The Social Foundations of Freedom and Equality: Honneth vs Rosanvallon

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Intro

• Three ideal-typical approaches to social and political philosophy, Honneth and Rosanvallon share a common opponent:
  • 1) e.g. Rawlsian political philosophy: articulate ideal principles of justice
  • 2) e.g. Honneth’s rival approach: social, structural analysis of Sittlichkeit, social freedom, relational justice & freedom;
  • 3) e.g. Rosanvallon: stress the ‘political’ aspect, conflicts, representation, relational equality

• E.g. ”welfare state”
"I sought to follow the model of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* and develop the principles of social justice by means of an analysis of society. ... This project could only succeed if the constitutive spheres of our society are understood as institutional embodiments of [social freedom] whose immanent claim to [and degree of] realization [are examined]...by following the historical development of each of these social spheres.” (Honneth vii-i)
• “we must also go further and rethink the whole idea of equality itself. This is what the social democrats and republicans of the early 1900s did. But they did their thinking in the framework of a corporatist understanding of society, treating institutions of solidarity as mere extensions of an organic vision of the social. We live today in an individualist age and must reformulate things accordingly.” (Rosanvalllon, 10)
Contents of the talk

• 1) Honneth’s Hegelian aim in FR: A theory of justice by means of an analysis of society
  • Priority of institutional embodiment vs shared understandings
  • Why immanent criticism?
  • Normative reconstruction

• 2) Three Models of Freedom
  • Centrality, three models (negative, reflexive, social), weak and strong social freedom, freedom and "aims", legal freedom, moral freedom, social freedom (Sittlichkeit)

• 3) Social freedom today?
  • The “we” in personal relationships; in market economy; in democratic will-formation and the constitutional state

• 4) Rosanvallon’s project in The Society of Equals
  • French Revolution, 19th C, 20th C, 1980’s; today

• 5) Brief Comparison: Rosanvallon and Honneth
1. Honneth’s Hegelian aim: a theory of justice by means of an analysis of society

- TJ does not consist of abstract principles, but of a description of a (better) society in terms of an arrangement of roles and social relations, such that via meeting the role-obligations people meet the goals of self-realization, autonomy/freedom, general welfare, solidarity, mutual recognition, and justice (“to each their due”, equal and unequal treatment); under the umbrella of social freedom (other values its modifications).

- Four premises: 1) social reproduction depends on shared, universal/fundamental ideals/values (embodied in institutionalized objectives). (3). -> Clear-sighted (not dim-sighted/blind) idealism; social reproduction & shared values as naturalization of Hegel’s Geist? (see below)

- 2) Theory of justice in terms of those values on which social reproduction depends (4) -> immanentism (the values must be genuine and already operative) against Kantian constructivism independently of social analysis (see below).

- 3) Normative reconstruction: selective, typifying, normative description of those elements of society that truly capable of embodying these values; Sittlichkeit; -> an analysis of society (incl. economy) by means of an account of central values it already embodies (see below)
  - Not: what ideas animated the historical changes, but: historical changes from the viewpoint of social freedom (some changes are misdevelopments and pathologies)

- 4) Criticism of prevailing society for failing to actualize the values to a higher degree
Some quotes

• "Hegel’s entire theory of justice amounts to an account of ethical relations; it presents a normative reconstruction of the layered order of institutions in which subjects can realize their freedom in the experience of mutual recognition" (57-8, italics added).

• “reverse the relationship between legitimating procedures and social justice: we must first regard all subjects as integrated in social structures that ensure their freedom, before they then participate as free beings in a procedure that monitors the legitimacy of the social order” (57).

• The function of the procedures “lies within the framework of the social order that has already been proven ‘just’; instead of founding that order, their role lies in judging individual questions of legitimacy” (58); examining “given institutions in terms of whether the latter live up to their own standards” (58).

• Hegel permits moral and legal freedom (as private distance to shared reality) ”to the degree that they do not endanger the institutional structures of actual, social freedom” (58). They are not a source of a new order, but a licence to criticize details. (58). Unclear what Hegel would have said about rejection of a system (58).
Priority of institutional embodiment vs shared understanding?

• For Hegel (on one reading) ideals may enter reality by first being embodied (“realized”) in institutions and practices, and only second being understood (“realized”) by participants or theorists. The institutions and practices may contain higher degrees and different forms of reason than the participants would say.

