

## PUBLIC WORLD: THE MODERN AND CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICS<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this paper an attempt is made to theorise the contemporary notion of the “ordinary” in contrast to the ancient Greek understanding of citizenship formed in the context of a perceived division between the private and the public. We begin with Charles Taylor’s notion of the “affirmation of ordinary life” and theorise it in light of criticisms of the ordinary by developing the notion of the “ordinary” beyond the negative implications commonly attributed to it such as being consumed by consumerism. Here, an attempt is made to look at the ordinary in a dialectical manner, one that brings out the ambiguities found in it so as to highlight the pleasures and joys of ordinary life as well as its constrictions. In the final part of the paper a reading of the ancient Greek understanding of citizenship and public political life is provided as a backdrop to a potential reformulation of our commitments to a public life.

“Within this society, which is egalitarian because this is labor’s way of making men live together, there is no class left, no aristocracy of either a political or spiritual nature from which a restoration of the other capacities of man could start anew. Even presidents, kings, and prime ministers think of their offices in terms of a job necessary for the life of society, and among the intellectuals, only solitary individuals are left who consider what they are doing in terms of work and not in terms of making a living.”

(Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1958: 5)

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