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REPLIES

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The author of a book can count himself lucky if soon after its publication a number of excellent colleagues pay it enough interest and attention to critically discuss the ideas it presents. I am in this privileged situation thanks to the initiative of Robin Celikates and Beate Röessler, who organized a philosophical colloquium at the University of Amsterdam devoted to my recent study *The Right of Freedom*. In what follows I respond to the contributions to that workshop, which are here collected in revised form. Rather than addressing each individual contribution separately I will structure my response around their thematic intersections and thus around a few focal topics, in the hope of contributing to the systematic debate over an adequate theory of justice for our times. Among the numerous objections, three overarching sets of questions emerge, which not accidentally coincide with the broad thematic choices I made in *The Right of Freedom*. At the center of Rutger Claassen's contribution, and towards the end of Bert van den Brink's, we find doubts about the methodological approach of the book as a whole (I). The comments by Thomas Nys, Beate Röessler and Joel Anderson raise concerns regarding my placement of the various freedoms within the moral discourse of modernity (II). Finally, the contributions by Yolande Jansen and Rutger Claassen, and to a certain extent the ones by Bert van den Brink and Joel Anderson, raise objections to my analyses of particular spheres of social freedom. The in-

teresting considerations by René Gabriëls, which are orthogonal to these distinctions, will be briefly addressed towards the end of my replies (III). I hope that by engaging with these several sets of questions I will be able to convey the specific strategy I chose in approaching the theory of justice by way of a 'social analysis', so that following the debate will not presuppose detailed familiarity with the book.

My book aims to place the theory of justice on a new footing by following Hegel in deriving the basic criteria of social justice directly from the normative claims that have emerged within the practical spheres constitutive of modern societies. This approach by way of a 'social analysis' is meant to avoid what I consider a mistake of Kantian approaches, namely the attempt to devise principles of justice by relying only on thought experiments or proceduralist methods. The latter disregard the concrete historically formed claims of participants, and the application of the resulting principles to social reality comes only as a second, separate step. The method I follow to derive requirements of social justice from the norms inherent in the various practical spheres is one that I call 'normative reconstruction'. In polemical contrast with 'constructivist' approaches, this term refers to attempts at articulating the norms that are tacitly accepted by the participants in a given practical sphere, so as to retrace in an idealizing manner the social conflicts and struggles that have been waged over the appropriate interpretation and application of those norms. Such attempts are guided by the hope that the developmental paths thus reconstructed will exhibit a certain directedness towards moral progress, telling us not only which ones among a specific sphere's fundamental normative ideals have already been realized but also what would need to be done now in order to realize them more adequately and more fully. When there have been departures from the developmental path revealed by the reconstruction, such that already institutionalized improvements in the application of some particular norm have been reversed, I speak of 'normative misdevelopments' ('normative Fehlentwicklungen'). If, by contrast, the institutional reform of a practice leads to a fuller and more adequate application of its basic normative ideal, I speak of 'moral progress'. The history of Western societies is marked by a series of historical caesuras that in retrospect are perceived (or should be described) by everyone as particularly beneficial or as particular gains, pre-

cisely because they brought about significant improvements in the practice of the relevant norm. Such events play an indispensable role in giving us a sense of historical direction, and in my book I therefore do not shirk away from occasionally referring to them as ‘signs of history’ (*Geschichtszeichen*), a term that originates in Kant’s philosophy of history.

These remarks will hardly suffice to explain how to properly conceive of the method of normative reconstruction. To make things more precise, it may help to add that I hope to use this method to find a post-metaphysical equivalent of what Hegel calls the ‘logic of the concept’, as applied to the sphere of ‘objective spirit’. What Hegel had in mind here was the idea that spirit, structured like an organism, had the power to shape reality by gradually actualizing itself according to its own distinctive procedure, and that philosophy was confined to the task of adequately representing this process of self-actualization (see Horstmann/ Emundts 2002, esp. 32 ff.). Once we abandon the thought that there is such a metaphysical power of spirit, this methodology of mere representation or ‘reconstruction’ can be retained only if some other explanation is given of why and how something ‘spiritual’ should be able to unfold and assert itself in social reality.¹ Here I rely on the thought, which ultimately comes from sociology, that a certain class of spiritual entities, namely normative ideas, may reshape social reality and impress their own contents upon it to the extent that the normative demands encapsulated in them are gradually realized by way of social struggles. Hegel’s ‘spirit’ succeeds at refashioning reality according to its own essential structure of pure self-referentiality freed from all external constraints, and it does so all by itself, through its own immanent power. On the post-metaphysical view, this result is achieved instead through the efforts made by social agents who insist on the as yet unredeemed promises contained in the norms that history has handed down to them, and who invoke these promises to revolt against a given status quo. It is true that described in this way, the relevant social struggles are invested with a certain idealistic dignity, since they are now invested with the task of actualizing something ‘spiritual’ in the sphere of social reality. But this idealist dimension has in fact all along been essential to the notion of a ‘struggle for recognition’, and it is further supported by views such as John Dewey’s, who holds that ‘intelligible’ so-

