



Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life (New Directions in Critical Theory)

By Axel

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Theories of justice often fixate on purely normative, abstract principles unrelated to real-world applications. The philosopher and theorist Axel Honneth addresses this disconnect, constructing a theory of justice derived from the normative claims of Western liberal-democratic societies and anchored in the law and institutionally established practices that possess moral legitimacy.

Termed a “democratic ethical life,” Honneth’s paradigm draws on the spirit of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right and his own theory of recognition, demonstrating how concrete social spheres generate the principles of individual freedom and a standard for what is just. Using social analysis to re-found a more grounded theory of justice, Honneth argues that all crucial actions in Western civilization, whether in personal relationships, market-induced economic activities, or the public forum of politics, share one defining characteristic: they require the realization of a particular aspect of individual freedom. This fundamental truth, Honneth shows, informs the guiding principles of justice, enabling a wide-ranging reconsideration of its theory.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A stunningly ambitious exploration of the ways in which the major institutions of Western society promote freedom and at the same time present obstacles to its realization. Honneth defends a compelling conception of social freedom grounded in mutual recognition, which he employs both to comprehend contemporary social reality and to reveal its deficiencies. Characterized by an extraordinary richness of detail, the book's aim is a provocative mix of reconciliation and critique. No social philosopher has attempted a project of this scope since Hegel composed the Philosophy of Right almost two hundred years ago."

Frederick Neuhouser, Barnard College

"Breaking with the dominant style of contemporary political philosophy, Axel Honneth demonstrates how fruitful it can be to develop a theory of social justice, not simply by appeal to common beliefs and intuitions, but more fundamentally on the basis of an understanding of the characteristic institutions of modern society. *Freedom's Right* is a brilliant work by one of today's leading philosophers."

Charles Larmore, Brown University

"On a historical and ideological level, *Freedom's Right* is a bold effort to rescue the Philosophy of Right from the Heglian Right."

Political Studies Review

Review

This book is a major statement by the distinctive perspective of a pivotal figure in the Frankfurt School tradition. Axel Honneth's accounts of social freedom, normative reconstruction, and societal pathologies are sure to be points of reference within critical social theory for decades to come.

(Joel Anderson, Utrecht University)

About the Author

Axel Honneth is Professor of Philosophy at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, and at Columbia University, New York. His many books in English include *The Struggle for Recognition* and *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*.

Users Review

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