• The participants may be "dim-sighted" (have an implicit grasp, unable to articulate) or even "blind" ("what do you mean the market is for the general good? We’re just being selfish!” -> "cunning of reason") to the value of the institutional reality. The theorist’s task: find the rational in the actual.

• For Honneth (&Parsons) ideals enter reality through the cultural system, as shared, accepted, understood values (3), (see, however, viii), and then role expectations, implicit obligations etc. -> clear-sighted about shared values.
  • like the coll. acceptance – approach [S. Miller]? like constructivism? Social contracts? The role of socialization anyhow.
  • Honneth does in fact appeal to (half-forgotten) aspirations of previous generations
  • Why ”social reproduction”? Long-term societal achievements would be lost if it didn’t work? “Social reproduction” & ”shared values” as demystifying Geist?
A bit unclear: why *immanent* criticism? (an imagined dialogue)

- Youthful Utopian criticism bypasses the study of the implicit rationality of our institutions. To some extent at least what there is, is as it ought to be.
  - Well OK, but are the implicit ideals the only or the best ones there are?

- The embodied ideals are the *only* ones we know of?
  - Not true: Utopian ideals, ideals in other cultures; ”particular”, ”backwards”(8);

- The embodied ideals are the *best* ones we know of?
  - Best according to my judgement, or trust history to have selected the best?
  - Perhaps all worthwhile ideals are to an extent embodied here and now, but how to tell if not by comparative normative judgement?

- The operative ideals are in any case *operative* now, survived trial and error
  - Yes, but other, (better) ones could be if we’d give them a chance to prove their case.

- All humanely comprehensible ideals are in the relevant sense ”immanent”?
  - If so, no need to be ”embodied” as long as ”accessible”: even Plato’s *Republic* was a sign of its times. This rules out *no* ideals as ”external”. Honneth not this liberal: critical of Kantians.
• Have to start from here and now, it is *this* society we’re interested in
  • Right, but do we have to end up to where we already are? Context-transcendence?
• We’re interested in the forces that will really guide our society
  • But isn’t it in principle possible to make new ideas to ”really guide” by introducing new regulations? Don’t new ideals emerge?—> think of ecological concerns
• The task of reconnecting to the society may be insurmountable (63)
  • Well, shouldn’t we at least try? A weak reason to put aside good ideas.
• Abstract principles aren’t enough, must give social conditions, institutional structures that are constitutive of the ideal (freedom)
  • That is fine; a point about structural priority of *Sittlichkeit* to *Moralität*, but does not entail that we need to focus on already institutionalized ideals.
Normative reconstruction

• May highlight institutions, practices and roles of ‘Sittlichkeit’ that not salient in typical social science -> deviate from official image of mainstream social science (7)
  • But because “clear-sighted” cannot surprise us on which values are central?

• An (historical) unfinished process of actualizing value V is at place: which institutions and practices are central in it? To what degree has it been actualized? (7-11)
  • Hegel: the rational is the actual, and the actual is the rational vs not everything ”merely existent” is rational. Rationality can be found from what there is. And the actual could embody reason to a higher degree.

• Ample room for criticism, by appeal to the same value V.
The burdens of proof

1) Is normative reconstruction the best method for a theory of justice?
   - Explicitly tackled in the intro

2) Is normative reconstruction an ok method for the analysis of society (and its history)? Why not a genealogy of the animating ideas and/or functionalist description?
   - Well, for this purpose, OK. Unclear at places how the "shared understandings" are supposed to be there. Difference to "ideal-typifying" theorist’s view?

3) Is normative reconstruction in light of this value (social freedom all the time) better than rivals (say, liberal individualism), a pluralist one (social freedom + other values all the time: why only one?), or a "variantist" one (different values at different stages, "ages" – e.g. late modern "singularity")?
   - Honneth might think that OK, provide a rival story and let’s compare. But mostly defends "nr in light of social freedom" against opponents of nr (as if obvious that social freedom)
2. The centrality of freedom

- Freedom = autonomy [etc] of the individual (15)
- All other values facets of autonomy (15)
  - Fn on 337: freedom and equality
  - Even postmodern ethic its variation (16). Social movements (16)
- Systematic link between individual subject and social order (15)
  - Freedom has changed our perspective on social interaction (16)
- Justice & individual freedom: justification to individuals (17)
  - Genuine, irreversible achievement (”can only be reversed at the price of cognitive barbarism”, 17)
  - Universal validity, not mere historical contingency.
- Negative, reflexive and social models of freedom (19)
Three models of freedom

• Negative freedom (Hobbes; Sartre, Nozick) from external obstacles to do what one wants
  • Minimal justice. (On its own leads to social pathologies, of legal freedom.)
  • What about being “slave to one’s passions”? The content of the aims? Misses the subjective aspect.

