

The crisis of public opinion according to Jurgen Habermas

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Abstract:

The crisis of public opinion has been discussed many times by a philosopher, who has made together all the other philosophers thoughts about this topic. He is the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. He makes a deep analysis of Hegel, Marx, Mill and Toucqueville thinking without avoiding the history of public opinion development.

Although Habermas distances from his mentors Adorno and Horckheimer thought, often we see their influence on his analysis. Habermas is placed very well on the line of those researchers, historians and sociologists, who have the merit, from '20s of '900s, to highlight the extraordinary character of public opinion in our time.

To understand the public opinion crisis I will show in this article what the reasons of this crisis according to Habermas are and who has replaces which.

During this article will be treated the culture industry subject and the newspapers and editorial role on the public opinion crisis. The issue consist on the fact that where the public opinion, in the past, could be characterized as a process of spontaneous, autonomous and

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free (at the intellectual elites of the '700s and '800s), with the advent of the mass society, the impact of communication tools becomes increasingly longer relevant and deep, the autonomy of public opinion coming from outside becomes a fact clear and undisputable.

Key words: public opinion, crisis, industry culture, philosophical thoughts, media

INTRODUCTION:

Primarily from my perspective, I should emphasize the originality of Jurgen Habermas point of view regarding the public opinion. If we consider his formation origin and evaluate the point of achieving of his trajectory, we see that he was able to assimilate influences and different models, summing up all in a unified education. In fact, under the mentor's traces of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, he had assimilated Hegel and Marx lessons and in particular Lucás lessons.

However the harsh reflection on this issue, conform the critical elements derivative in the broad sense hegelian-marxian and in general dialectic, does not remain a slavish repetition of the ideas of the others. If we take into consideration all the arch reflection of Habermas, it is to be evaluated his capacity to not exclude from his reflections a series of leading critical elements, instead of the tradition of liberal-democratic thought.

In my opinion here is where is seen the originality of his flows and at the same time, the fallout from Frankfurt models, although in a continuum perspective.

Actually we see that in various topics analysis arising from its main book, *History and critic of public opinion*, Habermas in many cases distances from the models and thoughts styles attributed to his mentors and neomarxism. In fact the bourgeois public opinion in less illuminated moments of its history – Habermas recognizes this fact – was host of minorities interests onto majorities. But while there is no doubt

that it was a spokesman for the civil and political ideals, that otherwise wouldn't find expression.

In fact, not rarely, during the modern era, the public opinion has represented the point of view of a civil society that on behalf of its ideals of civil, religious-ethical and its economic interests didn't hesitate to come out against the creators of the power of the State. According to Habermas, in these freedom roots we find immortal value of modern and contemporary public opinion.

THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC OPINION

One of merit of historical reconstruction that Habermas offers regarding the public opinion stays in the fact that we could find a radical opinion of the bourgeois public opinion, starting not only by Marx. Even again beyond a liberal context, not oriented by the social sense, but oriented in the conservator sense, such as the Hegel, in the work *Elements of philosophy rights* – we find one of the most severe analyses of the public opinion that is characterized by its grey or dialectical character – said Habermas².

It is precisely in the paragraph 317 of *Elements of the philosophy rights* what Habermas talks about³. Hegel noted that for the public opinion, we can state what the ancient Latin slogan says *Vox Populi, vox Dei*, which means the voice of the people is the voice of the Gods; he noted in a phrase of Orlando Furioso by Ludovico Ariosto that we need to talk about the vulgar intellectual as more as it is little understood⁴. This is the specific contradiction in which public opinion moves. From one side, Hegel noted, “The public opinion carries within the eternal principle of justice, the real content and results of the

² Cini, L., *Società civile e democrazia radicale*, (Florence, Florence University Press, 2012), pg. 36 and on.

³ Hegel, G.W.F., *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2012),pg. 250 and on.

⁴ Ivi, pg. 251.

constitution, legislation in the form of the *healthy human intellectual*”⁵.