lutions to social conflicts accomplish a gradual ‘spiritualization’ of reality itself (see Dewey 1988, chs. 8-9).

To be sure, the worries that the contributions collected here raise with regard to the methodology informing my approach to the theory of social justice are quite independent of the question of whether I have in fact found anything like an equivalent of Hegel’s own method. Focusing on the market sphere, Rutger Claassen objects to my method of normative reconstruction that the interpretation of the market it offers is guided by intuitions about justice for which I fail to make an adequate case. He argues that as long as it is admitted that there are other ways of justifying the market, for example in individualist terms, my privileging of the model of social freedom must tacitly rely on some type of ‘constructivist’ theory of justice. This observation leads him to the systematic claim that my ‘normative reconstructions’ are dependent throughout on an ‘implicit constructivism’, since the historical interpretations of the various principles of legitimacy are never in themselves sufficient to explain why some particular principle should be preferred over others. I will return to the special case of the economic sphere in section III below. For now I am concerned only with justifying my methodology at the general level, regarding its applicability in principle. It is true, as Claassen points out, that I must offer arguments for the assumption that for any given sphere, there is one and only one specific principle (of recognition) underlying it, which normative reconstruction can then aim to uncover. His challenge is this: could not the description of any such sphere rely on other principles, which are at least *prima facie* equally legitimate but whose developmental reconstruction would diverge from the one offered by me, so that I must resort to ‘constructivist’ considerations in order to justify my particular point of departure? I rely on two operations, albeit more implicitly than explicitly, to avoid the conclusion Claassen suggests. First, I collect scientific and literary evidence demonstrating for each given sphere of action that the public justifications accompanying its emergence made reference to a single normative principle in its support. We can think of this procedure as a generalization of the interpretive method employed by Jürgen Habermas in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he traces the emergence of the ‘idea of publicity’ in the eighteenth century (see Habermas 1990, chs. 2 and 4). Yet this type of hermeneutic re-

trieval of the founding documents of particular spheres is not sufficient to show that the principles thus uncovered have subsequently retained their justificatory force. I therefore have to supplement the first operation by a second one meant to do just that. By drawing on historical documents, autobiographical reports, empirical studies and the like, I have to show that the participants in a given practical sphere continue to think of their interactions as governed by the single normative principle that is already discernible in the founding documents. In my book I try to offer this kind of evidence for each of the practical spheres I examine and reconstruct. This may consist, for example, in interpreting the discourses in which social movements articulate their own goals (as in my discussion of workers' cooperatives and labor unions in the chapter on the labor market), or in drawing on recent empirical studies (as in the chapters on friendship and the family). In each case I am faced with the task of providing historical and empirical support for the claim that the various principles of legitimacy, at which I initially arrive through a hermeneutic approach, continue to be efficacious in practice. If I could thereby successfully demonstrate that each distinct practical sphere is taken by its participants to be normatively tied to a distinctive principle of legitimacy, this would relieve me from the burden of having to take the further 'constructivist' step that Claassen urges on me. As I said, I will later come back to the specific difficulties that arise for the sphere of market activity.

The objection that Bert van den Brink raises against the method of normative reconstruction towards the end of his illuminating essay on personal relationships entails recommendations that are more or less the opposite of those made by Claassen. Instead of proposing that I enrich my justificatory procedure by adding a constructivist layer, van den Brink suggests that my entire project should be understood as a political intervention on the part of an engaged citizen, which would reduce its claim to normative objectivity and would give me greater liberty to mark out as desirable specific developments within the individual spheres. Here again I would like to postpone discussion of the specific case (the family) to the third part of my response, and limit myself for now to the general issue. One reason why it would be unsatisfactory to think of normative reconstruction simply as one citizen's personal plea is that this would hardly justify the effort of reconstructing a developmental path pointing to the

