

Andy Blunden 2004

## Nancy Fraser on Recognition and Redistribution

*Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.*

Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. Verso 2003.

In the first section of this exchange, Nancy Fraser restates the case for viewing modern social movements from the *two* perspectives, that of Recognition and that of Redistribution, that she put forward in Chapter 1 of *Justice Interruptus*. She has further developed her position, particularly with the introduction of the concept of *participatory parity*, and introduces a range of distinctions and measures across modern social struggles which veritably open up the terrain of modern social struggle to view in a way which is liberating in itself. Her declared aim is:

“developing an integrated strategy [which] is not the job for an individual theorist [but] a project for an emerging counterhegemonic bloc of social movements.” [p. 86]

Axel Honneth has also shifted his ground since *Struggle for Recognition*, opting for a *monological* analysis of social struggles in terms of the logic of recognition alone, rather than the “*logical dualism*” he accommodated in *Struggle for Recognition*. Honneth has become quite incoherent and unconvincing in the meantime however. He fails to engage with Fraser’s proposals and I don’t intend to further review his contribution to this volume, or deal with Nancy Fraser’s response to him. The first section therefore shall be the focus of this review.

### Two Folk Paradigms

Nancy Fraser first introduces the concepts of redistribution and recognition as two “folk paradigms” of justice.

“in their political reference ... the terms ‘redistribution’ and ‘recognition’ refer not to philosophical paradigms but rather to *folk paradigms of justice*, which inform present-day struggles in civil society. Tacitly presupposed by social movements and political actors, folk paradigms are sets of linked assumptions about the causes of and remedies for injustice. By reconstructing the folk paradigms of redistribution and recognition, I seek to clarify what and how these perspectives have been cast as mutually antithetical in current political debates.” [p. 11]

“I shall treat each folk paradigm as expressing a distinctive perspective on social justice, which can be applied in principle to the situation of *any* social movement.” [p. 12]

These two “folk paradigms” at first sight seem to be associated with, on the one hand, the class-based social movements stretching from the early communists up to the trade union and social welfare movements of today, and on the other hand, the struggles for recognition stretching from the post-world war two national liberation movements up to the identity politics of recent times. However, Fraser is at pains to point out that the two paradigms, each with their respective conceptions of justice, proposed remedies, class or status collectives and kind of group-difference, both inhabit all social movements to one degree or another. However, the *actual* differentiation of the two paradigms from each other, and the mutual antagonism and misunderstanding between them, is a real thing, and developing a theoretical framework which can interrogate both

paradigms is a practical task which materially contributes to the creation of the “counterhegemonic bloc” that Fraser alludes to.

### **Mapping social movements on the Recognition-Distribution Domain**

To illustrate the idea of recognition vs redistribution as a *domain* across which different social movements can be ordered, Fraser takes as the classic case of “redistribution” the exploited class which seeks a more just distribution of wealth; as the classic case of “recognition,” the despised sexuality which demands an end to denigration and/or just recognition of their peculiar needs. In the middle are women and blacks, groups who are affected by *both* kinds of injustice, who seek remedies of both kinds, who are constituted by both cultural and economic practices and seek both recognition and redistribution.

Fraser convincingly shows that from one extreme to the other, all groups are affected by combinations of both kinds of injustice and have both kinds of remedy open to them, though in differing degrees.

One of the most remarkable insights that flows from this viewpoint is the light it sheds on the problems of “interference” between the two axes: remedies for maldistribution which exacerbate misrecognition, and remedies for misrecognition which exacerbate maldistribution. It is this kind of insight which is characteristic of what Fraser brings to these issues and convinces one that no activist should be without her.

For example, the “backlash” effect of affirmative action: by introducing special measures to ensure women access to male jobs and thereby tackling women’s unfair share of incomes, women can become further stigmatised as getting special treatment. On the other hand, measures aimed at improving the economic position of women can *blur* gender differentiation.