But on the other hand, precisely the public opinion as such, is the sum of individual views which withdraw each other and tend to decrease the critical level of taking into consideration, where we find prejudice, impulsive, violent and not rational tendencies.

Hegel noted that there is an essential basis in the public opinion that is the reflection of the immediate intellectual form – even though limited, but meaningful of these eternal principles of justice, rights, etc. But from the other hand, same as the shield that carries within the essence, the core, we see how each day the public opinion fails, giving immature judgments, so it is not at the proper height in which writers of the democratic theory will like to see it – said Hegel – inalienable foundation of the State⁶.

So, for Hegel, the natural contradiction that is not resolved dialectical, the public opinion finds itself. This explains citing one more time Hegel, the great German philosopher of Restoration– said Habermas:

“Public opinion, therefore deserves to be as much respected as despised — despised for its concrete expression and for the concrete consciousness, it expresses, respected for its essential basis, a basis which only glimmers more or less dimly in that concrete expression.”⁷.

The discussion of Hegel is very clear. Valuating the public opinion, which reflects the immediate form – in a critic naïve way, but not because of this not authentic – the consciousness of the goods, rights and the eternal values of human. Whereas it desires to condemn because phenomenizing and manifesting the individual views, it lost its consciousness and became the voice of the passions, instincts in which its main

⁵ Ivi, pg. 250.

⁶ Ampola, M.,-Corchia,L., *Dialogo su Jürgen Habermas: le trasformazioni della modernità*, (Pisa, ETS, 2010), pg. 77 and on.

⁷ Hegel, G.W.F, *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto*, cited, pg. 252.

consciousness get lost and fall in 2012, ded. According to Habermas, the views of Hegel and Marx for public opinion, as far as can be different from incompatible theories, they are both in sync after attacking public opinion – which until that moment has appeared as indisputable in the European spirit – from hostile views (one a revolutionary, that of Marx; the other conservator, that of Hegel). One tended to show the crucial border of the bourgeois public opinion in being its spokesman of the goods and economic interests (the case of Marx). While Hegel, an alien toward the considerations of the economic field, tended to see in the public opinion the possibility of fading of the main consciousness of the good spokesman of the irrational and unjust interests (here, it is Hegel the conservator in politics, the one that has assisted in the degeneration of the French Revolution in Terror and after in the liberal opposition toward Restoration). However, as Habermas notes, the importance of one view and the other is in the fact that they allow accepting what in the post-Enlightenment and romantic periods are the first critics toward the public opinion, which until that time seemed unstinting and firm⁸. So, if the public opinion to the Enlightenment optimism seemed uncorrupted, in the romantic era and in general in the 800s, the public opinion started to be an object of a strict, skeptical vision, which started to show how within it, we could learn even the opposite of those principles of the rights, justice, the universality of the interests that it defends⁹.

Now the importance of reading Habermas is in the fact that he shows how the liberal throne is not compact in considering that public opinion was, always and everywhere, in the foundation of the right, so of a constitutional State and prone to protect the individual rights. Benjamin Constant, but also Jeremy Bentham in another contest from other opponents of the Marx and Hegel theories, started to think that the public

⁸ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, (Milano, Mondadori, 2010), pg.196 and on.

⁹ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cited, pg. 72 and on.

opinion is not a synonym of incorruption and critic perfection, as the first liberal generation thought¹⁰. It is a view that the great political writer of 800s, the liberal and democratic Alexis de Tocqueville, was reflected in the work *Democracy in America*, where the doubts and reserves now shown in the reflection of Constant and Bentham fundamentally analysed, even through the dialog that Tocqueville had with the English political philosopher and writer, John Stuart Mill ¹¹.

Against the economic concept of the public opinion border presented by Marx, and also against the ethic-metaphysical concept, the thought of Hegel, these authors, the first Tocqueville, characterized for a *sociological* kind of reading of those that will be the borders of the public opinion.

