

are justified. In both cases, to be sure, one must guard against perverse effects. Thus, one must apply the parity standard bifocally, ensuring that reforms aimed at reducing class disparities do not end up exacerbating status disparities — and vice-versa. Likewise, one must also apply the standard with an eye to cross-cutting axes of subordination, ensuring that reforms aimed at fostering, for example, gender parity do not worsen disparities along other axes, such as sexuality, religion, and “race.” In the end, moreover, as such matters are highly contentious, the parity standard can only be properly applied dialogically, through democratic processes of public debate. But as I explained in chapter one, drawing on the arguments of Ian Shapiro, that condition holds for any account of *democratic justice*.²⁰ Construed as the principal idiom of public reason, the principle of participatory parity is sufficiently rich in moral substance to adjudicate conflicting claims — for both the recognition and distribution dimensions of justice.

Thus understood, the view of justice as participatory parity is simultaneously deontological and substantive. As a result, it bursts the bounds of Honneth’s account of the possible options in moral philosophy. In his account, there are only two possibilities: the thick “teleological liberalism” favored by him and the thin “procedural liberalism” associated with Habermas and Rawls. Justice as parity of participation, however, fits neither of those two ideal types. It diverges from teleological liberalism in eschewing ethical foundations, while also parting company with liberal proceduralism in articulating substantive requirements of justice. Thus, this approach attests to a possibility overlooked by Honneth. Rejecting both teleological sectarianism and proceduralist formalism, justice as participatory parity exemplifies a third genre of moral philosophy, which could be called *thick deontological liberalism*.

The question remains, however: what justifies thick deontological liberalism? More specifically, what justifies the radical democratic view of justice as participatory parity? For Honneth, recall, such a view can only be arbitrary absent an ethical

foundation in a theory of the good life. In fact, however, participatory parity finds the right sort of philosophical support in two complementary lines of argument, neither of which is ethical. The first line of argument is conceptual. The basic idea is that equal autonomy, properly understood, entails the real freedom to participate on a par with others in social life. Anything less fails to capture the full meaning of the equal moral worth of human beings. That idea is not adequately embodied, for example, in equal formal rights that lack “fair value” due to the absence of the necessary preconditions for their exercise. For such rights remain purely notional, despite their symbolic importance. Only when all the conditions are in place, ensuring that all can really interact as peers, is the equal moral worth of each individual respected. Thus, participatory parity simply is the meaning of equal respect for the equal autonomy of human beings *qua* social actors. Certainly, this conceptual argument assumes the normative validity of the core liberal norm of equal respect and will not persuade anyone who rejects that ideal. Nevertheless, it lends support to the radical-democratic interpretation of equal autonomy — in a manner befitting thick deontological liberalism.

The second argument for participatory parity is historical. It invokes historical considerations in support of a radical democratic interpretation of equal autonomy. From this perspective, participatory parity appears as the outcome of a broad, multifaceted historical process that has enriched the meaning of liberal equality over time. In this process, which is by no means confined to the West, the concept of equal moral worth has expanded in both scope and substance. In early modernity, the scope of liberal equality was restricted to religious freedom and equality before the law. Later, however, its reach was extended to more arenas of social interaction, including politics (thanks to suffrage struggles), labor (thanks to the trade unions and socialist parties), family and personal life (thanks to feminist and gay liberation movements), and civil society (thanks to struggles for multiculturalism). In substance, likewise, the

meaning of equality has also expanded. Earlier, formal rights were deemed sufficient to meet the requirements of equal moral worth. Today, however, one increasingly encounters the expectation that equality be manifest substantively, in real social interactions. Thus, the right to sue in a court of law now entails the right to legal counsel. Similarly, "one person, one vote" is now widely thought to entail public electoral campaign financing.²¹ Likewise, the career open to talents, long linked to equal public education, is increasingly viewed as entailing abolition of the gender division of carework. Such examples suggest that the norm of equality is becoming substantIALIZED. No longer restricted to formal rights but also encompassing the social conditions for their exercise, equality is coming to mean participatory parity. Participatory parity, then, is the emergent historical "truth" of the liberal norm of the equal autonomy and moral worth of human beings.

