

Towards Global Justice: An Interview with Nancy Fraser*

Nancy Fraser is a professor of social and political theory at the New School University in New York. She specialises in social and political issues from a critical perspective and focuses especially on justice and gender. Her publications include, for example, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (1989), *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (1994, with Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell), and *Justice Interruptus* (1997). Nancy Fraser is also co-editor of *Constellations*, an international journal of critical and democratic theory.

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Hrubec: In your theory of democratic justice, you solve contemporary dilemmas in a post-socialist age after 1989 by arguing for an integrative approach that includes both the traditional social conception of redistribution and the new multicultural conception of recognition. Could you explain the relation between these two aspects of justice in order to illuminate your theory to the readers of the journal?

Fraser: That's an excellent starting point. My work of the past 10 years has been guided by a single political-intellectual intention: to overcome the unnecessary and unproductive opposition between two different understandings of justice. The first of these is the distributive paradigm, which has dominated both Anglophone analytic philosophy and social-democratic politics in the post-war period. The second is the recognition paradigm, which has recently resurfaced in neo-Hegelian 'continental philosophy' and in various 'new social movements', both progressive and reactionary. Too often, these two paradigms are seen as mutually incompatible. Thus, some proponents of egalitarian redistribution reject the recognition perspective as 'merely superstructural' or inherently regressive, while some supporters of recognition cast the distributive paradigm as a species of outmoded materialism or reductive economism. In my view, such mutual recriminations are deeply misguided. The fact is that each paradigm brings into focus a fundamental aspect of justice, which cannot be grasped by the other. The distributive paradigm deals well with class injustices and resource inequities, which the recognition paradigm does not adequately address. Conversely, the recognition paradigm aptly handles status hierarchies and institutionalised disrespect, which the distributive paradigm does not ful-

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ly comprehend. Thus, each paradigm offers access to an essential range of phenomena that is not available to the other. Far from being mutually incompatible, then, the two paradigms complement each other. To be fully adequate, moreover, a theory of justice must encompass both dimensions, as each by itself is incomplete. What is needed is a comprehensive account that brings distribution and recognition together, in a single integrated framework, without reducing either one of those dimensions to the other.

This is precisely the sort of theory I have tried to develop. I call my theory of justice 'two-dimensional' because it treats distribution and recognition as two fundamental aspects of justice, which are analytically distinct from one another, yet mutually intertwined in social reality. On this view, social arrangements can be (and usually are!) unjust in either of at least two distinct ways: on the one hand, because economic ground rules generate distributive injustices or maldistribution; on the other hand, because institutionalised patterns of cultural value generate status inequalities or misrecognition. In the first case, the problem is the class structure of society, which corresponds to the economic dimension of social ordering. In the second case, the problem is the status order, which corresponds to the cultural dimension. In modern societies, the class structure and the status order do not neatly mirror each other, although they interact causally. In complex societies, the only way to overcome injustice is to change both those shapers of social interaction. What is needed, therefore, is an approach that integrates a politics of egalitarian redistribution with a politics of reciprocal recognition.

Hrubec: *In your book Justice Interruptus, you explain the integrative relation between the two aspects of justice in connection with two general types of possible remedies of injustice, i.e. affirmation and transformation. At the same time you analyse the aspects of justice and the types of remedy in terms of political orientations. I would also like to ask you which versions of justice/remedy you prefer.*

Fraser: *In Justice Interruptus and later writings, when I have tried to draw out the political-theoretical implications, I involved some comparative reflection on the relative merits of alternative remedies for injustice. It was in this context that I developed the distinction you mentioned, between 'affirmation' and 'transformation'. This distinction, briefly, concerns the level at which injustice is addressed: whereas affirmative remedies target end-state outcomes, transformative remedies address root causes. Thus, the first approach aims to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying social structures that generate them. The second, in contrast, aims to correct unjust outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework.*

What is most interesting, and useful, about this distinction is that it cuts across the redistribution-recognition divide. Thus, we can distinguish affirmative from transformative approaches in both those dimensions of justice. With respect to redistribution, the paradigm case of an affirmative strategy is the liberal welfare

state, which aims to mitigate poverty through public assistance, while leaving intact the structures that generate deprivation in the first place. In contrast, the classic example of a transformative strategy is socialism, which sought to redress unjust distribution at the root – by transforming the framework that generates it. That contrast is doubtless familiar to your readers. What may be less obvious, however, is that an analogous contrast can be drawn with respect to the politics of recognition. Here the paradigm case of an affirmative strategy is mainstream multiculturalism, which seeks to redress disrespect by revaluing the identities of depreciated groups, while leaving intact the symbolic structures that support them. In contrast, the paradigm case of a transformative strategy is deconstruction, which seeks to destabilise the binary oppositions that underlie existing group differentiations, such as male/female, native/immigrant, and straight/gay, thereby changing everyone's social identity. Thus, the affirmation/transformation distinction allows us to classify and evaluate alternative political strategies along both dimensions of justice.