• Reflexive freedom (Rousseau, Kant, Herder) as self-determination, -realization or authenticity
  • Procedural justice (& self-determination). (On its own leads to social pathologies, of moral freedom)
  • Misses the objective (institutional, interpersonal) aspect, as heteronomous.(47).
  • Being at home vs alienated from the social world?

• Social freedom (Hegel, Marx): adds the constitutive institutional/interpersonal aspect (42-62)
  • The social world is not external to, but constitutive of freedom. Not mere absense of obstacles.
  • Theory of justice as outlining the institutional setting (Sittlichkeit) which enables individuals to be free; as many (kinds of) institutions as aspects of freedom to be realized
  • Self-realization via social roles/relations; “being oneself in another”; mutual recognition: friendship/love, economic interdependence and cooperation, collective discursive will-formation; cooperation.
Social pathologies of freedom

- Whereas legal and moral freedom provide a legitimate escape from shared social world, social freedom realized in the social world.
- Legal freedom (institutional complex of negative freedom) autonomized -> social pathology (66)
  - Legalization, hollow anti-social self-understanding
- Moral freedom (institutional complexes of reflexive freedom) autonomized -> social pathology (66)
  - ”agent-neutral” universal moralism, morally motivated terrorism
- Social freedom -> no chance of one type of freedom gaining independent existence (no ”social pathology”, but ”misdevelopment”)
  - But what about tyranny, democratic totalitarianism, sidestepping legal and moral protection of privacy? In a sense, social freedom without legal/moral?
The ’we’ of personal relationships (132-176)

• The background idea: friendship and love illustrate the relation where the other is constitutive of my identity, not an obstacle to my freedom. Being oneself in another. An important aspect of social freedom consists in such personal relationships.

• Three spheres (with different behavioural expectations etc.):
  • Friendship
  • Intimate relationships
  • Families
The ’we’ of the market economy (176-253)

• Social freedom:
  • cooperation in ways that we see each other’s success as a condition of our own
    success; I contribute to your welfare and you contribute to mine; division of labour
    and everyone is needed. (cf. Non-alienation, aspect of freedom).

• In addition to market mechanisms in the narrow sense, market economy
  (in the broad sense) includes:
  • Moral underground: an underlying ethos (fairness, everyone’s consent etc), sense of
    solidarity, role obligations, articulated via discursive mechanisms; institutions such as
    guilds or ‘corporations’ (Hegel) socialize the workers, ”occupational honour”.
  • Institutional, legal regulations

• Normative functionalism: how is the legitimacy of the system sustained?
  • Some critical questions: the nature of and need for the market mechanism in the
    narrow sense? (e.g. the Marx problem). Rival ethical frameworks for embedding the
    market?
"Market” in the broad and narrow sense

• It seems that Honneth’s *broad* notion of Market has two layers,
  • a) Market mechanism in the *narrow* sense (the mechanism of supply and demand, money as universal means of exchange, market prices etc), and
  • b) the embedding ethical, discursive, political, legal understandings, expectations, decisions and regulations,
    • concerning e.g. i) what things ought to be for sale, ii) whether some commodities (e.g. housing) should have regulated price, iii) how extensive, luxurious demands are ok, iv) whether goods consumed and produced individually or in cooperatives (209)
    • Compare: the rules of football vs the ethos of fair play and the point of playing football
• Against extreme views (pure market alone –no b; planned economy – no a)
• Two intermediate views: accept a & b, but is b internal/external to the Market?
  • Honneth oscillates, see p.208: ”none of these variables is determined by the market itself”, ”none of these demands ... external to the market”.
  • Should we have a narrow or broad notion of market or both?
Which embedding understandings?