Targeted welfare payments for the poor have the effect of casting those excluded from paying work as bludgers in need of hand-outs from the taxpayer. Conversely, measures to celebrate and support women’s role as unpaid carers may actually exacerbate their economic situation, making access to paid work more difficult and *consolidating* their position as unpaid helpers.

The pages of Nancy Fraser’s article are filled with “unintended side-effects” like these, and ideas about how to develop programs for reforms which can have *positive* side-effects, and work across both paradigms.

The two “folk paradigms” do not then neatly map on to a dichotomy of socialism versus “identity politics.” Fraser introduces the term “two dimensions of justice” to conjure up the image of a two-dimensional plane mapping the location of all social movements situated with some combination of Redistribution and Recognition. She later introduces a *third* dimension, and opens the possibility for further dimensions, but we will come to this later.

Fraser broadly describes the structure of the two paradigms under four headings.

“*First* the two paradigms assume different *conceptions of injustice*. The redistribution paradigm focuses on injustices it defines as socio-economic and presume to be rooted in the economic structure of society. ... The recognition paradigm, in contrast, targets injustices it understands as cultural, which it presumes to be rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication. ...

“*Second*: the two folk paradigms propose different sorts of *remedies*

for injustice. In the redistribution paradigm, the remedy for injustice is economic restructuring of some sort. ... In the recognition paradigm, in contrast, the remedy for injustice is cultural or symbolic change. ... “

“*Third*, the two folk paradigms assume different *conceptions of the collectives* that suffer injustice. In the redistribution paradigm, the collective subjects of injustice are classes or class-like collectivities, which are defined economically by a distinctive relation to the market or the means of production. ... In the folk paradigm of recognition, in contrast, the victims of injustice are more like Weberian status groups than Marxian classes. Defined not by the relations of production, but rather by the relations of recognition, they are distinguished by the lesser respect, esteem, and prestige they enjoy ...

“*Fourth* .. the two folk paradigms assume different *understandings of group differences*. The redistribution paradigm treats such differences as unjust differentials. Far from being the intrinsic properties of groups, they are the socially constructed results of an unjust political economy. From this perspective, accordingly, we should strive to abolish, not recognise, group differences.

“The recognition paradigm, in contrast, treats differences in either of two ways. In one version, they are *benign, pre-existing cultural variations*, which an unjust interpretative schema has maliciously transformed into a value hierarchy. In another version, group differences do not pre-exist their hierarchical transvaluation, but are *constructed* contemporaneously with it.” [p. 13-15]

The remainder of Fraser’s article is then to consider these two folk paradigms from four angles: moral philosophy, social theory, political theory, practical politics.

### **Class and Status**

Fraser points out that modern capitalist societies have two distinct patterns of social ordering, and thus two distinct orders of subordination, each of which generate claims of injustice. She calls these the class order, generated by the political economy, and the status order, a multifarious range of ordering covering “race, gender, nationality, age, family and so forth.

The idealised original traditional society was ordered exclusively by a status order; an idealised fully-marketised capitalist society would have eradicated all bases for status subordination not based on wealth. But modern capitalism is characterised by the intersection of both. Fraser does not accept the thesis that existing forms of status subordination are residual forms, not yet eradicated by capitalism on the grounds: (i) that former status orderings are not so much undermined, as transformed and instrumentalised by capitalism; for example, women are transformed into low-paid care workers, blacks given menial jobs, and so forth, and (ii) new forms of status subordination are generated, for example, bureaucratic subordination, new political forms, and so on.

\* I do not accept this argument. In my view, the residual forms of status subordination in modernity represent the incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution. The fact that the development of bourgeois society does not simply “melt into air” all traditional forms of subordination, is hardly a surprise; no form of subordination disappears without a struggle on the part of a subject which defines itself in terms of such subordination. We are dealing with a protracted historical epoch of struggle and it would be untenable to suppose that

inanimate or abstract forms such as “means of production” or “laws of political economy” would automatically transform relations between people. Fraser points out that her presentation of class and status in this way “historicises” the distinction, rather than “ontologising” it by assigning class to economy and status to culture.