In *Justice Interruptus*, I argued that transformative strategies were generally better than affirmative ones. Transformative redistribution reforms are less likely to promote social backlash against the beneficiaries, because they are solidaristic rather than targeted. Similarly, transformative recognition reforms are less likely to reify group identities and encourage separatism, because they blur the bases of existing group differentiations. Thus, in an intentionally provocative formulation, I proposed that the best approach was to combine democratic socialism in the economy with deconstruction in the culture. That proposal seemed to land me in an impasse, however, as both of those transformative orientations are far removed from the self-interpreted aims of most contemporary social movements and individuals.

Later, however, I came to appreciate that the distinction is not absolute, but contextual. Reforms that appear to be affirmative in the abstract can have transformative effects in some contexts, provided they are radically and consistently pursued. In *Redistribution or Recognition*, therefore, I proposed a third approach that represents a *via media* between affirmation and transformation. This third approach relies on André Gorz's idea of 'non-reformist reforms', which are policies with a double face: on the one hand, they engage people's identities and satisfy some of their needs as interpreted within existing frameworks of recognition and distribution; on the other hand, they set in motion a trajectory of change in which more radical reforms become practicable over time. By altering the terrain upon which later struggles will be waged, non-reformist reforms expand the set of feasible options for future reform. Over time their cumulative effect could be to transform the underlying structures that generate injustice.

This idea of non-reformist reform can help us to finesse what I am now tempted to call 'the transformation-affirmation dilemma'. No longer constrained to choose between them, we can look for strategies that combine the political feasibility of welfare-state multiculturalism with the radical thrust of democratic-socialist deconstruction.

Hrubec: Could you now apply your explanation to the issues of gender and/or ethnicity, for example? Moreover, if you could first introduce your normative notion of parity of participation, which I found very instructive, it would give a general picture of your theory before you apply it.

Fraser: Certainly. As soon as I decided to develop a two-dimensional theory of justice, I realised I needed to find an overarching normative principle that could encompass both distribution and recognition. Only by bringing both dimensions under a single principle of justice could I integrate them within a broader comprehensive framework. I devised the principle of parity of participation for this purpose. According to this principle, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers. A society is unjust, therefore, when it is structured in such a way as to deny some members the chance to participate fully in social life, on terms of parity with the others. That can happen, moreover, in at least two different ways. First, the distribution of material resources can be so unequal as to deny some social actors the resources they need in order to participate as peers. Second, the institutionalised patterns of cultural value can be so hierarchical as to deny some the requisite standing. In order to approach justice, therefore, a society must meet two conditions. On the one hand, it must eliminate economic obstacles to participatory parity, such as deprivation, exploitation, and gross disparities in wealth, income, and leisure time. On the other hand, it must eliminate cultural obstacles by de-institutionalising value patterns that deny some people equal standing. In my view, both of these conditions are necessary for participatory parity. Neither alone is sufficient. The first brings into focus concerns traditionally associated with the theory of distributive justice, especially concerns pertaining to the economic structure of society and to economically defined class differentials. The second brings into focus concerns recently highlighted in the philosophy of recognition, especially concerns pertaining to the status order of society and to culturally defined hierarchies of status.

In general, then, the principle of participatory parity applies to both distribution and recognition. Conceiving each dimension as concerned with a different type of obstacle to equal participation, this approach brings both of them under a single normative measure, yet does not reduce either one to the other. Thus, the view of justice as participatory parity allows us to integrate redistribution and recognition within a single comprehensive framework, while respecting their mutual irreducibility.

I can illustrate this approach, as you suggested, by reference to injustices of gender. I prefer to discuss gender, as opposed to ethnicity, because it is a subject I have worked on a lot. But both these axes of subordination exemplify the virtues of a two-dimensional conception of justice, because both are themselves two-dimensional. Let me explain.

