

Recognition, Education, and Civic Equality

Uncovering the Normative Ideals of the Welfare State

Jørgensen, Simon Laumann

Published in:
Recognition and Freedom

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Jørgensen, S. L. (2015). Recognition, Education, and Civic Equality: Uncovering the Normative Ideals of the Welfare State . In O. Lysaker, & J. Jakobsen (Eds.), Recognition and Freedom: Axel Honneth's Political Thought Brill Academic Publishers.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**Recognition, Education, and Civic Equality:
Uncovering the Normative Ideals of the Welfare State**

Simon Laumann Jørgensen¹

Published IN *Recognition and Freedom: Axel Honneth's Political Thought*. 2015, pp 33–56

Edited by Lysaker, O. & Jakobsen, J.

Brill, Social and Critical Theory, Bind 17

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004287341_004

Scandinavian welfare states try to adapt to the changing expectations of citizens as well as to economic change. To those of us who inhabit such states, it is useful to ask ourselves about the direction these states should be heading. Not to shy away from these questions because of their complexity, we may find guidance in theoretical approaches. Axel Honneth's theory of recognition captures something important about what the welfare state was, is and ought to be. It is worth looking closer at the affinities between his theory and the Scandinavian welfare state and its central institutions.²

Referring to 'Continental' and 'Scandinavian' welfare state models, I refer to ideal types. Parameters are needed to distinguish one model from another and to measure possible changes of paths over time. I mention this not to enter into "the welfare state modelling business", but to remind us of how the need for certain guiding norms springs both from citizens' reflections on "the current state of welfare states" as well as the reflections of researchers.³ Such normative guidance is meant to be of practical use.

¹ Thanks to comments from my colleagues at CCWS, Department of Political Science, Aalborg University and the participants at the Annual Meeting of the Danish Philosophical Society, 2012. Special thanks to Morten Raffnsøe-Møller for first introducing me to Axel Honneth's work, for his nuanced criticism as well of encouragement and support of my work over the years, and especially for his insightful comments to this chapter. Thanks as well to the editors for their very helpful comments.

² Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996; Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso, 2003. See: Frank Nullmeier, *Politische Theorie des Sozialstaats*, Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 2000.

³ Peter Abrahamson, "The Welfare Modelling Business", in *Social Policy and Administration*, 33(4): 394-415.

According to Honneth, normative theoretical “reconstructive approaches (...) uncover normative ideals of the institutions (...) that can be suitable for the criticism of the existing reality”.⁴ I take this theme of possible criticism seriously. Policies supporting specific motivations, practices or institutions among citizens may have both *intrinsic* value (due to their expression of intrinsic ideals of freedom and equality) and *instrumental* value (due to their non-expressive, but nevertheless supporting or preconditioning role in bringing about and reproducing intrinsic values. We might hope that Honneth’s theory could serve as a standard to measure institutional and social trends in light of both these intrinsic and instrumental perspectives.

Honneth’s theory of recognition can be used to reconstruct central welfare state institutions with a critical potential for those institutions themselves. This is because it emphasizes the recognitional attitudes of citizens for the realization of equal citizenship, and because of its moral psychological model of how these attitudes are dependent on the institutionalization of forms of recognition in society. The ideal of equal citizenship has become a normative expectation of Scandinavian citizens. Equality of citizenship is a norm governing that part of their lives which unfolds within institutions which are taken to be central to the reproduction of welfare state, such as the lower secondary public school.

I shall discuss two corrections to this overall positive answer to the question of whether it is fair to say that the Scandinavian welfare states – or social democracies – come close to realizing Honneth’s theory. First, to neo-republicans, Honneth’s theory might not fully capture the emancipatory aspirations of the welfare state in terms of empowering citizens by overcoming obstacles to their equal political voice in the form of *domination*. Secondly, Scandinavian welfare states traditionally favour more comprehensive state-institutional approaches to the formation of civic citizens than do the approaches suggested by Honneth. While not fitting into Honneth’s systematic scheme of three distinct forms of recognition, and while expressing scepticism concerning Honneth’s non-state bases of citizen-formation, relations of recognition (which are not accounted for in Honneth’s theory) within Scandinavian public institutions, such as schools, express and promote Honneth’s ideal of equal citizenship.

⁴ Axel Honneth, *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 48.

1 Civic equality and the welfare state: the hermeneutic approach

Comparing a complex philosophical theory to complex features of a set of historically formed nation states can be conducted in two distinct ways. Either we ask which ideologies formed a society, or we ask whether social practices realize ideals central to specific ideologies. In the first case, we will be concerned with the actual defence for certain policies made by central players such as the Social Democratic Party. In the latter case, we look for the attitudes and ideological outlook of citizens who have experienced and have been formed by a state's formative institutions.

Both approaches and types of questions would be appropriate in the case of Honneth's philosophical theory, since the theory itself is defended as a normative reconstruction of actual historical tendencies within Western liberal states. When I ask whether this reconstruction is suitable for Scandinavian welfare states, however, I am not asking the first question, but the latter one. As an additional caveat, though I shall primarily focus on the Danish case, this is not an empirical study of Danish citizen attitudes. Rather, it follows a normative hermeneutic approach.

This normative hermeneutic program is partly a mixed approach, since it seeks to demonstrate coherence between (a) the specific sense of equal citizenship and of civic equality which are shaped in citizens on the basis of shared experiences of common schooling over a 9–10 year period, the formative years of a citizen's upbringing in Denmark, (b) typologies of welfare state, and (c) normative 'social democratic' theories.

The approach taken is agnostic as to whether the ideal of equal democratic citizenship was the central ideological guideline for central parties such as the Social Democrats.⁵ The approach is agnostic as well concerning whether attitudes of civic equality have originated from any commitment to democratic ideals.⁶ However, it argues that there is a causal

⁵ According to an analysis by Lars Torpe, the Social Democrats wanted to do away with poverty, ignorance, unemployment and class-determinism and to create the preconditions for equal freedom and communal fellowship expressed through the institution build up since the 1960s. They were not concerned with creating a civic culture of equal democratic citizenship. This, however, was of primary concern to the Social Liberal Party, who played a central role in forming the lower secondary school. See: Lars Torpe, "Den politiske konsensuskultur i Danmark", in *Halvfemserne: Tekster om en fremtid*, in Erik Christensen and Carsten Heyn-Johnsen (eds.), Aalborg: Institut for Økonomi, Politik og Forvaltning, 1991, pp. 105–115, pp. 108–110.

