

Equality, Justice and Social Critique, Workshop im Rahmen des Projekts Ordnung durch Bewegung vom 24. bis 25. Oktober 2016 in der Kleinen Synagoge

After Rawls's groundbreaking *A Theory of Justice*, egalitarian political philosophy focused for nearly two decades on the issue of distribution. Within the so-called "Equality of what"-debate the central question was: What is the equalisandum of a fair distribution? Is it – to name only the most prominent candidates – primary goods, resources, capabilities, equal access to advantages or equal opportunity for welfare? What had been taken for granted within this debate was that philosophical egalitarianism is first and foremost a theorizing about distributive justice. This view has been challenged by anti-egalitarian critics posing the "Why equality?"-question: Why should an equal distribution of x be desirable in itself? Why should not – so the central argument of sufficientarianism goes – everyone have enough to lead the life she wants? By the late 1990s, egalitarianism, again, had taken another twist. Philosophers like Elizabeth Anderson, Samuel Scheffler or Jonathan Wolff argued that equality is primarily something relational. It is about people being able to encounter and relate to each other as equals and only secondary about a certain distribution of goods. How exactly this "social" or "relational egalitarianism" is to be positioned within the normative landscape of political philosophy, on the basis of which evaluative standards it proceeds and what it implies for social critique are, since then, topics of an ongoing and deepening debate.

Financed by the research group "Ordering Dynamics" and organized by Folke Schuppert and Urs Lindner, the workshop explored the analytical and normative potential of relational egalitarianism for social critique. Speakers from other universities included Sara Amighetti (Frankfurt), Franziska Dübgen (Kassel), Stephan Gosepath (Berlin), Stefania Maffei (Berlin) and Fabian Schuppert (Belfast), from Max-Weber-Kolleg: Christoph Henning, Urs Lindner, Antje Linkenbach-Fuchs and Folke Schuppert. Special guest of the workshop was Nancy Fraser, who contributed as a discussant to an extremely focused and intense debate. Fabian Schuppert, giving an overview of social egalitarianism, suggested to differentiate between three strands of this theoretical movement: justice based approaches that consider inequalities as unjustly harming; equality as a political ideal whose specific features are not reducible to justice; and republican approaches particularly focusing on relations of domination. Sara Amighetti's talk about equality as anti-subordination sparked a vivid discussion about the social ontological presuppositions of social egalitarianism: What concept of social structure or structural social inequality do relational egalitarians tend to assume? How do they think about the connection between social positions, mechanisms and resources? What role does Marx's critique of positional exploitative inequality play for them? Franziska Dübgen, in her talk about epistemic injustices, argued that one of the distinctive advantages of social egalitarianism consists in the ability to include a critique of what Iris Young has called "cultural imperialism". Stephan Gosepath, who has been for some time a proponent of "luck egalitarianism" and thus one of the "targets" of social egalitarians, conceded that relational equality could be a viable way to elaborate on the fundamental right to equal respect and concern. In her final statement, Nancy Fraser showed some skepticism as to the willingness of social egalitarians to realize the radical implications of their own approach. This may be one of the reasons why Fraser continues to prefer the language of justice over that of equality.

Urs Lindner