

ppi 201502ZU4645

Esta publicación científica en formato digital es continuidad de la revista impresa  
ISSN-Versión Impresa 0798-1406 / ISSN-Versión on line 2542-3185 Depósito legal pp  
197402ZU34

# CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Derecho Público "Dr. Humberto J. La Roche"  
de la Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas de la Universidad del Zulia  
Maracaibo, Venezuela



Vol.41

Nº 77

Abril

Junio

2023



## Recognition and normative reconstruction as a theory of justice in Axel Honneth

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46398/cuestpol.4177.55>

*Paulo Vitorino Fontes* \*

### Abstract

Based on Axel Honneth's concept of recognition, considered as a fundamental need of the human being, and the method of normative reconstruction, the core of a plural theory of justice is presented. The aim of the research was to articulate a normative conception of justice with the sociological analysis, by means of normative reconstruction, starting from the intersubjective dimension of the institutions of recognition. Social freedom presupposes access to institutions of recognition. Through research and bibliographical analysis, within the framework of German critical theory, a theory of justice is presented that analyzes institutions in a broad sense, through the reconstruction of already institutionalized practices and conditions of recognition, with a view to social emancipation. The main conclusions lie in the significance of the realization of freedom in patterns, not of an individual taken in isolation, but of social freedom expressed in a plural and expanded sense of "we". Thus, the spheres of realization of social freedom develop as the "we" of personal relations, of the market and, in relation to the sphere of the state, in the democratic formation of will.

**Keywords:** Axel Honneth; recognition; justice; normative reconstruction; critical theory of society.

\* PhD in Legal-Political Theory and International Relations (*summa cum laude*) from the University of Évora in 2016. Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of the Azores and Integrated Researcher at the Centre for Humanistic Studies – UAc. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1443-6820>

## Reconocimiento y reconstrucción normativa como teoría de la justicia en Axel Honneth

### Resumen

A partir del concepto de reconocimiento de Axel Honneth, considerado como una necesidad fundamental del ser humano, y del método de reconstrucción normativa, se presenta el núcleo de una teoría plural de la justicia. El objetivo de la investigación fue articular una concepción normativa de la justicia con el análisis sociológico, mediante la reconstrucción normativa, a partir de la dimensión intersubjetiva de las instituciones de reconocimiento. La libertad social presupone el acceso a las instituciones de reconocimiento. Mediante la investigación y el análisis bibliográfico, en el marco de la teoría crítica alemana, se presenta una teoría de la justicia que analiza las instituciones en un sentido amplio, a través de la reconstrucción de las prácticas y condiciones de reconocimiento ya institucionalizadas, con vistas a la emancipación social. Las principales conclusiones residen en el significado de la realización de la libertad en los patrones, no de un individuo tomado aisladamente, sino de la libertad social expresada en un sentido plural y ampliado del “nosotros”. Así, las esferas de realización de la libertad social se desarrollan como el “nosotros” de las relaciones personales, del mercado y, en relación con la esfera del Estado, en la formación democrática de la voluntad.

**Palabras clave:** Axel Honneth; reconocimiento; justicia; reconstrucción normativa; teoría crítica de la sociedad.

### Introduction

Axel Honneth, in developing the theory of recognition, has revitalized the reference to Hegel in contemporary political philosophy, especially since his work *The Struggle for Recognition* in 1992. The theoretical turn that Honneth imparted to critical theory consisted in developing the Hegelian category of *recognition* as the conceptual tool best suited to reveal social experiences of injustice and to understand the motivational source of social struggles. More recently, Honneth seeks to find, beyond a historical-genetic explanation of social demands, a normative standpoint from which to assess which claims are just and legitimate and which are not.

Honneth develops the core of a theory of justice that seeks to specify the intersubjective conditions of individual self-realization, that is, a theory of justice that is linked not to abstract models, but to a reconstruction of already institutionalized practices and conditions of recognition, analyzing social institutions in a broad sense. The author proposes to overcome the

gap between a normative conception of justice and the sociological analysis of modern societies, by proposing normative reconstruction and placing the emphasis on social freedom, based on the intersubjective dimension of the institutions of recognition.

