

IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: HABERMAS' DISCUSSION ON POST-SECULARISM

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Diterima: 02 Februari 2026 Direvisi: 21 Februari 2026 Disetujui: 14 Maret 2026 Tersedia Daring: 30 April 2026 Keywords: <i>Religious; Identity; Discourse, Post-Secularism; Epistemic Status; Public Space.</i>	Religion-based identity politics remains a major issue for Indonesian nationalism. One such issue is the legitimacy of religious groups' involvement in public policy in Indonesia. In this context, Jürgen Habermas' discourse theory and its connection to his views on post-secularism are highly relevant to examine. For Habermas, the neutrality of the public sphere does not mean a space devoid of religion. In the name of democracy, religion should be placed on an equal footing with other political opinions and aspirations. Functional differentiation in modern society, which encourages the individualisation of religion, does not necessarily imply the disappearance of the influence and relevance of religion in the public sphere. However, of course, the involvement of religion in the public sphere still has limitations, namely that the particular religious language of religion must first be "translated" into a language that is acceptable to the public, namely memiliki 'epistemic status' that is acceptable to other citizens. This parallelism is referred to as a 'post-secular' society, where every citizen with religious ties has the same right to communicate with one another.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During Suharto's New Order regime, the Islamic political movement underwent extraordinary depoliticization (Zarkasyi, 2008). However, after Suharto's fall in 1998, there was a resurgence of Islamic political parties and the emergence of radical Islamic groups (Zarkasyi, 2008). This change was due to the fact that, following the 1998 reforms, Indonesia transitioned from a centralized system to a decentralized one, granting greater autonomy to communities and even local governments to manage their own affairs. This paved the way for the emergence of political Islamic movements, the implementation of Sharia-based local regulations in various regions, and the establishment of Islamic-based political parties (Abbas & Murziqin, 2021). This period lasted until the end of 2014, during which religious identity served as a means of mobilizing the masses in electoral politics (Buehler, 2014; Bush, 2008).

This peak in Islamic mass mobilization took place between 2014 and 2019, during which there was a series of large-scale mass protests in Jakarta demanding the ouster of Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (*Ahok*) on charges of blasphemy. The largest protest took place on December 2, 2016, known as *Aksi 212*, which drew tens of thousands

of people to the National Monument. It was led by the FPI and the GNPf-MUI coalition, which brought together various Islamic organizations. This was the most well-known phase of Islamic populism in Indonesia.(Aidulsyah & Mizuno, 2020; Jati, 2024). The peak of this Islamic mass mobilization took place between 2014 and 2019, during which there was a series of large-scale mass protests in Jakarta demanding the ouster of Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (*Ahok*) on charges of blasphemy. The largest protest took place on December 2, 2016, known as *Aksi 212*, which drew tens of thousands of people to the National Monument. It was led by the FPI and the GNPf-MUI coalition, which brought together various Islamic organizations. This was the most well-known phase of Islamic populism in Indonesia.(Hadiz, 2018).

Given this background, a study of Islamic populism in Indonesia during the 2000–2024 period is important for understanding how religious identity is used in democratic politics, as well as its implications for the quality of democracy and social cohesion in Indonesia.

The dynamics of the relationship between religion and the public sphere have once again become a central issue in contemporary socio-political discourse. Rather than declining, as assumed by the classical secularization thesis, religion has instead demonstrated resilience and even a resurgence in various public arenas, ranging from electoral politics and policy debates to moral discourse in the media. This phenomenon marks what many thinkers refer to as the *post-secular* condition—that is, a situation in which religion remains present and influential in modern society, even though that society has undergone institutional secular differentiation.

In this post-secular context, the central issue no longer revolves around the question of whether religion should be present in the public sphere, but rather how religious identities and normative claims are negotiated within a pluralistic, democratic, and rational public sphere. The presence of religion in the public sphere often creates tension between the demands of public rationality, the principle of citizen inclusivity, and the expression of particular religious identities. This tension becomes even more complex in multicultural societies, where diverse religious traditions coexist with liberal-democratic values.

In this context, the author wishes to discuss the position of religion in the public sphere from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas' discourse theory. Born in 1929, Habermas is a contemporary philosopher who has recently devoted much of his efforts to addressing contemporary socio-political issues within the tradition of critical theory. Although he is an important contributor to Critical Theory, for many years he has also combined Marxian theory with many other theoretical inputs and produced a series of highly distinctive theoretical ideas (Ritzer, 2003).

