Participatory parity and self-realisation

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In this paper, I do not try to present a tightly organised argument that moves from indubitable premises to precise conclusions. Rather, my much more modest aim is to state a hypothesis—or, more informally and more accurately—to describe a hunch. This hypothesis—or hunch—is that it is possible to combine Nancy Fraser's and Axel Honneth's rival theories of recognition into a single theory which is better than either of its two component parts. This aim is hinted at in the title of my paper. Its two terms refer to the metrics by which Fraser and Honneth judge the justice of social orders. Fraser's theory is founded on her principle of parity of participation, according to which 'justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life.'[1] For Honneth, by contrast, '[t]he justice or well-being of a society is proportionate to its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition under which personal identity-formation, hence individual self-realization, can proceed adequately.'[2] By showing that these two metrics are of completely different natures, I shall also demonstrate that they are not direct rivals. This will then enable me to argue that they can provide complementary elements of a single and unified theory of justice as recognition.[3] I believe that the attempt to create such a theory is worthwhile since, if I can show that Fraser's and Honneth's best insights can be combined, the result will be a powerful analytical framework and set of normative principles which be used to evaluate and judge the justice of social orders.

For anyone acquainted with the critical exchange between Fraser and Honneth, this may seem an unlikely if not hopeless cause. While both claim to make it central to their theories of justice, their conceptions of recognition do not just diverge but appear to stand starkly opposed to one another. Honneth, true to Hegel's legacy, endorses what Fraser calls an 'identity model' of recognition which is grounded in a historically nuanced social psychology. He believes, as I have suggested, that humans need recognition in order to form intact identities, and that justice is achieved to the extent to which the relations of recognition necessary for such identity-formation are in place. As a consequence, he believes that a 'sufficiently differentiated theory of recognition' can deal with all matters of justice.[4] Fraser, strongly opposed to Hegel's legacy, offers a rival 'status model' of recognition which makes no reference to individual identity or social psychology. According to her model, recognition is achieved if a society's status order does not act as an obstacle to parity of participation. As a consequence, recognition plays a strictly delimited role in her theory, standing alongside two other principles of redistribution and representation. For her, all three of these independent principles must be met if justice as participatory parity is to be achieved.

Although it may appear to be a paradoxical move, in order to demonstrate how these two very different theories can be synthesised, I shall begin by emphasising how dissimilar their conceptions of recognition are. As David Owen and James Tully show, Fraser uses recognition in a 'restricted' sense to mean status equality, while Honneth uses it in a 'general' sense to mean 'the acknowledgement of the value of others.' Thus Fraser insists that recognition in the 'restricted' sense is distinct from redistribution, while Honneth insists that recognition in the 'general' sense can encompass redistributive issues.[5] Taking up this point, I would say that, given the different senses Fraser and Honneth give to recognition, both of their claims about the relationship between recognition and redistribution are plausible. Fraser is right to say that recognition (in her sense of status equality), redistribution and representation are the three necessary conditions of participatory parity, and Honneth is right to say that recognition (in his sense of being appropriately valued by others) is the necessary condition for self-realisation.

However, although it is possible to endorse both these propositions just as I have formulated them, it is impossible to endorse both conceptions of recognition. It is clear, then, that I need to decide which of these two very different conceptions of recognition to adopt. So, while fully in agreement with Fraser's claim that status equality is a necessary condition of parity of participation, I deny that such equality can be understood as a conception of recognition.[6] Instead I endorse Honneth's account in which recognition is an intersubjective relationship in which one party acknowledges the positive value of the other. Again following Owen and Tully, I take (evaluative rather than epistemic) recognition to be a matter of 'acknowledging an object of value in a way that is appropriate to its value', and I take political recognition to be a matter of 'acknowledging citizens in ways that are appropriately responsive to their status as free and equal persons or members of the polity.'[7]

