most importantly, this also tries to explore the possible reasons that might have prompted Habermas to relook into some of his previous standpoints on the public sphere. By showing how Habermas has re fashioned his concept of public sphere in some of his later works, it also discussed the reasons why Habermas has responded to some of its critics especially with regard to his views on the question of the origin of the public sphere, the question of exclusion, the structural transformations of the public sphere, etc. With an analysis about the reasons of Habermas' being pessimistic about the existence of the public sphere in Late Capitalism,

this chapter finally touches upon Habermas' model of democracy and its possible relation with the public sphere.

In the light of the above findings, it can be put forward that Habermas' theory of the public sphere has changed in many respects. It can also be seen that the main argument behind Habermas's was to develop a critique of the category of bourgeois society by showing its internal tensions and the factors that had led to its transformations and partial degeneration; and also by showing the element of truth and emancipatory potential that it contains. It can also be observed that Habermas, in his later works, finds deeper ideas of the public sphere in his presuppositions of the everyday communicative practices structuring the 'lifeworld'. Further, it is noticed that Habermas has revised his account of the infiltration of the public sphere, linking it now with the colonization of the 'lifeworld' by the 'systems' of the state and economy. To this extent, he abandons his totalizing conception of a fusion between state and civil society which characterized his diagnosis of structural transformations in favour of the more differentiated 'system-lifeworld model'. In fact, it is also noticeable that there is a visible and clear connection or link in his thought process.

However, reading and delineating Habermas's theory of the public sphere has not been an easy and straightforward task. Numerous blends of ideas and theoretical concepts drawn from other disciplines like philosophy, sociology, political theory, law etc. besides supplementing his thought not only from the Frankfurt School and western Marxism, but also from the thought Max Webber, Talcot Parson, Niklas Luhmann and so on. And it has

proved to be one of the reasons why there have been several interpretations and besides generating multiple controversies. It is also a fact that Habermas, like other German theorists, propounded his theory of the public sphere keeping in view the needs of Germany of his time. So, any modest attempt to contextualize Habermasian public sphere to every context would not seem to make much sense.

This thesis is not short of its own weaknesses or limitations, although this is an attempt to fulfill its own purpose of research at every possible level. Given the scope and complexities involved, it is not judicious to make a claim that this thesis has completely explored Habermas's theory of the public sphere. Therefore, further areas of study can be pursued. One may initiate other possibilities of the expansion of this area of research. One may try to do research on the relation between the public sphere and culture, media and new social movements etc. One may also do research on the controversies it has generated with regard to various interpretations on the Habermasian public sphere. And in the latest fashion, one can also investigate on the relationship between the public sphere, internet and cyberspace. A study on the influences it has on other disciplines and theories is also required and finally a study on its critical reviews can be done.

To sum up, it can be said that Habermas's theory of the public sphere is not static and it is in the transforming state into various Habermasian concepts. In fact, it is an uphill task to assess the theory of a leading thinker of our time who is still alive, who is rigorously engaging in several academic circles, and whose ideas are constantly transforming.

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