Women's subordination has both a distributive aspect, which comprises the traditional concerns of socialist-feminism, and a recognition aspect, which com-

prises the newer concerns of cultural- and discourse-theoretical feminism. Both dimensions are integral to sexism in modern society. The distributive dimension is rooted in the economic structure of society. Founded on a gendered division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour, this structure generates a division within paid labour between higher-paid, male-dominated, manufacturing and professional occupations and lower-paid, female-dominated 'pink collar' and domestic service occupations. The result is a gendered political economy, which institutionalises gender-specific forms of distributive injustice. In contrast, the recognition dimension of sexism is rooted in the status order. Governed by gendered patterns of signification, this order institutionalises a hierarchy of cultural value that privileges traits associated with masculinity, while devaluing traits coded as feminine. Embedded in most major social institutions, this symbolic hierarchy regulates broad swaths of social interaction. The result is an androcentric status order that generates gender-specific injustices of misrecognition, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and myriad forms of discrimination.

The view of justice as participatory parity is especially well suited to this problem. By submitting both dimensions of women's subordination to the overarching norm of participatory parity, this approach supplies a single normative standard for assessing the overall justice of the gender order. Insofar as the economic structure of society denies women the resources they need for full participation in social life, it institutionalises sexist maldistribution. In so far, likewise, as the status order of society constitutes women as less than full partners in interaction, it institutionalises sexist misrecognition. The overall result is a morally indefensible gender order, in which two basic aspects of sexism are intertwined. Thus, the norm of participatory parity serves to identify, and condemn, the full extent of gender injustice in modern society.

Hrubec: You discuss *folk paradigms of social justice as discourses diffused through democratic communities* in your book *Redistribution or Recognition?*, which you wrote together with Axel Honneth. The paradigms serve as a starting point and a practical reference point for your principle of participation parity, i.e. as a foothold in the existing social world which, however, has to be critically studied from perspectives of normative (moral philosophical) and empirical (social theoretical) conceptions. That is how you make the requirements of immanence and transcendence compatible. Could you explain it?

Fraser: Let me begin by noting that one can understand the terms *redistribution* and *recognition* in two different senses. In one sense, these terms refer to philosophical paradigms for theorising justice, which have been explicitly and reflectively elaborated by moral philosophers. Understood in this sense, the distributive paradigm owes its current form to the conceptual work of twentieth-century analytic thinkers, such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, while the recognition paradigm derives its present incarnation from the efforts of neo-Hegelian philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth. In a second sense, however, redistribution and recogni-

tion refer to 'folk paradigms', which inform struggles in civil society. Tacitly presupposed by social movements and political actors, but not explicitly theorised, folk paradigms are sets of linked assumptions about the causes of and remedies for injustice that underlie political claimsmaking in democratic societies. Thus, the folk paradigm of redistribution has informed more than a century's worth of social struggles, including those associated with social democracy, democratic socialism, and New Deal liberalism (in the United States). Likewise, the folk paradigm of recognition is currently informing diverse struggles over status and identity, including those associated with multiculturalism, gay liberation, and human rights.

Now, as soon as one distinguishes folk paradigms from philosophical paradigms, the question arises: what is the relation between them? Although this question is of little interest to practitioners of freestanding moral philosophy, who largely ignore folk paradigms, it assumes importance for those, like me, who seek to renew the project of Critical Theory. That project, which descends from the Frankfurt School, endeavours to bring moral philosophy into a fruitful relation with social research, including the study of social conflict and political culture. Thus, the critical theorist eschews the god's-eye-view standpoint of traditional theory, which seeks to confront an apparently separate social reality with an independent 'ought' from on high. Mindful of her own social and historical situatedness, rather, she adopts a reflexive orientation and aims to establish a dialogic relation with other constituents of social reality, especially actual or potential agents of emancipation. To this end, the critical theorist interrogates the status of her own normative categories. How, she asks, are the latter related to the folk categories that are diffused throughout the society and employed by social actors to evaluate and criticise their form of life?

My own view of this relation is elaborated in *Redistribution or Recognition?* There I argued that Critical Theory should derive its normative categories from a process of critical engagement with the folk paradigms that structure contestation in contemporary society. In the first instance, we should identify the principal folk paradigms that underlie political claimsmaking. Then, we should test the adequacy of these paradigms in the light of moral-philosophical and social-theoretical reflection, asking: Do the folk categories adequately grasp the nature and extent of current injustices? Do they enable social actors to conceptualise both the structural mechanisms that generate injustice and the appropriate forms of redress? Or do these paradigms need reconstruction? Conversely, however, we should also test the adequacy of our philosophical paradigms and social theories in the light of the insights contained within folk paradigms. Here we must ask: Do our theories illuminate the nature and sources of the injustices experienced by social actors? Or do our theories themselves need revision? The result will be a circle of critical reflection in which folk paradigms and philosophical paradigms communicate with, and correct, one another.