2. METHOD

This article employs a philosophical-critical analytical method using a library research approach. The discussion focuses on tracing, reconstructing, and critically evaluating the concept of post-secular public sphere in Jürgen Habermas's philosophical discourse, particularly in relation to the negotiation of religious identity in the democratic

public sphere. Using a philosophical-critical method, this study places greater emphasis on literature review and normative-theoretical analysis. Rather than conducting empirical investigations or sociological discourse analysis, this study is situated within the tradition of philosophical inquiry, focusing on conceptual clarification, argumentative reconstruction, and critical evaluation of Jürgen Habermas's discourse theory regarding religion, the public sphere, and post-secularism.

Public Space and Discourse Theory

By focusing the study on religion in the public sphere, it is only natural that Jürgen Habermas' perspective on the public sphere should be the starting point for this paper. Habermas's thoughts on the public sphere are presented in his work, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, published in 1962. (Habermas, 1989) In summary, it can be said that there are two main themes discussed by Habermas in the book, namely, first, his analysis of the origins of the bourgeois public sphere; second, the structural changes in the public sphere in the modern era, marked by the rise of capitalism, the culture industry, and the increasingly powerful position of economic organisations and large business groups in public life. In the second analysis, large economic organisations and government institutions took over the public sphere, while citizens were content to be consumers of goods, services, political administration and public entertainment. (Habermas, 1989)

The book explains that the development of capitalism in the 18th century, particularly in Britain, led to the emergence of public space among the bourgeoisie, which then declined in the mid-to-late 20th century. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere emerged as a result of the main characteristics of capitalist society in the 18th century, where the wealthy and educated struggled to free themselves from the dependence on the church and state that so dominated public life.

Beginning with the support of the bourgeoisie for the literary world—theatre, art, coffee shops, and novels—a space for criticism separate from traditional power has emerged. According to Habermas, this is where conversation turns into criticism and beautiful words turn into arguments. On the other hand, the rapid development of capitalism outside the state has given rise to demands for parliamentary reform to expand their representation in obtaining policies on market economic expansion. Included in these demands was the demand for freedom of the press so that political life could be monitored by a wider public. The result of these developments was the formation of the bourgeois public sphere in the mid-19th century.

Here, the public sphere includes information providers and political debate forums such as newspapers, journals, political discussion institutions such as parliaments, political clubs, literary clubs, public associations, minum houses and coffee shops, town halls, and other public places where socio-political discussions take place. In these places, freedom of speech, assembly, and participation in political debate are upheld. Publicity that occurs in the public sphere inherently contains a critical force against decision-making processes that are not public in nature.

Therefore, the "public sphere" here is not always synonymous with public buildings, but Habermas more associates the public sphere with conditions that enable citizens (from the private sphere) to come together and articulate their interests to form a common

opinion discursively and will. The bourgeois public sphere is understood as a space where private individuals gather as a public. (*"...the sphere of private people come together as a public;..."*). (Habermas, 1989) Public space arises when private individuals come together as a public and articulate the needs of society to the state. (*"... made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state..."*). (Habermas, 1989)

The conditions referred to by Habermas are: first, all citizens who are able to communicate have the same rights to participate in the public sphere. Second, all participants have equal opportunities to reach a fair consensus and treat their communication partners as autonomous and responsible individuals, rather than as tools to be used for specific interests. *Thirdly*, there are common rules that protect the communication process from pressure and discrimination, so that better arguments form the basis of the discussion process. (Habermas, 1989) In other words, in the public sphere, the conditions (values) that are created are inclusive, egalitarian, and free from pressure. (Hardiman, 2009b, p. 44) Thus, the public sphere allows citizens to freely express their opinions, because it creates conditions that enable citizens to use the power of argument.

The public sphere was then understood as an autonomous space distinct from the state and the market. It is characterised by its autonomy because it does not depend on administrative or capitalist economic power, but rather on its own resources. This means that the public sphere originates from the public interest, by the public interest, and for the public interest itself, without interference from certain parties, such as individuals or groups, or from the government. Thus, the essence of public space is democratic values that prioritise the common (public) interest. It is these maximum democratic values that form the core of a political public space.

Furthermore, talking about the public sphere in a political sense means how public discussions formed from individual interests are linked to state power. The political public sphere is a public space that bridges the gap between public interests and the state, where the public organises itself as the owner of public opinion based on democratic principles. (Habermas, 1989) This (political) public space is essentially a democratic space for the public to convey their aspirations to the government as the entity responsible for administering governance (power).