• Neither liberal nor Marxist understanding of the point of the market mechanism
  • (liberal individualism assumes e.g. sovereignty of consumers; for Marx market mechanism leads to devastating outcomes).
  • Honneth puts Marx aside as making too categorical demands (e.g. empirical question whether ‘exploitation’ compensated by sufficient wages), but does not really answer to Marx’s claim about where market mechanisms tend to lead. Perhaps because they can be regulated.
  • Honneth does not say much about rival justifications of the market (perhaps market economy is viewed as legitimate; or accepted but not approved; though not in terms of social freedom).

• Social freedom: market economy as a form of cooperation, complementary realization of interdependent aims. ’We’ in the market in a strong sense.
  • Doesn’t Hegel view market actors as pursuing externally related aims?
  • Not mere formal ‘mutual recognition’ in free exchange, but thick ethical cooperation.

• When and why should we have market economy? To the extent that it lives up to the promise of social freedom, and is a legitimate form of cooperation.

• (For what does Honneth actually need the market mechanism in the strict sense?)
Functionalist and normative functionalism

- Honneth praises Hegel and Durkheim for "an accurate description of the system of the market economy [in the broad sense?]":... such a description must remain incomplete ...[without] a certain class of non-contractual but nonetheless binding rules" (182).
  - Hegel’s rabble, mechanization of labour, ostentatious enrichment; Durkheim’s anomies are "violations of the implicit demand for solidarity inherent in the market"[in the broad sense?] (182). -> market to be grasped as a sphere of social freedom.

- How to see the moral norms as elements of the market economy?
  - Functionalism: needed for the reproduction of capitalist markets. Not credible. (183)
  - Normative functionalism: values and norms that enable everyone to consent to it; legitimacy.
  - "Just like any other social sphere, the market also relies upon the moral consent of the participants, such that its existence [...] cannot be explained without reference to the supplementary norms that legitimate the market in the eyes of economic actors" (184).
    - Should it say: legitimacy, not existence?
    - Vs. Searle: accept/approve.
    - "fairness", "justice", "consent of all"...sounds like a social contract theory, and a moralist one?
  - Polanyi, Parsons; Etzioni, Hirsch;
The Marx problem

• Social freedom – approach and the Marx problem:

• 1) no wage could ever compensate for exploited labour, which is the sole source of value-creation? This view dropped by most Marxists.

• 2) workers never equal contractual partners, prevents the majority even of negative freedoms.
  • Under all conditions (Marx) or under some conditions (Durkheim)?
  • A weak answer: as there’s no ”practical alternative”, there’s reason […] to see exploitation and enforced contracts ”as challenges posed by the market’s [in the broad sense] own normative promise, which can thus […] only be solved within the market system itself.”(196).

• In any case, market as part of ”shared, cooperative life”(197).

• Charge of idealism? (from neoclassical & Marxist economists).

• As market is seen as norm-free system, ”no longer any sense that economic interests can be re-shaped and are in fact open to interpretation”(198)
  • Isn’t classical market happy to assume any interests, subj.preferences are a ”black box”?
The ‘we’ of democratic will-formation and the role of constitutional state (253-335)

• Democratic will-formation
  a) constitutes a central aspect of social freedom: discursive will-formation, democratic cooperation
  b) produces legal regulations concerning other institutions (and is useful in many respects, epistemic justification of democracy)
  c) presupposes and should be responsive to pre-democratic aspects of freedom (legal freedom, moral freedom, social freedom in personal relationships, social freedom in market economy)
     • Some democratic theories argue for no limits; liberal individualism happy with legal and moral freedom; Honneth’s speciality the other aspects of social freedom.
Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals*
French Revolution

Equality as relation:
1) Similarity
2) Independence
3) Citizenship

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<tr>
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<td>Rights of man</td>
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<td>World of like human beings</td>
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<td>Society of autonomous individuals</td>
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<td>Citizenship</td>
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<td>Community of citizens</td>
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19th century

• Re-formulation of equality under capitalist conditions → four pathological solutions

• 1) liberal-conservatism → minimalistic, juridical re-interpretation of equality; naturalization of inequality

• 2) communism → market-competition is source of all evil; community of equals is realized at the price of a de-individualization and homogenization of society

• 3) national-protectionism → class-struggle is replaced with national unity in the face of an external threat

• 4) racism → class-struggle is replaced with an imagined unity of a superior white race
20th century

• Welfare state → equality through redistribution

• 1) institution of a progressive income tax
• 2) the advent of social insurance to protect individuals from life’s risks
• 3) introduction of collective representation and regulation of labor