In fact, according to Tocqueville, the corruption of public opinion did not come more from the authorities of the government than from civil society itself, through radiant conformity of the masses and despotism of the majority¹². From here, according to the thought of Habermas, we have another view through which during 800s, but especially in 900s, the public opinion will analyze in its shadow and in its unresolved cases. From this view, the backbone of critical investigation of the public opinion that was brought into existence with Tocqueville (and through the dialog of the later with the English political philosopher and writer, John Stuart Mill) it is of a great importance. Tocqueville and even Mill, had merits on representing how the despotism of the majority, in the modern democratic society – especially they had as a landmark the United State of America,- is a despotism not at all special.

It is not about a military obligation imposed by the public authorities: so it does not have to do with the traditional despotism where the minority has the power to oppress the majority. On the contrary, in this case the oppression is a

¹⁰ Ivi, pg. 161 and on.

¹¹ Matteucci,N., *Opinione pubblica*, in Bobbio N.-Matteucci N.-Pasquino G., *Dizionario di politica*, (Torino, UTET, 2000), pg. 638.

¹² Ibidem.

psychological type, it has to do with a kind of obligation without material exercise of the force, and that has the power to reduce in minority and powerless conditions the individuals that for one reason or another have characteristics that are different from the taste, the life style and the dominant thought.

So, we have a kind of despotism that is configured – Matteucci wrote, and its analysis corresponds with that of Habermas – in the same way of a “psychological oppression”¹³. We could ask what the role of public opinion is regarding this despotism as new specie. It has to do with a main role, which could shed light over a distorting way and the crisis of its own concept of public opinion. We saw in Marx how the concept of public opinion is opposed to a severe critic, but leading from a perspective of dialectic materialist perspective.

It is complete different the historic and philosophic attitude of the authors such as Tocqueville and Mill, who gave up the economic reflections that were very dear to Marx, to adhere more the sociological character reflections. Many have become solidarity with each other; instinctively they know each other and as such are prone to criticize them, which for one reason or another, seemed “different”. In this way, we are assisting in a drastic decline of the concept of the public opinion, which has started to take shape in the golden era of the liberal revolutions. Then, only Habermas noted, that the public opinion was the spokesman of the opponents, the ideal wing of theirs who were fighting the power imposed from authoritarianism.¹⁴ While now, in the embryonic democratic societies of the 800s, the public opinion risk to quit its critical function that it had from the beginning of its history. Through the press, not necessarily the critic view is the one that born: often is the opposite – explained Tocqueville – is the majority view of the conformists that have the first place¹⁵. It has no doubt that these reflections are taken by liberal or liberal

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cited, pg. 193 and on.

¹⁵ Ivi, pg.191 and on.

democratic authors such as Tocqueville and Mill stimulating the speculative and historiographical reflection of Habermas¹⁶. It is interesting, in fact, the way how Habermas deepens these groups of theses. For the one that has a solid Marxist education, the valuation of the economic process in its materiality and objectivity is simply essential. To him, it seems that Marx is offering a *bonus* in comparison with the above mentioned authors such as Tocqueville and Mill, in whom the valuation is simple from the sociological view. If the public opinion will oppose to the rank from the uncritical and conformist dominant view in the majority, could not be from the outside reasons. It is the contrary; it should have a capital interest that in a way is affirmed and take away the energy to the critic¹⁷. But at the same time, Habermas is far away from the devaluation of the detailed and profound critical suggestion that derives from the reflection of the authors such as Mill and Tocqueville. He finds in them a psycho-sociological interest and penetration that surely is missing in Marx. Here, we find again a fact of the extraordinary critic character of Marxism of Habermas, as it has been noted clearly from the beginning of my paper, but also is confirmed by the authors that has done research on this topic¹⁸. Free from any determinate temptation, Habermas appears here ready to connect the Marxism with the critical thoughts that derive from the other thought tradition. We could say that Marxism is a lump, opened to different experiments that derive from another field¹⁹.

In Habermas, we find the acute reflection of Matteucci, who has observed how in the reflection of Mill and Tocqueville, the traditional theme of despotism receives a new configuration, which turns back into a systematic psychological pressure that the society opposes not only on the body – as in

¹⁶ Magatti, M., *Per la società civile. La centralità del principio sociale nelle società avanzate*, (Milano, Franco Angeli, 1997), pg. 181 and on.