I shall now explain what I think is of value in each theory. I begin by looking in a little more detail at Honneth's account of recognition. He argues that there are three particular 'spheres', 'forms' or 'principles' of recognition.[8] First, love (or care) is a relationship of strong affective attachment between specific others. In loving (or caring for) for another, one is responsive to their unique needs. Second, respect is a relationship in which one treats all others as morally responsible for their actions, since they are capable of acting autonomously. Third, esteem is a relationship in which one values particular others for their achievements, and in particular for the contribution that they make to societal goals.[9] Honneth himself grounds his defence of these three principles in his quasi-anthropological claim that there are three corresponding modes of self-relation which must be intersubjectively mediated. Thus if an individual is shown love, respect and esteem by others, then they can acquire the self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem necessary for self-realisation. I think it is also possible to offer what might be regarded as a 'naturalised' defence of Honneth's three principles which makes no anthropological claims about the universal features of personhood. For instance, in his *Principles of Social Justice*, David Miller argues that there

are three distinct and mutually irreducible principles of justice – which he refers to as those of need, equality and desert.[10] Finally, let me emphasise that Honneth's three principles of recognition are not to be correlated with particular social institutions. To do so would be to fall into the error of 'misdirected concretization.'[11] In practice, we are likely to find more than one principle at play in each particular institution.

I now need to show why I think that Fraser's theory of justice remains a vital part of the synthesised theory towards which I am working. She contends that there are three distinct and mutually irreducible principles of justice. As we have seen, the first principle of 'recognition' corresponds to what she calls the 'status order' of society. This principle is met by eliminating status inequalities which stand in the way of parity of participation. The second principle of 'redistribution' corresponds to what she calls the 'economic structure' of society. This principle is met if citizens have the resources that they need in order to enjoy parity with their peers. The third principle of 'representation' corresponds to what Fraser calls the 'political constitution of society'. This principle is met if political decision rules and political boundaries facilitate parity of participation.[12] Bringing the three principles together, we can say that for Fraser justice is achieved if citizens possess the status, resources and voice necessary for them to be able to enjoy parity of participation. I am persuaded by Fraser's account of these three modes of social ordering. Since I was one critic who urged Fraser to introduce a political dimension to her account, I am certainly not going to suggest a return to the dualism of redistribution and recognition.[13] I think that there are a range of cases of injustice which cannot be successfully captured within that dualist framework. Fraser herself focuses on the way that political decision-rules and the way that political boundaries are drawn can inflict injustices on individuals and groups which cannot be reduced to a matter of cultural and/or economic injustice.[14] Could there be a fourth mode of social ordering? Here I would simply suggest that the burden of proof lies with the person who wants to argue that another mode exists. Finally, in parallel with my remarks about Honneth, I must stress that there is no simple correspondence between Fraser's modes of social ordering and specific social structures. On the contrary, the cultural, economic and political modes of social ordering are in play across the whole range of particular social institutions.

In order to show how it is possible to unite Fraser's and Honneth's theories, let me emphasise how very different the metrics of participatory parity and self-realisation are. Fraser argues that, if the three modes of social ordering distribute status, resources and voice appropriately, then all individuals can achieve parity of participation. In other words, they can take part in a range of social institutions on a par with their peers. Honneth argues that, if his three principles of recognition are met, then intact identity and thus self-realisation are possible. In this context, self-realisation means something like the actualisation of different aspects of an individual's personality. At first glance, these two metrics appear to have nothing to do with one another. For Fraser, ensuring that social arrangements enable all citizens to participate on a par with their peers has no bearing on whether they can achieve self-realisation. For Honneth, there is no suggestion that the necessary conditions of self-

realisation include parity of participation. In fact, as I hinted at the start of this paper, I want to argue that participatory parity and self-realisation are two highly complementary goals. To be specific, my thesis is that it is the former that makes the latter possible. That is to say, the attainment of participatory parity is precisely what enables self-realisation to be achieved. To my mind, therefore, a complete account of justice as recognition must take both participatory parity and self-realisation into account.

The best way I can find to explain myself is to put this thesis in the form of a table (see table 1). As you can see, this table has three columns and three rows, creating a total of nine cells. In each column, one of Honneth's principles of recognition is represented. The final, fourth row indicates that, if these principles are met, than self-realisation is possible. In each row, one of Fraser's modes of social ordering is represented. The final, fourth column indicates that, if each mode of social ordering is operating justly, then parity of participation can be achieved. The arrow between parity of participation and self-realisation stands for my claim that, if participatory parity is attained, then self-realisation is possible. Thus, this table as a whole is intended to represent my claim that Honneth's three principles of recognition can and should be intermeshed with Fraser's three modes of social ordering. The realisation of each principle of recognition makes particular demands on each mode of social ordering, and the necessary conditions for the just arrangement of each mode of social ordering can be divided between the three principles of recognition. I shall take up Honneth's perspective, and use his three principles, rather than Fraser's three modes, to guide us through this table.