actualization of the various distinct principles of freedom. This normative work is meant, after all, to provide us with general reasons, anchored in the structure of modern life, for thinking of certain developments within the individual spheres as beneficial, and of others as detrimental, to the realization of their respective institutionalized freedoms. It may be that the Rawlsian disjunction between philosophical and political conceptions of justice is not exhaustive, and that it is unsuited to capture the specific ambitions of normative reconstruction. Such a reconstruction is neither valid as an expression of a universal truth, being essentially tied to the normative premises of modernity, nor is it merely an act of political expression on the part of a citizen, since it aims to explicate a sequence of *necessary* steps on the way to realizing those specifically modern normative claims.² To be sure, it is a requirement on the (in principle corrigible) validity of any particular normative reconstruction that it should know itself to be tied to those particular emancipatory promises of modern societies which it treats as already institutionalized and thus, within this historical context, as universally authoritative. But granted the acceptance of the relevant principles, the reconstructive method then claims to objectively trace the developmental trajectories along which those principles come to be actualized. This is why I do not find it a satisfactory option to think of my entire project as simply amounting to a political statement.

II.

Up to now my response has been focused only on the methodological problem of why and how to think of the method of normative reconstruction as a fruitful alternative to more constructivist approaches in the theory of justice. It is therefore only natural that I have not so far said anything about what, in modern societies, will be the proper object of such normative reconstructions, such that the latter can play their intended role as purely immanent procedures in the first place. Here again I follow one of the basic thoughts of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in assuming that in modern societies the idea of freedom has become the Archimedean point for legitimizing social order, insofar as it has come to form the background for all of our normative obligations within the prac-

tical spheres constitutive of our life-world. As the sons and daughters of modernity, we might follow Hegel in saying, we cannot but in some manner refer to the value of individual liberty whenever we attempt to reciprocally justify to one another our activities within the essential spheres of social existence. If we follow Hegel one step further and claim that these several spheres have institutionalized distinct varieties of the idea of freedom, which respectively generate certain normative obligations, then we are led to a conclusion that I take to be central to a theory of justice that proceeds by way of social analysis: namely, that in modernity there are as many aspects or facets of social justice – conceived quite traditionally as the proper consideration of each person – as there are spheres of social action, each of which has institutionalized the value of freedom in a distinctive way. The domain of normative reconstruction, as undertaken in my book, therefore encompasses the social conflicts and struggles that have been waged within the several subsystems of modern societies over the question of how the respective ideas of freedom institutionalized in them should be appropriately interpreted as legitimate sources of demands for justice. As these reconstructions approach the present, the retrospectively discerned progress in the realization of the various freedoms will shed light on the question of which normative demands will have to be met today if we are to take a further step beyond the point we have already reached.

The contributions assembled here contain objections less against linking the institutionalized good (freedom) to the normatively right (justice) but rather against the hierarchy in which I rank the different varieties of individual freedom. Putting it in the briefest terms, one might say that Thomas Nys follows Isaiah Berlin in asserting the absolute priority of negative liberty as against all other modern conceptions of freedom, whereas Beate Rössler insists that this priority within the normative structure of modern societies belongs to moral freedom. As in the methodological discussion above, I am here again confronted with two nearly opposed recommendations, which I will address in turn. Both contributions object to the way I privilege, in the tradition of Hegel's theory of ethical life, social (or 'objective') freedom vis-à-vis more individualist forms of freedom (see Honneth 2013). Each then invokes a different individualist conception to cast doubt on this Hegelian view. Thomas Nys levels a whole battery of arguments