The public sphere that emerged around the early 18th and 19th centuries is described as a bridge connecting the personal interests and individuals in family life with the demands and interests of social and public life that arose in the context of state power. The mediation of public space also encompasses the contradictions often described between the interests of the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the interests of citizens on the other. The purpose of mediating public space is to overcome differences in various interests and personal opinions, and ultimately to find common interests and reach a mutual consensus.

In this context, Habermas understands the political public sphere as a condition of communication that can foster solidarity, uniting a society in its resistance against other sources, namely money (the capitalist market) and power (state bureaucracy), to achieve

balance. The political public sphere as conditions of communication is not an institution nor an organisation with specific membership and binding rules. From the term itself, one can recognise its informal and inclusive nature, because the term 'public sphere' or in German — *Öffentlichkeit* means "a state that is accessible to all people" and refers to the open and inclusive nature of this space.

According to Habermas, "the public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information from various perspectives ...; the flow of information, in the process, is filtered and condensed so that it coagulates into nodes of public opinion specific to the topic". (Habermas & Rehg, 1992, p. 360) The hope is that public opinion will influence the decision-making process within established political and legal structures. The capacity of the public sphere to provide independent solutions is limited, but it can be used to monitor how the political system deals with issues that arise within society. (Habermas & Rehg, 1992)

What is monumental in the history of the emergence of public space is that public space marks the dawn of an era in history when individuals and groups in society can shape public opinion, respond directly to anything that concerns their interests, while trying to influence political practices. However, with the development of capitalism, public organs that were originally places for public discussion gradually began to change their function. The press no longer voiced public opinion and political struggles, but became a space for advertising. Commercialisation, the growth of large corporations, increased state intervention for economic stability, and the spread of the influence of science and instrumental reason in social life exacerbated this process of depoliticisation. The structural transformation that Habermas emphasises lies at this point. The public sphere has changed from a space for rational discussion, debate, and consensus to a realm of mass consumption colonised by corporations and the dominant elite.

This structural transformation occurred during the transition from market capitalism and liberal democracy in the 19th century to state capitalism and monopoly, which took the form of European fascism and welfare state liberalism in the United States in the 1930s. This period marked a new chapter in history, characterised by the mixing of political and economic authority, manipulative cultural industries, and an increasingly undemocratic and unfree society. In Habermas's terminology, this process is called the "refeudalisation" of the public sphere. The refeudalisation of the public sphere resulted in public opinion no longer being formed through debate and consensus, but rather by media, political, and economic elites. Habermas argues that public opinion, which was originally an expression of concern for the public interest, has since the late 19th century become an expression of the personal interests of these elites. The political arena, which was originally a place for seeking rational consensus, has become a battleground for power among various interest groups.

Even though fundamental changes have taken place, Habermas still holds out hope. Habermas offers an agenda for reviving the public sphere by initiating a process of critical public communication through organisations that perform the function of public communication. Reviving the public sphere means reviving the public or critical nature of organisations operating in the public sphere. For Habermas, the positive impact of the

bourgeois public sphere, apart from the tendency towards refeudalisation, is the expansion of fundamental rights within the state-run social security system and the openness of information to the public from state institutions. At the very least, for Habermas, amid commercialisation and state intervention, some aspects of the public sphere can still be upheld.

As is well known, Habermas continues to seek new ways to break through this impasse. He turned to language (the linguistic turn) to find a philosophical basis for a new critical theory, through his most important work, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, published in 1981. (Habermas, 1984) According to Habermas, the phenomenon of language and communication between humans contains norms for criticising all forms of domination and oppression and for fighting for democratisation. This means that when two or more people speak in a discourse, they always try to understand each other first before moving on to other matters. The desire to understand and be understood is inherent in the act of speaking, and this applies to everyone, everywhere. Habermas illustrates this linguistic phenomenon as 'ideal speech situations'. (Habermas & McCarthy, 1987)

Normative measures, such as those found in the conditions for ideal speech, are then used to construct new ideas about the ideal public sphere. The rationality of a public sphere should not rely solely on assumptions about the public interest, which is automatically represented by the bourgeois public sphere, but rather on the ethics of universal discourse. Consensus is achieved when there is an intersubjective mutual understanding about something that is argumentatively better. The ideal conditions for discourse require that everyone's equal right to participate in the discussion is guaranteed and free from all forms of domination, both internal in nature concerning individual behaviour and external in the form of systematically distorted communication. Only when these conditions are met can the consensus reached be called rational.