It will be recalled that Honneth's first principle of love/care involves responsiveness to the needs of specific others. I want to argue that, if principle is to be realised, then each of the three modes of social ordering will need to meet certain conditions:

> 1a. On a narrow interpretation of love/care, one could say that institutionalised patterns of cultural values must acknowledge the worth of the sorts of relationships between adults in which children are able to receive 'good enough' care.[15] On a broader interpretation, one could say that such value-patterns must ensure that all care-work, by whoever this is undertaken, is given appropriate acknowledgement.[16] Although I do not have space to do it here, I would suggest that it would be useful to draw on accounts of the ethics of care in order to figure out what this might require in practice.[17]

> 1b. Again, on a narrow interpretation of love/care, one could say that the system of resource redistribution must ensure that the sorts of relationships between adults in which children are able to receive 'good enough' care are economically viable. This may involve a whole range of measures including, for example, extended parental leave. Again, on a broader interpretation, one could say that the distribution of resources must appropriately reward all care-work. This might entail

specific welfare benefits for those caring for others, or a more general scheme such as one establishing a citizens' income.

1c. It may be less clear that the principle of love/care has any bearing on how the political system of a particular polity should be organised. Certainly, if we follow Fraser and define this system narrowly in terms of decision-rules and political boundaries,[18] then the connection between love/care and this system may appear very tenuous indeed. However, if we take broader view of the political system, so that a whole range of mechanisms and spaces of consultation and deliberation are included, then connections do appear. I would suggest, for instance, it might be possible to create spaces of deliberation which are informed by an ethic of care. In such spaces, deliberators may regard one another not simply as rational and autonomous persons, but as particular individuals whose concrete needs must be taken into account.

To sum up, Honneth's principle of love/care makes demands on each of Fraser's modes of social ordering. Care-work must be appropriately valued and appropriately resourced, and a principle of care may also be fruitfully introduced in the political structure of society.

Honneth's second principle of respect requires each person to be appropriately responsive to all others given those others' capacity for autonomy. He tends to assume that in practice the institutionalisation of this principle will take the form of a system of subjective rights. But I want to suggest that, by thinking through what this principle might entail for each of Fraser's modes of social ordering, we may develop a rather more nuanced account:

2a. Institutionalised patterns of cultural values must be organised so that appropriate value is given to the capacity for autonomy. This is because, rather than being a capacity that individuals will inevitably develop if they are left alone to get on with their lives, autonomy requires cultivation within a particular cultural context. In support of this claim, I would point to Charles Taylor's well-known essay on negative liberty in which he shows that the development of individuals' ability to act freely depends on the existence of a wide range of social institutions.[19] To give just one example, the capacity for independent and critical thinking must be cultivated within the educational system.

2b. The capacity for autonomy does not just depend on certain cultural values being embedded in appropriate social institutions. It also depends on individuals having the resources that they need in order to be able to act freely. Thus meeting Honneth's principle of respect has implications for the economic mode of social ordering. A range of different measures may be appropriate here. For instance, social rights which guarantee access to a range of basic resources may fit the bill. Or, once again (see 1b), the introduction of a citizens' income may

be the best way of ensuring that all individuals are capable of autonomy.

2c. It will be obvious, I think, that the political structure of society will have a crucial bearing on the capacity of individuals to act autonomously. If social rights are appropriate so far as the economic ordering of society goes, then civil and political rights are appropriate with regard to its political ordering. Rights such as the freedom of speech and the freedom to vote are crucial if citizens are to develop and sustain their capacity for autonomy. I would suggest that Jürgen Habermas' account of the intimate connection between public and private autonomy is of great significance here.[20]

In summary, I have shown that the realisation of the principle of respect requires the three modes of social ordering to meet certain conditions. The capacity for autonomy must be appropriately valued, and the economic and political preconditions for the fostering of this capacity must be in place.