In so far as it proceeds in this way, Critical Theory can establish a relation to social reality that is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. On the one hand, because our categories derive ultimately from folk paradigms, they will have a foothold in social reality—which means they can gain critical traction and speak to

potential agents of emancipation. On the other hand, because they have gone through a process of critical scrutiny and theoretical refinement, our categories can point beyond the existing social reality and enable radical criticism of it. The result is that our critique is at once immanent and transcendent – ‘in but not of’ contemporary society.

Hrubec: *In this context and in comparison with Honneth’s more or less internal point of view of the people in the process of identity formation, I would like to ask which role your status model of recognition – which seems to be the more or less external sociological point of view – plays.*

Fraser: On my account, recognition is a question of social status. What requires recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of group identity. Rather, it means social subordination in the sense of being prevented from participating as a peer in social life. To redress the injustice requires a politics of recognition, but this does not mean identity politics. On the status model, rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognised party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with other members.

To treat recognition as a matter of status entails examining institutionalised patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality. When, in contrast, institutionalised patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible, hence as less than full partners in social interaction, then we must speak of misrecognition and status subordination. In cases of the second type, claims for recognition are in order. But they do not aim to valorise subjects’ identity. Rather, claims for recognition in the status model seek to remove obstacles to participatory parity. They aim, that is, to deinstitutionalise patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it.

In general, then, the status model represents a major revision of the folk paradigm of recognition. But it also revises the standard philosophical understanding, including that of Axel Honneth. You are right to observe that my approach moves the concept of recognition out of the orbit of subjective suffering and identity deformation and into that of social institutions and public-sphere debates. Thus, the status model locates the moral wrongness of misrecognition, not in subjective psychical suffering and identity deformation, but in institutionalised status subordination, which impedes participatory parity. Likewise, it traces the source of misrecognition, not to interpersonal dynamics, but to institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value that constitute some people as less than full partners in social interaction. Then, too, the status model proposes that recognition claims be warranted, not monologically,

through appeals to authentic identity or psychical suffering, but dialogically, in democratic public-sphere arguments, by appeal to the standard of participatory parity. Finally, my approach entails that the best way to overcome misrecognition is not by changing people's attitudes about one another or re-engineering their identities but by institutional change: the goal is to de-institutionalise parity-impeding value hierarchies and to replace them with parity-enabling alternatives.

This is why, no doubt, you view my account of recognition as more 'external' and 'sociological' than Honneth's. I have no objection to that description. But I would add that, precisely for these reasons, my conception is better suited to a Critical Theory that seeks to promote democratic struggles for social justice in a globalising world.

Hrubec: *Following your approach to immanence and transcendence and taking into account Marcuse's triadic approach, how would you formulate a relationship among good facticity (in other words: positive fragments and progressive tendencies, i.e. social movements, for example), practical criticism of bad facticity, and social norms? And how is this practical trichotomy related to a theoretical one, i.e. description, criticism and normativity?*

Fraser: This question really gets to the heart of my understanding of Critical Theory. The trick, as you say, is to establish the right sort of relationship among social description, social criticism, and normative theorising. My approach starts with the most basic folk ideal of modern society: the equal freedom and moral worth of human beings. Deeply rooted in the history of social struggles, this ideal continues to inspire social movements today. Thus, it represents an instance of 'good facticity'. Embedded in political culture, the ideal of equal freedom motivates emancipatory protest and structures political claimsmaking. But its full implications are not given once and for all. They unfold historically, rather, acquiring further depth as actors apply this ideal to new problems in new situations. Thus, the idea of equal freedom can transcend any given context in which it is situated. Endowed with a normative surplus, this norm points beyond the given, toward radical criticism, and transformation, of existing society.

In my view, the key to establishing a fruitful relation among your three elements of description, criticism, and normativity lies in the expansive, emancipatory potential of the ideal of equal freedom. For me, accordingly, critical theory should activate the surplus normativity of this ideal. Reconstructing its progressive enrichment in the course of the history of social struggle, we should plot the ideal's trajectory so as to disclose its still unrealised critical potential. In so doing, the theory can configure the elements of your Marcusean triad in such a way as to clarify the prospects for emancipation in the current conjuncture.

