

Subjectivity, Redistribution & Recognition

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Nancy Fraser observes that the norm of participatory parity allows the adjudication of claims for social justice, irrespective of whether claims are made in terms of redistributive justice, cultural recognition or equality of representation. (Fraser 2003: 37) Yet despite the importance of this observation for social movement struggles, it remains unclear, the actual terms on which claims made against participatory parity should be redeemed. Fraser assumes that although the claimant is a social movement, parity of participation is claimed on behalf of individuals. For example, 'what requires recognition ... is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction.' (Fraser 2000: 113). That is, the claim is formulated by a group, but it is *individual* members who need to be full partners. There are therefore two agencies involved - the individual and the group, but the pivotal relationship between these two agencies is taken for granted.

I propose that the reason for this unclarity¹ is that modernity has engendered a widespread, universalist consensus in favour of the equal moral worth of all persons, while efforts to grasp this theoretically tend to misfire because the *person* as a *sovereign subject* is wrongly taken to be a *fact*, or at least a *norm*, rather than the end of a still-unfinished, long drawn-out historical process. To presuppose a world of sovereign individual subjects begs the question. The majority of people today feel powerless, and lack effective agency in their own lives.

From the perspective of an Hegelian-Marxist with a pragmatist twist, I will argue that the *problem of agency* is the main source of social injustice today. Crucial to my argument is Hegel's conception of the Subject as a cultural-historical formation, uniting the individual, universal and particular in a single concept. Amartya Sen's notion of 'critical voice' goes some way towards what I am advocating. The notion of subjectivity which I am proposing can be seen as a *radicalisation* of Nancy's Fraser's idea of participatory parity, emphasising not just the institutions which offer parity, but the activity of those who participate.

By 'subjectivity' I mean the coincidence of three things: *knowing, agency and identity*; a subject is a self-conscious, knowing agent, someone or some group which can and does take responsibility for their own actions. Subjectivity inheres in people, their social relations and their activity; modern subjectivity is always multiply determined, and the cognitive, agency and identity aspects of subjectivity are never absolutely unique, stable and coincident with one another.

The word 'subject' comes from the Latin '*subjectum*' (OED 1989), as the substance from which things (including kingdoms) are made, the bearer of attributes, or in grammar, the carrier of predicates. But in the early 1600s, 'subject' turned from being the passive bearer of predicates to become the active *doer* of verbs. Descartes, for whom mind was a *substance*, used *subjectum* to mean the thinking and cognising mind in which all ideas and representations inhere, as opposed to an outside, material substance. (Descartes 1637, OED 1989) This usage was consolidated by Kant, who continued the posing of the problem in terms of a reasoning and experiencing individual mind, organising its perceptions of the material world, and gave 'subject' its modern ethical meaning, as the *sovereign individual* person:

A person is a subject whose actions can be imputed to him. ... *a person is subject to no other laws than those he gives to himself*, either alone or at least along with others. (Kant 1996: 378)

Because Kant separated the subject from its specific cultural and historical location, Hegel held that he reduced the subject to ‘utter abstraction, total emptiness’. (Hegel 1975: 72) Hegel, by contrast, did not begin from the posing of the problem in terms of mind vs matter, individual vs culture; for Hegel, human culture develops, and consciousness develops *along with* all the artefacts and practices, languages, art, industry and so on, while the mental and material are just two sides of one and the same activity. (Hegel 1979: 102, Hegel 1975: 35)

So with Hegel, ‘subject’ meant the self-conscious, self-legislating social actor which is simultaneously corporate and individual. His basic unit of analysis (Vygotsky 1997: 132) is a ‘self-conscious system of activity’ (Leontyev 1978) which from the very beginning has individual, universal and particular aspects (Hegel 1969: 600), as well as being duplicated as both ideal and material. (Hegel 1910: §178)

Although linked for Hegel to a metaphysical conception of social action, this idea is open to a *pragmatic* interpretation which points to a democratic concept of justice. Hegel’s subject develops historically and logically through a process of *differentiation*, with the individual both producer of the activity of ‘collective subjects’ and the product of their differentiation. In contrast to the abstract intersubjectivism of Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1998) and Axel Honneth (Honneth 1995), Hegel highlights the role of *mediation* in social action.

