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Habermas and the Public Sphere by Craig Calhoun (Book Review)

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Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1992. Pp. x, 498. Cloth, \$45.00.

No living social theorist has worked harder or produced more on behalf of universalism than Jürgen Habermas. Over the years, Habermas has sought to employ (and, in so doing, enriched) a range of philosophies to advance the cause of human enlightenment and emancipation: Kantianism, Marxism, pragmatism, linguistics, moral-developmental psychology, and even legal process formalism have been among the approaches he has tried and continues to try. As one of the world's leading public intellectuals, he has done battle with those who reject the emancipatory quest: whether they be German historians rewriting the past in the name of the nation and its elites or *soi-disant* post-modern radicals for whom particularity and irony are the only guarantors against oppressive rationalist homogenization and erasure.

The present volume, a collection of conference essays, is dedicated to matters raised in one of Habermas's earlier works, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, published in Germany in 1962 but not available in English until 1989. Perhaps ironically, many of the New Left scholars who came of age reading Habermas and whose influence is evident in this volume, have contributed to the rejection/demolition of precisely that public-private distinction on which so much of the bourgeois order—good and bad alike—has rested. Similarly, Habermas's quest to establish the conditions for reasoned universalist critical debate has been ridiculed by pomo intellectuals, quite a few of whom made their debuts with mea culpas for erstwhile French Stalinism, and whose influences also appear in this collection.

The contributors to this volume differ over what is alive and what is dead in Habermas's model of the public sphere. Is it possible to create conditions for effective participation in sovereign self-governing democratic communities? Can differences of race, gender, and class (the new holy trinity) be *aufgehoben* to create the undistorted intersubjective communication underlying emancipation? Or, does the value of "difference" lie precisely in its resistance to incorporation and effacement in some national-territorial public of abstractly equal citizens—the achievement of which has been the strategy of the last two generations of social democrats?

The fifteen philosophers, anthropologists, social theorists, historians, and Germanists represented here vary greatly both in their positions (and assessments of prior historical instances). On the whole, they are less than persuaded by Habermas's historical account and less than optimistic about the future of the secular and scientific subjectivity that emerged from the public sphere created by an ascendant bourgeoisie. Contributions like those of Fraser, Eley, Postone, and Baker make this abundantly clear. The emancipation of individuals and creation of competent (not imagined) communities of citizens

independent of class and status remains a wish to be realized. But, since even those furthest left among the contributors are distinctly post-Soviet and post-Second International, they reject the progression from French Revolution to Socialist/Soviet revolution that once enabled the respectful admiration for the bourgeois public sphere (and disdain for popular and subcultures) that clearly characterized Lukács and was evident still in the analyses of Horkheimer and Adorno.

Even though they disagree in their assessments of both the far and the recent bourgeois pasts, Habermas and his interlocutors here are generally at one in believing that the end-of-the-century-millennium public sphere is in sad shape. For all their deference to Habermas, they generally reject the intellectual and political project that follows from *Structural Transformation*. Such a decision may be premature.

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Gordon Smith, William E. Paterson, Peter H. Merkl, and Stephen Padgett, eds. *Developments in German Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992. Pp. 390. Cloth, \$55.00 Paper, \$21.95.

This book is a direct replacement for *Developments in West German Politics*, published in 1989 by Smith, Paterson, and Merkl. Aside from the editors themselves, some of the foremost authorities on German politics have contributed individual essays, of which there are a total of eighteen, including an appendix documenting the legal context of German unification. The book also contains a useful guide to further reading and a very extensive bibliography.

As the title implies, it is the aim of this book to provide an up-to-date account of important issues and trends in the political affairs of the Federal Republic. By far the most important of these developments, of course, is the unification of the two German states in 1990. Not surprisingly, therefore, the principal theme running through this volume involves the impact of unification on the political structure and behavior, the party system, public policy, and other aspects of German government and society.

Unfortunately, this emphasis on the impact of unification in the end produces a rather one-dimensional analysis. Two examples: the chapter on environmental policy devotes only two pages to environmental politics before unification, but fourteen pages to the same issue after 1990. Similarly, the essay on the "New German Economy" contains a very valuable synopsis of the difficulties brought on by the economic union, but it tells us very little about the enormous structural problems, which, in the context of increased global competition, will threaten German prosperity into the next century. Most of the