⁶ Empirical research is likely to reveal that the existing culture of equal citizenship springs from pragmatic politics rather than ideals of democracy. This explanation was in fact suggested by one historian, who argues that politicians broke down the earlier hierarchical

relationship between the existence of an undivided common school, which in the 1970s came to be clearly founded on ideals of freedom and democratic equality (as directly expressed in the preamble of the Danish primary and lower secondary school law) and citizens' aspirations to be effectively equal to other citizens. This institution has played a key role in forming both: (1) citizens' willingness to accommodate egalitarian policies of equal citizenship (such as radical democratic procedures of deliberative compromises as well as radical policies of redistribution); and (2) an egalitarian everyday culture with recognitional attitudes of civic equality. If these policies and attitudes seem attractive to us, as they appear to me, we may want to know whether Honneth's theory could help explain in which form they are attractive. Additionally his theory might help explain the reproducibility of equal citizenship and civic equality.

Without entering the abovementioned 'welfare state modelling business', I shall simply claim that there is a coherence between (a) citizens' general *support* (for policies of equal citizenship and recognitional attitudes of civic equality) and the fact that (b) in the welfare state typological literature, it is suggested that 'equal citizenship' forms the core normative aspiration of the Scandinavian welfare states.⁷ In a much more elaborated way, I shall show

system: "social mixing (...) in the schools would lead to a more equitable society promoting talents from all walks of life". See: Susanne Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration: Comprehensive Schooling in Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 5. This suggests a shared political agreement to build up human capital in line with the post-1864 slogan "What's lost abroad must be regained domestically". See: Bo Lidegaard, *A Short History of Denmark in the 20th Century*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2009, p. 33. It is on such grounds, historians might claim, that the Scandinavian school system came to involve "[m]ixed ability classes throughout the entire nine/ten-year comprehensive school". See: Susanne Wiborg, *Education and Social Integration*, p. 7. Compare: Ole Morsing, "Har folkeskolen brug for trobekendelse?", in Lise Andersen, Simon Laumann Jørgensen, and Hanne F. Skovmose (eds.), *Folkeskolens filosofi*, Århus: Philosophia, 2008; The Danish Government, *Et Danmark, der står sammen: Regeringsgrundlag*, 2011, p. 55. Thus, through the struggle for other things, the outcome of the process was that institutions were created early in the twentieth century such as the common public school, where citizens could form the image of themselves as others as at least potentially equal to all other citizens. Key factors in this process were that in contrast to neighboring countries like Britain or Germany, an overlapping consensus bridging liberals and social democrats and marginalizing the conservative party lead to the introduction of common schools early in the 20th century, and that since 1958 the Danish primary schools have been undivided from the 1st to the 9th grade. See: Susanne Wiborg, *op. cit.* Lately, the preschool (year 0) has become obligatory making 10 years of primary schooling mandatory.

⁷ Jørgen Goul Andersen, "Citizenship, Unemployment, and Welfare Policy", in Jørgen Goul Andersen et al. (ed.), *The Changing Face of Welfare: Consequences and Outcomes from a Citizenship Perspective*, Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2005, pp. 75–92.

additional coherence with (c) the group of theorists who “argue that the social-democratic tradition offers an (...) account of equality, emphasizing ‘social equality’ (or ‘civic/democratic’ equality)”.⁸

These civic-equality theorists seek to answer questions such as: Which obligations do citizens have towards each other if they seek to live up to this ideal? Which obligations does the state have to accommodate the preconditions for civic equality? To defenders of this view, all answers to questions of: Which liberties, procedures, compartmentalizations and redistributional schemes are framed by a concern with a specific outcome, namely that of civic equality? To such questions, one can respond with David Miller’s apt phrase: “[e]qual citizenship (...) grounds social and economic claims”.⁹ These civic equality theorists are distinct from three closely related groups of theorists. First, they are distinct from liberal theorists (who tend to focus on the cognitively demanding attitudes of respecting the liberties of non-interferences that others have as makers of choices, or who focus on respect for procedural rules, or who focus on compartmentalization between private and public tasks). They should also be distinguished from neo-Marxist approaches (concerned with egalitarian (re)distribution of resources and opportunities). Finally, they should be distinguished from what may be called ‘civic egalitarians’, these approaches being concerned primarily with effective equality as a moral psychological *experience* based on institutionally grounded relations of recognition.¹⁰

⁸ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 (2nd ed.), p. 202. Kymlicka lists Michael Walzer and David Miller among the theorists, and I shall include – apart from Honneth – Philip Pettit. I will focus on an early article to the neglect of his later developed republican theory. See respectively: Philip Pettit, “Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State”, *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, 1987, pp. 537–551; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford University Press, 1997. See also: José Luis Martí and Philip Pettit, *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero’s Spain*, Princeton University Press, 2010. To Pettit, ‘the social ideal of equal respect for all persons’ is *citizens*-centered because of “the notion that every citizen enjoys or ought to enjoy equal respect’. See: Phillip Pettit, “Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State”, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

⁹ David Miller, “Democracy and Social Justice”, in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1–19, 1978, p. 4.

¹⁰ See: Blain Neufeld and Gordon Davis, “Civic Respect, Civic Education, and the Family”, in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2010, pp. 94–111; Carina Fourie, “What is Social Equality? An Analysis of Status Equality as a Strongly Egalitarian Ideal”, in *Res Publica*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2012, pp. 107–126.