Together, these two arguments provide strong support for the view of justice as participatory parity. But they do not appeal to a theory of the good life. *Contra* Honneth, then, my approach does not require an ethical account of the sorts of participation that are required for human flourishing. It assumes, rather, that the participants will decide that for themselves by their own lights. Far from pre-empting their choices, justice as participatory parity seeks to ensure them the chance to decide freely, unconstrained by relations of domination. Thus, it seeks to remove obstacles to parity in all major social arenas — including politics, labor markets, family, and civil society. In this way, it aims to enable social actors to participate as peers in any and every arena they choose to enter. Included here are what we might call "deliberative meta-arenas": critical discursive spaces where interlocutors debate the merits of various types of social participation, mooted proposals to reform or abolish existing arenas and to establish new ones.

In general, then, the approach I propose avoids appealing to ethical arguments. Unburdened by teleology, it has no need to drain its normative principles of determinate content. Thus,

this approach is free to articulate a substantive, radical democratic interpretation of liberal ideals. Construing equal autonomy as parity of participation, it expands that ideal's scope and substance, deepening its emancipatory force. The result is a thick deontological theory of justice that avoids both sectarianism and indeterminacy. Thus, this approach, unlike Honneth's, meets the requirements for a Critical Theory of justice in the era of globalization.

Let me conclude by recapping the key points. Those of us who hope to rejuvenate Critical Theory face difficult challenges in the period ahead. To ensure the continuing relevance of our tradition, we must adapt it to a world in which struggles over status are proliferating amidst widening economic inequality. With its capacity to analyze such struggles, the concept of recognition represents a promising vehicle for reconstructing Critical Theory in an era of accelerating globalization.

Nevertheless, recognition alone cannot bear the entire burden of critical theorizing. By itself, it is not sufficient to capture the normative deficits of contemporary society, the societal processes that generate them, and the political challenges facing those seeking emancipatory change. To ask that of recognition is to overextend the concept, distorting it beyond recognition and depriving it of critical force. Such an approach, I have argued here, can provide neither a suitable empirical reference point, nor a viable account of culture, nor a defensible theory of justice. What is needed, in contrast, is clear: *Critical Theory should situate recognition as one dimension of a perspectival-dualist framework that also encompasses distribution.*

Nothing I have written here detracts from the powerful moral and emotional force of Axel Honneth's emphasis on recognition. But there is a distance between the emotional appeal of a concept and its translation into a viable critical-theoretical framework. By integrating redistribution and recognition in a single framework, I hope that I have shortened that distance.

Notes

1 I am grateful to several colleagues for helpful comments on and discussions of this chapter. Thanks to Amy Allen, Seyla Benhabib, Maria Pia Lara, Martin Saar, and Eli Zaretsky.

2 Jürgen Habermas, "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies," in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. Sherry W. Nicholson (Cambridge, MA 1990).

3 Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York 1981).

4 This construal is also problematic for a second reason, which I shall elaborate in section III. To stress the victim's subjective feelings of injury is to endanger the possibility of a democratic adjudication of justice claims. The latter requires public deliberation aimed at determining the validity of the claims in question, a matter which in turn requires that claimants press their case via public reasons, not subjective feelings.

5 Jane Mansbridge, *Everyday Feminism* (Chicago, forthcoming).

6 Wilfred Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, eds, *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1 (1956).

7 I borrow the expression "Morality's Own Language" from Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton 1980). Interestingly, Honneth himself seems to concede this point when he acknowledges, later on in his essay, that moral experience is in fact "shaped" by socially and historically elaborated idioms of normative judgment. Yet he fails to acknowledge its full import and scope. Illegitimately restricting such "shaping" to his three subtypes of recognition discourse, he fails to allow for the historical elaboration and institutionalization of moral vocabularies that are not centered on recognition.

8 In fact, such claims are plausibly viewed as articulated reconstructions of previously inarticulate suffering. Moreover, as the self-organized expression of such suffering, social movements are at least as well positioned to articulate the experience of the subjects in question as the social scientists whose interpretations Honneth privileges.

9 Mansbridge, *Everyday Feminism*.

10 In that case, as I argued there, an androcentric pattern of cultural value is institutionalized in labor markets, channeling women into service-sector jobs that are coded "feminine" and assumed to require little skill. Since those jobs tend to be poorly paid, the result is to deny women

workers both the standing and the resources they need to interact on terms of parity with men. To redress the injustice requires, *inter alia*, that we deinstitutionalize the androcentric value patterns and replace them with patterns that promote parity. In this case, accordingly, Honneth's analysis overlaps partially with my own — although he assumes that cultural change by itself is sufficient and that its point is to valorize feminine identity, both propositions I consider erroneous.

11 Granted, bourgeois society purveyed ideals of companionate marriage as a "haven in the heartless world" of emergent capitalism. But far from eliminating the institution's economic functions, the effect was rather to mystify them, largely to the detriment of women — witness the increased invisibility of their household labor in industrial society.