¹⁷ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cited, pg. 171 and on.

¹⁸ Corchia, L., *La teoria della socializzazione di Jürgen Habermas: un'applicazione ontogenetica delle scienze ricostruttive*, (Pisa, ETS, 2012), pg. 111 and on.

¹⁹ Price, V., *L'opinione pubblica*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993), pg. 171, and also Koselleck, R., *Critica illuminista e crisi della società borghese*, (Bologna, Il Mulino 1972).

the past – but also in the soul of the humans, condemning – Matteucci wrote – with a “dramatic solution between the conformism and marginalism”. There is a social control, more than a political one, that prevents the free development of the individual personality and education of a public with reasonable and rational individuals”²⁰. This short reflection on the foundations and the conclusions of the latest historiographical reflection and speculations of Habermas, allow us to clarify the reason of its interest toward Tocqueville and Mill. In fact, these authors appear in the eyes of Habermas, as authors that even though in a liberal kind of contest, have identified the borders that the liberal society imposes to criticize, the free development of the individual. So, in its view, they appear in a special way for the fact that they are liberal but in a way they put out the limits of liberalism. In an indirect way, this means that they could bring a kind of confirmation of the Marxist reflection and precisely, the way how Marx knew to identify the limits of the capital – bourgeois society and public opinion as the spokesman of the minority, that within itself, keeps the organized power and the economic capital²¹. Now the force of Marxism – even though a revised and clear Marxism – it will that allow us for further research toward the illuminati intuitions of the authors such as Mill and Tocqueville.

The capitalist and bourgeois society, regardless of the repeatedly declaration on the universality of the freedom, equality, etc., at the end, manifested a society which the opponents, individualities that do not take us in the real conformism methods, marginalized and simply disappear. At the suggestion that these reflections professed in Habermas, we could say that the Frankfurt School analysis has its influence – firstly those of the authors such as Adorno and Horkheimer - who were his mentors. It is known the fact that the School of Frankfurt pointed out the prohibitive character of the freedom

²⁰ Matteucci, N., *Opinione pubblica*, cited, pg. 638-639.

²¹ Apel, K.O., 1992, *Etica della comunicazione*, Milano, Jaca Book, chapter II.

of the western capitalist society²². So, for Habermas, through the effective union of the critic Marxism and the political reflection of the freedom, it comes out a series of arguments against corruption and the destruction of the liberal society. In fact, from the complex exploration of Habermas, after the affirmation of 600-700s, it resulted that the public opinion had lost its original force, from the critic and corrective instrument of the governing force, it was turned into a kind of sounding board to amplify the power²³. Here, the public opinion of Habermas becomes very harsh. During 900s, but even in the new millennium – when Habermas has been more active – he shows how the public opinion has suffered a considerable decline, and we should turn its reasons into possible resources and instruments to bring it up again.

ECLIPSE OF THE REASONS AND THE PUBLIC OPINION

Until now, we have analyzed the thematics treated by Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. However, if we go through some of the other Habermas' works about public opinion on the rise of the bourgeois – capitalist society and its crisis, it is always very important. Since the mid of the 60s – when Horkheimer gave up teaching and Habermas replaced him in Frankfurt – this theme in its intellectual horizon has had a special importance. In fact, it is well known that the work of Habermas *Knowledge and Human Interests* was inspired by the first course that Habermas taught at Frankfurt in 1965, titled *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (translated Knowledge and Human interests). Here, Habermas elaborates a historic-philosophic theory of configured modernism as “*a pathology of modernity and that analyses the way in which their values and forms of representation,*

²² Horkheimer, M., - Adorno, T., *Dialettica dell'Illuminismo*, (Torino, Einaudi, 2010).

²³ Habermas, J., *Il discorso filosofico della modernità*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003), pg. 71 and on.

fabricated by the dominant class, generalized and become actual criteria for the public sphere"²⁴.

