

What, exactly, is civil society?

Civil society is the association of human beings in all aspects of their lives on the basis of (1) a mutual recognition of their dignity as persons (construed broadly as including pre-, post-, and quasi-persons); and (2) the mutual respect of rights demanded by such mutual recognition.

Among the aspects of human lives that are ubiquitous and fundamental are their *moral* aspect and their *political* aspect. Their moral aspect is present in all other aspects insofar as they all involve actions affecting the interests of others. Their political aspect, broadly considered, is also present in all other aspects insofar as they must all be somehow structured or ordered, socially as well as culturally, such structuring or ordering itself being the result of human actions. Their political aspect, strictly considered, is also present in all other aspects insofar as the whole of their common life, in all of its aspects, must also be structured or ordered, which is to say, *governed*, and this, too, is the result of human actions.

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