In her writing, Nancy Fraser talks alternately of subjects (in the usual contemporary usage, meaning individual agents) and ‘collective subjects’ (corporate entities and social movements). Neither of these notions can capture the complexity of modern subjectivity, but Hegel offers an alternative approach.ⁱⁱ

In the critical tradition, social justice is often posed exclusively as a problem of *intersubjectivity*. But this is a mistake, not only because intersubjectivity excludes mediation, and thereby essentially *culture*, but because intersubjective relations are dependent on prior intrasubjective and subject-object relations. Most people experience institutions as *objects* not subjects, in fact. Rather than the intersubjective relation, it is the subject-object relation, the activity of a subject in the world around it, which is the subject’s primary and most fundamental relation. For example, in the early parent-child relation, the child cannot know the parent as another subject like itself;ⁱⁱⁱ its first task is to differentiate itself from an objective world, and only later does the child realise that that objective world contains other subjects. (Piaget 1955: 87) Likewise, states do not treat other states as subjects like themselves until compelled to do so by those other states; in the beginning, other states or cultures are just part of the outside world. Before a subject knows anything about another subject, it assimilates the properties of its environment by *objectifying*, or institutionalising itself, and accommodates itself to the world by *internalising* properties of its environment. (Piaget 1955: 350)

Although it is only through its objectification that we get to know about a subject, a subject is *not equal* to its objectification; in fact, a subject is alive only to the extent that it *opposes* its own objectification. A trade union, for example, which has no other life than performing the functions set out for it in its industrial agreements, and has no plans to overthrow those agreements, is dead.

This subject-object relation is distinct from and prior to the subject-to-subject relation. For example, you can negotiate with another subject^{iv}, but you don't negotiate with an object; your relation to a bureaucrat or a supermarket is purely instrumental. It is a completely different relationship.

The relation of a person to a subject in which they participate, a subject which expresses *their own* will and aspiration, is different again. For example, we reserve the right to scold a member of our own family that we would not extend to an outsider. The well-known aphorism, associated with Kant (Kant 1996: 379) and Rousseau (Rousseau 1913: 210), that we see as binding only those rules which we can be deemed to have participated in making, expresses the same idea. Further, *within* a subject, participation and recognition do not imply equality, at least not liberal, individualistic equality. Membership of a subject represents a form of moral equality which has ancient provenance, but generally requires that an individual be treated *according to their station*, without prejudice or favour, and according to the rules of that subject. Equals should be treated equally, unequals unequally. (Heller 1987: 18) Agnes Heller has described the contrast between the 'loose ethos' within which pluralism and moral egalitarianism prevail, and the 'dense ethos' within institutions where the hierarchical relations prevail. (Heller 1988: 165, c.f. Putnam 1993: 171) Families, unions, parties, companies, social movements, ... are all hierarchical.

At the same time, modernity continues to generate a contradictory type of egalitarian individualism. But to apply such an egalitarian individualism without regard to existing relations of subjectivity actually has the effect of pre-supposing an atomised neo-liberal dystopia.

Ethical principles take on the character of moral axioms only once they have become embedded in institutions. The individuation of the notion of subjectivity began with the growth of bourgeois society in the early 17th century. Globalisation, the marketisation of social relations and the embedding of recognition struggles in the labour market, has by now created a firm prejudice in our minds for the equal moral worth of all *persons*.

The secret of the expression of value, namely, that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent ... cannot be deciphered until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice. This, however, is possible only in a society in which the great mass of the produce of labour takes the form of commodities. (Marx 1996: 70)

But this 'in-itself egalitarianism' would be objectified only through a long-drawn out historical process. From the Chartists of the 1830s onwards, social movements have aimed to achieve their objectives by broadening and strengthening the franchise, ultimately leading to the normalisation of *universal individual suffrage*. It is *this* institution which has been crucial in creating the counterfactual popular conception of the individual as a sovereign subject. As Axel Honneth said: 'under the conditions of modern societies, every conception of justice must have an egalitarian character from the start.' (Fraser 2003: 176)

(The evidence from the history of philosophy and language is that the individualist turn in the conception of subjectivity dates from the early 17th century, associated with the rise of bourgeois society. The *actual eclipse* of collective subjectivity by conceptions of individual sovereignty is a much more recent shift.)