So, it has to do with the topic that we had the possibility to highlight in the previous pages. The sphere of public opinion that in 70s was idealized as unconditional inspired by the simple critical goals and in the research of the good in each sector of the social interaction, in fact, appeared determined – Habermas likes to use the colonized term –by the interest on all the economic and capitalist types. In particular, the dominant class using the communication means of mass and of journalism as a sounding board, it seems able to create the values of society in its complexity, humiliating the public opinion and taking out its critical function that belonged since the beginning²⁵. During the 60s, but also in the later works, the theme of public opinion continues to be the center of Habermas' attention. In this discussion, we could mention the work *The Theory of Communicative Action*, in which the crisis of the rationality of our time that Habermas sees fallen unilaterally, allow to be leaded by the loss of legitimacy, emptiness of the meaning from which the contemporary public opinion has suffered. ²⁶ In this work, it appears a series of important themes, which are treated more in the work *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Firstly, the public sphere is a historical category: and here it is accepted an agonistic motive against the sociological, structural-functionalist theory, that in fact treated in details, as a kind of non historical category, divided by the concrete conditions of the time and life²⁷. Habermas has no doubts that when he says that during the XIX century, in the time frame from the period of Cromwell in England (mid of 600s) until 700s or until the end of the French Revolution and until the Napoleon era, we have assisted in a golden era for the public opinion. In fact, the public opinion

²⁴ Grassi,C., *Sociologia della comunicazione*, (Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2002), pg. 153.

²⁵ Habermas,J., *Conoscenza e interesse*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2012).

²⁶ Habermas,J., *Critica della ragione funzionalistica*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997)

²⁷ Ivi, pg. 63 and on.

is structured, articulated and provided with its means which are the newspapers. But they are not the only one. It became the mean of propaganda and spread the highlighted ideas of the philosophers. So, it seemed like a miracle. The clear ideas, revised critical concepts returned into the principles of the institutional interaction. The same monarchs, the same principles rejecting the absolutism of an era, could not do anything else apart from inviting philosophers, to dialog with them and listen to their advice. Precisely in the golden era of the public opinion, Voltaire is transferred in the Prussian court of Frederick II. And in the same epoch, the Russia, that until that moment was closed toward Europe, with Caterina II opened toward a new rationalism and invited to the court, San Petersburg, D'Alembert, Diderot, until the most extreme movement to possess the private library of Voltaire (that even nowadays it is in Russia)²⁸. Not only these, but the monarchs wanted to do philosophy, but not in an abstract way, but to argue in a critical way, not interested about its best assets that they could give to the political and social institutions of their kingdom. The philosopher king called himself the Frederick II of Prussia, but also other monarchs such as Duke of Leopold of Toscana were proud of this epithet²⁹. Even though, as we saw, after the outbreak of the rationality of 700s, after the confirmation of the Napoleonic era, during 800s something happened: from different opponents such as Marx and Tocqueville (the perceptions of which were very different) that through the different means to report the essence of corruption and the humility that the public opinion has suffered. It is the despotism of the majority (theorized by Mill and Tocqueville) with the predominance of the production means capital of the minority that brings humiliation and resolves the social economic interests of the majority. It has made possible that the public opinion lost its original function, the critical and leading ones, to become the accelerator of the artificial interest

²⁸ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cited., pg.76 and on.

²⁹ Ivi, pg. 169 and on.

