Introduction to "Struggles of Recognition: Between Social Bond and Social Conflict"

Introducción a "Conflictos de reconocimiento: entre lazo social y conflicto social"

Dossier

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This dossier is based on the conference proceedings of the French-Chilean Colloquium in the Social Sciences, "The Struggle of Recognition: Between Social Bond and Social Conflict," held in January 2007 and organized by the Institute of Political Science of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, the Institute of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences and History of the Diego Portales University, with the support of the French-Chilean Institute and the French Embassy in Santiago de Chile.

The French authors represented in this dossier on theories of recognition belong to the prestigious research group SOPHIAPOL, which has its seat at the University of Paris X – Nanterre, and is under the direction of Christian Lazzeri and Alain Caillé. SOPHIAPOL is composed of philosophers and sociologists specialized in contemporary philosophy and political sociology. The group was founded to undertake a series of theoretical and empirical investigations on the philosophical, ethical, and political implications of recognition today (Caillé and Lazzeri, 2004). The theory of recognition and its application to the social sciences has its starting point in the philosophical works of Charles Taylor (1992), Jürgen Habermas (1983), Axel Honneth (1992) and Nancy Fraser (1995, 2003), among others. Initially, the debate on recognition was a philosophical one centered on the interpretation of Hegel, who was the first modern philosopher to give a systematic value to the "struggle for recognition" in his famous analysis of the master-slave dialectic (Hegel, 1970). Whereas Charles Taylor gave the struggle for recognition a communitarian interpretation, and employed it to understand the kind of public policies implemented in Quebec to promote a multicultural society, Axel Honneth pursued the theory of recognition within the tradition of Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School, seeing in this struggle a way to make sense philosophically of the various contestation movements which developed in industrial democracies after the crisis of Marxism. Since then, the debate on recognition has spread over to other crucial fields in moral and political philosophy as well as in the social sciences, from the discourse on theories of justice and political equality (e.g., Rawls, Pettit) to the discourses on the politics of cultural, sexual, and gender identity and difference (e.g., Butler).

The diversity of theoretical discourses which have appropriated the concept of recognition, as well as the multiplication of concrete struggles for recognition over the last two decades has motivated the research of SOPHIAPOL in two general directions. The first of these

directions stems from the need to provide a rigorous analytic investigation of the concept of recognition in order to be able to apply the concept in meaningful ways. The essays found in this dossier are exemplary of this analytical work because they advance answers to questions like: What does it mean to recognize someone or something? Who has to recognize whom? In the name of what does one have to recognize others? What form is recognition supposed to take? The second direction taken by SOPHIAPOL consists in employing the discourse on recognition in order to move beyond utilitarian and economicist understandings of the relations between cooperation and conflict in contemporary free market, liberal-democratic societies. The essays found in this dossier share the project of providing concepts to the social sciences and moral philosophy that will allow them to understand the normative import of social conflicts and the critical import of social pathologies in contemporary society.

In his current research project, Christian Lazzeri investigates the relation between ethics and recognition, both in the works of classical authors like Machiavelli, Spinoza, Fichte, and Marx, as well as in contemporary authors ranging from Taylor through Rawls to Pettit. Lazzeri's work pursues the question of whether the phenomenon of recognition is subordinate to a specific normative theory, be it an ethics of communication (Habermas, 1985) or a theory of justice (Rawls, 1971), or, instead, whether normative conceptions of self-realization and political equality emerge from a demand for and a distribution of recognition. Lazzeri argues that struggles for recognition constitute a condition for the emergence of norms, and he has confronted the theory of recognition with the empirical research that has been done in the social sciences on the emergence of norms based on strategic interactions grounded in rational choice, or, alternatively, based on the logics of exchange grounded on the gift (Caillé, 2000; Chanial, 2001; Hénaff, 2002). In his article for this dossier, Lazzeri situates the idea of a struggle for recognition within the paradigm of an "economy of esteem" recently developed by Pettit and Brennan (2004). The goal of his article is to clarify how the social goods of respect and esteem emerge in and through logics of cooperation and conflict that are not reducible to the laws of the free market or to those of legitimate state rule. The article also tries to give an account of social conflicts (when the conflict is a struggle for recognition) as constitutive of better social relations, rather than as obstacles to sociality.

Stéphane Haber works on theories of pathologies in the human and social sciences. He investigates the interaction between psychopathologies and social pathologies, as well as the history of psychiatry and its constitutive concepts. His current research project is concerned with evaluating the pertinence of classical Marxist concepts like reification and alienation. The article by Haber for this dossier is part of this ongoing research project. In it, he presents the latest developments in Axel Honneth's theory of recognition which turns on Honneth's appropriation of the concept of reification (*Verdinglichung*, 2005) in order to radicalize in an existential and in a psychological sense his previous theory of recognition. Haber then attempts to critically situate Honneth's idea of reification in the context of a revaluation of the concept of alienation and its importance in the analysis of social pathologies of late capitalism.

Emmanuel Renault is the author of several works on the problem of social suffering in contemporary political philosophy and sociology as well as on Hegel and Marx. His contribution to the dossier exemplifies the analytical approach to the theory of recognition that is characteristic of the investigations of the SOPHIAPOL research group. In his article, Renault distinguishes between struggles for recognition and struggles of recognition: the former are struggles that seek a redistribution of the social good of recognition to individuals and groups that feel discriminated on the basis of their cultural identity. Struggles of recognition, instead, are intended to bring awareness of the intolerable social and personal effects of denied or misplaced recognition on the part of the social structure. Discrimination and marginalization result from individuals and groups being recognized wrongly, and this motivates these individuals and groups to a struggle to correct these perceptions. Whereas the former struggles aim at having a type of identity recognized, the latter, for the most part, are struggles against type-casting of identities. Renault argues that the latter kinds of struggles of recognition are indicative of social pathologies and injustices that go well beyond the usual themes of identity politics.

Author's note: I thank Miguel Vatter for his help and advice in putting together this dossier.

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