2 Honneth's theory of recognition and citizen's equal status

In the following, I shall demonstrate that the civic equality ideal described above shares with Honneth's theory a concern with describing the preconditions for civic relations of equality, one of these conditions being empowerment. In addition, the civic equality ideal shares with Honneth's theory the insistence on taking a broad perspective on civic relations.¹¹

One of the most famous attempts to describe how a society's continuing specification and interpretation of the ideal of equal citizenship can motivate legal, political and social reforms is Thomas H. Marshall's essay *Citizenship and Social Class*.¹² Honneth follows the path laid by Marshall when he argues that "the establishment of each new class of basic rights is consistently compelled by arguments that referred implicitly to the demand for full-fledged membership in the political community".¹³ Honneth's progressive story of citizen rights follows the same pattern as that of Marshall, describing how an ideal of equal citizenship eventually leads to social rights:

During the twentieth century, what then emerged from such demands for equality, at least in those Western countries that have followed a welfare state course, was a new class of social welfare rights, which are supposed to assure every citizen the possibility of asserting all his or her other rights-claims.¹⁴

As can be seen in the quotation, Honneth connects equal citizenship and the progression of rights-ascription to "the possibility of asserting rights-claims". As Honneth explains: "under pressure from struggles for recognition, ever-new prerequisites for participation in rational will-formation have to be taken into consideration".¹⁵ If states fail on this level, citizens can now legitimately claim "the appropriate preconditions (...) for equal participation in the rational agreement".¹⁶

Considering Honneth's close reliance on Marshall's theory of equal citizenship, we might think that to Honneth, civic equality should not be understood in this broad sense, but

¹¹ Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice: Political Philosophy beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002.

¹² Thomas H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 114 f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

should rather be understood as civic equality in the narrow *political* sphere. However, as I shall argue in the following, this is not the case.

Marshall, too, was concerned with the general social status of citizenship as well as preconditions for absence of socially based shame. However, in Honneth's view being a citizen is more than just being a political being. It involves the freedom to lead one's own life in general. Therefore, our status in general – outside a possible specific political sphere – is of central concern as well.

Thus, it turns out that for Honneth (as well as for other theorists within the theoretical social-equality tradition), the prerequisites for equal citizenship relate to the double meaning of autonomous citizenship.¹⁷ The free citizen should be able to both formulate his or her *own* social and political opinions and be able to influence his or her social and political surroundings by these ideas.

There is a different road to a similar insistence on civic equality in the broad sense. Hence, Pettit, though not using the term 'autonomy', suggests the same double ground of social reforms when he states that social rights were established on the basis of two political ideals inherent to the ideal of equal citizenship: "(1) the capacity to form preferences and other attitudes in an informed and justifiable manner; and (2) the power to make such attitudes felt".¹⁸ Overall, the first ideal relates to the democratic ideal of independent and autonomous citizens relative to other citizens and authorities (i.e. the idea that citizens should be able to express their *own* ideas rather than those of others), whereas the second ideal refers to the power of the 'horizontal' as well as 'vertical' *voice* of citizens (i.e. their ability to give effective voice to their political aspirations to co-citizens and to those in power).

This latter strategy of linking a concern with citizenship as political citizenship with policies that aim at civic equality as a recognitional attitude within both political and broader social spheres can be found in Honneth's work as well. Related to the first category, that of the capacity for rational preferenceformation, we find the argument that the state has the function of "securing (with the help of legal norms) the social conditions under which all citizens can articulate their interests without constraint and with equal opportunity".¹⁹ Equal citizenship translates into the second ideal of effective voice both through representation- and participatory

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 25, 30, 69, 108, 110, 118, 133.

¹⁸ Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 542.

¹⁹ Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today", in *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 6, pp. 763–783, 1998, p. 775.

enabling policies. As Honneth puts it, in principle “every member of society is accorded all the rights that help to bring about the equal representation of his or her political interests” just as “every member of a political community must be accorded equal rights to participation in the process of democratic will-formation”.²⁰

In light of the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship, social rights in Scandinavian welfare states translate into social security as well as empowering institutions (such as schools) with the aim of empowering citizens’ *emancipated* voice and *effective* voice. Effective and equal “opportunity for participation in the public process of will-formation” depends on “a certain social standard of living and degree of economic security” as well as “universal mandatory education’ which is ‘required for the equal exercise of citizen’s rights’”.²¹

If politicians were to ask Honneth for advice concerning which policies would help advance the ideal of emancipated and effective voice, the very Hegelian ending of *The Struggle for Recognition* seems to indicate that Honneth would shy away from giving any further specifications.²² Apparently, we would be more likely to find guidance in neo-republican theories of freedom as *non-domination*.²³ Such theories offer thick descriptions of “[t]he experience of subordination – of personal subordination” which is expressed through “bowing and scraping, fawning and toadying; (...) fearful trembling; (...) high-and-mightiness” in order to argue more openly that “[t]he aim of political egalitarianism is a society free from domination”.²⁴ Neorepublicans such as Philip Pettit openly admit that “as things stand people are not equally respect-able individuals” and that equal status is not something we can “assume”.²⁵ Though such suggestions may appear to be generally in line with Honneth’s approach, Pettit and others who warn us against the powers of domination and horizontal inequality seem more alert than Honneth to the threats of domination as well as to the

²⁰ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

²² See: Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and Paul Sörensen, “Mit Hegel zu einer kritischen Theorie der Freiheit: Eine Heranführung an Honneths *Das Recht der Freiheit*”, in *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2012, pp. 247–270.

²³ Philip Pettit, “Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State”, *op. cit.*; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books, 1983, p. xii. The ideal of non-domination as developed by Philip Pettit in his *Republicanism* is catching on. See: Cecile Laborde, *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. See also: Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

²⁵ Philip Pettit, “Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State”, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

progressive possibilities of state strategies. Scandinavian welfare states might want to follow neo-republican state strategies for overcoming relations of domination while having less faith than Honneth in the progressive force of social movements.²⁶ Though this empirical point can be questioned, at least the point marks a clear difference between Honneth's reluctance to philosophically based state policies the willingness of neo-republicans such as Pettit to suggest progressive state policies.