## 1. Recognition

The idea of a struggle for recognition as a methodological key for understanding social conflicts was initially elaborated by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807-1992) during the period called “Jena”, as a reference to his stay in the city of the same name, as well as to the theoretical instrument he elaborated, as a young professor of philosophy, whose internal foundation goes beyond the institutional horizon of his time (Honneth, (1992-2011: 13). It is from here that Honneth seeks the possibility of founding a new social theory with normative content, along the lines of Max Horkheimer’s earlier contribution to critical theory.

Based on a re-reading of Frankfurt theorists, Honneth proposes the existence of three assumptions that run through his critique: (1) the declaration of a universal reason capable of making social movements intelligible; (2) the discordant performance of this reason as the cause of a pathology; and (3) an emancipatory motive identified from a suffering (Honneth, 2009a: 42).

The first two presuppositions are open-ended and, thus, it is not possible to ascertain their empirical proof. It is only from the last theoretical assumption that the theory can be given a positive content, object of experimentation. In this way, Honneth proposes the construction of a social theory with normative content, dependent on the capacity for pre-theoretical verification of social suffering, capable of informing theoretical thinking about the pertinence of an emancipatory will in society.

However, according to Honneth ([2000] 2007: 65) the Frankfurt School had remained stuck in Marxist historical materialism, linking social suffering to the particular issues of a class, the proletariat, to whom it would be up to transform their suffering into an emancipatory engine. But when history had shown that the proletarian class had transformed its suffering into support for the rise of fascism, the positive tenor initially adopted by critical theory had become ill-suited to the understanding and transformation of society.

However, for Honneth what history shows as inadequate is only the specific positive content adopted by the theory, which was linked to the exploitation of labour and not its theoretical foundation, remaining open the possibility of developing a social theory with a normative content,

provided that it starts from suffering as revealing an emancipatory will in society. For this thinker, without some kind of proof that the critical perspective of theory is reinforced by a movement in social reality, critical theory can no longer be followed in contemporaneity, since it would not be possible to distinguish it from other models of social criticism, either by its claim to a superior sociological method or by its philosophical procedures of justification. For Honneth ([2000] 2007: 66), it is only by its attempt, which has not yet been abandoned, to provide critique with an objective grounding in pre-theoretical praxis that critical theory can be said to be unique and alive.

In Honneth's (1992-2011) theoretical extension, we perceive an effort to conceptualise the three spheres of recognition: Love, Law and Social Esteem, initially identified by Hegel. These spheres of interaction, through the cumulative acquisition of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, create not only the social conditions for individuals to arrive at a positive attitude towards themselves, but also give rise to the autonomous individual.

The sphere of love constitutes the primary affective relations of mutual recognition that structure the individual from birth, and which are dependent on a fragile balance between autonomy and attachment. According to Honneth (1992-2011), the symbiotically nurtured bond, which is formed by an initially reciprocally desired boundary between mother and child, creates the dimension of individual self-confidence, which will be the fundamental basis for autonomous participation in public life.

From the normative perspective of the generalised other, which teaches us to recognise others as holders of rights, we are allowed to understand ourselves as legal persons. The sphere of law develops in a historical process, its development potential is verified in the generalization and materialization of legal recognition relations (Honneth, 1992-2011).

In order to achieve an uninterrupted self-relationship, human subjects also always need, in addition to the experience of affective dedication and juridical recognition, a social esteem that allows them to relate positively to their concrete properties and capacities. We are in the sphere of social esteem, of a third relation of reciprocal recognition, on the assumption of symmetrical valuation, individuals consider each other in the light of values that make manifest the capacities and properties of themselves and the other as important for the common experience.

The symmetrical relationship does not mean reciprocal valuing in equal measure, but rather the challenge that any subject has the opportunity to experience himself as valuable to society through his capacities and properties. Only then, following Honneth's (1992-2011) reasoning, under the notion of solidarity can social relations access a horizon in which individual competition for social valuation can be free from experiences of disrespect.

In the succession of the three forms of recognition, the degree of the person's positive relationship with himself increases progressively. With each level of mutual regard, the subjective autonomy of the individual also grows. Similarly, parallel experiences of social disrespect can be attributed to the corresponding forms of mutual recognition.

In his article "Invisibilité: sur l'épistémologie de la reconnaissance", Honneth (2005) presents invisibility as the negation of the notion of recognition. The concept and the beginning of the discussion are inspired by Ralph Ellison's book *El hombre invisible* (1984) and is based on the experience of a black character who suffers a process of "invisibilization" by white society.