intended to demonstrate, by recourse to Isaiah Berlin's famous essay, that the idea of social freedom is unsuited as a normative reference point for a contemporary conception of justice. If justice stands in need of any kind of support by a shared conception of 'the good' at all – and Nys takes no stand on whether it does – it would have to find its support in the idea of negative freedom, since it alone among the prevailing conceptions of freedom is neutral with regard to particular values. I cannot here respond in adequate detail to the very substantial questions Nys raises over the course of just a few pages. I will therefore confine myself to two general points, which I hope will indicate what a more exhaustive treatment of this complex topic would have to look like. First it seems important to me to recall once more that my own theoretical point of departure, in distinction to Isaiah Berlin's, is not provided by philosophical reflection on the significance of individual freedom but rather by a 'hermeneutics' of the ethical self-conception of modern societies. The hermeneutic thesis is that this self-conception accords priority to individual freedom over other values to the extent that the latter are reduced to either an instrumental or a contributory role vis-à-vis the former. If my task were to defend this thesis in direct engagement with Berlin, I would have to show that the evident attractiveness of other values in modernity can be adequately explained only by relating them to individual freedom as their end.³ This is true of the idea of a 'nation' no less than it is of the ideas of 'community', 'nature', or 'work'. Under the conditions of modernity, all of these used to be – or still are – valued for the role they play with regard to the experience or the realization of individual freedom. If it were possible to show this, as I hope and believe it is, a second step would then be to explain the more specific contents of the individual freedoms that have found their expression and attained practical efficaciousness in the various core institutions of modern societies. This leads to a thesis which is essential to my book as a whole: that the legitimacy and the flourishing of the institutional spheres of personal relationships, the economic market, and the democratic public sphere can be adequately understood from the perspective of their participants only when they are thought of as concrete embodiments of an intersubjective or social form of freedom. No doubt a number of objections can be brought against this thesis, as a thesis belonging to social theory. But they will have to operate on the same plane as the arguments in its favor. It is not enough merely to follow Berlin's analysis

and insist on the value-neutral character of ‘negative liberty’, since my goal has been precisely to show by way of a social analysis that given the functional differentiation of practices the other, discarded conceptions of freedom are always already relied on by the participants. It seems to me that whoever wishes to object to this interpretation of the normative infrastructure of modern societies will have to offer alternative interpretations of the same sort, that is to say, he or she will need to offer substantive suggestions about how we can better understand the conceptions of freedom prevalent in the various social spheres, and the expectations associated with these conceptions.

It seems to me that the strategy pursued by Thomas Nys faces difficulties even if in contrast with my own approach it refrains from engaging in social theory. To privilege ‘negative liberty’, as Nys does following Berlin, is not yet to tell us anything about how to understand the genesis of this liberty. If we adopt a Hegelian perspective, according to which all human freedom derives from a social process of mutual recognition – specifically, from the reciprocal acknowledgement of normative statuses which entitle individuals to specific sets of actions – then we cannot rest content with Berlin’s classification. For from this perspective, what Berlin himself surprisingly calls ‘social freedom’ – by which he means a certain kind of solidarity founded on reciprocal recognition⁴ – is both logically and genetically prior to ‘negative liberty’. In other words, we would be unable to explain what it means to have ‘negative liberty’ without presupposing acts of reciprocal status attribution that point to a quite different, properly intersubjective concept of freedom. This might lead us to wonder whether Berlin is able to treat ‘negative liberty’ as a value-neutral concept, and thus to accord it the status of a universal norm, only because he does not sufficiently reflect on the fact that it is founded on the minimal commonalities that make up a shared practice of mutual recognition.

The further questions raised by Thomas Nys seem to me to be much less weighty. They concern the treatment of the individual social spheres. My outline of an answer to the crucial question of whether a contemporary conception of justice should be grounded in a substantive ethical notion of social freedom, even if this violates the conditions of value neutrality, should have made it clear that I see no reason to abandon my strategy: the

privileging of social freedom as the key to justice is owed not to a free-standing conceptual analysis of individual freedom but rather to a social theoretic examination of the conceptions of freedom that have come to be at the heart of institutional legitimacy within the various modern social spheres. Assumptions about ‘the good’ enter into this account not as arbitrary choices on the part of the author or observer but as results of the institutional paths created by his or her subject matter, that is to say, by the social forms that are being analyzed.

The tendency of Beate Rössler’s objections to my hierarchical ordering of the different conceptions of freedom is almost exactly opposed to the strategy pursued by Nys. Rather than seeking to convince me of the priority of negative freedom vis-à-vis the other conceptions, she appeals to Kant in presenting me with reasons to think that *moral* freedom enjoys priority within the texture of our social practices. I will briefly address the two arguments that she takes to support the thesis that existing social institutions are always subordinate to the claims of moral freedom. Her first point concerns the question of whether the exercise of moral freedom along Kantian lines should in fact be understood as being uncoupled from our social practices to the extent that I, following Hegel, seem to be suggesting. Here I would like to sidestep the contentious debate over the proper interpretation of Kant’s moral philosophy, and focus directly on the systematic issue that I take to be at the core of our disagreement. Suppose we follow Beate Rössler in holding that when we take up the moral standpoint, we remain embedded in our everyday practices, such that the obligations arising from them are not simply bracketed but are treated as providing a context within which we then test our maxims. Even if we adopt this reading, we will have to explain in what spirit we accept these antecedent obligations of our everyday life-world. On my understanding of Hegel, his critique takes up at just this point. He asks what stance we take towards the obligations and commitments that precede the testing undertaken by our conscience, and aims to show that unless these obligations are treated as mere social facts, the relevant stance must be one of normative affirmation. In Hegel’s view, Kant lacks the philosophical resources needed to account for the kind of affirmation that distinguishes such ‘pre-moral’ obligations from mere facts or ‘social preconditions’ (to use Rössler’s formulations). This is because Kant lacks an ‘ethical’ theory