Rather than measuring the present through the emancipatory potentials of existing institutions, the neo-republicans seem closer to ideologically grounded social democratic politicians who defend the need to ensure equality of resources at "a level of social security that prevents employer exploitation".²⁷ As neo-republicans put it, marginalization and exposure to domination should be opposed through emancipation "from such conditions as penury, and vulnerability; in particular, vulnerability to sickness and disability". The solution is to provide "social security, public housing, compulsory education, public health care, and the like".²⁸ They suggest an agenda of countering "asymmetries of capacity and power"²⁹ as well as "coercion, exploitation (...) discrimination, marginalization, and the like".³⁰ "[M]anipulation" and "ignorance" should be countered by providing "compulsory education" "freedom of information" and "participatory democracy" so as to stop people from being marginalized and alienated.³¹ Now to the welfare engineer, such words may nevertheless seem just as elusive as the claims of Honneth in terms of giving guidance. I may have been overstating a non-existing difference here, given that Pettit has also defended a procedural democratic model for setting up the actual levels of welfare provisions.³²

3 Honneth and the reproduction of the welfare state

Combining the intrinsic value of equality of citizens with the instrumental value of social reproducibility, the following three motivational tasks become central to Honneth's project. First, citizens must be politically alert and engaged so that they are prepared to fight for and

²⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

²⁷ Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 543f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 543. Compare: Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", p. 539.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 543.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 543 f.

³² Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*. Compare Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Princeton University Press, 2010.

care for equal citizenship. Second, citizens need to support equality-supporting policies and to be willing to support the preconditions for political participation of all citizens. Third, in their political interaction, citizens need to give each other a chance to form and express their own opinions.

According to Honneth, the broadening and institutionalization of rights within welfare states has led to a high degree of feasibility and reproducibility of the model itself. This reflects the fact that as the recognition of citizens' rights progressed (and was reaffirmed through elections), "a general principle of equality [emerged]" which was helpful in countering "the pre-political, economic inequalities".³³ As Honneth puts it, "rights (...) provide one with a legitimate way of making clear to oneself that one is respected by everyone else".³⁴ Knowing that other citizens recognize 'you' as a citizen, gives you a basis for experiencing self-respect.³⁵ He continues: "What gives rights the power to enable the development of self-respect is the public character that rights possess in virtue of their empowering the bearer to engage in action that can be perceived by interaction partners".³⁶ On this basis, Honneth optimistically sees a reinforcement of the reproduction of equal citizenship: Citizens are recognized through elections and by emancipating and empowering policies; they then recognize themselves as worthy of this recognition, whereupon they become emancipated and empowered to such a degree that they perform valuable tasks. These valuable tasks can become objects of recognition by others as well as themselves. Such forms of recognition supports a sense of self-esteem which is central to recognize the valuable tasks performed by others. On this basis, ideally, citizens come to recognize the importance of general policies of emancipation and empowerment.³⁷

Honneth insists, however, on giving this circle of optimism an abstract form based on his specific understanding of human freedom as *autonomy* and on his emphasis on an intimate link

³³ David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice", *op. cit.*, p. 15; Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 115 –116. As Miller puts it, whereas, clearly: "[i]n wealth, prestige, etc., individuals are visibly unequal (...) political equality allows each person to consider that he is as worthy and important as every other member of the community". Hence, the political sphere may help "to offset the inequalities of economic and social life". See: David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice", in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1978, pp. 1–19, p. 17.

³⁴ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³⁵ Compare: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 440–452.

³⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Compare: Axel Honneth, *ibid.*, pp. 118–120.

between autonomy and *moral accountability*. Honneth imagines that once “adult subjects acquire, via the experience of legal recognition, the possibility of seeing their actions as the universally respected expression of their autonomy”, they can form an identity as members of a moral community.³⁸ The abstract nature of this form of recognition (of oneself as chooser of moral ends) seems to weaken the empirical link between specific welfare institutions and the social identities of citizens. The abstract turn of the circle introduces a tension between the recognition of citizens’ social needs and the recognition of citizens’ cognitive status as choosers of moral ends. It may thus also weaken our own optimism concerning Honneth’s circle.

On this point, we will be able to find grounds for internal discussion among Honneth and the civic equality social democrats. For Miller, the existence of a community requires a number of “practices or institutions that convey a sense of what it means to belong”.³⁹ In later works, Miller reaffirms the need for shared institutional experiences in and through what he calls ‘expressive institutions’.⁴⁰ ‘Expressive’ institutions (i.e. institutions *expressing* ideals inherent to the welfare state) are also concrete and ‘impressive’ (i.e. making an impression on citizens). To Miller, state institutions can promote a sense of unity among citizens by evoking “the symbolic or declarative significance of creating and maintaining a welfare state”.⁴¹ In accordance with the dual meaning of autonomy as independent and effective political voice, citizens have more than one chance of becoming aware that the “equal right to participate in government has become an essential expression of the basic equality between the members of each state”.⁴²

Such expressive institutions offer citizens a concrete experience of sharing “a common fate” by bringing them together and by offering them “the experience of receiving goods and services in common”.⁴³ If “everyone (...) take[s] part in the same institutional distribution of goods and services”, the goods provide areas of social life in which citizens are equals. Certain institutions are obvious candidates for this task.⁴⁴

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁹ David Miller, “What’s Left of the Welfare State?”, in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2003, pp. 92–112, p. 99.

⁴⁰ David Miller, *ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

By attending common schools and using public hospitals, people are brought directly into contact with fellow citizens from different classes, different ethnic backgrounds, etc., and this breaks down barriers and prejudices and gives people a sense that they are sharing a common fate with others in their society.⁴⁵

The effect of common institutions or a *shared lifeworld* is a central theme among ‘civic equality social democrats’.⁴⁶ Here, however, it is not so easy to adjust Honneth’s theory to make him fit the social-equality model’s programs. The explanation for this gap shall be explicated in the following section.

3.1 Honneth’s recourse to a ‘prepolitical’ sphere

The ‘civic equality social democrats’ and Honneth agree that central institutions of the welfare state are expressions of a shared commitment to the rights of citizens to have the preconditions for equal citizenships both in the sense (1) of having an equal opportunity to find their own political voice and (2) in the sense of being able to voice their political interests effectively. The civic equality social democrats also believe that the institutions of the welfare state have come a long way in solving the problem of reproducing citizens’ commitment to the ideal of equal citizenship. Nevertheless, we found that Miller believed that a set of central welfare state institutions would have to be *common* in the sense of being commonly shared across social stratifications. Here I will show that whereas Miller argued for the need for *concrete socially common expressive institutions*, Honneth proposes the *prepolitical work-sphere* as the central solidarity-forming institution.⁴⁷ Miller’s civic equality model thus differs from Honneth’s

