



The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition

By Axel Honneth

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In this volume Axel Honneth deepens and develops his highly influential theory of recognition, showing how it enables us both to rethink the concept of justice and to offer a compelling account of the relationship between social reproduction and individual identity formation.

Drawing on his reassessment of Hegel's practical philosophy, Honneth argues that our conception of social justice should be redirected from a preoccupation with the principles of distributing goods to a focus on the measures for creating symmetrical relations of recognition. This theoretical reorientation has far-reaching implications for the theory of justice, as it obliges this theory to engage directly with problems concerning the organization of work and with the ideologies that stabilize relations of domination.

In the final part of this volume Honneth shows how the theory of recognition provides a fruitful and illuminating way of exploring the relation between social reproduction and identity formation. Rather than seeing groups as regressive social forms that threaten the autonomy of the individual, Honneth argues that the 'I' is dependent on forms of social recognition embodied in groups, since neither self-respect nor self-esteem can be maintained without the supportive experience of practising shared values in the group.

This important new book by one of the leading social philosophers of our time will be of great interest to students and scholars in philosophy, sociology, politics and the humanities and social sciences generally.

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About the Author

Axel Honneth is Professor of Philosophy at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt.

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