“I assumed that status injustices can be just as material as class injustices. ... Far from ontologising the distinction, I *historicised* it, tracing it to historical developments in social organisation ... to the rise of capitalism, arguably the first social formation in history that systematically elaborates two distinct orders of subordination, premised on two distinct dimensions of injustice.” [p. 67]

This is a very good claim; however, I would go further, because as her schema stands, it leaves fully marketised capitalism at an, albeit unattainable, end of history. By viewing the eradication of status subordination and the eradication of class subordination as overlapping historical tasks working towards the *same* ends would seem to be a further step in this historicisation.

Nevertheless, Fraser’s principal point stands:

“class and status denote socially entrenched orders of subordination. To say that a society has a class structure is to say that it institutionalises economic mechanisms that systematically deny some of its members the means and opportunities they need in order to participate on a par with others in social life. To say, likewise, that a society has a status hierarchy is to say that it institutionalises patterns of cultural value that pervasively deny some members the recognition they need in order to be full, participating partners in social interaction. The existence of either a class structure or a status hierarchy constitutes an obstacle to parity of participation and thus an injustice. ...”

“virtually all axes of subordination partake simultaneously of the status order and the class structure. Thus, far from corresponding to folk distinctions, status and class represent analytically distinct orders of subordination which typically cut across social movements. What status and class *do* correspond to, however, are misrecognition and maldistribution respectively ...

“the paradigmatic status injustice is misrecognition ... the quintessential class injustice is maldistribution ...” [p. 49-50]

The preceding analysis in which Fraser deconstructs the differentiation between the two folk paradigms is a practical example of how deconstruction can serve to destabilise difference and de-reifying collectives - in this case the differentiation between “new” and “old” social movements.

Commenting on how egalitarian struggles have been eclipsed by such a diverse range of struggles for recognition, Fraser observes:

“such widespread recourse to a common grammar is striking, suggesting an epochal shift in the political winds: a massive resurgence in the politics of status.” [p. 89]

### **Recognition: a matter of justice or self-realisation**

Fraser makes a strong case against advocates of the struggle for recognition who argue for recognition as a requirement for *self-realisation*. She points out that this approach to recognition firstly depends on a specific theory of psychology, which may be fallible, and secondly, pre-supposes a certain ethical conception

of the Good life which may not be shared by others. Consequently, to argue for recognition as needed for self-realisation is *sectarian*. Social movements need to justify their aims in terms which can be reasonably accepted by others who do not share their conception of the good life, on the basis of *justice*.

### **Parity of participation**

To this end, Fraser brings forward the notion of *parity of participation* as a normative criterion by which the validity of the claims and reforms of others can be evaluated: is the subject being denied parity of participation by the social arrangements objected to? does the proposal enhance or damage parity of participation?

She points out that this is a normative criterion whose validity appears to be widely accepted across the social and political spectrum, and furthermore is being *strengthened* in conditions of modernity. The cogency of such a norm across boundaries gives *traction* to claims which can be framed and argued in its terms.

It's logic is "circular," inasmuch as modern subjects cannot be considered subject to norms which they cannot reasonably have *participated* in framing. Consequently, parity of participation must function as a pre-condition for the acceptability of *any* norm of justice which is framed dialogically.

This idea of parity of participation as a norm or measure across all claims of injustice has numerous ramifications, not least of which is that it creates a language in which differing social movements can assess and communicate each others' claims. Thus despite "perspectival dualism" there is a common measure across *all* "dimensions of justice."

### **Two conditions for parity of participation**

The norm of parity of participation leads Fraser to identify two classes of impediment to participation, two conditions which subjects require in order to participate in whatever wider deliberation they are part of: what she calls *objective* conditions and *intersubjective* conditions. A claim for parity of participation may be directed at the lack of objective or intersubjective conditions for participation (or both).