The discursive process in the formation of opinion and will in the public sphere will become increasingly important when placed within the framework of political and legal structures. It is in this context that Habermas applies discursive ethics in the political sphere through his work, *Faktizität und Geltung* (Habermas & Rehg, 1992) di tahun 1996. This work shows how Habermas constructs an argument for a public sphere in relation to political and legal structures. This discourse theory was actually introduced by Jürgen Habermas in the 1980s under the name "discourse ethics", which was then applied in the political sphere in the 1990s as "discourse theory". " If we explore this theory further, we find that discourse theory is a further development of Habermas's Critical Theory, which has been reconstructed from Communication Theory into the fields of law and politics. (Habermas, 1984; Habermas & McCarthy, 1987; Hardiman, 2008)

This theory is a manifestation of the strategy of changing Kant's philosophy of subject paradigm towards the paradigm of intersubjectivity as Habermas's attempt to overcome the "dead end" in establishing universal validity claims in the political public sphere. The Kantian subject philosophy paradigm, which Habermas refers to as subject philosophy (*Subjektsphilosophie*), is considered no longer suitable for today's society, which is characterised by the plurality of lifestyles and value orientations. Within this paradigm, according to Habermas, there is a certain understanding of subjectivity, namely

that the subject recognises and masters its object monologically.(Hardiman, 2008) According to him, this type of philosophy is characteristic of modern philosophy, which makes self-awareness (cogito) the ultimate reality.(Habermas & McCarthy, 1984, p. 519)

Philosophically, the shift from Kant's epistemological paradigm of the subject to Habermas's epistemological paradigm of intersubjectivity (communication) affirms that subjectivity is no longer understood as an isolated subject characterised by monological cognition. Instead, the paradigm of intersubjectivity understands subjectivity and knowledge as the result of intersubjective communication processes. Knowledge is the result of consensus with other subjects.

As is well known, Immanuel Kant divided the function of reason into pure reason, which is the ability of human intellect to acquire theoretical knowledge, and practical reason, which is the ability of human intellect to know the good and bad of an action. Therefore, the explicit in Kant's philosophy of autonomous subjects can become the basis for monological considerations of morality and law. As a result, Kant indirectly removes the position of the subject, particularly practical reason, from the context of the community and its social characteristics.

Habermas considers Kant's monological reflection on the subject to trap people into absolutism and totalitarianism because the results of this monological reflection are regarded as absolute. For this reason, many contemporary philosophers, including Jürgen Habermas, engage in what is called "the decentring of the subject" in their thinking.

In contemporary political philosophy, as seen in the debates between John Rawls and Karl-Otto Apel with Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael J. Sandel, the anthropology of Kant's model is termed the *unencumbered self*, that is, a self or individual detached from the concrete cultural context represented in liberal thinking. Subjects who think this way view society purely instrumentally, as a means to fulfil their rational interests.

As an alternative to understanding reason through the model of subjective philosophy, Habermas then defines reason as "questioning itself." This means that what is most important in reason is not the rationality of the world order designed by a subject in a monological manner, but rather the procedures that are recognised intersubjectively. It is through this procedure that the products of rational processes obtain their validity. This means that rationality cannot be achieved by a single subject alone. Similarly, the rationality of a rational claim can only be achieved communicatively, that is, through mutual understanding with other subjects. Likewise, a rational claim is unreasonable if it is made under duress. Therefore, in order to give a claim its rational nature, it is very important to have a procedure that ensures that people can make claims without coercion and free from power. Intersubjective examination mechanisms and intersubjectively accepted procedures are formal requirements that contain procedural reason. This means that a person can only abstract their individual knowledge into a valid epistemic status when they are in the process of communicating with other people.(Hardiman, 2009a, p. 186)

Habermas argues that a person's statement or action is rational to the extent that the reasons for it can be explained or recognised intersubjectively. Explanation (*Erklärung*) and justification (*Begründung*) are fundamental characteristics of rational validity claims.

Not all forms of communication possess these characteristics. In general, we can distinguish between two forms of communication: "naive" communication and "reflective" communication. In our daily lives, we use naive communication. In this type of communication, we do not specifically question the reasons or clarity of our statements. We do not question the validity claims we make through our statements; rather, we simply assume their truth. However, when our conversation about something touches on the interests of others, or even when what has been mutually agreed upon becomes problematic, our routine acceptance is disrupted in a certain sense, and the consensus we have taken for granted begins to be disturbed. This is where we need to interpret, affirm or justify our claims. This form of communication, whose object is the validity claims that are being questioned again, is called "discourse" by Habermas. (Habermas & McCarthy, 1987) Discourse is a form of reflection (*Reflexionsform*) of communicative action. This means that discourse is a continuation of communicative action using other means, namely argumentative means. Thus, the object of discourse is claims of validity that are open to criticism. This means whether a claim of validity can be universalised (*universalisierbar*) or is context-specific (*kontextgebunden*).