Using a metaphorical idea, Honneth shows that invisibility is an active process in which contempt is evidenced: a behaviour concerning a person as if he were not and which, for him, becomes very real. Visibility, on the contrary, means recognising the relevant characteristics of a person. In this way, Honneth (2005) presents individual identifiability as the first form of knowledge. This stage is already considered a social act, since the affected individual knows of his or her invisibility by the lack of specific reactions on the part of the other or others. Besides, the lack of expressive acts of visibility may also be perceived by the other people present. Therefore, one can speak of a social invisibility, which leads Honneth to a differentiation between "knowing" and "recognising": "knowing" is then the non-public identification of an individual, while "recognising" refers to appreciation as a public act.

In an analogous way to Daniel Stern's ([1985] 1992) contributions on the interpersonal development of infants, Honneth claims that for adults too there are signs that openly show whether they have been socially approved. As evidence one can consider precisely that feeling which is produced in situations where a person is denied this approval. All expressions of approval are interpreted as a sign, in a symbolically abbreviated form, of a whole series of dispositions that refer to a set of performances that can be legitimately expected in future interactions, such as being treated with respect.

Following the argument of *Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth ([1992] 2011) adds to the elementary form of recognition through love the ideas of respect and solidarity, which place people in distinct constellations with different performances that can be legitimately expected. All of them go beyond the mere affirmation of the existence of the other, that is, of what is meant by "knowing", since they show a motivational disposition towards the other that supposes a restriction of one's own egocentric perspective and with which we grant the other a moral authority over us in interaction. Social invisibility then appears as the denial of social recognition.

For Honneth (2005) human subjects are visible to another subject insofar as the latter can identify them, according to the characteristics of the relationship, as persons clearly defined by properties, that is, when our social interaction partners recognise our singularities and qualities. According to Honneth (2005: 42), “cultural history offers numerous examples in which the dominator expresses his social superiority by appearing not to perceive those he dominates”. A subject can attest to his visibility if he forces his social interaction partner to recognize the properties and singularities that form his identity.

From Honneth’s historical-theoretical research (2008: 71) stands out the consequence, and to some extent the presupposition, that “in the relation of human beings to their world, recognising (*Anerkennen*) always precedes knowing (*Erkennen*), so that by reification we must understand a violation against this order of precedence.” Spontaneous, somewhat unconscious and irrational recognition, what the author calls a “pre-cognitive realisation of the act of assuming a certain stance” (Honneth, 2008: 73), which leads to accepting the other’s perspective after previously recognising in him a familiar intentionality, is presented as a presupposition of human interaction. This action is neither rational nor does it configure “any awareness of motives” (2008: 73).

This attitude for Honneth is not normatively oriented, although it does lead us towards some form of position-taking, which is by no means predetermined. The non-epistemic character of this elementary form of recognition is emphasised, for which reason the author sets before the differentiated spheres of recognition a stage of recognition, which appears as a kind of transcendental condition: the spontaneous recognition, not rationally achieved, of the other as a neighbour represents a necessary presupposition in order to be able to appropriate moral values, in the light of which we recognise that other in a determined, normative way (Honneth, 2008: 73)

In the absence of the experience of closeness and/or similarity to the other, we could not endow the relationship with moral values ordering our actions. Thus, in the first place, elementary recognition is necessary, “we must existentially take part (*Anteilnehmen*) in the other before we can learn to be guided by norms of recognition” (Honneth, 2008: 73) that bind us to certain ways of acting. In the process of socialization, individuals learn to internalize the culture-specific recognition norms of their culture; in this way they enrich step by step that elementary representation of the other, which is available to them by habit from an early age, with those specific values that are embodied in the principles of recognition prevailing within their society. (Honneth, 2008: 74).

What normative principles are presupposed in relation to the human being when claiming that he always refers to others in a “recognizing”

(*aner kennend*) way? The answer to this question constitutes a central concern in Honneth's reflection as he contributes to a theory of human intersubjectivity. Honneth attempts to guide sociological analysis in the study of normative claims to recognition.