"According to the norm [of parity of participation], justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers. For participatory parity to be possible, I claim, at least two conditions must be satisfied. First, the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and "voice." I call this the *objective condition* of participatory parity. ... the second condition requires that institutional patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social parity. This I shall call the *intersubjective condition* of participatory parity. ... either burdening them with excessive ascribed "difference" or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness." [p. 36]

In this way, the idea of "basic goods" that John Rawls used to incorporate a minimal element of egalitarianism into his political liberalism is used by Fraser to demonstrate the traction that claims of maldistribution can have on the norm of parity of participation - one must have sufficient equality of power and wealth to ensure that the poor have a voice and the wealthy do not monopolise the means of communication.

### **Intergroup and Intragroup parity**

By claiming that a reform must enhance parity of participation not only in relation to other groups, but also between groups *within* a subject group, Fraser claims that participatory parity provides a means of evaluating some difficult “multi-cultural” disputes.

I think her assessment of the veils-in-French-schools debate is a good one. She supports the multiculturalist claim that the veil is an icon of Moslem identity and on that basis should be affirmed, while as a means of oppression of women its meaning is *contested*. In the long-term, admitting Moslem women to the mainstream education system will do more to break down intolerance *and* enhance the liberation of women, than forcing Moslem women into a separate school system. Reforms which create a “common material form of life” have a long-term effect which militates against prejudice and injustice, she says.

\* However, I find her response to the accusation that her approach would legitimise genital mutilation less convincing. She says that genital mutilation reduces participation of women in health and sexual pleasure. This is true enough, but eschewing universalism in favour of relying on “parity of participation,” has the effect of broadening the meaning of “participation” beyond the domain where it was supportable as a democratic norm of justice. If “parity of participation” can mean participation not just in deliberation over social arrangements but, for example, sex, then surely it becomes has the potential to become a sectarian conception of the Good life? The answer is to some extent an empirical question, that is, to what extent is “parity of participation” interpreted in “folk paradigms” in such a thoroughly egalitarian spirit?

### **Substantive and Analytical Dualism**

Fraser is at pains to point out that the two “dimensions of justice” do not operate over separate domains of social life; that is to say, despite the differentiation of the two folk paradigms in political life, status subordination and class subordination interpenetrate one another in almost every relation of domination, every group-difference and every instance of injustice.

Consequently, the distinction between “substantive dualism” and “analytical dualism.” “Substantive dualism” reifies the distinction made by the two folk paradigms as if there were some people, or at least some relations of subordination which are wholly traceable to the economic structure, while other relations of subordination belong to the status order. In fact however, “perspectival” or “analytical” dualism gives one two different insights into two different ways in which relations may be generated and interpreted, but it would be a mistake to treat economy and culture as two separate spheres - each instrumentalise and modify the other.

### **Dualism versus Monism**

Likewise, Fraser holds that dualism is preferable to monism in this question, because the status order and the economic order are in reality two different orderings of social relations in modern capitalism. Any attempt at a monistic interpretation would be committed to reducing one to the other, which flies in the face of there being two distinct historically developed systems of subordination.

Further, the multiplicity of insights Fraser offers into the interconnection between reforms and the unintended side-effects such as backlash or reification

of constructed differences, are really only possible because of the way she has made it possible to look at social arrangements and changes from two distinct points of view.

The challenge for social theory is to show how these two folk paradigms and the associated social movements have become differentiated and how, despite growing inequality, struggles for redistribution have become marginalised. Fraser gives a brief sketch of the changes that have taken place over the past century to indicate her thinking on this score, tracing the paradigm shift to changes in the labour process, the fall of the Soviet Union and cultural and economic globalisation, but there is no need to go further in this issue here. The main thing is that Fraser has offered excellent theoretical tools to practically overcome this disconnection.