In the context of this paradigm of intersubjectivity (communication), Habermas builds his philosophical foundation on the concept of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt/ lifeworld*). So what is the relationship between the lifeworld and the paradigm of intersubjectivity (communication)? The lifeworld is a concept originally used by Alfred Schutz to refer to everyday life. Schutz mainly associated it with intersubjective relationships in the lifeworld, but Habermas was more interested in seeing these intersubjective relationships with interpersonal *communication* in the lifeworld. In this context, Habermas defines the "lifeworld" as "the intuitively present, in this sense familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, i.e. valid or invalid". (Habermas & McCarthy, 1987) Here, the process of opinion formation is not a theoretical construct separate from the lifeworld, but rather refers to concrete communication practices within the lifeworld. Therefore, discourse participants are not *unencumbered selves* as in Kant's model. (Hardiman, 2009a)

Ideally, such communication should be free and open, without pressure. For Habermas, free and open communication means a rationalisation in the lifeworld. This means that those who interact with others will be rationally motivated to accept free and open communication, leading to mutual understanding. Rational methods will be used to reach *consensus*. Consensus will emerge and be understood to have been achieved when the better argument prevails. This means that people debate issues until a consensus is reached based solely on the *best arguments* (Hardiman, 2008).

Thus, the world of life appears as a "network of cooperation made possible through communication. It is this cooperation that enables the integrity and stability of a society. This is because communicative action ultimately aims at consensus. This consensus can be considered rational if the participants in communication can express their opinions and attitudes towards these claims of validity freely and without coercion. But how can consensus be achieved? Habermas says that the success of communication depends on the

listener's ability to "accept or reject" these claims of validity. This means that these claims of validity must be simultaneously true, accurate and honest, so that the listener can take a stance.

What is interesting in Habermas' thinking is that human actions or social interactions within a society do not occur arbitrarily but are essentially rational in nature. The rational nature of these actions is evident and this, for Habermas, contains a lesson in the fact that actors orient themselves towards achieving mutual understanding. The word understanding, *Verständigung*, has a spectrum of meanings for Habermas. It can mean understanding (*Verstehen*) a linguistic expression. It can also mean agreement (*Einverständnis*) or consensus (*Konsens*). The rational nature of actions refers to this last meaning. Actions between humans are rational because they are oriented towards consensus. In other words, actions that lead to consensus are communicative actions. (Hardiman, 2008)

Furthermore, in relation to the context of ideal conditions for discourse as discussed previously, Habermas highlights the colonisation of the lifeworld (*lifeworld*) by the system. The lifeworld, according to Habermas, is the arena where everyday events take place and communicative actions occupy the most central place. Meanwhile, the system is a mechanism for regulating the actions of individuals, giving functional meaning to actions, and ensuring that the system continues to work as intended.

Habermas uses both concepts "lifeworld" and "system" together and refers to them as the "two-level concept" (*Zweistufiges Konzept*). Simply put, these two concepts can be understood as follows: When viewed from the perspective of the participants (*Teilnehmerperspektive*), society appears as a "network of cooperation made possible through communication." It is this cooperation that enables the integrity and stability of a society. The social consequences seen from this perspective are produced jointly by social actors. However, when viewed from the perspective of observers (*Beobachterperspektive*), society presents itself as a "functional network of a series of actions." These final actions seem to occur mechanically, that is, they are not intended by the actors. This is where society emerges as a system. In modern societies, systems are particularly evident in the economy and state power. (Habermas & McCarthy, 1987)

In the context of the colonisation of the lifeworld (*lifeworld*) by this system, the system has its origins in the lifeworld, but it develops within its own distinct structure, such as in the family, legal system, state, and economy. As these structures are built, they grow larger and become separated from the lifeworld. Like the living world, systems and their structures undergo progressive rationalisation. However, rationalisation and systems have a different form from the rationalisation of the living world. Rationalisation here means that systems and their structures grow and develop differently, are complex, and are capable of being self-sufficient. Most importantly, the power of systems and structures grows, with their ability to control and direct what happens in the living world. This reality has a number of unpleasant implications for the living world, the most important of which is that systems colonise (enter into) the living world. (Ritzer, 2003) The colonisation of lifeworlds takes many forms, but none is more important than the fact that the system imposes itself on communication within lifeworlds, limiting actors' ability to argue through

and achieve consensus within their lifeworlds. Habermas refers to this phenomenon as the "disconnection (Entkoppelung) between the system and the lifeworld".

