

# Abstract

**Torben Bech Dyrberg**

*State and Civil Society*

*– the Political Constitution of the Social Order*

The problem of the relationship between state and civil society is anticipated by a more fundamental one, namely that of instituting social order and how the subject is integrated in it. This problem has been posed in modernity (from Machiavelli to Marx) as how the growing autonomisation of politics is capable of guaranteeing the cohesiveness of civil society. This has also been discussed as how the particularity of civil society can be (re)united with the universal in order to work towards a rational society. Two major strategies are dealt with: That of Hobbes and Locke, on the one hand, in which civil/political society is contraposed the state of nature, and Hegel and Marx, on the other, who differentiate between civil society and the state. In opposition to the view of the political as being that specific level in society which represents it in its entirety, and is able to speak in its name, it is argued that politics at once both constitutes and threatens social order, and that it is as such located in the impossibility of consummating it. The political is in this sense an empty place located in the antagonisms between hostile forces: where they institute and subvert social relations; where specific interests attempt to present themselves as general ones; and, finally, where power tries to establish itself as authority.

**Jacob Torfing**

*Gramsci and the neo-Gramscians: Towards a Societal*

*Theory of the Primacy of Politics*

The Italian marxist, Antonio Gramsci, is well known for his development of the concept of hegemony. Clearly, the emphasis upon the importance of political as well as moral-intellectual leadership for the organization and transformation of social power relations brings Gramsci's Marxism close to the traditional preoccupation within political science with questions of legitimation and consensus. But if we want to grasp the originality of Gramsci's political theory, we have to work our way through the theoretical problems of Marxism, which Gramsci tried to solve. Thereby it becomes possible, not only to understand Gramsci's deconstructive impact upon the Marxist tradition, but also to take his assertion of the political character of state, economy and civil society still further in arguing for a societal theory, which insists upon the primacy of politics. Such a theory, which involves a reformulation of the very concept of politics, is supported by the central insights provided by recent developments of a so-called neo-Gramscian discourse analysis.

**Uffe Østergård**

*Clientelism as a Possible Form of the Postpolitical Society?*

What are tomorrow's politics going to be like? What happens when traditional mass parties of the working class and Christian democratic type lose their membership? Will the political parties go to disappear and leave the scene to rational decisions by enlightened citizens? Or are we going to witness a return to supposedly older and outdated forms of politics such as patron-client relations? Are we going to live in a democratic society governed by rules according to which »corruption is almost allright«? A possible clientelist scenario is established based on an analysis of the so-called »postpolitical« theories of Jean Baudrillard and Mario Perniola combined with the theories of clientelism in anthropology and political science. The example of the Roman Empire is pre-

sented in some depth and the various strands are drawn together in an analysis of the »Italian paradox«: An industrial or even postindustrial society thriving with an archaic political structure ridden by crises and scandals. It should not work but according to a number of recent analyses it actually does. Is »Democracy, Italian Style« as Joseph LaPalombara has named it a prediction of tomorrow's politics instead of yesterday? And if yes which conclusions are we going to draw?

### **Jörn Loftager**

#### *Public Opinion between State and Civil Society*

There is hardly any disagreement today that public debate and public opinion makes up a fundamental cornerstone of democracy, especially against the background of recent developments in Eastern Europe. At the same time, however, it is not equally clear, what kind of basis – if any at all – the wide-spread confidence in the public opinion has as a basic element in the democratic process. For instance, the cynical diagnosis of post-modernistic writers as well as the cultural-pessimistic views of conservative critics seem to deny any optimism on behalf of the »really existing« public democratic politics. In several respects that kind of understanding seems to be a repetition of Jürgen Habermas' theory of the decay of the public space in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* from 1962. How, then, must the argument of this classic work be evaluated thirty years later? The answer is that both theoretical and practical experiences from the last three decades speak against the picture of decay. The public space is still there. Although tendencies towards technocracy as well as the colonization of the world of politics by entertainment and showbiz cannot and should not be ignored, more important tendencies in the opposite direction have manifested themselves. Rather than disappearing, politics as discourse has come to play a greater and not a smaller role in the political process.

### **Jürgen Habermas**

#### *Morality, Society and Ethics*

The main topic of the interview is Jürgen Habermas' thoughts on morality and ethics, in particular as they have developed since the publication of *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* in 1981. The first part concentrates on the formal, non-substantial concept of morality in the discourse ethics – in particular the delimitation of »justice« as telos or object, and the relation between »justice«, »law« and »care«. The second part deals with a number of questions on the linguistic or universalpragmatic argumentation for the discourse ethics. The focus is on the truth of norms, the status of the ideal speech situation, and the demarcation and separation from democratic procedure. The final part deals mainly with morality and ethics in relation to the concepts of »lifeworld« and »system« in the two-level concept of society in *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* and with the mediation from morality to society and ethics.