of those that have the power. It is precisely here, in the critical neomarxism of Habermas, in the synthesis of the ideas that comes from Marx, Tocqueville and Mill, filtered through the lectures of Adorno and Horkheimer, and in general, the School of Frankfurt – that has explained according to Habermas – the corruption in which the public opinion was found during the 900s, after its initial glow. In fact, the crisis of the public opinion is the same with eclipse of rationality that Habermas, based on Adorno and Horkheimer and *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, has always repeated. Thus, I see these aspects in analytical ways, which are configured in the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, but also in other works of Habermas³⁰. Firstly, it is a constant belief of Habermas that in the critic of public opinion a true eclipse of rationality is consumed. It is the concept of rationality that through maturity of the Industrial Revolution, increasingly wider the dominance of scientism and the technology, configured in a narrow, necessary and practice meaning or as Habermas likes to express functionalist (meaning that the reason is not interested theoretical, thus critical, but is more practical, is widespread and in this way, put aside the axiologic horizon within which every realizations of purposes could be installed)³¹. So, the rationality according a concept that began to dominate during the 800s showed its legitimacy in the moment when the practical view appeared useful or untouchable in the technical valuation for the increase of welfare³². The reason becomes inevitable, a calculative reason, even when the science and philosophy is applied. It is difficult not to understand these highlights of Habermas, the influence of authors such as Adorno and Horkheimer, whose in many works – mainly in the work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – have highlighted the

³⁰ It is of a special importance the work *Conoscenza e interesse*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2012 and *Critica della ragione funzionalistica*, cited, but even *Dialettica della razionalizzazione* Milano, Unicopli, 1995 (because it is distinguished for a series of dynamics that Habermas goes through in the thoughts of Adorno and Horkheimer).

³¹ Habermas, J., *Critica della ragione funzionalistica*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2012) pg.171

³² Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cited, pg.161 and on.

pragmatic and calculative character that the reason, in its form, even in those that at the first view are not interested and are theoretically clear, had started to be present in our era³³. Habermas without doubt follows the steps of his mentors even in this topic. Rationality becomes more and more specified, divided in sectors, until that point that it appeared fragmentized in a plurality of specializations that often are detached from each other. This means enacting the decline of the great ideas of the rationality that through rationalism and Enlightenment has illustrated the first centuries of the modern era.³⁴ So, in pragmatic rationality, functionalist directed toward maximization of the necessity: this calculative reason that securely has been one of the engines of the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the mature capitalism; together with it all the bourgeois society had enacted its crisis and limits.

To be legitimate, any rational project in the last minute should be reduced in a calculation of the commercial kind. This means losing mainly in the rational dialog in the search of the universality of the opinions³⁵. Regarding the latest, it is discussed for a kind of Habermasian *Neocantism*³⁶, that an opinion should be publicly worth should be subjected with success – says Habermas - “a universality test”³⁷.

Securely, the universality for which Habermas talks has not to do with the metaphysic or dogmatic: it has not to do with universality the fact that the entire subject is obliged to be subjected. Vice versa, here we are in the presence of a universality of rights and ideals, or of an opinion which aspires to be worth from a plurality of subjects, surpassing the individuals interest³⁸. Habermas explains what has affected the crisis of public opinion, which were used to see its glow until the Enlightenment era. It has to do precisely with the conditions

³³ Horkheimer, M., - Adorno, T., *Dialettica dell'Illuminismo*, cited.

³⁴ Habermas, J., *Il discorso filosofico della modernità*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003)

³⁵ Habermas, J., *Etica del discorso*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009), pg.49 and on.

³⁶ Abignente, A., *Legittimazione, discorso, diritto. Il proceduralismo di Jürgen Habermas*, (Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica, 2003)pg. 69 and on.

³⁷ Habermas, J., *Etica del discorso*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009),pg.77 and on.

³⁸ Ivi, pg.91 and on.

of universalism, which we find lesser in the concept of public opinion. From the 800s, these conditions or assumption of universalism, which are now known less, were the foundations of the public opinion. So, beginning from the 800s, we notes that gradually these ideals of an Enlightenment thinker and writer with his public are seen less, which form Kant still represent an inevitable priority³⁹. In this crisis of the dialog reason – replaced by a functionalist or “commercial” reason – it is reflected even the Adornian thematic and after Habermasian of the “culture industry”⁴⁰. The theme of “cultural industry” noted by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but also in other works is treated with pleasure even from Habermas, in which we find one of the continuity elements of the Habermas thought with those of his Frankfurt mentors⁴¹. Does it exist then through the functionalist, calculative and commercial dimension, a sector where the reason could express itself in our era? It does but it is a non authentic sector, where the authentic soul and the critic deep are missing: precisely the one so-called “cultural industry”. The theme of "cultural industry" notes by Adorno and Horkheimer at *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but also in other works, treated with pleasure by Habermas, in which we find an element of continuity of Habermas opinion with his mentors from Frankfurt⁴². Beyond the functionalist, calculative and trade dimension, is there a sector where the reason can express itself? Yes, there is but it is an inauthentic sector that doesn't have the authentic spirit

³⁹ Matteucci, N., *Opinione pubblica*, cited, pg.639.