For Habermas, the solution to this problem lies in rationalisation, each in its own way, both in the lifeworld and in the system. The system and its structures need to be accompanied by the growth of greater diversity and complexity, while the lifeworld needs to be elevated so that free communication becomes possible and better arguments are allowed to prevail. Full rationalisation of both will allow the lifeworld and the system to realign themselves in such a way that each enhances the other. For Habermas, the dialectical relationship between the lifeworld and the system, which leads to the formation of rational consensus, is an important ontis-normative perspective for reading social reality. (Ritzer, 2003)

It is in this context that Habermas coined the term "deliberative democracy" for modern society today. Democracy is deliberative if "the process of providing reasons for a public policy candidate is first tested through public consultation or public discourse." (Hardiman, 2004) Therefore, "deliberative democracy means that it is not the sum of individual wills nor the general will that constitutes the source of legitimacy, but rather the process of political decision-making that is always open to deliberative and discursive revision." The most important implication is the manner in which decisions are reached. In this view, Habermas actually wants to discuss a principle, namely proceduralism: legitimacy does not lie in the number of votes, but in the way the decision is made. In proceduralism, the methods must be fair, for which continuous discourse is necessary.

Thus, despite the structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas remains optimistic about the future of the public sphere for democracy as long as it remains within the massive discourse formation of its citizens.

Public Space and Religious Identity

The question is whether the public sphere envisioned by Habermas provides ample opportunity for the differences that characterise a multicultural society, while at the same time being capable of producing a consensus. More specifically, how does religion fit into the public sphere?

In this context, Habermas's thoughts on the issue of religion in the public sphere have not yet appeared explicitly in *Faktizität und Geltung*. Habermas first discussed this issue in a public debate with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) on 28 January 2004 at the invitation of *Katholische Akademie* of Bayern München. Three years later, the Munich School of Philosophy invited Habermas to discuss similar topics with professors and students on campus. (Bosetti & Susanto, 2009; Habermas et al., 2006; Kleden & Sunarko, 2010) In his latest debates and discussions, Habermas remained rooted in the German liberal tradition pioneered by Kant, but he also developed his own version that was not as strict as liberalism.

The connection between religion and the public sphere that caught Habermas' attention was when liberalism tended to demand strict state neutrality towards religious groups. This liberal attitude can certainly be considered unfair by religious groups in a complex society because it suppresses religious arguments from the outset. Therefore, on

the one hand, Habermas accepts the view that citizens' motivation to participate in the formation of political opinion and aspirations in a democratic constitutional state is drawn from all specific ethical-political ways of life, namely from particular religious beliefs, cannot be suppressed from the outset as liberalism does. According to Habermas, we are now in a 'post-secular' society (*postsäkulare Gesellschaft*) in which believers have the same right to communication as secular citizens, so religious reasons can also be part of the public use of reason (*öffentlicher Gebrauch der Vernunft*).

Post-secularism is a concept developed by Jürgen Habermas in response to the crisis of modern secular society. In a public lecture at the Nexus Institute of Tilburg University on 15 March 2007, (Habermas, n.d.) Habermas asserts that functional differentiation, which encourages the individualisation of religion, does not necessarily imply the loss of religion's influence and relevance in the political arena, in society's culture, or in everyday behaviour. Based on his experience in Europe, Habermas identifies three phenomena that demonstrate the vitality of religion to this day: (1) Mass media reports that shape the general perception that current global conflicts are rooted in religious conflicts, particularly after the spectacular attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 and the rise of terrorist acts often disguised as Islam. This phenomenon erodes the belief among secularists that religion is destined to disappear with the progress of modernisation. (2) Religion not only influences the course of global events, but also takes on the role of a "community of interpretation" in discussions of important issues in the public sphere. Religious language today colours public debates, ranging from the legalisation of abortion, voluntary euthanasia, biogenetic research that raises bioethical debates, to same-sex marriage, animal protection and global climate change. As a result, religious discourse has a stronger influence on the formation of public opinion and will, even in highly secular societies. Finally, (3) the tortuous transformation process currently underway in Europe to become a post-colonial immigrant society, with the influx of labour and other immigrants who bring with them their traditions, cultures and beliefs. The current debate on multiculturalism and the renewed discussion on tolerance show how difficult and tortuous this transformation process is. (Habermas, 2010)

Habermas' latest view actually marks an attempt to reformulate the theory of secularisation in a more cautious and nuanced manner, far from the arrogant scientism and certainty about the end of religion. It also increasingly emphasises the beginning of the decline of the arrogance that was continuously repeated as a dictum in classical scientific theories, at least until the 1970s, that religion was nothing more than a remnant of primitive humanity, a childish illusion à la Freudian psychoanalysis, or institutionalised ignorance and superstition that would eventually disappear due to the progress of science and the Enlightenment. (Hadden, 1989, pp. 3–26)

Habermas sees two erroneous models in the understanding of secularisation, namely the *Verdrängungsmodell* and the *Enteignungsmodell*. The first model sees religion in modern society as disappearing and its position being replaced by science and the ideology of modern progress, while the second model sees secularisation and modernity as enemies of religion because they have given rise to moral evils. According to Habermas, both models contradict the reality of a "post-secular" society, where religion and science can coexist.