capable of explaining the value of specific forms of social practice. Since Hegel is convinced that we can understand ‘the good’, the ethical appeal of the pre-existing obligations and commitments, only by thinking of their structure as consisting in ‘being-with-oneself-in-another’ and thus as instantiations of ‘objective freedom’, he has to relegate moral freedom or ‘autonomy’ to a secondary place relative to such institutionalized forms of freedom. It is only because we first experience ourselves as ethically bound to some among our ‘social preconditions’, which constitute opportunities for enjoying social freedom, that we can then come to feel their weight as obligations within a life-world from which we must distance ourselves in cases of conflict by taking up the moral stance. It will be apparent from my discussion in *The Right of Freedom* that I try to take up the Hegelian line of thought I have just sketched. ‘Moral’ freedom, or the Kantian ‘moral stance’, is secondary to (or even parasitic upon) certain structures of the social life-world because these structures give rise to individual crises of conscience, and thereby to moral self-scrutiny, only insofar as they have first been experienced as ethically obligatory due to the specifically intersubjective kind of freedom they afford. Since this Hegelian view does not regard all aspects of social reality as rational just because they exist, the components of a social life-world do not as such give rise to the kinds of obligations that form a precondition of the moral activity of testing maxims. The parts of social reality presupposed by taking up the moral stance are only those that obligate us for reasons having to do with the special kinds of freedom they enable, for example friendship. This is why social freedom is both logically and genetically prior to the freedom of the moral standpoint (see Pippin 2000, Pinkard 2011, Honneth 2012b).

Yet following Rössler, we might go on to ask whether normative improvements within the individual social spheres may not be owed to the exercise of moral freedom, so that the latter functions after all as a motor of social development. It is certainly true that efforts to enforce a more ‘just’ or more adequate interpretation of a given institutionalized principle of social freedom can be thought of as exercises of moral autonomy, since they are motivated by an interest in the truly impartial application of some generally accepted principle. But in each case this sense of impartiality is embedded into the normative context furnished by some form of

‘ethical life’ in such a way that its motivating force cannot be adequately modeled on Kant’s moral law, but must include elements of a hermeneutic power of judgment.

Beate Rössler’s argument in the second step of her contribution proceeds at a yet more fundamental level, and touches on a reservation that also emerges from Joel Anderson’s reflections. Both consider it a failing of my book that it offers no systematic account of the abilities an individual must possess to navigate among the different spheres of freedom and to rank them according to his or her own convictions. We cannot yet speak of ‘individual freedom’, the argument goes, when an individual has merely the general competence to make use of the various institutionalized freedoms, but only when she knows which of them should be given preference at a specific time and in a specific situation. I think that this argument touches on an important issue that merits further reflection. But the solutions offered independently by Rössler and by Anderson seem to me for different reasons to be either incomplete or beset with problems. It is true that in my book I did not broach the question of how the individual is related to the institutionalized spheres of freedom considered as a social whole, and that I thereby inadvertently created the impression that I take the same view as Hegel, who occasionally tends to depict the freedom of the individual as being exhausted by the correct exercise of the practices belonging to the different spheres. What we would lose by embracing this image of an ‘oversocialized subject’ is the idea, nearly self-evident to us today, that an individual is really ‘free’ only once she is able to decide for herself when to accord priority to which one among these spheres. Although this remains an empirical question, it seems overwhelmingly likely that we would have a difficult time finding, in our contemporary societies, a person so fully identified with one or several of the different practical spheres that she unquestioningly draws all of her life decisions from it. Instead we can proceed on the sociological assumption that most of the members of our society possess some degree of reflective distance with respect to many practical spheres and roles, such that they will from time to time encounter the problem of how to order their various social commitments and obligations relative to each other. I find it quite difficult, however, to characterize the attitude that subjects are supposed to have when we imagine them as taking a distance from all their