That, at any rate, is how I proceeded in *Redistribution or Recognition*. There I theorised the principle of participatory parity as a radical-democratic interpretation of the ideal of equal freedom. On this view, participatory parity appears as the outcome of a historical process that has enriched the meaning of that ideal over

time. In this process, social struggles have expanded both the scope and the substance of equal freedom. Once restricted to religion and law, the reach of that ideal was extended, first, to politics, through struggles for universal suffrage; then to labour relations, through trade union and socialist struggles; then to family and personal life, through feminist and gay-liberation struggles; and finally to civil society, through struggles for multiculturalism. In each such arena, moreover, the meaning of equal freedom deepened as well. Today, for example, it is no longer thought sufficient merely to accord everyone equal formal rights. Increasingly, rather, people believe that equality should be manifest substantively, in real social interactions. The result is that the ideal of equal freedom is becoming substantialised. No longer restricted to formal rights, but also encompassing the social conditions for their exercise, this equal freedom is coming in effect to mean participatory parity. Participatory parity, then, is the emergent historical 'truth' of the ideal of equal freedom.

The consequences for Critical Theory are profound. If we centre our theory on the principle of participatory parity, we can establish a fruitful relation among good facticity, bad facticity, and normativity.

Hrubec: *I would like to ask what you are planning to work on in the forthcoming academic year.*

Fraser: I am beginning work on a new project, tentatively titled 'Post-Westphalian Democratic Justice'. My aim is to theorise a structural transformation in the grammar of democratic justice that is emerging now, in the wake of what is usually called 'globalisation'. Processes associated with that term are causing me to revisit my previous two-dimensional theory of justice. Today I maintain that an adequate theory of justice must be *three-dimensional*. The reason is that the acceleration of globalisation has fundamentally transformed the circumstances of justice – by altering the scale of social interaction and de-centring the Westphalian territorial-state frame. Today, accordingly, the national framing of political claims making no longer goes without saying. On the contrary, from Chiapas to Kosovo, from international feminism to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, the characteristic conflicts of the present exceed that frame. Far from taking for granted existing national and international structures of governance, such struggles suggest that justice may require decision making in a different frame. Under these conditions, neither distribution nor recognition can be properly understood without explicit reference to the problem of frame. Both those dimensions of justice must be resituated in relation to another major aspect of social normativity, which was neglected in my previous work. Henceforth, redistribution and recognition must be related to *representation*, which allows us to problematise governance structures and decision-making procedures. Explicitly thematising the problem of the frame, this notion points to yet another class of obstacles to justice: neither economic nor cultural, but political. Representation, accordingly, constitutes a third, *political* dimension of social justice, alongside the (economic) dimension of redistribution and the (cultural) dimension of recogni-

tion. And so I am now beginning work on a new book in which I hope to work out the theoretical and practical implications.

Hrubec: You specify the development from the establishment of the post-socialist age to the contemporary situation with the statement that issues about justice leave out a Keynesian-Westphalian frame, which limited claims for justice through the boundaries of territorial states. I guess you would agree that we may talk about a new post-Westphalian frame, especially in relation to the contemporary debates about justice and not too much in relation to (in)justice itself. I think that we have to admit that the disputes about justice should have broken down the Westphalian frame of territorial states earlier. The so-called Cold War, for example, was very 'hot' in Vietnam and other states that were dragged into the global war turbulences. Czechoslovakia, occupied by Soviet troops in 1968 and by Soviet economic interventions, was not totally cold either. Despite the undeniable fact that strong financial, economic and other global forces came into existence in the 1990s, I would like to ask: would you accept that the term 'Cold War' and the contemporary delayed breakdown of the Westphalian frame are to some degree a West-centric and Soviet-centric point of view, i.e. the point of view of subjects who were not affected by global forces in their territories earlier?

Fraser: It is questions like this one that make me appreciate the importance of transnational and transregional communication. By counter-posing a view from the former 'second world' to fashionable 'first-world' discourses about globalisation, you expose the limited, parochial character of the latter. But let me backtrack and explain what I mean.

Earlier this year, I devoted my Spinoza Lectures at the University of Amsterdam to the problem of the frame. I introduced this problem by observing that there exists today, thanks to the salience of globalisation, an increased awareness that the modern territorial state is not always the appropriate frame for thinking about justice. Delivering the first of these lectures in Prague, I claimed that the time was past when it could simply go without saying that questions of justice concerned relations among fellow citizens, that they were subject to debate within national publics, and that they contemplated redress by national states. I also claimed that this ensemble of assumptions, which I called the 'Keynesian-Westphalian frame', had been taken for granted throughout much of the post-war period. Presupposed by most political actors, that frame was also assumed, without explicit justification, by philosophers who theorised justice in both the distributive and recognition paradigms. I argued, too, the experience of globalisation is currently destabilising the Keynesian-Westphalian frame. The result, I said, is to put the question of the frame squarely on the philosophical and political agenda.