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, *op. cit.*; Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, *op. cit.*; David Miller: *On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. ; Michael Walzer’s “What does it mean to be an ‘American’”

has been used to point in a different direction. See: Michael Walzer, “What does it mean to be an ‘American’”, in *Social Research*, Vol. 71, No. 3, 2004, pp. 633–654; Andrew Mason, “Political Community, Liberal-Nationalism, and the Ethics of Assimilation”, in *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 1999, pp. 261–286. Alternative models can be found to the question of how motivational challenges to welfare states can foster a proper set of identities. See: Rainer Forst, *Contexts of Justice*, *op. cit.* This can then go in the direction of a national identity, a culturally embedded political identity or towards a more abstract form of identifying more directly with one’s status as person. These disputed debates are related to equally disputed terms such as ‘trust’, ‘solidarity’, and ‘cohesion’. David Miller, *On Nationality*, *op. cit.*; Cecile Laborde, “From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism”, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ To Honneth, solidarity is not about being moved to defend the institutional support of needy co-citizens, which might be the implication of Miller’s model. Rather, it is the

theory in its distinction between different spheres of recognition and in its distribution of burdens between family and state. These (possibly empirically-based) differences between Pettit, Miller and Honneth are grounded in theoretical moral psychological differences.⁴⁸ For Miller, citizens' political approaches to central welfare state institutions change if these institutions are seen to be not merely instrumental (such as forming equal democratic citizens) but are seen to have this instrumental potential only in so far as they can express and entail intrinsic value to citizens as well. For Pettit, these institutions have a primarily instrumental (emancipatory and empowering) role.⁴⁹ For Miller, in contrast, the educational and health-providing institutions provide "each citizen with certain goods – most notably health care and education – on an equal basis", but they do so by way of giving citizens a sense of *shared fate*.⁵⁰

Honneth would willingly agree that the cognitively demanding abstract story of the self-respect provided by legal recognition needs to be supplemented by a highly demanding sense of equal citizenship. When he takes up this question, however, he formulates an answer very different from Miller's.⁵¹ Honneth argues that the motivations necessary for the reproduction of relations of equal citizenship can be provided by 'pre-political' institutions (rather than health care and school). Therefore, there is no need, as Miller would have it, to defend the need for common rather than segregated hospitals or schools as a condition of solidarity. As the exposition of Honneth's theory below will show, if Miller is right, the reproduction of a citizenry who by virtue of their solidarity support the core ideal of the welfare state may be threatened by Honneth's model.

willingness to enter the sphere of work and take part in the functionally distinct system of labour (Potsdam seminar).

⁴⁸ This is already indicated by the distinction drawn between the Danish and the German school system on the question of mixed schools.

⁴⁹ To Pettit, status inequality should not be seen to stem from a flaw in the 'natural goodness of humanity', but rests on the contingent fact that 'people are not equally respect-able'. See: Joshua Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Philip Pettit, "Towards a Social Democratic Theory of the State", *op. cit.*, p. 539. Furthermore, Pettit states: "People may be equally respect-able in the higher-order sense that they each have the capacity to perform in a manner, and with an effect, which is as worthy of respect as anyone else's performance. But they are not equally respect-able in the sense of actually performing to that standard or with such an effect". See: *ibid.*, p. 542. Comparing the norm of equality against the fact of unequal respectability, however, reveals that it is the facts rather than the norm that needs to change.

⁵⁰ David Miller, "What's Left of the Welfare State?", *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁵¹ In: Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*; Honneth 2011, *op. cit.*

According to the exposition in the part above, Honneth believes that the sustained motivation of citizens to promote the institutions that support the empowerment of citizens' individualized- and empowered political voice depends on their *reflective* insight that their own autonomy depends on such social and political institutions which are promoted by other citizens. Thus, citizens need to see that their private ends can be achieved only through some form of social cooperation with others (what Honneth in *Das Recht der Freiheit* calls 'social freedom').⁵²

Apart from this self-reflective process, Honneth provides an additional narrative of how citizens may come to perceive political processes as non-antagonistic.⁵³ According to Honneth, Dewey was right. The sense that non-strategic, non-egoistic approaches to politics are rational to me as an individual can be where and when citizens form "a consciousness of cooperatively contributing with all others to the realization of common goals".⁵⁴ For Honneth, however, Dewey's conclusion sets Honneth apart from Miller. This motivation to enter politics as a co-operator rather than a bearer of egoistic preferences is formed primarily within "prepolitical associational communities – especially those connected with the world of work – within which individuals develop a sense of solidarity and an interest in solving collective social problems for the development and encouragement of participatory motivations".⁵⁵ It is in the prepolitical realm rather than 'within' public institutions that citizens come to see themselves as sharing problems with other citizens; problems which may best be solved – if solvable at all – through cooperation.

As citizens expend their energy in their work, they are likely to realize that their particular work is functionally linked to the work contributions and competences of other citizens. They will realize that this link between diverse groups "increase the reasonability and rationality of solutions through enriching the context of deliberations".⁵⁶ This insight, according to Honneth, is in itself central to the formation of a democratic identity of this cooperating kind. We come to see ourselves as beings whose broader interests can only be satisfied in complex forms of

⁵² See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011.

⁵³ Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*, p. 776.

⁵⁵ Christopher F. Zurn, "Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory", in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2005, pp. 89–126, p. 95 f.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

cooperation. Through such cooperation, we come to realize that mutual cooperation with others within society in general can be personally rewarding without being reducible to immediate, self-interested cost-benefit calculations. Thus, citizens are likely to accept that interaction with other citizens in the political sphere is distinguishable from self-interested strategic rationality in any crude sense.

According to Honneth, Dewey shows us how such forms of pre-political cooperative interaction within the sphere of work teaches us to overcome political problems through cooperative democratic means.⁵⁷ In the sphere of work, citizens form the democratic virtues and mind-set that motivates them to participate in the democratic public as members of a cooperating (rather than preference aggregating) political community of equal citizens. Only through citizens' experiences in work relations can a welfare state "motivate individuals to participate in broader socio-political decision making, beyond the confines of familial, affinity, and career groups"⁵⁸, and only then will they participate in a non-selfish manner.⁵⁹ This emphasis on the importance of prepolitical institutions for democratic citizenship differs from Miller's emphasis on public (state) institutions of shared fate in so far as it foregrounds civil society and the market sphere as the impetus for citizenship.⁶⁰

3.2 An alternative to Honneth's prepolitical sphere: the school

Honneth's emphasis on the sphere of work as formative of democratic sensibilities is complex and critical.⁶¹ It is also problematic when viewed in light of the Scandinavian welfare states.