Habermas's view seems to reinforce José Casanova's thinking, in his magnum opus on public religion in the modern world, as well as in his debate with Talal Asad, who asks us to be more cautious in our view of secularisation theory. For Casanova, (Casanova, 2006) The theory of secularisation should not be regarded as a single entity, but rather as consisting of three dimensions, each of which must be treated separately: (1) secularisation as the differentiation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms; (2) secularisation as a decline in religious beliefs and practices; and (3) secularisation as a process of marginalising religion into the private sphere. Casanova believes that dimension (1) is the core element of the theory of secularisation, an attempt to understand the process of modernisation of society as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of secular spheres -- particularly the modern state, the capitalist market economy, and modern science -- and the religious sphere, as well as the differentiation and specialisation of religion within its own sphere. The other two dimensions, although often perceived as a result of the process of secular differentiation, according to Casanova, cannot be maintained as a general proposition, either empirically or normatively. "The assumption that the role of religion tends to decline in line with the progress of modernisation," said Casanova, "is an idea that has been 'proven false as a general empirical proposition', and can be traced back to the Enlightenment's critique of religion." (Casanova, 2006)

There is an important note regarding the term "post-secular", which is often misunderstood. The prefix "post" should not be interpreted as a further stage, as if post-secular society is a society that has transcended secularism (or is no longer secular), but rather a society in which the process of secularisation is still ongoing and even more profound. What shifts with the addition of "post" here is, as Habermas emphasises, a change in awareness and acceptance of the fact that religious communities and all their traditions still survive and even play an active role in a secularised society. Post-secularism emphasises that modern and secular societies must continuously take into account the survival of religions. Furthermore, religions will also continue to actively participate in and determine the direction of development in various fields of social life. The emergence of these religions is expected to become agents of meaning that provide ethical orientation for modern humans.

However, on the other hand, Habermas remains committed to the liberal tradition that believes in 'the common sense of humanity' as the basis for the separation of church and state and the basis for modern state power that no longer depends on religious legitimacy. Therefore, the state should not ban religious arguments from the public sphere from the outset, but in terms of deliberative procedures, the state must also maintain its impartiality towards competing religious groups in society.

Habermas then imposed several normative restrictions on religious groups, secular groups, the state, and religious majorities. First, he demanded the 'translation' of the contributions of religious groups and their particular religious language into a language that is acceptable to the public because in deliberations in parliament, ministries, the judiciary and the bureaucracy, only 'secular reasons' can be taken into account. Therefore, religious beliefs must be explained rationally, so that they have an 'epistemic status' that is

acceptable to other citizens, whether they are of other religions or secular.(Habermas et al., 2006)

Habermas emphasises the need for an 'epistemic attitude' among religious citizens to enable public deliberation, which is not to dialogue about the contents of exclusive religious doctrines, but rather to take the inclusive rational content of religious faith that touches on issues of universal social justice. This attitude must not only be possessed by citizens of different religions. Even if there is still a homogeneous society with one religion, according to Habermas, its members will understand themselves not as a 'congregation' or 'flock', but as 'citizens' if they want to live together politically in this world. In other words, Habermas still demands that the religious arguments put forward by religious groups must pass the test of universalisation ("U").

According to Habermas, religious visions and language can play a role and contribute to political processes and decision-making, *only if* those visions and language have been translated into the aforementioned universal language and justified by purely rational considerations. This translation process takes place in the public sphere, which Habermas sees as functioning as a filter between the religious sphere and the state, through a process of joint deliberation, and not within or even as part of the attractive political forces in parliament, the judiciary, or in the government bureaucracy.(Habermas et al., 2006)

Secondly, Haberman also directs the same demands towards secular citizens or those of other faiths. Deliberative democracy values mutual learning in order to understand the position of one's discourse partners. Just as religious exclusivism can arrogantly view secular citizens as 'lost souls', secular citizens can also be arrogant if they judge religion to be irrational.