Axel Honneth in his book "Crítica del agravio moral" (2009b) also presents us with a theoretical proposal for the recognition of moral offence and the expansion of democratic solidarity. Honneth develops a perspective in which moral offence is not a simple antecedent of reciprocal violence, nor only the reverse side of formal justice, which would have to punish in order to compensate for the damage inflicted on people's legal rights. But it seems important to interpret the moral consequences that interpersonal moral offence and conflicts over recognition play in the process of subjectivation.

Honneth aims to recover the ethical potential underlying the processes of struggle for intersubjective recognition that are developed from the experience of vulnerability and violation of personal integrity; these aim to expand the horizons of the forms of moral relationship - affection, respect and solidarity - and of the reciprocal bonds, which sustain our integrity in the form of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

In this sense, experiences of contempt and moral violation and the resulting feelings of injustice are the sources of normative claims for recognition, which expand reciprocal bonds and the sense of social recognition. Thus, moral violations offer a more adequate normative standard and source of practical motivation for Honneth (2009b) than the principles of conventional justice.

Alongside the three spheres of recognition listed above, Honneth (2009b: 322) distinguishes three forms of moral violation: firstly, forms of offence that deprive a person of the security of his or her physical well-being, as occurs with physical mistreatment, torture, rape and murder. Secondly, the forms of contempt for people's moral responsibility, which destroy self-respect, such as through fraud, deceit, failing to keep one's commitments, etc. Finally, there is a form of contempt that involves the humiliation of the other and a serious lack of respect, ranging from indifference and invisibility to the stigmatisation of the other.

For Honneth (2009b) it is fundamental to attend to the expression of feelings of contempt and injustice, since from their interpretation it will be possible to deepen the democratic forms of intersubjective recognition of all people and to minimise the possibilities of being affected by social injustice.

Thus, for Honneth, experiences of disrespect constitute the moral basis of the struggle for recognition of individuals, going beyond certain institutionalized standards. We can point to the feminist movement and those of colonized peoples as historical examples, which demonstrate

that this moral substratum is capable of considering the totality of forms of social injustice, resulting from the depreciation of certain standards of social esteem. For Honneth, it is only through a normative paradigm that goes beyond historical contingencies that the broad scale of human suffering can be examined and provide the moral foundation necessary to renew critical theory.

For Honneth the practice of deviant behaviour would not only result in a social reproach, but in preventing the individual from a positive recognition of himself in his action. This opens up the possibility of a transformation of the collective ethic that allows the realisation of the *Self*. In this sense, the struggle for social recognition of the particularities of the subject would be the constant engine of transformation of the ethical framework of a society, so as to include forms of individuality that in a given circumstance are the object of precarious recognition.

## 2. Recognition, normative reconstruction and justice

In order to rebuild the foundation of a social theory with normative content, along the lines of the project previously developed by Horkheimer for critical theory, Honneth recovered the Hegelian philosophical project of a struggle for recognition. Although at first, he confined himself to seeking its bases in the thought of the young Hegel, in more recent works (Honneth, ([2001] 2007, [2001] 2010), the author attempts to link that intersubjective struggle to the conception of freedom formulated by the mature Hegel, in opposition to the atomistic visions of Kant and Fichte.

Honneth states that Hegel's theory of justice has in common with the thought of these authors the centrality of the idea of equal individual freedom for all. However, his theory distinguishes itself from them by conceiving of freedom as something that goes beyond a simple subjective right or a simple moral autonomy. For Hegel, adopting either of these views of the concept of freedom in isolation would lead to the social pathologies resulting from the violation of the "absolute spirit" (Honneth, [2001] 2010: 25). In this Hegelian thesis, although metaphysical in character and historically situated, Honneth considers that there is a critical core that should be transported to our days.

Starting from these principles, Honneth ([2001] 2007: 52 ff) begins a work of re-updating Hegel's theory of right through three stages. In the first, he presents a theory of justice, starting from the Hegelian concept of "free will" which, having been conceptualised in opposition to atomistic perspectives, determines the total scope of what we should call "right". The difficulty of this fundamental intuition is related to the Hegelian thesis that the "will has itself as an object" (p. 59). Honneth interprets this idea on the basis of the Hegelian definition of love: "Being oneself in the other".

