

## **Johannes Althusius on the family and the commonwealth**

### **Simon P. Kennedy**

The juxtaposition of public and private spheres is a staple of political theory, whilst also being a core part of the analytical framework for historians of political thought. If one pays particular attention to interpreters of the early modern period, one can see the basic presupposition that the public sphere represents the sphere of the “political,” while the private sphere is the realm of the social life and therefore constitutes a separate and non-political space. The orthodox approach to this question is most influenced by interpretations of Aristotle and the subsequent application of those readings to interpretations of early modern political texts. Anna Becker has recently challenged this with her analysis of Renaissance Aristotelians and their understanding of the family in relation to the polis. This paper extends Becker’s analysis via an exposition of the early chapters of Johannes Althusius’s *Politica*. Althusius agrees with Bodin and other Renaissance Aristotelians that the family is closely connected to the polis. However, he goes a number of steps further by arguing states that the family is not merely connected to the commonwealth, but is itself a political fellowship imbued with political structures and ends.

Simon P. Kennedy is a Visiting Fellow at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium in Budapest, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and an External Fellow at the Centre for Public, International and Comparative Law, both at the University of Queensland.