⁵⁷ See: David Owen, "'Self-Government and Democracy as Reflexive Co-operation': Reflections on Honneth's Social and Political Ideal", in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 295 f. Compare: Christopher F. Zurn, "Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy, *op. cit.*, pp. 94 f.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Compare: David Miller, *On Nationality*, *op. cit.*; David Miller, "In what Sense must Socialism be Communitarian?", *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1989, pp. 51–73.

⁶⁰ Thereby moving in the direction of the welfare-state-sceptical, civil-society-optimistic, critical-theory tradition represented by Iris Marion Young. See: Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, 1990.

⁶¹ See: Axel Honneth "Work and Instrumental Action", in *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995; Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, *op. cit.*; Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, *op. cit.*; Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology", in Bert van den Brink and David Owen, *op. cit.*, pp. 323–347.

In Scandinavia, the workplace may not act as integrative or formative for all citizens. Many Scandinavians enter the work force relatively late in life, after prolonged educations. Some will never enter a sphere of cooperative work (since they are continuously unemployed or working as individuals, sub-contractors, free-lancers, *etc.*). If they do enter what Honneth and Dewey would define as cooperative work-relations their working conditions may not have the democracy-empowering, emancipatory and solidarity-promoting qualities suggested by Honneth. In this context, it is the lower secondary school that plays the role of forming the democratic citizen. In highlighting the school, the Scandinavian welfare state tradition and Dewey are on common ground.

Given the complex forms of labour promoted within the Scandinavian welfare states and the later age at which most Scandinavian citizens enter the sphere of work (as qualified workers), most citizens will enter the work force well after they have achieved political voting rights. How are 18-year-old (or even younger) citizens to show democratic cooperative competences if their democratic learning process does not begin until they start working, i.e., in their mid-20s or even at 30? This is the obvious reason why most democratic countries have some agenda for fostering democratic and civic virtues through schools at an early age.⁶² This point comes to mind once we consider Miller's point about the *expressive* and '*impressive*' relations at schools, Dewey's concern with democratic education at schools and the fact that in Scandinavian welfare states, public secondary schools have been seen as laboratories for building democratic practice and instilling democratic culture. Hence, it is in Scandinavia that the Deweyian 'project work' and focus cooperative problem-solving has been extraordinarily prominent.

Numerous elements of the Dewey-Honneth model could therefore be 'lifted' from the prepolitical sphere of work relations into the politicized and welfare *state* institutionalized lower-secondary school arena. After all, it is not hard to adopt Deweyan ideas within this arena. As Dewey points out in the beginning of *Democracy and Education*, education is a communal *need*.⁶³ Without education of the youth, fundamental experiences of knowledge of how to survive and express oneself as a human being would be lost.⁶⁴

⁶² Honneth's interests in such questions is shown in chapter 1 in this volume.

⁶³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007/1916, pp. 10–12.

⁶⁴ Many schoolchildren would object to any thoughts of schooling as an urge! The point being, rather, that the social need for education can be made vivid as a self-interest of children; particularly if it connects teaching to problem-solving and experiencing.

3.3 Mediated recognition in the common lower-secondary school

Combining (1) Honneth's focus on horizontal recognition, (2) Miller's emphasis on expressive institutions and (3) the empirical insight that public workers within central welfare state institutions such as the common lower secondary school can establish effective vertical forms of recognition, we can now elaborate the possible strategic uses of public welfare institutions to promote and reproduce equal citizenship and civic equality. For Honneth, the common public lower secondary school is a central player in the strategies of enabling the emancipation and empowerment of citizens. Within *common* schools – 'common' in Miller's sense – a sense of solidarity may be fostered which will help the reproduction of the welfare state.⁶⁵ However, as many commentators have observed, the mere blending of social groups may not be enough to foster solidarity.⁶⁶

Beyond this blending of children from different social classes, the impact of the teacher as a public worker within the welfare state also needs to be highlighted. The explicit recognition by public employees of children's equal status may be very effective in a society where the status of children differs substantially. For these future citizens, teachers may offer visible expressions of what equality of status means and which role it is meant to play within the welfare state.⁶⁷ I believe this suggested model could gain strength by implementing aspects of

⁶⁵ See for example: Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education: With a New Preface and Epilogue*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press (2nd ed.), 1999/1987; Melissa S. Williams, "Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the Functions of Multicultural Education", in Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (eds.), *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies: Teaching for Cosmopolitan Values and Collective Identities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 208–248; Meira Levinson, "Common Schools and Multicultural Education", in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2007, pp. 625–642.

⁶⁶ See: Meira Levinson, *op. cit.*; Amy Gutmann, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ For empirical evidence see the discussion of Gordon Allports 'contact hypothesis': "Allport argued that four conditions were required for intergroup interaction to reduce prejudice: contact must (1) be frequent enough to lead to personal acquaintance, (2) be cooperative, in pursuit of shared goals, (3) be supported by institutional authorities, and (4) take place among participants of equal status (equal roles within the organization)". See: Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 123 ff. See also: Pathen Markell, "Making Affect Safe for Democracy? On Constitutional Patriotism", in *Political Theory*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2000, pp. 38–63; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996/1992; Cecile Laborde, "From Constitutional to Civic Patriotism", *op. cit.* In this new light, we may now give real meaning to a point made by John Dewey and

Honneth's theory of recognition. However, in this area Honneth's model is in need of correction. In Honneth's work-based model, experiences of cooperative problem solving takes place within workplace-based environments, among citizens who share a particular set of competences which sets them off from other citizens. In contrast, cooperative practices within schools have the possibility to become a more *inclusive* practice than specialized functionally differentiated labour. Within schools, future citizens could experience the kind of sharing of fate expressed by Miller's social democratic model. Moving the model to the lower-secondary common school, cooperative practices and problem-solving projects in a 'truly' common school (given Miller's standard of social inclusiveness) could make the model work as a foundational model for the formation of citizens motivated towards democratic civility.⁶⁸ Instead of state coordinated spheres of work, these citizens would now be acting within the framework of state run welfare institutions. Hence, citizens who may later become unemployed or choose to work as independent workers would be able to share in the foundational citizenship formation that would make them believe in their equal standing as citizens.