But with this moral egalitarianism has come enormous differences in wealth and power. The co-genesis of external moral equality and sharpening instrumental inequality is a form of '*neo-colonialism*'. This notion entered the language in the early 1960s, to describe a form of domination resting on recognition of the *formal equality* of states, combined with the use the *market* by dominant states to exercise subordination - a practice pioneered by the US in the first decade of the 20th century. 'Neo-colonialism' can be taken as a metaphor for the predominant forms of suffering within modern capitalist countries and internationally. It is the essential problem of our times.

We can shed some light on this problem and the location of injustice within it, by further clarification of some of the basic notions used in Nancy Fraser's analysis.

Redistributive Justice

We *know* that the principle of redistributive justice is *real*, because it is objectified in systems of progressive taxation and welfare payments, with which it is *co-extensive*, that is, on the whole confined to within national borders. The principle is *internalised* by us all to one degree or another in the conviction none of us should be too poor. But where did this objectification come from?

Ideas of redistributive justice come from the 'dirty compromise' made by the elite with, in the first place, the socialist movements of the nineteenth century, demanding the right to organise, and access to the corridors of power, and later with the organised working class in the aftermath of the World War Two. I say 'dirty compromise,' because these movements were not essentially campaigns for redistribution of wealth, but for democracy and socialism, one *by-product* of which would have been redistribution of wealth. The socialist movement is a subject; redistribution may have been a remedy to the strife it caused, but it was never a remedy to its claims of injustice. Redistribution and the absorption of workers' mutual aid into the welfare state functioned to *weaken* the socialist movement.

The progressive taxation and transfer payment systems and the corresponding notions of fairness that we share today are not the expression of a movement for redistributive justice. Contemporary popular notions of redistributive fairness are the *internalisation* of the principles objectified in the industrial courts, tax offices, welfare payments, etc. - the outcome of *settlements* made by dominant subjects to demobilise radical subjects.^v If these institutions are the expression of the aspirations and needs of *any* subject, it is not that of the poor, but that of the better-off, for whom these institutions provide social peace.

None of this is to deny that redistribution is a *real* 'paradigm of justice,' as it would have to be, after more than a century of regulated wage determination, progressive taxation and welfare systems.

Nancy Fraser has expanded the concept of 'redistribution' to include all those conceptions of injustice as rooted in political economy; social democracy and revolutionary socialism are seen then as simply affirmative or transformative remedies for the same injustice of maldistribution. A century of bureaucratic incorporation of workers' mutual aid into the state has created a genuine social basis for such an amalgam. That is to say, all the spokespeople, ideals and activities of the labour movement, have been *institutionalised*, but in the form of the state-mediated welfare and redistribution, not in the form of theories of exploitation or the abolition

of private property.

But because the incorporation of workers self-organisation into the state is one of the main causes of injustice today, the reification of this amalgam in theory should be opposed. So long as the labour movement was buoyant, the incorporation of the labour movement into the state was an *expression* of its self-consciousness, not a negation of it. But as Nancy Fraser points out (Fraser 2003: 78), only ‘nonreformist reforms’ which contribute to transforming the deep structures underlying an injustice, can survive the end of the favourable political context in which they are first instituted, when they are no longer the expression of a living subjectivity.

Recognition

The *modern* notion of Recognition originates with those movements which objected to the post-World War Two settlement referred to above, subjects claiming recognition in the new post-war order.

Use of the term ‘recognition’ in philosophy dates from Fichte in 1796 (Fichte 2000: 42). Arguing against Kant’s deduction of Right on purely logical grounds, Fichte showed that a person can become aware of themselves as a free agent only through evidence of their freedom in the external world, and this is provided by an already-free agent who recognises them as a free person. Hegel held that Fichte deduced the Freedom, i.e., the State, from the Ego, rather than conversely. (Hegel 1955: 500) This, Hegel argued by tracing the logical-historical differentiation (Ilyenkov 1982: 202) of the individual from the community.