### **Monologue versus Dialogue.**

Fraser raises in this context *who* is to make judgments about claims of injustice, with or without a norm such as “parity of participation.” The two schools of thought on this are *monological* and *dialogical*. In the monological view of justice, experts, philosopher-kings, revolutionaries or God makes the judgment as to what is just and promulgate “blueprints” for appropriate reforms. Thanks largely to Habermas, there is an alternative view that judgments about justice can only be rationally made “dialogically,” that is to say, by means of dialogue between all the parties affected. This is especially the case in conditions of value-pluralism and post-metaphysical morality, when only reasoned argument between the affected subjects can bring all the relevant issues to light and find a resolution to which all are committed.

### **Proceduralism vs Theorist-agent division of labour**

However, possibly referring to Habermas’s school of “communicative ethics,” or John Rawls’ political liberalism, Fraser points out that a theory of justice which limits itself to “rules of debate” to be observed by the citizens when they weigh issues of justice will be very abstract and lacking in content. Consequently, Fraser proposes a *division of labour* between the *moral philosopher* and *citizen* in the dialogical approach:

“[We] must allow for an appropriate division of labour between theorist and citizenry. Delimiting the philosopher’s province from that of the *demos*, it must discern the point at which theoretical argumentation rightly ends and dialogical judgment should begin. Where that point lies, however, is not immediately self-evident.

“... delimiting the range of permissible options entails measuring institutional proposals by a normative yardstick, which is largely an exercise in conceptual analysis. Choosing among a set of acceptable options, in contrast, entails situated hermeneutical reflection on matters that are context-specific, including what citizens value in addition to justice, given their histories, traditions, and collective identities. Political theorists *qua* theorists may be able to help clarify the former; the citizens themselves should do the latter.

“... in considering programmatic scenarios for integrating redistribution and recognition .. I shall aim to clarify the parameters the parameters of public debate ... [but] I shall not forgo substantive conclusions .. options that can serve to foster parity of participation along both dimensions of justice simultaneously and I shall propose some heuristics for a democratic discussion by which their relative merits can be weighed.” [p. 71-72]

In an uneasy combination of the *demos* of an ancient *polis* and modern individualism, Fraser disqualifies the “expert” from activity as an *agent* fighting for justice, while excluding the agent from the activity of determining the terms and limits of struggle. I don’t believe this casting of the subject of justice is tenable.

Nancy Fraser’s reflections which follow, by way of substantive conclusions, cover a number of insights which bear on *how* injustices may be redressed and on how measures aimed along one axis of subordination may have positive or negative impact in others.

### **Affirmation vs transformation**

*Affirmative* strategies are strategies aimed at redressing misrecognition by affirming the attributes of the denigrated group. Celebrating femininity and “Black is beautiful” fall under this category, as does paid maternity leave or generous allowances for stay-at-home mothers. Such measures generally assume that the difference involved is a “benign” difference, rather than one which is socially constructed, and seek to reverse the negative experience of the misrecognised subject by *affirming* its value. The result, however, is often to *consolidate* the relevant differentiation, and in the case of differences resulting from socially constructed interpretations (such as interpreting care-work as women’s work, and “therefore” of lower value), the effect may be to *reify* the difference, and hinder its deconstruction (for example, by discouraging men from taking on care-work).

Those oppressed by class differences on the other hand, hardly need their difference to be affirmed, since remedying the injustice requires abolition of the conditions which *create* the economic distinction in the first place. However, workers in low-paid, low-status jobs may still benefit from affirmation of the value of their labour, since they will receive psychological and material benefits from it, possibly a precondition for any more radical collective struggle, even though the underlying causes of their position remain untouched.

All kinds of mainstream “multiculturalism” are affirmative, seeking to validate, preserve and reinforce group relationships, and prevent not only the denigration of minority groups by the majority culture, but to prevent their weakening or extinction resulting from the combination of denigration and the dilution of the minority culture. This can have a negative impact on those who are most disadvantaged by membership of the denigrated group.