Finally, the principle of esteem involves giving appropriate acknowledgement to those who make effective contributions to societal goals. Once again, if this principle is to be realised, then the three modes of social ordering will need to meet certain conditions:

3a. With regard to the cultural mode of social ordering, the institutionalised pattern of cultural values must be able to provide opportunities for all individuals to contribute to societal goals. Given the fact of reasonable pluralism in contemporary societies, it follows— to put it in Honneth's terms—that there are a range of 'particular forms of self-realization'. If the dominant set of cultural values does not give all individuals, whatever their form of self-realisation, an opportunity to contribute to societal goals, then it would not be possible to realize the principle of esteem. As a consequence, I suggest, there needs to be an ongoing public debate about societal goals in order to ensure that this principle can be met (see 3c).

3b. So far as the economic mode of social ordering is concerned, I would suggest that redistributive policies must make it possible for individuals to contribute to societal goals. For instance, if a particular society values the cultivation of the intellect, then all individuals must have the resources necessary in order for them to develop their minds. This could entail, for instance, decently funded system of public education. I would also suggest that the economic mode of social ordering is of relevance with regard to the principle of esteem since contributions to societal goals should—in some instances—be appropriately rewarded by the distribution of resources. Sometimes this will not apply. For example, particular contributions—e.g. military valour—may be best rewarded through a system of honours. But at other times it will apply. For example, an outstandingly talented brain surgeon should enjoy appropriate financial rewards.[21]

3c. Finally, the political structure of a society must be organised so that all individuals can make an appropriate contribution within this structure itself. In other words, they must enjoy effective voice in order to contribute to public debates and decision-making. One reason why this is particularly important is because some such debates and decisions will be about the nature of societal goals. Thus the ability to contribute in the political sphere makes it possible to shape such goals and thus have an effect on how esteem is measured in both the cultural and economic spheres. This final condition of political contribution may be met in a number of ways. It may be that a conventional system of representative democracy does this job perfectly well. If not, then a variety of other measures may be needed. For example, there may be a place for measures such as quotas for women, special representation rights for national minorities, and guaranteed representation for marginalised groups.[22]

To sum up, the realisation of the principle of esteem makes demands on each of the three modes of social ordering. The pattern of cultural values must provide opportunities for all to contribute, the system of redistribution must enable all to contribute (and to reward those who do), and the political system must give a voice to all so that they are able to make a contribution at this level too.

I can now return finally to the claim with which I began this paper—namely, that participatory parity and self-realisation name two complementary rather than contradictory goals. The simplest way to put this is to say that parity of participation is a necessary condition of self-realisation. If individuals have sufficient status, resources and voice to be able to participate across a range of social institutions on a par with their peers, then they will be have the opportunity fully to develop all of the various aspects of their personalities. To put the same point negatively, if some individuals don't enjoy participatory parity, if they are marginalised within or excluded from certain social arenas, then they will lack the opportunity to develop the capacities which are particular importance in these arenas. For instance, if men are not able to play their part in care-work, or if a national minority is effectively excluded from public deliberation, then both groups will find it harder to develop those capacities which are needed to participate in these particular fields.

Before offering a brief conclusion, I want to draw attention to one important issue (of many) which I have had to overlook in this paper. One important aspect of the debate between Fraser and Honneth revolves around their rival characterisations of their theories in terms of a contrast between the right and the good. Fraser claims that parity of participation is a deontological standard that can be used to 'justify claims for recognition as normatively binding on all who agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism.'[23] By contrast, she argues, since Honneth's conception of self-realisation is an ethical standard, it has no normative force for those who hold different ethical values. Honneth, in reply, contends that Fraser's theory faces a choice between deontological procedure and ethical substance, and characterises his own theory as a form of "teleological liberalism."[24] Although

I have sought to combine their two metrics of participatory parity and self-realisation, I have not considered what the implications might be with regard to this issue. It may be that my proposed synthesis opens up a middle way between the right and the good, the moral and the ethical, the deontological and the sectarian. More than this I cannot say at this stage.