In English, the term ‘Recognition’ originates in 14th century Scottish law, referring to the resumption of unused land from a vassal by a feudal superior. The word is derived from the same roots as ‘cognate,’ co + gnatus (born), meaning related by birth, akin; thus ‘recognise’ essentially meant ‘bring back into the family estate.’ It was later generalised to mean the registering of something as already known and derivative usages. In the sixteenth century, in a parallel shift to that already noted in relation to ‘subject,’ ‘recognition’ turned from being the act of the ruler, to mean the acknowledgment by a subject of a ruler’s rights over them. By the early 19th century, it was used in international law (OED 1989) to refer to the explicit acknowledgment of the rights of a state by another state. Thus, its original usage was only in relation to *corporate* or social subjects, not individuals. Hegel used the term Recognition [*Anerkennens*] in connection with the interaction between independent social subjects. (Hegel 1979, 1910: 176)

The concept of recognition did not figure in philosophy for a century after Hegel’s death, during which the dominant paradigm of politics was class struggle - something unknown to Hegel in its modern sense. In 1937, Alexandre Kojève (Kojève 1947) gave a series of lectures building an original philosophical position around Hegel’s ‘master-slave dialectic,’ a feature of Hegel’s system which had hitherto received little attention.

After World War Two, this notion was picked up by French intellectuals and through them, the national liberation movements, and via the civil rights movement, was introduced into the women’s liberation movement. (Blunden 2003: 53) These movements objected to being excluded from the deal by the ruling elites with the Soviet Union and organised labour movement; they demanded recognition and *inclusion* as *equals* in these arrangements. Recognition thereby became the key

concept for the whole series of ‘new social movements,’ in contrast to notions of *class* struggle. These movements have been objectified in various institutions from the United Nations to anti-discrimination laws, multiculturalism and so forth.

Note that just like the tax and welfare institutions, these objectifications are not to be equated with the social movements themselves, but the various ‘anti-discrimination’ and ‘affirmative action’ institutions still provide a real basis for moral philosophers to adopt ‘recognition’ as a principle of justice. Later, ‘recognition’ has moved into the psychological register (Honneth 1995: 75), somewhat closer to the philosophical sense given the term by Fichte, as a necessary condition for the development of identity. Nancy Fraser has proposed instead a ‘status model’ (Fraser 2000: 113) in which recognition means participation in the dominant culture without denigration, locating both recognition and misrecognition in *structural* elements of the wider society, rather than in the activity of the subject itself.

I use the term ‘recognition’ in the historically specific sense as a relation generated by the post-war social movements. I share with Nancy Fraser the view that it is properly regarded as a category referring to the *status order* rather than the political economy, and to the *ethical*, not to the psychological, register. However, I see recognition as primarily a relation *between subjects*, not as the relationship of an individual to an objectified social structure.

However, Nancy Fraser (Fraser 2003: 28) is entirely correct in rejecting Axel Honneth’s proposal to subsume all radical subjects under the concept of recognition.^{vi} Historically, recognition arose specifically as a claim made by those who were excluded, in *opposition* to the deal made with the labour movement. To re-cast the labour movement as a recognition movement is to do exactly what the participants in social movements most object to: dismissing their specific subjectivity, and subsuming it under that of another movement. Axel Honneth (Fraser 2003: 154) reduces the labour movement to a shared *psychological* condition, but millions of employees feeling misrecognition makes a sociological *category* but not a social movement, not a subject. But also, the socialist movement cannot be subsumed under ‘redistribution,’ *reducing* the socialist movement to being one *remedy* amongst others for distributive injustice. It would be more true to say that distributive justice was a remedy to having a socialist movement.

It is not just that the concept of justice prevalent in the labour movement was broader than the principle of redistributive justice, including in particular the notion of *exploitation*. What moved participants in the labour movement was a vision of the Good Life, *flowing from which* were corresponding conceptions of what constituted justice and injustice. Although of secondary importance in the subjectivity of the labour movement, it was the principle of redistributive justice which was objectified in modifications to the social structure; on the other hand, the principle of exploitation survives only in literature and rhetoric.

Since about the 1950s, the labour movement has been overtaken by other radical subjects whose claims also cannot be reduced to claims for a greater share of resources for themselves. These include the peace movement, the environmental movement and the recent anti-corporate movement. These ‘radical subjects’ provide many of today’s social justice activists. What they all have is a critique of the entire social system, a vision of the Good Life, rather than a demand for *inclusion*. Notions of what constitutes justice and injustice flow from the subject’s conception of the

Good Life. Such radical subjects must be central to the concerns of moral philosophers if the normative foundations of their theories are to have empirical backing.

