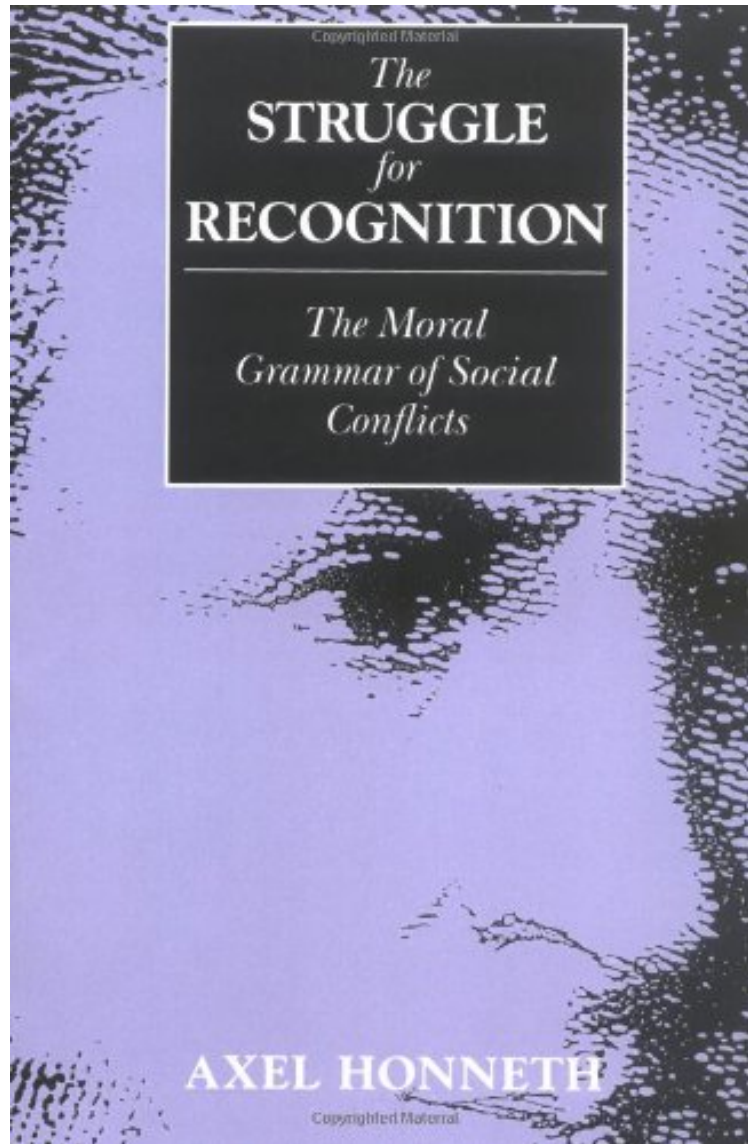


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The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought)

Axel Honneth

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Axel Honneth : The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought):