With this interpretation the focus shifts to the existence of social and institutional conditions, seen as fundamental, as these should enable the communicative relations of the subjects. For Honneth ([2001] 2007), those spheres, expressed in institutions and systems of practices, which are irreplaceable for socially enabling individual self-determination, are the authentic bearers of rights. In this way, *philosophy of law* is understood as the theory of the social conditions of possibility of the realisation of the “free will”. Which goes in the direction of a normative theory of social justice.

From this perspective, Hegel’s theory of law is structured in three divisions. “Abstract law” and “Morality” are the first two, in which Hegel deals with the incomplete conditions of realisation of the free will, in the form that it takes, respectively, of modern rights or the capacity for moral self-determination. In the third part, ‘Ethicity’, he deals with the complete conditions, distinguishing three spheres of communicative action: the family, civil society and the state. From here onwards the theory of justice is articulated with the diagnosis of the time, constituting the second stage of Honneth’s re-updating proposal.

By updating the doctrine of ethics in a normative theory of modernity, Honneth establishes self-realisation and recognition as fundamental conditions. Only in an action whose execution is characterised by compliance with certain moral norms can a subject ensure being recognised by others, because this recognition is determined precisely by moral competences, which are established through the corresponding norms of action (Honneth, [2001] 2007: 86).

Thus, the normative content of ethics is an articulation of the forms of intersubjective action that can guarantee recognition due to their moral quality. In this sense, the family, civil society and the state are constituted as social spheres, with fields of practices, which may guarantee individual freedom in their modern configurations that articulate recognition, formation and self-realisation.

The renewed theory of the struggle for recognition appears as a model for understanding social conflicts as ethical claims that contribute to the expansion of the possibilities of subjectivation and change the ethical framework of the whole.

Transgression, thus, points to the ethical insufficiency of the collective, not of the individual transgressor. The focus of the law’s intervention is inverted, no longer centred on the individual, on the need to adapt him to social conventions, but on society, on its need to recognise and include the most diverse modes of existence, guaranteeing them from physical survival to the valorisation of their singularity.

In view of the revision of the initial project of Struggle for Recognition, after almost twenty years, it is possible to understand *El derecho de la*

*libertad, esbozo de una ética democrática* ([2011] 2014) as the first book in which Honneth reworks his theory in a systematic way. In this sense, the concept of recognition starts to fulfil another role: if, in his habilitation thesis, Honneth develops a typology of the forms of recognition, articulating more properly a relation between theory of subjectivity and social theory, his attention turns, now, to an analysis of a theory of justice supported by a critical theory of society, whose central concept becomes that of freedom - understood, more specifically, from the idea of social freedom, where the spheres of a theory of democratic ethics (*demokratische Sittlichkeit*) are discussed.

In this sense, the suggestive title of the book points to a significant change in the face of recurrent models in the debate on theories of justice. It is a matter, therefore, of shifting the emphasis on the juridification and procedure of justice to the reconstruction of the ways of realising the concept of individual freedom mediated socially and institutionally.

It is noteworthy, here, the importance that the author gives to the sense of individual freedom as a presupposition for the task of a normative reconstruction. In this sense, Honneth ([2011] 2014: 31-32) states that:

In social modernity, the demand for justice can only be legitimised when, in one way or another, the autonomy of the individual is neither the will of the community nor the natural order, but individual freedom which configures the normative cornerstone of all representations of justice.

But it is only in the third part of the book that we find the propositional core of Honneth's project ([2011] 2014). And it is in this part that the author, in distinction from the sense of possibility of freedom referring to moral and juridical freedoms, finds the meaning of "realization of freedom" in the standards not of an individual taken in isolation, but of social freedom expressed in a plural and expanded sense of "we" (das "Wir"). In this way, the spheres of realisation of social freedom, following closely in the footsteps of the Hegelian theory of ethics, are developed as the "we" of personal relations (pp. 174 ff.), of the *market* (pp. 232 ff.) and, in relation to the sphere of the state, in the democratic formation of the will (pp. 339 ff.).

With regard to the family, in turn, Honneth observes the structural changes that have occurred throughout modernity, showing the plural forms of conception around the family model. Here, the discussion between the spheres of family and work stands out, in which affective relations are combined with new roles played as a result of struggles for the emancipation of women.