The grounding norms and the value premises of both the philosophical theory and the ideal model of the best possible socio-political world cannot be termed 'empirical', but they must have, and indeed do have, an empirical 'backing'. There must be at least some people committed to the very values, and guided by the very norms, which constitute the 'normative foundation' of the theory and the ideal model of the best possible socio-political model. ... The 'empirical backing' may be understood as a bet, ... the philosopher bets on ... actors of the present committed to the same value premises and norms in their actions, ... life-styles ... in which the future society, ... a good society, must be grounded. (Heller 1987: 230)

Nancy Fraser's multi-perspectivalism provides a *social-theoretical* orientation in the contemporary moral terrain, by correlating the main coordinates in the *objectified ethical landscape* resulting from this history. However, the importance of 'parity of participation' is that it engages the *subjective* element.

Democracy

Radical subjects do not seek parity of participation for their members in the dominant culture. They aim to *overthrow*, or at least *transform*, the dominant subjectivity. Their history is inseparable from the movement for democracy. Look at the claims made by the founders of the communist movement:

Babeuf's 1796 'Manifesto of Equals' explicitly rejected equalisation of property in favour of equality of rights. The Barnsley Manifesto of 1838 makes a claim for redistribution of wealth, though is not restricted to that; the People's Charter of 1839 makes no claim for redistribution of wealth at all and is exclusively concerned with democratic reforms; August Blanqui's 1832 defence speech, the earliest statement of the aims of the first communists, is more concerned with exploitation than inequality, and like Marx and the German communists, is clearly looking to socialism rather than affirmative redistribution and clearly seeking transformations in the political sphere as a matter of principle, not just instrumentally.^{vii}

The Chartists and early European communists believed that their objectives could be achieved by and were implied in the extension of democracy. What they brought about, however, was universal individual suffrage, and this has proved to be problematic. The claim for 'majority rule' is objectified in still-unsatisfactory arrangements, which leave the majority *excluded* from the corridors of power. This objectification deserves to be critiqued in the same way that the post-war settlement left the majority excluded and was critiqued under the banner of recognition.

Nancy Fraser's concept of parity of participation has attractions therefore because it is a formulation of the requirements of justice which engages with the aspirations of both those who see their oppression as rooted in political economy *and* those who see their oppression as rooted in cultural discrimination, *and* those who see their oppression as rooted in democratic structures.

Nancy Fraser's status theory of recognition as participatory parity is a new and important contribution, not only to a theory of justice, but also to the understanding of

subjectivity. But like many theories of justice, it conceives of society as an *aggregate of many individuals* each with an individual status. This author contends that such a bi-polar approach obscures the mediating role of social formations intermediate between the institutions and the individuals, in determining *what counts to an individual as just*, in providing the avenue through which an individual seeks to obtain what is just, and *for whom*.

The problem is that ‘equal voice,’ conceived in terms of individuals, leaving out of account the *construction* of subjectivity, fails in its emancipatory function. Further, the fragmentation of the social fabric brought about by the commodification and individuation of social relations is *denying* more and more individuals any semblance of self-determination. Democratic justice needs a form which accords with the principle of the moral equality of all persons, without presupposing the *atomisation* of humanity, without *declaring* the individual a sovereign subject.

Let us take it that *persons* are bearers of moral rights, not subjects or citizens, but *persons*, children as well as adults, felons, men and women alike. Documents like the People’s Charter of 1839, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and so on, routinely excluded women, foreigners, the insane, felons and children. One of the great gains of modernity has been to extend the scope of justice to genuine universality. Nevertheless, despite the extension of *rights* to all *persons*, children and the insane are still (rightly) not regarded as *moral agents*.

Let us further take it that the content of post-traditional justice is to be determined *dialogically*. But if we recognise that ‘subject’ is not equal to ‘person’, then the meaning of ‘dialogical’ is indeterminate: dialogue between who? Let us be clear that we have neither populations divided into mutually exclusive independent ‘collective subjects,’ nor 6 billion autonomous individual subjects. Subjectivity is multiply determined, overlapping and mediated.

But the majority of the world is denied effective subjectivity altogether. People can have a say in their own life only by participation in forms of *collective* self-determination, including work, family, education and health services, politics, and so on. The worst injustice in today’s social arrangements is precisely the *exclusion* of the majority of people from participation in the determination of their own lives.