specific commitments so as to choose among them from a higher vantage point. For this yields the image of a completely de-socialized, punctual self that is the exact opposite of the ‘over-socialized’ conceptions of the individual. If the latter overestimate the degree to which a subject is integrated into a given space of institutionalized obligations, the former underestimates it by suggesting that we might find ourselves at a point that transcends all the particular projects we value and their concomitant commitments, so that we could then neutrally assess our determinations in their entirety from a moral perspective. Much of what Beate Rössler says about the role of moral autonomy seems to me to saddle us with this chimera of a punctual self, so thoroughly detached from all its prior commitments that it is now able to survey them from the elevated perspective of the moral law and to place them within a life plan according to their moral value. I think that this type of view is not well equipped to explain the specific kind of distanced relation in which a reflective subject stands towards the institutionalized whole composed of the different spheres of intersubjective obligations. Insofar as such a subject is properly individuated at all, it will always consider itself to be to a certain degree tied to some such sphere, which it may then take as a point of departure for scrutinizing the value of the other spheres by means of moral judgment. But at no point will it confront all the spheres with equal neutrality, as a completely indeterminate subject. The considerations that Joel Anderson advances in the same context appear to me to be better suited to offer us some insight into the relation between a reflective subject and the institutionalized spheres of freedom. He proceeds more cautiously than Rössler insofar as his discussion of the role of autonomy does not presuppose the availability of a perspective beyond all role obligations and personal ties, referring instead to a ‘bundle of capacities’ that allows us to achieve a certain amount of distance within the institutionally established practical spheres and thus to navigate the various obligations arising from them in a relatively self-determined way. In this context, ‘autonomy’ should therefore never be understood in an ‘absolute’ or ‘moral’ sense but only in a ‘gradual’ and ‘personal’ one, and it should moreover be taken to encompass certain abilities that tend to be absent from a catalogue shaped by the tradition of moral philosophy, such as irony and a self-transparent knowledge of one’s own needs (see Honneth 2007a).

III.

Joel Anderson’s contribution addresses a further problem, which belongs to the third cluster of questions I named at the outset. Having engaged with concerns regarding my methodology and with objections to my typology of different freedoms, I would now like to focus on questions having to do with my specific reconstruction of various practical spheres. In this context Anderson raises the quite general worry that especially with regard to the market sphere and the political sphere, my discussion tends to lose sight of innovative proposals for reform as it approaches the present. His suspicion seems to be that I find myself compelled to one-sidedly classify contemporary developments in these spheres as ‘misdevelopments’ only because I am insufficiently sensitive to the experimental innovations to which they give room. I grant (as I have said in writing before; see Honneth/Busen/Herzog 2012) that in my research for the book, I did not sufficiently focus on recent counter-movements and innovative projects in the spheres of the market and of democratic politics. The losses and dangers resulting from the world-wide deregulation of the capitalist market, which threaten to undo what progress we have already made, leapt out at me so vividly that I barely paid any attention to the present possibilities of regaining or enriching social freedom. In the meantime, especially Erik Olin Wright’s splendid book about contemporary ‘utopian’ projects has taught me better (see Wright 2010). The examples of current efforts at a democratic socialization of politics and the market that he provides are far more numerous than I was able to imagine when I was writing the book. Yet the question remains whether these admirable experiments, geographically remote from each other and sometimes with only local impact, really constitute a sufficiently forceful alternative to the gradual erosion of already existing freedoms that I diagnosed as a tendency of our time. My lingering doubts in this respect are not removed by Anderson’s well-intentioned exhortation to remain awake to signs of renewal.

The objections Yolande Jansen and Bert van den Brink level against my reconstruction of particular spheres of social freedom are of a somewhat different sort. Even though they too remark on occasion that I do not pay enough attention to recent developments and upheavals, the question

