

Summary

A Critical social theory presents a critique and analysis of social problems, and articulates normative proposals for their resolution. The Critical theory of Axel Honneth, on which this book is focused, is an inspirational example of such a theory. Marek Hrubec and his colleagues have attempted to document that he brings significant and original approaches to the analysis of social conflicts, following on from the previous generations of Critical theorists and other authors who have developed the concept of social recognition.

Honneth has articulated his own theory of social recognition which he develops as a normative – specifically moral – Critical theory of misrecognition. Since this theory is founded as a theory of conflicts, it is capable of critically analysing social contradictions and proposing normative concepts for society. It offers articulations of specific kinds of recognition in several recognition spheres in the long-term historical trends of societal development, within national and international frameworks.

The authors of this book focused on Honneth's theory, first, from the perspective of the historical development of recognition, then in three spheres of recognition (love and friendship; rights; social esteem), then from the perspective of constitutional recognition, and, finally, from the perspective of international recognition. They were concerned in both a systematic reconstruction of Honneth's theory as well as demonstrating its limits and the possibilities for further developing and transcending Honneth's theory in discussion with other social critics. They want to emphasise especially

analyses (1) in the articulation of the historical concept of recognition which demonstrates historical development as the crystallisation and differentiation of various models of social recognition; (2) in supplementing Critical theory of recognition with the individual motifs of critical hermeneutics; (3) in making legal recognition more specific, using the specification of various cultural and socio-economic struggles for recognition; (4) in further differentiating social esteem in view of the problems linked to social origin, power, the market, and solidarity; (5) in developing legal recognition to constitutional recognition in a recognising constitutionalism; (6) in formulating and promoting global justice using the expansion of national, international and inter-state recognition, as well as supranational and global recognition.

The principal line of argument throughout the book is, on the one hand, the development of Critical theory of recognition in its various aspects within the recognition paradigm itself and, on the other, its elaboration in such a way as to add value to the significant aspects of the previous work and communications paradigms, and to take seriously the rising paradigm of global interactions. Critical theory of recognition is capable of redefining the previous work and communications paradigms in such a way as to integrate these sub-topics into the recognition paradigm. At the same time, it is able to articulate the new theme of global interactions to such an extent that it enables them to be formulated in the form of supranational and global recognition. In all of these issues, Critical theory of recognition permits a proper articulation of the recognition models which within the historical development of a complex society are increasingly institutionalised in the form of more demanding legal codifications, including constitutional recognition.

In conclusion, the book states that, through his analyses, Honneth has not only contributed significantly to more detailed analyses in Critical theory but, by following on from the fundamental elements formulated by preceding Critical theory generations and at the same time by redefining the entire paradigm with his own recognition theory, he also became a very important figure in contemporary Critical social theory. His theory is a challenge and motivation for all those who are aware of the need to develop the project of Critical social theory.