Parity of Participation

The notion of parity of participation is enormously valuable and Nancy Fraser is right in suggesting that it has traction across different folk paradigms of justice, and it could be argued that it constitutes the essential idea of the radical subjects which have fought for extension of the franchise. The problem is that this demand is still objectified unsatisfactorily. If the idea behind universal suffrage is that people have a right to a *critical voice* (Sen 2002: 258, 274) in the forums where their lives are really determined, then is it not clear that existing democratic institutions fail to deliver this? Is this not an injustice?

But this injustice is not confined to a ‘political sphere’ analytically distinguishable from the political economy and culture. The kind of injustices picked up in Fraser’s ‘third dimension’ of justice (representation) are issues like proportional representation, unequal size of electorates, limitation of election costs, etc., issues arising in respect to a separate, reified domain of electoral activity. Such a reified political domain may function to *legitimise* the denial of critical voice in the cultural

and economic spheres.

The notion of '*critical voice*' highlights the unclarity about agency inherent in Fraser's notion of participation. Sen (Sen 1998: 58) points out that a poor, uneducated person is often in no position to make judgments about the justice or not of their own lot.^{viii} This raises the notion of *critical voice*, which entails the mediation of individual consciousness by knowledge of the wider culture, and particular forms of social collaboration, that is, a developed notion of subjectivity.

Amartya Sen's notion of '*critical voice*' is a new and important way of conceiving of subjectivity in modern society. '*Critical voice*' is neither the sum of individual powers (such as wealth and education) nor the result of representative institutions, but concerns all those conditions which contribute to the capacity of people to make a difference in their own lives - the vitality of civil society, media diversity, freedom of association, social cohesion, safety of public spaces, etc.

So we must retain the universalist principle that *persons* are bearers of rights, but incorporate the fact that autonomy is exercised by participation in social subjectivity,^{ix} not just the individual right to speak and vote. An example: multiculturalism does not legitimate female circumcision, because we suspect that the female victims are not genuinely free to choose whether or not to participate in this practice. Fraser opposes female genital mutilation on the grounds that it harms the victim's '*parity [of participation] in sexual pleasure.*' (Fraser 2003: 42) But such an interpretation opens '*parity of participation*' to an infinite scope of meaning.

I take it that '*parity of participation*' means '*... in the determination of the subject's own life.*' A subject is *sovereign* if it '*answers only to its own [internal] order and is not accountable to a larger ... community, save only to the extent it has consented to do so.*' (Bederman 2001: 50) '*Parity of participation*' can surely be meaningful only in this same specific sense, as contributing to sovereignty, or self-determination. The same sense is also implied in the notion of Recognition, that '*other [subjects] are prepared to treat an entity as a member of the family of [subjects],*' (Bederman 2001: 54) and is implicit in the notion of '*equality of representation.*' (Fraser 2005)

But we cannot demand that '*parity of participation*' extend to relations *within* a subjectivity. A demand for '*parity of participation*' raised by members *within* a subject would signal the intention of the agents to assert rights against what was formerly an expression of and vehicle for their own subjectivity. Such a demand is actually paradigmatic of the destruction of community by neo-liberal capitalism (Putnam 2000: 85). If I freely choose to join the ALP or the Catholic Church, where I will have no say at all on matters of doctrine, that is my choice; it is not a question of justice. If the Pope or the Party leader is silenced, then an injustice *is* done to *me*, because it is *my* voice which is thereby silenced. On the whole, liberal egalitarian autonomy is not the norm within the '*dense ethos*' of an institution or *habitus*, but prevails only in the '*loose ethos*' of the broader civil society.^x

But the greater problem of justice is that so many people do not participate in subjectivity *at all*, that is to say, they do not have a *critical voice in decisions which affect their own life*, isolated from or subordinated in the broader culture.^{xi} '*Critical voice*' refers not to an individual's personal voice, but rather their *representation*. (Fraser 2005) Effective participation is always *mediated* and issues of injustice are rarely raised just by those individuals who are suffering. But the majority of people do not have a critical voice where it matters to them. In using the term '*critical voice*'

I specifically rely on Amartya Sen's justification of this notion; Sen has shown (Sen 2002: 258, 274) that 'voice' alone is insufficient, as subjects can be complicit in their own subordination unless they have a sufficiently *critical* voice (even high-class, educated women in India may participate in 'boy-preference').