that is at the center of both their contributions concerns the meaning and reach of ‘the democratic’ in the various spheres of freedom I discuss. Yolande Jansen expresses misgivings about my suggestion that the existence of a common democratic will is tied to the presence of a shared background culture, and that therefore the project of a unified Europe cannot be indifferent to the prospects for a widely acceptable historical narrative. She believes that even in the past democracies did not depend for their functioning on a unified (national) public, and that they presuppose such cultural resources even less today, given the availability of new mechanisms of ‘centerless’ social integration. My sense is that it is important in this dispute that I myself regard the idea of democratic decision-making as a normatively very demanding one, since it requires from its participants a large degree of voluntary engagement and a considerable willingness to accept burdens and redistributions (see, among others, Allen 2004). Moreover, both of these motivational dispositions require that, in Claus Offe’s words, the citizens have antecedently recognized each other as ‘sufficiently good-willed (trustworthy) and non-indifferent (solidary)’ (Offe 2003: 245). This succinct formula sets the target both for what I have said, looking back at the historical past, about the role that the construction of a ‘unified nation’ has played for the emergence of democratic public spheres, and for what I wrote, looking forward, though guided by my reconstructive analysis, about the need for a European public sphere to be based on an encompassing cultural background. Both at the small and at the large scale, the development of sentiments of mutual sympathy depends on cultural resources that persuade us – through myths, images, or narratives – that we must be ready to come to the aid of the others and to willingly carry their burdens. It is not quite clear to me which among the considerations just named Jansen rejects. Is it the very idea that joint democratic decision-making presupposes the willingness to accept redistribution, for example in the guise of taxation, or is it merely the further conjecture that this willingness can arise only from culturally generated feelings of community and solidarity?

As I see it, there can be few doubts about the correctness of the first of these two theses. Anyone who sincerely participates in the activity of forming a common democratic will must at the same time be prepared to accept the results of this joint activity even when they conflict with his or

her personal preferences and ideas. The second thesis merely spells out a consequence of this nexus between participation and joint responsibility, namely that the members of a society are going to undertake this risky and potentially burdensome reciprocal obligation only if they are capable of extending trust and sympathy to one another. It may be an empirical question whether such attitudes of generalized solidarity, not limited to small groups, may come from sources other than a culturally formed conception of a common good or a shared history. But there seems to be no question that a reasonably intact form of democratic decision-making requires some kind of cultural background that allows the participants to think of themselves as members of one demos. I am therefore not persuaded by the objections that Jansen raises against my emphasis on the historical role that the idea of the nation has played in the emergence of democratic public spheres. To be sure, the groups whose protests and grievances were especially vital in bringing about democratic improvements were those excluded from ‘the nation’, and not all social movements were effectively oriented towards the nation in contrast with international solidarity. But the severe prejudices and the persecution and vilification with which such dissident, non-nationalist movements were frequently met during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries only serve to highlight the formative role of ‘nationalism’ throughout long periods of our democratic history, whether or not we approve of that role. I therefore do not see how one could today take up the project of the further democratization of Europe without at the same time thinking about the prospects for a trans-national public sphere as the condition of possibility of a European demos. The growing skepticism towards the European project among the populations of Germany, France, and England at the very moment when a need for large-scale economic redistribution arises indicates that it is of great importance to reflect on the possible sources of a future European solidarity.

The objections raised by Bert van den Brink against my reconstruction of the sphere of personal relationships, especially the family, point us towards the interesting question of whether changes in the ways children are educated within the family affect the moral content of that education. When I suggest that the more fluid and egalitarian practices of today’s family life contribute to the dissemination and stabilization of democratic

virtues, I must be assuming that the changing style of intra-familial communication has consequences for the norms of conduct imparted to the children. Van den Brink denies just that, pointing out in response to my quite optimistic view that things may be entirely different in this respect, insofar as a discursive style of education can also be used to teach norms with a reactionary or elitist content. I can vividly picture the kinds of social environments he may have in mind, where snobbery and xenophobia are instilled in children under the cloak of egalitarian and need-oriented forms of interaction. However, numerous empirical studies confirm that such cases, undeniable as they are, remain an exception in our contemporary societies (for a survey see Dornes 2012: esp. chs. 4-6). There is also an interesting question here concerning the nature of socialization: what is the relative impact on a child's moral development of the manifest contents of parental norms, on the one hand, and of the educational style by which those norms are conveyed, on the other? The psychologist Gertrud Nunner-Winkler has long argued for the thesis that what is decisive for the emergence of motivationally stable and efficacious moral orientations in a child is not so much the content of moral teaching but rather the forms of socialization by which that content is transmitted. She too infers from this that contemporary changes in educational methods within the family have improved the prospects for a context-sensitive, democratic morality on the part of the younger generations (see Nunner-Winkler 2002). We certainly need to be cautious about these kinds of generalization, but at this point empirical research seems to me to provide sufficient evidence for my optimistic assumption that the 'cooperative individualism' of today's families can function as a 'seedbed' for a further democratization of our societies (see Honneth 2011: 314 ff.). Finally, regarding the glaring oversight I committed in not discussing public education at all, van den Brink has already pointed out that I have attempted to make up for this in a recent essay (see Honneth 2012a). In writing the book I was led astray by the fact that Hegel did not and could not possibly have paid any attention to state-organized general education, given that it did not yet exist in his time. An expanded second edition of my book should try to fill this lacuna by adding a chapter to the section on the democratic public sphere.