*Transformative* strategies on the other hand, seek to abolish the underlying *cause* of the differentiation. Socialism for example, does not seek to redress the poverty of exploited workers simply by getting pay-rises or improving the social status of wage-labour (necessary affirmative strategies) but to do away with a working class altogether, by transformation of the political-economic structure.

Along the *recognition* dimension, transformative strategies include *deconstruction*, which seeks to destabilise and blur the distinctions which are the focus of constructed negative interpretation. So for example, queer liberationists seek to create a perception of a multiplicity of sexual choices which blur the straight/gay dichotomy, women seek to abolish the gender division of labour by getting women into the traditional male jobs, and far from celebrating femininity, promote so far as possible the abolition of gender as a social distinction.

Thus the social-democratic welfare state and mainstream multiculturalism are *affirmative* remedies to maldistribution and misrecognition respectively, and socialism and deconstruction are transformative remedies to maldistribution and misrecognition respectively. I have some objections to the suggestion that the notion of socialist revolution is captured by the concept of a transformative remedy for maldistribution but I will return to that later.

### **Differentiation and De-differentiation**

Before moving to Fraser's interesting observations about the cross-impact of social reforms, there is one more distinction to review, that between differentiation (or reification of difference) and de-differentiation (blurring, destabilising or deconstructing differences).

Generally speaking, affirmative strategies seek to *differentiate* along the recognition axis, while deconstruction aims to *destabilise* differences. On the redistribution side, measures do not aim at either differentiation or de-differentiation, but simply seek to address maldistribution. However, redistributive measures can have differentiating and dedifferentiating consequences. Likewise, affirmative strategies can have differentiating effects which negate the intended effect. Conversely, affirmative or deconstructive measures can have unintended negative consequences along the redistribution axis.

For example, targeted welfare measures aiming to redress poverty-injustice invariably have the effect of casting the recipients in the role of bludgers who are living off the earning of hard-working taxpayers, adding the insult of stigmatisation (misrecognition) to poverty (maldistribution). Likewise, affirmative action aimed at improving the economic position of women can have the affect of stigmatising beneficiaries as recipients of unfair advantages. Multiculturalist measures can also have the effect, not only of consolidating existing power-relations within an ethnic community, way past their use-by date, but also make the community the target of stigmatisation.

Awareness of possible unintended side-effects and consideration of the use of selected *combinations* of strategies is Fraser's first suggestion for developing strategies to redress injustice.

### **Nonreformist Reform**

Her second suggestion is what she calls "nonreformist reform," moderate strategies which do not challenge existing institutions, but seek to promote changes in the underlying terrain which will facilitate more thoroughgoing transformation in the future.

"At its best, nonreformist reform combines the practicability of affirmation with the radical thrust of transformation, which attacks injustice at its roots." [p. 80]

She notes that the success of "nonreformist reform" tends to depend on the overarching political conditions, which may or may not allow reforms to engender the anticipated outcomes. So for example, focusing on increasing options for part-time and casual work may help the lot of women with family responsibilities return to work, given a benign social-democratic regime. But under a neo-liberal regime such measures would more likely lead to locking women into an insecure, low-paid casual workforce.

## **Cross-redressing**

“[Cross-redressing] means using measures associated with one dimension of justice to remedy inequities associated with the other - hence, using distributive measures to redress misrecognition and recognition measures to redress maldistribution.” [p. 83]

Examples would be improving the wages of women workers, and as a by-product improving exit options from marriage and therefore ameliorating domestic violence. Universal entitlements to social welfare rather than targeted aid for the poor, avoid stigmatising the recipients and by reducing economic differentials. They also contribute towards creating a *common material form of life*, thereby lessening incentives for maintaining racial boundaries. Comparable Worth legislation simultaneously affirms the value of women’s work while redressing maldistribution and encouraging men to take up those lines of work.

## **Boundary Awareness**

“Boundary awareness” means being aware of the impact of reforms on group boundaries, whether they will reify them or blur them.

## **Three Threats facing the Fight for Justice**

Fraser summarises the threats and pitfalls facing social movements today as three problems: the problem of reification, the problem of displacement and the problem of misframing.