4 Problems of Honneth's systematics

I have suggested that for the reproduction of welfare states working to realize the ideal of equal citizenship, common institutions need to be installed and reproduced. In such common institutions, citizens form a sense of shared fate.⁶⁹ Here, public workers can offer an alternative to the inequalities of status present within civil society. This model depends on whether a sufficient number of citizens (teachers) take upon themselves the task of articulating specific normatively defined sets of 'recognitional attitudes'. The model depends also on whether these attitudes will continue to find political and institutional support. Political and institutional support relies on more than preambles to public school legislations (as can be found in Scandinavia). It depends on how school quality and outputs are measured, on the internally

referred to by Axel Honneth: "State institutions, whose officials are 'officers of the public' have to enable, as Dewey puts it, all members of society 'to count with reasonable certainty upon what others will do'; they create 'respect for others and for one's self'". See: Axel Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation", *op. cit.*, p. 775.

⁶⁸ See the debate in: Meira Levinson, "Common Schools and Multicultural Education", *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ This point is inspired by Melissa S. Williams. See: Melissa S. Williams, "Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the Functions of Multicultural Education", *op. cit.*

expressed visions of the good teacher and on public opinions concerning the purpose of the school.

Such publicly promoted recognitional attitudes do not seem to play a role in Honneth's work. In contrast to his own self-understanding as a theorist whose work is closely aligned with the Scandinavian type welfare state, Honneth's recent work seems closely aligned with a continental welfare state model stressing the impact of families rather than schools.⁷⁰ Perhaps we can explain why such attitudes and why they are absent from Honneth's theory.

The forms of public social work described above are expressions of what I would term 'mediated' forms of recognition. Mediated recognition forms are partly professional and partly personal. In contrast to the recognition of legal rights, such as those expressed in a constitution or executed by monetary transfers of socio-economic goods, mediated forms of recognition are linked to the initial form of recognition found in relations such as love or esteem, where individuals are compelled to express their recognition of another human being by their preferences for particular individuals. On the other hand, they are also distinct from such forms of recognition by being stabilized by professional habits (such as a professional-ethical codex, a work-ethos, salaries, institutional control, etc.). This mediated recognition also differs from the anonymous face of the public or mass of political representatives who might generally express their support for welfare state institutions. It consists of a concrete human's interaction with another human.

The introduction of mediated forms of recognition is thus an extension of Honneth's initial scheme. It poses a conceptual threat to Honneth's 'three part sphere systematics', which forms the core of *The Struggle for Recognition* as well as Honneth's general theory of recognition developed in his subsequent works.

For Honneth, 'legal' recognition dominates a restricted area distinguished from the spheres of particular attachments and "[c]ompared to the form of recognition found in love (...) legal relations differ in just about every essential respect".⁷¹ For Honneth, legal recognition is purely cognitive. It involves no affective component, no emotional feeling of attachment,

⁷⁰ I base this on the fact that in Axel Honneth's *Das Recht der Freiheit* the family rather than traditional welfare state institutions such as schools and elderly homes, hospitals and pre-school institutions such as kindergarten and nurseries marks the sphere with primarily responsibility of the welfare of citizens. This suggests a Continental rather than a Scandinavian welfare type. See: Axel Honneth, *Das Recht der Freiheit: Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011. See, however: Andreas Busen, Lisa Herzog, and, Paul Sörensen, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 f.

community, or shared identity. Legal recognition is thus totally distinct from the kind of recognition found in relations of love, family, friendship or other forms of sentiment-based relations.⁷² As he puts it, “this type of universal respect is not to be conceived of as an affective attitude but rather only as a purely cognitive accomplishment of comprehension, which sets almost internal limits on emotional promptings”.⁷³ Honneth thus stresses the cognitive side of this form of recognition, which should “be detached from feelings of liking”.⁷⁴

The teacher and public school model, however, indicates, first, that the reproduction of the welfare state depends on a group of citizens who are willing to show a group of citizens’ affective or ‘thick’ expressive recognition and, second, that we need *only* a group of citizens – not all citizens – to do so. This group of citizens (depending on how well civil society is able to support the ideal) are the public workers, employed by the state to conduct tasks necessary for the welfare state’s reproduction of equal citizens.⁷⁵ They are, to use Honneth’s terminology, performing ‘legal respect’, but their ‘respect’ cannot overall be detached from emotional categories (such as feelings of liking and affection), as Honneth describes them. I am not claiming that all teachers are to be emotionally attached to all future citizens, merely that a realistic model will depend less on purely cognitive respect and more on a plurality of teachers able to express different types of attachments and engagements of a both cognitive and emotional nature.

So far, I have indicated that Honneth commits himself to a clear distinction between legal and affective relations on the grounds of systematic concerns (grounded in his intension to formulate a theory of three distinct spheres and forms of recognition). As I shall show in the following, however, Honneth’s commitment to this distinction is closely linked to his understanding of the relations of respect in the second (legal) sphere of recognition. For Honneth, “the legal system can be understood as the expression of the universalisable interest of all members of society”.⁷⁶ For him, these interests are limited by three principles. First, for Honneth, legal relations rest on a fundamental logic of *reciprocity*. Discussing ‘the logic’ of legal relations, he argues that they “appeal to the same mechanism of reciprocal recognition”. Hence, “we can only come to understand ourselves as the bearer of rights when we know, in

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 107–110.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See: Michael Walzer, “The Civil Society Argument”, in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Citizenship*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995.