• Importance of sociology (e.g. Durkheim’s ‘organic solidarity’) for stressing our interdependency and for socializing responsibility
1980s - the present

• Crisis of the welfare state

• 1) De-legitimization of the institutions of solidarity
  • Problems with financing the welfare state; it is reduced to poverty alleviation
  • Paradigm of social insurance changed
  • Reagan/Thatcher: market is more efficient than the state: de-legitimization of paying taxes
  • Solidarity with the working class is replaced with concern for future generations

• 2) New type of capitalism:
  • From fordist to post-fordist organization → autonomous, self-responsible worker

• 3) New forms of individualism
  • Individualism of singularity → society becomes more complex and ‘unreadable’
1980s – the present

• Shift from redistribution to distribution
• Radicalized ideal of meritocracy

• 1) Society of generalized competition
  • Anthropological ideas of autonomy, self-responsibility and ‘taking risks’
  • The ‘consumer’ is symbol and measure of the general interest
  • Market competition establishes the proper relations among members in a society

• 2) Theories of equality of opportunity
  • Only look at individual situations, not at the social dimension of equality
  • Theories of legitimate inequality
21st century

Equality as relation:

1) Singularity
2) Reciprocity
3) Communality
Singularity

• Equality as the dynamic construction and recognition of particularities
  • vs. equality based on an abstract, universal notion of autonomy
  • vs. equality based on a specific communitarian identity

• ’This marks the advent of a fully democratic age: the basis of society lies not in nature but solely in a shared philosophy of equality.’ (The society of equals, 261)

• Problem: the ideal of singularity can become a new form of discipline
Reciprocity

• Equality of involvement:
  • parity of social engagement: equality concerning rights, duties, rules, and treatment by institutions
    • vs. free-riding, favoritism, ‘taking advantage of the system’

• Problem:
  • growing resentment among the middle class and working class against the elite and immigrants

• Solutions:
  • transparency about fiscal and social statistics
  • vigorously opposing abuse of the welfare and tax systems
  • welfare state should reduce inequality in general not only focus on poverty alleviation
Communality

• Citizenship as a social form: the individual defined by his relation to his fellow citizens

• Problem: forms of segregation
  • the rich fleeing their country to avoid taxes
  • gated communities
  • privatization of public space

• Solution: ‘production of the common’
  • participation (celebrations, demonstrations)
  • mutual understanding (overcoming prejudice and stereotypes)
  • circulation (sharing public space)
Honneth and Rosanvallon

• The realization of freedom and equality is dependent on the quality of social relations; redistribution and distribution of goods are secondary

• The task is to identify those developments that undermine the quality of social relations, which both Honneth and Rosanvallon call ‘pathologies’

• Political philosophy as social analysis and historical reconstruction against a purely normative political philosophy
• ‘Equality and liberty are in contradiction only if equality is structurally associated with the state as its agent of realization, while liberty is merely a capacity attributed to individuals. When equality and liberty are understood jointly as social qualities, as relations, they tend rather to coincide. Equality as distribution and equality as redistribution are secondary concerns.’ (The Society of Equals, 296)
France in the 1970s and 1980s

• Rosanvallon: ‘[Marxism] was the reality of the 1960s. In the 1970s, it was necessary to move beyond the program of the re-foundation or reconsideration of Marxism. Why? Because the black hole of Marxism is not its economic analysis, but its vision of politics: there is no theory of democracy in Marx.’

• Anti-totalitarian Left: Claude Lefort and François Furet criticizing Marxism, Soviet-Union, and PCF

• From utopian Marxist thinking to liberal thinking
Pathology of democracy

• The ‘Jacobin’ desire to transcend all social division by creating political unity in the form of a general will, thereby rejecting any mediation or representation between the people and the state, which usually means the supression of minority groups

• Solution: liberalism → to guarantee the separation of civil society from the state and the protection of the rights of minorities in the face of the ruling majority
Pathology of liberalism

• Denying the complexity of society and promising the end of social conflict:
  • Economic liberalism → market
  • Political liberalism → rule of law

• Can lead to de-politicization and anomie, and to technocratic, non-democratic forms of government

• Rosanvallon → to avoid both ‘democratic illiberalism’ and ‘undemocratic liberalism’
## Honneth vs. Rosanvalllon

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