According to Habermas, what is true is that in a post-secular society, religion and secularism are equal components of values that must be communicated in order to achieve intersubjective mutual understanding. At this mature stage of his thinking, Habermas seems to reject the assumption of linear development towards modernity, in which religion will gradually be abandoned by a society that is becoming modern. Participants in deliberation are not institutionalised in the public sphere, but rather depart from the *Lebenswelt* in which 'religious voices' are formed.

Thirdly, the state's own attitude in deliberations is like a balanced scale. Here, Habermas warns of the danger of misunderstanding that can arise if the principle of neutrality that should be implemented by the state is simply equated with secularism, so that the principle of neutrality actually conceals a bias towards secularism. The state's neutrality towards worldviews that constitute equal ethical freedoms for every citizen cannot be equated with the political universalisation of a secular worldview. In the face of the principle of neutrality, secularism is also a substantive worldview among other worldviews, so the state must also be neutral towards it, just as it is towards religion.

Fourth, in the context of a country with a certain religious majority, not only the arguments of religious minorities, but also the contributions of secular groups should not be ignored. Majority domination becomes oppression when a majority argues on religious grounds - in the process of forming opinions and political aspirations of secular minorities or other religious minorities -- rejects the discursive implementation of justifications made

by these minorities. In other words, according to Habermas, the majority group in a democracy must not ignore or silence the potential truth of arguments originating from minority groups, because democratic procedures derive their legitimacy not only from their inclusiveness, but also from their 'deliberative character'. If not all parties accept the majority decision at present, openness to revision by the minority through public deliberation after the decision will ensure the rationality of the decision in the long term.

Of course, in real politics, the four normative limitations above will not immediately resolve the issue of religion in the public sphere. Religion is not merely a social attribute, such as membership in a party or professional group, which can be quickly replaced with another social attribute, but rather a 'comprehensive worldview'. Pious people with religious beliefs that lean towards totality and integrity often find it difficult to draw concepts of justice outside of their religious beliefs, to the extent that they cannot distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. specific religious beliefs, so that they view other people and religions only from their fundamental but limited perspective.

Such difficulties when they harden and become political attitudes form the background of the politics of identity. Habermas himself seems to doubt the ability of religious citizens to think outside the box or beyond their worldview. He acknowledges the existence of a hard core that is difficult to penetrate in the deepest human experiences, whether in religion or art, so for him religious expressions are only allowed in the social sphere, but clearly not in the political sphere. The role of religion in fostering social solidarity and motivating believers to obey the constitution is not rejected, but that role would be excessive if it turned into a political aspiration to replace the constitution and legal system with sacred law. This caution is certainly justified. What must be avoided here is nothing less than the politicisation of religion, which will not only harm pluralism, but will also damage the autonomy of religion itself from political interests.

With that, Habermas wants to emphasise the urgent need today to engage in a process of "dual learning" that involves both secular knowledge and religious traditions. (Habermas et al., 2006) On the one hand, this presents three layers of epistemological challenges for religious communities: *First*, religious consciousness must face cognitive dissonance arising from encounters with other religions and beliefs, including those who do not have any religious beliefs at all. *Second*, religious communities must also learn to adjust to the authority of science as the holder of secular knowledge. Thirdly, religious communities must also agree on the basic premises of a constitutional state based on non-religious morality (Habermas, 2006).

On the other hand, secularists are asked to respect the existence and role of religious people sincerely, not as "an endangered species that must be protected from extinction", but as equal citizens whose rights must be protected, respected and fulfilled just like those of other citizens. Without such sincere respect, it will be difficult to demand the political participation of religious groups in maintaining the constitutional democratic order and may even exacerbate the Kulturkampf within civil society (Habermas, 2006).

4. Conclusion

By examining the above description, from the perspective of Discourse theory, it can be emphasised that the neutrality of public space does not mean a space void of religion. In

the name of democracy, the position of religion should be placed on an equal footing with other political opinions and aspirations. The Functional differentiation in modern society, which encourages the individualisation of religion, does not necessarily imply the disappearance of the influence and relevance of religion in the public sphere. However, of course, the involvement of religion in the public sphere still has limitations, namely that the particular religious language of religion must first be "translated" into a language that is acceptable to the public, namely owner 'status epistemic' that is acceptable to other citizens. This parallelism is referred to as a 'post-secular' society (*postsakuiare Gesellschaft*) in which religious citizens have equal rights of communication. Thus, the legitimacy of religious groups' involvement in the national public sphere, as demonstrated by formalist-radical Islamic groups, cannot be justified at all because it would undermine the nation's values of diversity.

5. References

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