It will be clear that this paper is a work in progress. At a number of points I have resorted to statement rather than argument, and I have had occasion to twist parts of Fraser's and Honneth's theories in order to make them fit into my proposed framework. Nevertheless, I do think I'm onto something here, and that a complete account of justice as recognition will have to take both modes of social ordering and principles of recognition, as well as their complex interlacing, into account. Fraser's theory provides us with a powerful account of the three modes of social ordering which can stand in the way of parity of participation. Thus she focuses on the important problem of structural inequalities, and her theory provides guidance on how such inequalities can be eliminated. Honneth's theory provides us with a detailed account of the justice as recognition, showing how misrecognition can take three distinctive forms and how its rectification must therefore take three forms too. Thus he begins from the lived experience of misrecognition, and shows how this points to a form of life in which recognition can be achieved. By bringing the two theories together, therefore, I hope to have outlined the shape of a theory of justice as recognition capable of understanding both structural inequalities and experiences of misrecognition, and, most importantly, of showing how these two are linked.

Table 1

		Honneth's principles of recognition			
		1. care/love – needs	2. respect – autonomy	3. esteem – contribution	
Fraser's modes of social ordering	a. cultural "recognition" – status	1a. appropriate valuation of care-work necessary	2a. culture must value capacity for autonomy	3a. culture must provide opportunities to contribute	parity of participation
	b. economic redistribution – resources	1b. appropriate resourcing of care-work necessary	2b. redistributive policies must underpin capacity for autonomy	3b. redistributive policies must enable and reward contribution	
	c. political representation – voice	1c. deliberative spaces responsive to need required	2c. political system must facilitate autonomous action	3c. political system must enable all to participate	
		self-realisation			↵

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[1] Nancy Fraser (2005), 'Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World', *New Left Review*, 36: 69-88, p.73.

[2] Axel Honneth (2003), Contributions to Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, p.174.

[3] Having said this, I must confess that I do have to reinterpret and rework both Fraser's and Honneth's theories to some degree in order to achieve this end.

[4] Honneth, Contributions, p.113.

[5] David Owen and James Tully (2007), 'Recognition and Redistribution: Two Approaches' in Anthony Laden and David Owen (eds) *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.268n6.

[6] This is the most important of a number of reinterpretations that I must make in order for my project to succeed.

[7] Owen and Tully, 'Recognition and Redistribution', p.266.

[8] Honneth, Contributions, pp.138, 143, 148.

[9] Axel Honneth (1995), *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Struggles*, Cambridge: Polity Press, ch.5.

[10] David Miller (1999), *Principles of Social Justice*, Harvard MA: Harvard University Press.

[11] Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, p.176.

[12] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice', pp. 73-76.

[13] Simon Thompson (2005), 'Is Redistribution a Form of Recognition? Comments on the Fraser-Honneth Debate', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8/1: 85-102; Simon Thompson (2006), *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, ch.5.

[14] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice'.

[15] I should not need to say that my formulation here – 'the sorts of relationships between adults' – is deliberately broad so that no restriction to conventional heterosexual norms of marriage and family is implied.

[16] In line with the previous footnote, this phrase – 'by whoever this is undertaken' – is intended to detach the valuing of care-work from conventional assumptions about the relationship between care and gender.

[17] See, for instance, Virginia Held (2005), *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*, New York NY: Oxford University Press; Nel Noddings (2003), *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press; revused edition; and Michael Slote (2007), *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*, London: Routledge.

[18] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice'.

[19] Charles Taylor (1979), 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty' in Alan Ryan (ed.) *The Idea of Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 175-193.

[20] Jürgen Habermas (1994), 'Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State' in Amy Gutmann (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

[21] See Michael Walzer (1983), *Spheres of* Justice, Oxford: Blackwell for a well-known attempt to distinguish the distinct spheres of money and honour.

[22] See, for example, Will Kymlicka (1995), *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Anne Phillips (1995), *The Politics of Presence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Melissa Williams (1998), *Voice, Trust and Memory*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press; Iris Marion Young (1990), *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press; and Iris Marion Young (2000), *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[23] Nancy Fraser (2003) Contributions to Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, at p.14.

[24] Honneth, Contributions, pp.178-80.