### **The problem of reification**

These are the dangers, especially for affirmative strategies, where measures taken to protect victims of injustice actually entrench relations in such a way as to make further progress more difficult. This is the case not just with multiculturalism but all forms of communitarianism which reify and simplify group identities.

### **The problem of displacement**

The problem of displacement refers to the fact that the centrality of status conflicts and social struggles against status subordination have marginalised struggles over inequality, which are causing acute and widespread suffering for people unlucky enough to be born on the wrong of the tracks.

### **The problem of misframing**

The problem of misframing means the posing of problems at the wrong level (national, transnational or local). This problem is brought into focus by posing the issue of *which frame* is relevant to “parity of participation”. The construction of frames of decision-making being in fact the central problem of justice today.

## **The Third Dimension**

\* Despite the fact that almost the entire article is structured around the dichotomy redistribution versus recognition, the “two dimensions of justice,” Fraser points out that she in no way limits the number of such dimensions to two. By way of illustrating this point she raises as the most likely candidate for the third dimension, “political injustice,” the remedy for which would be “democratisation.”

“Political injustice” could encompass, for example, those who feel that being the target of a U.S. invasion without having had any part in provoking or launching the war, not to mention having a government launch a war against

another country on one's behalf; also those who believe that large corporations who ride rough-shod over environmental laws and labour legislation, governments which use their power to interfere with reproductive rights in other countries, and so forth, are committing an injustice. All those who believe that concentrating the power to decide on what is to be produced by the country's industries, and how it is to be distributed in the hands of those who *own* these industries as their private property to be a gross injustice are also situated on this "third dimension," not to mention those who believe that the country's means of communication being owned by a small handful of people may also constitute an injustice - *irrespective* of whether that power is used to sustain inequalities of wealth.

Now, we know that these kind of conceptions of justice are not very popular as the subject of moral philosophical treatises these days. But these conceptions of injustice have not only motivated millions of people across the world for a century, but still motivate social movements challenging the status quo today in the "anti-WTO movement." Green movements whose commitment to social justice is far more centred on concepts of democratisation than either equality or recognition, also find themselves situated in the "third dimension."

What does it mean to locate these conceptions in the "third dimension" of a two-dimensional domain of justice? Is it Nancy Fraser's way of conveying the idea that we are "seeing the world in only two dimensions," so to speak? Or does she mean that the socialist, anti-corporate and Refugee Support movements are all so marginal as to be not worth factoring in?

In a number of passages, Fraser incorporates the socialist project in her analysis on the basis that socialism is a "transformative remedy" for "maldistribution"? But this is not the case, is it? There can be no denying that egalitarianism has been an element in the socialist project from its beginning, and doubtless there are egalitarian elements in the anti-WTO Movement, Green and the Anti-Refugee Detention movements as well, but the idea of "political injustice" is far closer to capturing the concepts of justice which motivate movements for democracy in Indonesia, campaigns against the anti-War movement in Britain, Anti-detention campaigns in Australia, and so on.

On the other hand, Nancy Fraser's proposal for *parity of participation* well captures the idea of political injustice. It would not be stretching the concept of parity of participation very far at all to capture the idea of revolutionary socialism, and the ideals of the "No Borders" and Green movements under the concept of "parity of participation." Fraser remarks that little may be left of capitalist relations of production if "parity of participation" were to be applied sweepingly to management of corporations. And yet, "parity of participation" in the form of movements for democratisation well fits the notion of a folk paradigm. Does this perhaps prefigure something of the character of the "counterhegemonic bloc of social movements" that Fraser spoke of?

Nancy Fraser's recourse to the "third dimension" is in part an anticipated response to Axel Honneth's claim that Fraser's dualism is arbitrary. I think it needs further thought.