Pierre Bourdieu shows how subjectivity is formed in a *habitus*, so that subjects can be actively complicit in their own subordination, whilst the intervention of social movements and political parties is integral to how people formulate their views about the justice or otherwise of their position. (Bourdieu 1984: 372, 418)

These observations are challenging in pointing to the kind of conception of subjectivity which is required for a modern theory of justice.

Having a vote in an election means very little to the majority of people. 'Equality of representation' (Fraser 2005) is a valuable third dimension of justice for mapping the objectified moral landscape of modern society, but it barely touches the question of subjectivity, which is the central problem of social justice today. The greatest generators of injustice are social arrangements which frame people out of decisions about their own lives and thereby consign them to poverty - for being born on the wrong side of a border or the wrong side of the tracks.

Conclusion

It goes beyond the scope of this short talk to outline a suitable conception of subjectivity. My point is only that such a conception - incorporating the mortal individual, their particular on-going forms of social collaboration, and the universal cultural-historical constructs they share - is required in order to construct a viable concept of democratic justice, that is, 'participatory parity,' in which having a critical voice in decisions affecting your own life is normative.

'Parity of participation' can lead to an effective dialogic framing of justice, which avoids the sectarian threat posed by a 'master' theory of justice. But instead of relying on the utopian ideal of the sovereign individual, a developed notion of subjectivity is needed. Such an approach would link up with the new paradigm of justice found in the anti-corporatist and anti-war movements of today, continuing the project which began in the streets of Paris and the industrial towns of England in the 1830s.

Nancy Fraser has provided one of the richest sources of perspectives into modern problems of justice we have seen for some time. My proposal is to introduce an additional nuance, namely a more developed notion of subjectivity and its distinction from objectification, into the domain she has opened up.

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ⁱ Among the writers in this debate, Nancy Fraser is probably the *least* guilty of this unclarity. My criticism is directed at Fraser, only because her approach seems the most likely to provide the opportunity to overcome this unclarity. In Axel Honneth's case, the failure in conception of subjectivity is catastrophic, marked as it is by an unbridgeable gulf between an individual subject conceived in psychological terms, and social action conceived in abstract-general terms.

ⁱⁱ The notion of 'subject' considered here should not be confused with the poststructuralist 'subject' in the sense of a structural 'subject position'.

ⁱⁱⁱ Winnicott's (Winnicott 1987) object-relation theory cited by Honneth (Honneth 1995) in support of a recognition theory of child development does not contradict the priority of the subject-object relation over intersubjectivity, as psychoanalysis pre-supposes *innate drives*, not an Ego. See my talk at the 2004 Hegel Summer School at <http://home.mira.net/~andy/seminars/solidarity.htm>.

^{iv} Throughout this paper, for the sake of clarity of expression, I refer to corporate *subjects*, rather than the more complex concept of *subjectivity*, which would presuppose the elaboration of a suitable concept of subjectivity which lies beyond the scope of this paper.

^v *For Ethical Politics* (Blunden 2003) traces the evolution of the *radical subject*, under which is included both socialist movements and 'new' social movements as well as the more recent anti-corporate movement.

^{vi} Honneth's attempt (Honneth 1995, Fraser 2003) to develop the concept of recognition through three stages fails mainly because of his individualist-psychological concept of subjectivity. His attempt to subsume human need, in the main provided via the economic division of labour, under 'love' is unconvincing to say the least. The third category of 'merit', i.e., self-realisation in the form of monetary reward, is untenable. Leaping to the social-political level, Honneth knows only abstract-general collectivities, not subjects, and it is only subjects which can claim recognition.

^{vii} Texts of these documents are available at marxists.org.

^{viii} Lukács (Lukács 2000: 63) has shown that the juridical notion of 'imputed consciousness' (the view that a person could rationally be expected to have in their position), provides a legitimate basis for seeing injustice even where the victim themselves does not.

^{ix} Whether one extends solidarity to what someone *does* with that subjectivity is another question., as per the Voltairean maxim.

^x C.f Agnes Heller's dense and loose ethos, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus and culture, Hegel's Subjective Spirit and Objective Spirit, Putnam's 'strong' and 'weak' bonds. All these writers are talking about the same dichotomy.

^{xi} An individual who participates in a subjectivity which is *isolated* is in much the same position as an individual who participates in no subjectivity at all. The high levels of social cohesion in small rural communities as compared to poor urban neighbourhoods, do not off-set social disadvantage. (Vinson 2004: 80)