⁴⁰ These ideas are more clearly expressed in Agazzi, E., *Dopo Francoforte, dopo la metafisica: Jürgen Habermas, Karl Otto Apel, Hans Georg Gadamer*, (Napoli, Liguori, 1990), but also in the interventions of the pieces of Alfieri, L., -De Simone, A., *Per Habermas: seminario 2009: interventi su intersoggettività e norma*, (Perugia, Morlacchi, 2009)

⁴¹ Very meaningful is also the testimony that in some cases has an autobiographic character by Habermas himself in *Profili politico-filosofici: Heidegger, Gehlen, Jaspers, Bloch, Adorno, Löwith, Arendt, Benjamin, Scholem, Gadamer, Horkheimer, Marcuse*, cited, but also in Habermas, *Dialettica della razionalizzazione*, cited.

⁴² Very significant is the testimony-that for some cases has the character of an intellectual autobiography by Habermas in *Profili politico-filosofici: Heidegger, Gehlen, Jaspers, Bloch, Adorno, Löwith, Arendt, Benjamin, Scholem, Gadamer, Horkheimer, Marcuse*, cit., but also Habermas, *Dialettica della razionalizzazione*, cited.

and deep criticism: precisely that which is so-called "cultural industry". According to Habermas, until we stand on the science and technology plan, we face that reason which waives any universality horizon and reduced exactly on the products creation and manufacturing, of individual horizon. Besides this technical dimension, simply calculative, stands precisely the cultural industry. Through an incentive analysis, developed in parallel in other works, Habermas stops especially to those which are bodies that give voice to cultural industry and that together with the culture education mass have decreed the end of critical rationality⁴³. Spaces where public opinion, in the past, was created and had given himself a rational approach, simply disappeared.

The conditions for the quiet confront, not interested, inspired by the civil cultural ideal, today are not available. Once upon a time were the clubs, cafes, salons, where could be found any trace, until the first half of '900, near the exponents of the so-called culture of high bourgeois⁴⁴. But there is nothing left. The solons were replaced by the television. The newspapers and the press in general fell to the level of enterprises directed by speculative criteria; the parties and associations, ruled by an oligarchic spirit; generally those that might have been – like in a society enlarged and completely renovated – the new spaces of public opinion, don't fully exercise their duty because they are directed and administered by organizations in power and not by self criteria manageable⁴⁵.

CONCLUSION

Public debates in TV are discussions that have a purpose, don't intend to deepen rationally or they are determined in their development. What looks like an integrated and not interested news, is manipulated and not true. Further the parties that

⁴³ Habermas, J., *Dopo l'utopia*, (Venezia, Marsilio, 1992)

⁴⁴ Habermas, J., *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, cit., pg. 69 and on.

⁴⁵ Habermas, J., *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*, (Il Mulino, 1986) pg.1020 and on.

previously had the vision of the society, an ideology of the human and the world, today are closer to the societies in order to profit and consolidation of the power.

These are topics that Habermas summarizes in a phrase “colonization of vital world” and of course for him merge in one with the crisis of public opinion where we all are suffering the consequences.

The phrase “colonization” has a recreational energy: it is a kind of "imperialist" acting that some social subsystems operate to the detriment of other subsystems, becoming part of the global social system, but they should have the right to an autonomous procedural development.

Is on the capitalist and economic interest, together with the political ambitions of the groups who operate colonization mechanisms, where the most visible symptom, according to Habermas, is the crisis of public opinion. The need to re-establish the conditions of a public opinion to be really public and not to be useful for only a minority.

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