### **Evaluating Claims**

\* Fraser says that it is not viable to make a principle of giving the subject of a claims for justice the last word on what their needs are; rather claims must be assessed against norms of justice, in particular "parity of participation." *Who* should be making such a judgment? Fraser says that this has to be decided by

the citizens, deliberating under conditions parity of participation. However, Fraser makes a division of labour between herself as a theorist and the *demos*, restricting the role of the theorist to giving advice on the validity of norms and the scope of what can be just, within which bounds citizens may weigh things up and endeavour to reach agreement through dialogue.

One gets the feeling that Nancy is wearing two hats at once, that she is *not* simply playing the role of “expert adviser,” but is perfectly aware that she is acting as a player in the fight for justice by what she has written, and that her work will injure some and help others. In fact, she *is* part of a subjectivity contesting injustice, and she adopts the role of theorist *within* the self-conscious system of activity which constitutes a subject fighting against injustice.

Should she be blamed for being both subject and object at the same time, should she *choose*, or on the other hand, is wearing the two hats appropriate? To her credit, her standpoint in wearing two hats encourages those who are subjects of claims for justice to resort to *reasoned argument*, to appeal to possibly shared norms of justice, to avoid sectarian reliance on notions of the good, to find common cause with rival claimants. She is able to do this precisely because she is able to “wear two hats.” All individuals who participate within modern subjectivity, participate in both theoretical and practical activity, the unity of which constitutes subjectivity.

The problem is that she invites her readers to choose whether to adopt the role of participant-subject *or* objectifying-observer. But this is unwarranted. The rational-subject utilises appeals to universalisable norms of justice in preference to sectarian conceptions of the good life, and so on, because citizens participate in theoretical reflection as well as “weighing options.”

The point is that each subject must evaluate in some way the claims of other subjects. On *what basis* do those subjects evaluate?

“Choosing among a set of acceptable options, ... situated hermeneutical reflection on matters that are context-specific, including what citizens value in addition to justice, given their histories, traditions, and collective identities.”

If I understand these words correctly, this means in fact that citizens do *not* make judgments about justice. They choose which available just option is “preferable.” But perhaps this was not what was meant. But in what sense does a subject gain the right to “evaluate” the claim of another subject?

This question only leads to an untenable value relativism if we ignore the plain fact that conceptions of justice are the subject of *struggle*. One *can* take an attitude towards the struggle of another subject. One can choose whether or not to *solidarise* with them and whether or not to struggle *against* them, if the other subject’s conception of justice offends one’s own. This does not take away from the necessity that conceptions of justice need to resolve the problems that Nancy Fraser so well identifies, and arrive at agreement on norms of justice which can be rationally validated - but also to *insist* that such norms are adhered to. And this means struggle, for the world is full of injustice. The world is *ruled* by injustice. The separation of subject and object of justice implicit in Nancy Fraser’s standpoint, though belied by her own subjectivity I suspect, should be rejected. The struggling subject must have the standpoint of both theorist and subject, for subjects are not individuals who may have more or less expertise in moral philosophy, but *as subjects* incorporate both theory and practice, irrespective of whether the expertise is the task of an individual within the

struggling social subject, and independently of whether some particular activity is devoted to weighing theoretical issues or practical struggle.

Finally, Nancy Fraser concedes at one point that the most pressing problem of injustice facing the world today - the fact that the majority of the world's population, having been unlucky enough to have been born on the wrong side of the tracks, or the wrong side of the border, are denied recognition and basic goods sufficient to live. I think that the fine job of conceptual surgery that Nancy Fraser has done can be turned to good use to investigate issues of justice that are framed not in gender or class but by "geography," but that work has to be done.

The practice of framing discussion is itself possibly the major source of injustice today. Those who are born on the wrong side of the tracks are framed out of the discussion of their own fate. Nancy Fraser's ideas are an extremely fruitful source of insights into these problems.

Nancy Fraser is also an extremely *succinct* writer, and reviewing her work in a smaller number of words than she presents them in has been a challenge. She is also very precise and any attempt at abbreviation runs the risk of losing nuances. The reader would be well served by reading her in the original.