At the same time, the author discusses the importance of seeing the affective care and upbringing of children by parents as a social contribution and at a later point, with increased life expectancy, the care of parents by their children, who, in a certain sense, "become 'parents' of their parents"

(Honneth, [2011] 2014: 226). And here, in the face of imminent death, Honneth finds in the sense of “consolation” (p. 227) a secular way, full of affective content, of dealing with the transitoriness of life. The author argues that both consequences should be taken into account by a public policy model (pp. 227 ff.).

If, in relation to the family, the normative reconstruction proposed by Honneth does not encounter major difficulties, the discussion about the market probably presents one of the most controversial parts. In effect, Honneth sees the market as a space of social freedom insofar as it would make possible the reciprocal satisfaction of individual needs and preferences and, in this sense, the reference to the market is inseparable from a discussion about its moral content: market relations can only be legitimate if they are able to fulfil such demands. The evident contradictions and exhaustion of the market in its current model in satisfying individual demands are problems occurring in its own development and preventing the realisation of its normative potential.

It is not clear, however, whether the problems of development are inherent in the capitalist mode of production - as in a Marxist analysis to which the author himself also refers - or whether there should be a kind of correction derived from an internal revision of capitalism. What Honneth proposes is to revise the necessary *moral* presuppositions so that the market, too, can ensure the socially mediated satisfaction of individual preferences.

And in this sense, Honneth refers to the so-called “Adam-Smith problem” ([2011] 2014: 238ff) - around the question of the link between moral theory and Smith’s economic theory - defending the interpretation that a free market can only be founded if preconditions linked to a moral content are fulfilled - as suggested by the concepts of “empathy” in Smith, “solidarity” in Durkheim or “trust” in Hegel. (pp. 248 ff.). Thus, for example, Honneth argues, in defence of a “solidarity consciousness”, prior also to contractual relations, that:

...in the language chosen by Hegel it is possible to express the idea that the coordination of the simple calculations of individual preferences proceeded in the framework of the market can only succeed if the subjects involved are recognized not only legally as contract partners, but also morally and ethically (“sittlich”) as members of a community of cooperation (“kooperierenden Gemeinwesen”). (Honneth, [2011] 2014: 248)

Honneth in an interview with Gustavo Pereira (2010: 333) presents us with an idea of post-traditional extended ethicity, along Hegelian lines, which includes private life, forms of intimate relationships and, what becomes important here, certain forms of economic life. The author argues that we should have ethicity in economic life. The market should have a normative form. The neoliberal market we have today is not an ethical form

of market. Already Hegel and later Durkheim had had this idea, that the capitalist economic market will only have an ethical form if it is regulated in a sense of inclusion of each and every person. That every human being is specifically included in the market, so that corresponding forms of social esteem are possible.

As far as we can see, the Honnethian bet on normative reconstruction is not immune to criticism. And here we could basically name two problems or limitations. The first, already mentioned, is the fundamentally Eurocentric sense of the reconstruction that Honneth proposes. A second problem consists in a necessary starting point taken for the proposed reconstruction. In effect, the author needs to resort to a certain sense of *helos* that justifies the criteria of his reconstruction: it is only by already taking the concept of social freedom beforehand that it is possible to reconstruct institutional frameworks in a certain way linked to that concept.

### Final considerations

Axel Honneth presents a concept of social struggle that emphasizes the ethical dimension of injustice, proposing new parameters for Critical Theory. His proposal consists in analysing the concrete patterns of disrespect that lead individuals to social struggles for recognition, in which there is a continuous broadening of the perceptions that individuals have of their unique attributes.

On the basis of an analysis of Honneth's bibliographical path initiated in the concept of recognition, seen as a fundamental need of the human being, a theory of justice is presented which seeks to specify the intersubjective conditions of individual self-realisation. Honneth's (2009c: 16) conception of justice is based, firstly, on replacing the distributive scheme with the conception of an inclusion of all subjects in the relations of recognition developed in each situation; secondly, in place of the construction of a fictitious procedure a normative reconstruction should be placed that reveals historically-genetically the fundamental moral norms of those relations of recognition; and, finally, the exclusive look at the regulatory activity of the rule of law should be complemented by a decentralised consideration of non-state agencies and organisations.

A reconstructively proceeding theory of justice is today faced with the challenge of defending in the name of individual autonomy not just one normative principle, but three such principles: depending on the respective social sphere, it must highlight and strengthen the moral standpoints of deliberative equality, the justice of needs, and the justice of performance.