⁷⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

turn, what various normative obligations we must keep vis-à-vis others”.⁷⁷ Secondly, rights are made effective through laws. For laws to earn legitimacy they need citizens’ *consent* and ‘free approval’.⁷⁸ A third principle establishes an empirical link to the limited universalisable recognitional attitudes of citizens. According to Honneth, citizens will not offer strangers affective forms of recognition. They can only be expected to recognize in all other citizens a ‘capacity’ consisting of ‘a purely cognitive accomplishment of comprehension’.⁷⁹⁸⁰

Honneth expands these three principles of legal structures to the legitimacy of legally-based state institutions as forms of vertical recognition. For Honneth, citizens cannot be required to show emotionally grounded recognition to strangers. We are expected to give recognition emotionally grounded recognition only to those with whom we have affective relations (family and friends). Emotions have a voluntary element and cannot be demanded. In the sphere of esteem, the mix of cognitive and emotional basis of our recognition contains a voluntary root. For Honneth, the empirical fact of limited recognition together with the rule of reciprocity and free consent imposes limits on what he calls legal relations even in its institutional form.

What about a group of citizens who freely choose to perform a public task and freely choose to submit themselves to a specific (but pluralistic) professional *ethos*? The presence of such a group challenges Honneth’s claim that legal recognition is limited by the empirical limits set by people’s willingness to recognize all others as well as by the principles of reciprocity and consent. Teachers, namely, consent to enter relations that are grounded in the ideals of equal respect. However, the relations of recognition into which they enter – relations with their pupils – are not directly reciprocal (as required by Honneth’s theory). We may call them ‘delayed reciprocal’ in the sense that schoolchildren are offered recognition in the form of an expectation which they will only be fully competent to reciprocate later in life. Since children are often unable to reciprocate, it is only by recourse to forms of recognition known from the intimate relations of parents and children that we can understand the prescriptive and expressive nature of the recognition given. Only with recourse to the esteem teachers may

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108. The existence of laws and the expression of commitment of following laws express a commitment to all citizens “as persons capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms” whereas they are bound only by laws which “they have, in principle, been able to agree to the norms as free and equal beings”. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 111.

⁷⁸ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

expect for their socially useful work can we fully understand the motivation of teachers who are not being rewarded in the way parents are rewarded by their on-going efforts to express recognition. There is thus a part of the legal sphere which is not directly reciprocal, and where elements of love, respect and esteem – to use Honneth’s terminology – play a part. Honneth, in contrast, insists on differentiating such recognitional attitudes into different spheres of the family, the legal sphere and civil society.

In contrast to Honneth’s sphere-systematic-argument, the concept of mediated forms of recognition shows that vertical recognition does not need to be motivationally limited to the kind of recognition in which all citizens would be willing to give all citizens. By introducing functionally differentiated public work, we do not violate the fundamental principle of *reciprocity* upon which Honneth relies.

Within the expanded legal sphere of recognition, teachers, pedagogues, and welfare workers can choose a profession where they are expected to give an affectively more demanding kind of recognition than within the legal recognition structures suggested by Honneth. They give this recognition in their engagement with needy ‘strangers’ with whom they come to form short-term or long-term relationships. Such welfare work – if the state seeks to structure, provide the means for it as well as appreciate it – can be personally rewarding, be well-paid and lead to esteem from other citizens. Given the plurality of human interests, Honneth is right that we cannot expect that all citizens would be willing to give all others such a demanding form of affective recognition based partly on the needs of others. However, we can expect that there are at least some who will find such forms of work and recognition meaningful and rewarding.

A large group of publicly employed citizens could be legitimately expected to offer strangers’ children a form of affective recognition not merely on account of their good hearted nature, but because the recognition they offer is effective – or ‘impressive’ – in its articulating the ideal of equal citizenship. Thus, they may come to see that due to the professional efforts, children who were unable to fully express or even comprehend the ideal of equal citizenship could gradually come to understand and live out this ideal. In this sense, the recognition offered by a public employee (the teacher) is not necessarily compelled by the actions of the other (the child), but by a cognitive and experience-based belief in the effect of expressing recognition (in order to help the future citizen imagine him or herself as being worthy of the recognition). In this sense, Honneth’s theory of recognition-processes may help reveal a model for citizen formation historically inherent to Scandinavian welfare institutions, but now slowly eroding (due to New Public Management and political valorising of the economic demands of the

marked). To see this potential, however, his model needs to include a subversion of legal recognition. It does not make sense to see the form of recognition discussed above as clearly distinct from affective recognition. It's very form needs to be combined with affective forms of recognition, and for the particular teacher, the motivational root of actual forms of recognition is likely to be motivated in combination (though not always) with affective concerns for particular children.

This picture suggests that the welfare state can only reproduce itself if it insists on breaking down the systematic dichotomy introduced by Honneth. Scandinavian welfare states can only reproduce the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship by providing relations of recognition via public workers. This kind of recognition challenges Honneth's systematics. These relations are instrumental for ensuring the on-going provision of precisely those public goods and values that stabilize and reproduce the intrinsic ideal of equal citizenship inherent to the social democratic position and which can realize Honneth's project.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first turned to comparative and normative approaches that took the normative core of Scandinavian welfare states to be the ideal of equal citizenship and civic equality. I found that Axel Honneth's theory of recognition was very much in line with this 'thick' normative ideal of equal citizenship involving recognitional attitudes of civic equality. I followed Honneth's expansion of the ideal of equal citizenship into an emancipatory, an empowering as well as voice-giving dimension.

Next, I analysed Honneth's theory from the perspective of the 'thinner' normative ideals of reproducibility, showing how Honneth's theory of the reproduction of the non-selfish citizen, who shares a strong commitment to the equal status of citizens, depends both on citizens' ability to reflect on their recognized rights, and on their experiences within pre-political spheres of differentiated labour. I have argued that though the Scandinavian welfare states – or social democracies – realize something close to Honneth's theory, they do so in a manner which cannot be understood if one views the model through the lenses of Honneth's distinct sphere structure. Furthermore, Scandinavian welfare states realize something close to his model by ways which are partly opposed to Honneth's worksphere strategy. My suggested solution aligns recognition theory with the Scandinavian welfare state tradition of common schools and public employees. However, this leads to a partial break up of Honneth's central systematic strategy in *The Struggle for Recognition*. The discussion of Honneth's work has

nevertheless helped bring out the rationale for continuing support for such forms of ‘mediated recognition’. This investigation has provided the framework for a normative reconstruction of the Scandinavian welfare states with the possibility for further critical analysis of developments within these societies – such as the possible erosion of common schools and the gradual decline of the ‘thick’ normative tasks of public employees.