12 Such injustices supply the chief inspiration for the current revival of recognition theory. Yet they were ignored entirely in Honneth's book *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge 1995). In the present volume he considers them effectively as an afterthought, asking which recognition sphere they belong to and assigning them to the sphere of law, hence to the principle of equal autonomy.

13 Honneth's difficulties in handling these injustices are compounded by his cultural monism — his quasi-Durkheimian assumption that society is (or should be) ethically integrated via a single, overarching horizon for assigning esteem, which is centered in the system of labor. Treating labor as the sole source of differentiation in social identity, this model obliterates differences, such as those based in language, ethnicity, or religion, which do not correspond to occupational divisions. The effect is to render invisible claims for recognition of cultural difference. Thus, the most salient struggles of our age elude Honneth's framework.

14 In this respect, my approach resembles that of Jürgen Habermas. Unlike him, however, I do not substantiate the distinction between system and lifeworld. By treating it perspectivaly, rather, I enable a more complex account of their mutual imbrication than his one-directional conception of the "colonization of the lifeworld." For Habermas's approach see *The Theory of Communicative Action*. For a critique, see Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," *Unity Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis & London 1989).

15 Actually, there is an ambiguity here. In some passages, Honneth treats the consolidation of an intact identity as the *chief ingredient* of human flourishing, effectively equating the good life with one enjoying adequate recognition. In other passages, in contrast, he treats the consolidation of an intact identity as the *chief prerequisite* for human flourishing, effectively

instrumentalizing recognition as a means to the good life. In both cases, however, psychological inactness is treated as the only relevant factor in human flourishing. Thus, whether construed as ingredient or prerequisite, identitarian integrity is assumed by Honneth to be both necessary and sufficient for self-realization.

16 There is also an ambiguity here. In some passages, Honneth contends that justice requires recognition relations that *really supply* the requisite forms of recognition to all individuals. In other passages, in contrast, he contends that justice requires only that recognition relations provide individuals with *equal chances* to gain the requisite forms of recognition. Neither approach is wholly satisfactory, however. The first one works well for rights-based respect, which a just society ought to really guarantee, but poorly for achievement-grounded esteem, which it cannot. Conversely, the second approach works well for self-esteem, where equal opportunity is the appropriate standard, but poorly for self-respect, where real equality is called for.

17 To be sure, he speaks suggestively of a “moral dialectic of universality and particularity,” which *might* mean something akin to participatory parity. But absent further clarification, no practicable standard emerges here.

18 In fact, the social citizenship principle could be interpreted along the lines of my notion of participatory parity. In that case, it would guarantee all social actors the resources they need to interact with others as peers, regardless of their social contributions.

19 One could also invoke Honneth’s notion of care to derive yet a third distributive principle. Such a care-based principle could be understood either in terms of need (e.g., as requiring satisfaction of some specified level of “basic need”) or in terms of welfare (as requiring some specified level of individual welfare). Either way, the effect would be to introduce a further prospect of conflict among principles, hence a further dimension of indeterminacy.

20 For a recent elaboration and defense of this sort of democratic approach to justice, see Ian Shapiro, *Democratic Justice* (New Haven 1999).

21 It should go without saying that “one person, one vote” also entails a uniform system for casting and counting votes. But, as we learned in December 2000, that condition is scandalously lacking in the United States.

The Point of Recognition: A Rejoinder to the Rejoinder*

Axel Honneth

Nancy Fraser has devoted a thorough critique to my attempt to develop a recognition-based framework for Critical Theory in response to her objections. The reformulation of her premises and the transparency of her counterarguments make it easier to continue our conversation. Yet the multitude of issues she touches on, and the sheer number of her objections, render this task harder and would, if I wanted to respond defensively, require complicated corrections, clarifications, and explanations — which would be tiresome for most readers. For long stretches it is easy to follow Fraser’s reflections and see the core of our disagreement. In certain especially heavy-going places, however, I had to rub my eyes to be quite sure that I was meant to be the author of such absurd-sounding conclusions. Under these circumstances, it seems to me to make the most sense to respond not defensively but offensively to her rejoinders by working out once again in sharpened form the point that I see connecting the three clearly outlined levels of a recognition-theoretical “monism.” My impression is that, despite her clear and nuanced analysis, at central points Fraser has incorrectly or inadequately construed the real field of our debate. The attempt to more precisely outline these problem zones in the reactualization of Critical Theory will therefore be more useful, pro-