A pluralism of these, however difficult it may seem to handle, meets the differentiations that the subjects themselves operate topically in questions of justice; as a number of empirical surveys show today, they too usually distinguish in cooperation-related problems in their everyday life precisely the three areas mentioned, in order to apply the corresponding principle of justice to each of them (Honneth, 2009: 21).

We can state that Honneth's thought represents a decisive contribution to the contemporary debate on theories of justice and political philosophy by questioning positions already taken as presuppositions in much of this debate, seeking to offer a response of its own within the framework of a renewed political philosophy (Fontes, 2021). The author's starting point of developing a theory of justice in the footsteps of a critical analysis of society therefore remains promising, even if Honneth's attempt is historically dependent on its own context.

### **Bibliographic References**

- ELLISON, Ralph. 1984. *El hombre invisible*. Lumen. Barcelona. Eshana.
- FONTES, Paulo. 2021. Thinking about the problems of democracy from Hannah Arendt. *Academia Letters*, Article 1250. Available online. In: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1250>. Consultation date: 12/11/22.
- HEGEL, Georg (1807-1992). *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Vozes Publishers. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- HEGEL, Georg [1820]. 1997. *Principles of the philosophy of law*. Translation by Orlando Vitorino. Martins Fontes. São Paulo, Brasil.
- HONNETH, Axel [1992]. 2011. *Struggle for recognition: towards a moral grammar of social conflicts*. Translation by Jorge Telles de Menezes. Edições 70. Lisbon, Portugal.
- HONNETH, Axel [2000]. 2007. *Disrespect: the normative foundations of critical theory*. Translated by John Farrel and Joseph Ganahl. Polity Press. Malden, USA.
- HONNETH, Axel [2001]. 2007. *Suffering from indeterminacy*. Translation by Ruri3n Soares Melo. Editora Singular. São Paulo, Brazil.
- HONNETH, Axel [2001]. 2010. *The pathologies of individual freedom: Hegel's social theory*. Translation by Ladislaus L3b. Princeton University. New Jersey, USA.

- HONNETH, Axel [2011]. 2014. *El derecho de la libertad. Esbozo de una eticidad democrática*. Translation by Graciela Calderón. Katz Editores. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2004. "Recognition and Justice: Outline of a plural theory of Justice" In: *Acta Sociologica*. Vol. 47, No. 04, pp. 351-364.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2005. "Invisibilité: sur l'épistémologie de la reconnaissance" In: *Réseaux. La Découverte*. Vol. No. 01, No. 129-130, pp. 39-57.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2008. "Observations on reification. Translation by Emil Sobottka and Giovani Saavedra" In: *Civitas - Revista de Ciências Sociais*. Vol. 08, No. 01, jan.-apr, pp. 68-79.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2009a. *Patologías de la Razón. Historia y actualidad de la Teoría Crítica*. Traducción de Griselda Mársico. Katz. Madrid, España.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2009b. *Crítica del agravio moral. Patologías de la sociedad contemporánea*. Traducción de Peter Strandt Diller. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- HONNETH, Axel. 2009c. "The texture of justice. On the limits of contemporary proceduralism" In: *Civitas - Revista de Ciências Sociais*. Vol. 09, No. 03, Sept-Dec, pp. 345-368.
- PEREIRA, Gustavo. 2010. "Reconocimiento y critérios normativos. Entrevista a Axel Honneth" In: *Andamios*. Vol. 07, No. 13, mayo-august, pp. 323-334.
- STERN, Daniel [1985]. 1992. *The interpersonal world of the infant*. Translation by Maria Adriana Veríssimo Veronese. Artes Médicas. Porto Alegre, Brasil.



UNIVERSIDAD  
DEL ZULIA

---

# CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Vol.41 N° 77

*Esta revista fue editada en formato digital y publicada en abril de 2023, por el **Fondo Editorial Serbiluz**, Universidad del Zulia. Maracaibo-Venezuela*

[www.luz.edu.ve](http://www.luz.edu.ve)  
[www.serbi.luz.edu.ve](http://www.serbi.luz.edu.ve)  
[www.produccioncientificaluz.org](http://www.produccioncientificaluz.org)