But you are right, of course, that not everyone took the Keynesian-Westphalian for granted in the post-war period. For those living under direct Soviet domination, the view of justice as an exclusively national affair must have long been suspect. Likewise, for many in the so-called Third World, the claim that some justice issues require a transnational frame is hardly news. As you rightly note, only people living in

wealthy democratic welfare states, who benefited from both neo-colonialism, on the one hand, and Cold War military Keynesianism, on the other, had the luxury of bracketing the transnational conditions of their own relative privilege and prosperity.

That said, it remains the case that the problem of the frame enjoys a new salience today – if only because those who once had the luxury of ignoring it can no longer do so. Today, North Americans and Western Europeans find themselves in the same boat as everyone else on at least this one point: thanks to heightened awareness of globalisation, they too observe that the social processes shaping their lives routinely overflow territorial borders. Like others, moreover, they note that decisions taken in one territorial state often impact the lives of those outside it, as do the actions of transnational corporations, international currency speculators, and large institutional investors. Like everyone else, they also note the growing salience of supranational and international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, and of transnational public opinion, which flows with supreme disregard for borders through global mass media and cybertechnology. The result is that even the most privileged inhabitants of the globe now sense their vulnerability to transnational forces. Faced with global warming, the spread of AIDS, international terrorism, and superpower unilateralism, they too believe that their chances for living good lives depend at least as much on processes that trespass the borders of territorial states as on those contained within them. Thus, they, too, can no assume without argument the Keynesian-Westphalian framing of questions of justice. They too must confront the problem of the frame.

Thus, I accept your point about the West-centric character of my initial introduction of the problem of the frame. (And I also accept your related point about the expression the ‘Cold War’.) Nevertheless, I am convinced that my larger point still stands. In the current conjuncture, theorists of justice should not focus single-mindedly on debating the question, ‘equality of what?’ In addition, they should devote a significant portion of their energies to the question, ‘equality among whom?’ This means evaluating the relative merits of nationalism, liberal internationalism, and cosmopolitanism with respect to issues of distributive justice, on the one hand, and of recognition, on the other. And it also means considering yet a third question: *How* should we decide between alternative frames? These, as I said, are the questions I shall work on in the coming period.

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SS 04:4

Structural Tensions in the Interface between the Labour Market and Social Policy in the Czech Republic

Jiří Večerník

Efficient policies must be based not only on mainstream economics but to a large degree also on the social sciences. This study tries to demonstrate the links between the social structure and social policies. While in traditional societies structures mostly precede policies, to a great extent it is the opposite that occurs during the transition from a command to a market economy. The post-communist state interferes more than other governments in the social structure, and it supports strong actors. This hinders the expansion of the main actor in a successful transition – the middle-class – whose stagnation or adverse development causes the social structure (disintegrated, polarised, and unstable) to become implicitly the main social problem, which in turn generates other 'minor' problems. The middle-class perspective provides the framework for many tensions and latent conflicts in the structure of society.

Using a socio-economic approach the study presents four types of socio-economic friction, which develop between the middle class and other groups, between the new and the old middle class, between pensioners and the economically active, and between people with employment and the non-working poor. The first involves insufficient incentives for middle-class expansion, which leads to a socio-economic trap: social polarisation. The second relates to tensions among various sections of the middle class, which result in a socio-structural trap: the autonomous corporatisation of sections of the middle class. The third is linked to the pension system, which can give rise to a socio-political trap: excessive redistribution. The fourth involves the effective ratio between the wages of low categories of workers and the guaranteed subsistence income, which creates a socio-cultural trap: the spread of dependency status.

Such controversies are observed also as examples of an integrative approach to human resources development and the process of social inclusion. Social cohesion cannot be reached only from without, i.e. by redistribution, which must remain within limits so as not to hinder social change by distorting individual motivation and personal effort. The delineation of such limits cannot be drawn from a rational economic calculation alone; the social structure and its political, economic and cultural dimensions must also be taken into consideration, as when certain of their limits are exceeded another type of redistributive trap evolves; one that in the end, however, leads to a similar type of stagnation.

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