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. ReviewBy CBThis is the book that - I believe - made Axel Honneth famous in Germany. In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth wants to place critical theory (or critical social philosophy) within a new normative context. Instead of being pessimistic and implicitly normative - like many of the first generation Frankfurt school were - Honneth believes he can redefine the landscape of normativity, to provide a foothold for socio-political critiques. The new landscape is the struggle for recognition, which can originally be found in Hegel, and is subsequently naturalized by G.H. Mead. Honneth builds upon Hegel and Mead, providing fairly interesting empirical research, to develop three primary forms of recognition that constitute the sources for our sense of self-worth and the sources of our sense of injustice. The first source of recognition is love. Children require love from their parents in order to develop a basic sense of self confidence and trust. Without proper love they lack confidence, and are often scared to explore the world, for fear no one is there to protect them, and care for them. Once an individual knows someone cares about them and is willing to protect them, this allows for a basic sense of self confidence that makes exploring the world possible, less frightening, and even exciting (hence if you experience no love, there's a chance you may be a xenophobe). There's nothing too radical about this thesis, psychologist, and people with basic human empathy, know love is necessary for proper development and social functioning. The next source of recognition is rights. This form of recognition historically comes after love, which is primordial. But Honneth wants to argue that the struggle for rights is equally primordial, albeit its historical fruition is a response to the growth of society and the division of labor. Rights allow us to generalize one another as capable of some basic forms of recognition and dignity. This is obvious in various racial struggles, or struggles for gay marriage. People are trying to be recognized on equal footing, and have access to something potentially universal (speech, marriage, property, healthcare), and although each individual is unique, a universal outlet for recognizing them provides for some sense of self-worth and dignity. The final source is social/solidarity recognition. This form was a bit more confusing than the other two, and seemed primarily to overlap with them to some degree. Whereas love is necessary for a sense of confidence within a community, and necessary for amicable interaction within a community, and rights provide confidence within a larger social context - where one encounters strangers - solidarity was aimed at basic social esteem which allows the individual to have confidence in their unique traits and characteristics. One can feel comfortable being good at singing, but bad at dancing for instance. Simultaneously having esteem for individual traits should lead you to esteem other individuals for their traits (e.g., if someone can't dance we don't chide them for it). This form of recognition is different from rights in that it's not universal, but recognizes the particular in everyone. Considering all three of these forms of recognition are primordial, Honneth believes that this allows for a new normative basis for social-political criticism. If one is being denied some form of recognition, or failing to recognize another individual as some basic level, an immoral event has occurred. Moreover, by placing recognition at the forefront of social and moral development, he believes he has opened up a window into understanding how and why social movements come about. So various classes and racial groups aren't just "mad" at how they're being treated, even if they say things like "I'm mad" or "I'm being exploited," what they really mean is that they are not being recognized, and are thus being denied something essential and necessary for their fruition both individually and socially. Honneth explicitly wants to get beyond the justice debates related to distribution of resources. There's something deeper, and more insidious, than just handing someone reparations, or giving them access to some commodity in order to quell their sense of injustice, that generates the initial complaint. The only problem I have with Honneth's theory is that he has rewritten social history from the point of view of agency alone, and writes off structure. Hegel said history was spirit coming to know itself, Marx thought it was class conflict in a particular mode of production, and Honneth believes it's a struggle for recognition. Like Hegel, this struggle is progressive. But there are various structural and ideological factors that undergird the desire to be recognized, and at least in this book, Honneth seems to ignore them, or discount them. Very particular forms of recognition, even if they have primordial components, are frequently ideological, and it's not at all clear that primordial properties take precedence here; the need to be recognized as a king qua king, or as an executive qua executive, is ideological at its core, and these social roles exist prior to the individual. Overall though this is a breath of fresh air in regards to normative theory, ethical philosophy, and theories of political justice. Instead of just plugging some system (Kantian, Utilitarian, etc), into some particular case (Euthanasia, Abortion, Healthcare), Honneth is providing us with a grander view of morality: where it comes from, how it works, and how to make it flourish.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A critical and important bookBy Richard H. This is an extremely important book for ethical and political philosophy. Honneth has brought the philosophy of Hegel up to date to make it viable for contemporary thinkers.

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. very happy! Thanks to Jeff for his follow up e ...By StephenKMackSDNew book, very happy! Thanks to Jeff for his follow up e mail. Best regards, StephenKMackSD

In this pathbreaking study, Axel Honneth argues that "the struggle for recognition" is, and should be, at the center of social conflicts. Moving smoothly between moral philosophy and social theory, Honneth offers insights into such issues as the social forms of recognition and nonrecognition, the moral basis of interaction in human conflicts, the relation between the recognition model and conceptions of modernity, the normative basis of social theory, and the

possibility of mediating between Hegel and Kant.

Honneth's book casts a flood of light on what has been an area of darkness, the place where the philosophical tradition and modern politics meet and interweave. Since neither is really comprehensible without the other, this work is essential reading for those who would understand either. It is a pathbreaking study, which ought to be at the center of the debate for many years to come. (Charles Taylor, McGill University) This is a most remarkable book. The exposition and critical discussion are conducted with exemplary clarity. It may change intellectual lives; it will certainly attract a great deal of attention for many years to come. (William Outhwaite, University of Sussex) Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: German About the Author Axel Honneth is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Konstanz.