In the context of my earlier discussion of methodological issues I already

remarked in passing on the objections that Rutger Claassen raises against my approach to the sphere of the market economy. At this point I would like to turn the tables and ask him how else one might go about offering a normative defense of the need to impose social constraints on the market, if not by uncovering the immanent principles of legitimacy that are intrinsic to its existence. If we turn to moral constructivism in the hope of generating the relevant norms, then we are still left with the further task of adapting those norms to the functional requirements of the market to a degree sufficient to persuade its defenders of their relevance and validity. My sense is that in doing so, there will be no way of avoiding the idea of normative demands that belong specifically to market society as such, so that we arrive at just the point from which my normative reconstruction sets out. Of course there is also the alternative pursued, for example, by Debra Satz: instead of undertaking a hermeneutic explication of the principles proper to the market sphere, we might instead look to those that govern the surrounding democratic society so as to protect the latter from being instrumentalized by the market or affected by it in 'noxious' ways (see Satz 2010). But here too an extra step is required to convince the ultra-liberal market advocates (think of the Tea Party) that the immanent norms of our political system possess any moral validity vis-à-vis the economic sphere, and once again we are brought back to the point where it is open to debate which normative principles are compatible with the functional requirements of a market economy. Thus it seems to me that none of the apparent alternatives to the method of normative reconstruction is viable without recurring to the question of how we should think of the functioning of a market within a society in the first place: whether merely in terms of a functional integration or rather as a more thorough-going social integration.

Let me finally add some brief remarks on the contribution by René Gabriëls. His cautious and restrained objections are somewhat orthogonal to the tripartite thematic division that I have been following here, so that it seems appropriate to address them at the end of my replies. If I understand him correctly, Gabriëls' tentative exploration seeks to draw my attention to the difficulties that my approach faces insofar as its normative assumptions throughout are those of European societies. The question he adumbrates, if somewhat indirectly, is whether it can be permissible in the

face of the rapidly advancing process of globalization in our time to develop a conception of justice in a reconstructive vein, given that such a conception remains tied to one specific social formation and is consequently unable to give voice to the moral concerns of large portions of the world's population. This certainly articulates a valid concern, and it seems at first glance to simply identify the price that a reconstructive theory of justice must pay for accepting as well-founded claims of justice only those that can be recast as convincing criticisms of the limited or incomplete realization of obligations which already enjoy some institutionalized legitimacy. This means that the moral grievances rightfully voiced today in many parts of the world beyond the European continent fall within the purview of such a theory of justice only to the extent that they correspond to some implications of our own institutional structure. Here it seems appropriate to say at least a word about the fashionable idea of 'methodological cosmopolitanism', which makes a brief appearance in Gabriëls' contribution. As I see it, such a methodological principle, which asks us to strip away all remainders of the nation-state from the conceptual apparatus of social theory, would be justified only if there were convincing empirical evidence that the key concepts that shape our collective self-descriptions – whether pertaining to social integration (membership, addressees of a norm, affected parties, etc.) or to systemic integration (administrative competence, gross domestic product, tax revenue, and so on) – are no longer in any way nation-referring ones. But that is far from being the case. In a brief aside, Gabriëls himself points to the path a reconstructive theory of justice would have to pursue – far beyond the point to which I myself have gotten – in order to adequately address the injustices that it rightly indicts in other parts of the world. Such a theory would have the task of reconstructing the normative liabilities and obligations towards the world's population that have become part of the legal and political common sense in European countries, as both deepening interdependencies and moral re-interpretations of existing constitutions have led to a radical expansion of the circle of those affected by a population's democratic self-legislation.

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¹ Even Marx, in his *Capital*, takes his cue from this Hegelian model when he attributes to economic capital the power to reshape all of social reality in the image of its own self-referential structure.

² See my engagement with the theoretical agenda of Boltanski and Thévenot in Honneth 2008.

³ This is broadly what Will Kymlicka aims to show in his excellent book *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Kymlicka 2001).

⁴ See Berlin 1969: 158. On the tension between negative and social conceptions of freedom in the work of Isaiah Berlin see Honneth 2007 b.