

# Nancy Fraser

## Kort biografi

Amerikansk kritisk feminist. Nancy Fraser har siden 1995 været professor i politisk filosofi på New School for Social Research i New York. Fraser er en fremtrædende feministisk teoretiker, der har fremlagt en række analyser af den amerikanske velfærdsstats modsætninger, og en feministisk-socialistisk strategi for overvindelse af disse modsætninger. Hun har udtrykt sympati for borgerløns/basisindkomst tankegangen og set den som en af mulighederne for udvikling af velfærdsstaten.



## Dokumentation

**Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003) *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. Verso. London.**

p. 10.

Redistribution comes from the liberal tradition, especially its late-twentieth-century Anglo-American branch. In the 1970's and 80s this tradition was richly extended a "analytic" philosophers such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin developed sophisticated theories of distributive justice. Seeking to synthesize the traditional liberal emphasis on individual liberty with the egalitarianism of social democracy, they propounded new conceptions of justice that could justify socio-economic redistribution.

The term "recognition", in contrast, comes from Hegelian philosophy, specifically the phenomenology of consciousness. In this tradition, recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it. This relation is deemed constitutive for subjectivity; one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject.

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In what follows, I shall try to show how that redistribution and recognition can go together, despite their divergent philosophical provenances. And I shall also suggest that both notions can be conceived in ways that escape their respective critics' objections.

...I shall consider them, that is, as ideal-typical constellations of claims that are currently contested in public spheres. From this perspective, the terms "redistribution" and "recognition" refer not to philosophical paradigms but rather to folk paradigms of justice, which inform present-day struggle in civil society. Tacitly presupposed by social movements and political actors, folk paradigms are sets of linked assumptions about the causes of and remedies of injustice. By reconstructing the folk paradigms of redistribution and recognition, I seek to clarify why and how these perspectives have been cast as mutually antithetical in current political debates.

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I begin, accordingly, by distinguishing affirmation and transformation. The distinction turns on the contrast between underlying social structures, on the one hand, and the social outcome they generate, on the other. Affirmative strategies for redressing injustice aim to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying social structures that generate them. Transformative strategies, in contrast, aim to correct unjust outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework. This distinction is not equivalent to reform versus revolution, nor to gradual versus apocalyptic change. Rather, the nub of contrast is the level at which injustice is addressed: whereas affirmation targets end state outcomes, transformation addresses root causes.

The distinction between affirmation and transformation can be applied, first of all, to the perspective of distributive justice. In this perspective, the paradigmatic example of affirmative strategy is the liberal welfare state, which aims to redress maldistribution through income transfers.

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..In contrast, the classical example of a transformative strategy is socialism. Here the aim is to redress unjust distribution at the root – by transforming the framework that generate it....

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The contrast between affirmation and transformation is intuitively familiar in the perspective of distribution. What may be more surprising, however, is that it can also be applied to remedies for misrecognition. An example of an affirmative strategy in the latter perspective is what I shall call “mainstream multiculturalism”.

..It can be contrasted with a transformative strategy that I shall call “deconstruction”.

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.. Applied to misrecognition, deconstructive remedies are in principle dereifying, as they aim to destabilize invidious status distinctions. Acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of identifications, they seek to replace overweening master dichotomies, such as black/white or gay/straight, with a decentred congeries of lower-case differences.

...Applied to maldistribution, meanwhile, transformative approaches are solidaristic. Focused on expanding the pie and restructuring the general conditions of labor, they tend to cast entitlements in universalist terms; thus they reduce inequality without creating stigmatized classes of vulnerable people perceived as beneficiaries of special largesse. Far from generating backlash misrecognition, then, they tend to promote solidarity. Thus, an approach aimed at redressing maldistribution can help to redress misrecognition as well – or, rather those forms of misrecognition that derive directly from the economic structure of society.

All other things being equal, then, transformative strategies are preferable.

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In fact, the distinction between affirmation and transformation is not absolute, but contextual. Reforms that appear to be affirmative in the abstract can have transformative effects in some context, provided they are radically and consistently pursued. For example, Unconditional Basic Income grants would guarantee a minimum standard of living to every citizen, regardless of labor force participation, while leaving intact the deep structure of capitalist property rights. Thus, in the abstract they appear to be affirmative. That appearance would jibe with reality, moreover, in a neoliberal regime, where the grants would effectively subsidize employers of low-wage, temporary labor and possibly depress wages overall. In a social democracy, however, the effects could be dramatically different. According to proponents, if the level of grants were set high enough, Basic Income would alter the balance of power between capital and labor, creating a more favourable terrain on which to pursue further change. The long-term result could be to undermine the commodification of labor power. In that case, an apparently affirmative remedy formal distribution would have deeply transformative effects with respect to economic class subordination.

By the same token Unconditional Basic Income grants would not, in abstract, be transformative with respect to gender. To be sure, they would enable primary caregivers, along with others, to withdraw periodically from the labor market. But in and of themselves they would do little to alter a gender division of labor that assigns unpaid caregiving overwhelmingly to women, while leaving male recipients free to surf. In some context, in fact, Basic Income would serve to consolidate a “Mommy Track”, a market in flexible, non-continuous, largely female labor, thereby reinforcing, instead of transforming, the deep structure of gender maldistribution. On the other hand, instituted as one element among others of a social-democratic-cum-feminist regime, Basic Income could be deeply transformative. Combined, for example, with comparable worth and high-quality, abundant public childcare, it could alter the balance of power within heterosexual households, helping to spark changes in the gender division of labor.

..What defines this alternative strategy is its reliance on “non-reformist reforms”. These would be policies with a double face: on the one hand, they engage people’s identities and satisfy some of their needs as interpreted within existing frameworks of recognition and distribution; on the other hand, they set in motion a trajectory of change in which more radical reforms become practicable over time. When successful, non-reformist reforms change more than the specific institutional features they explicitly target. In addition, they alter the terrain upon which later struggles will be

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waged. By changing incentive structures and political opportunity structures, they expand the set of feasible options for future reform. Over time their cumulative effect could be to transform the underlying structures that generate injustice.