The concept of praxis is one of the most fundamental concepts in the history of political philosophy from classical antiquity to our time and it is still used as a fundamental concept in contemporary political philosophy. Politics is fundamentally concerned with praxis. The most famous example may be Marx's statement in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, that the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the point is to change it (Marx 1968: 341). However, in Marx's theses on Feurbach and in the later use of the concept of praxis in political philosophy, the close relation between praxis and *polis*, which was grounded in Aristotle's political philosophy, is ignored. This close relation was dissolved with the breakdown of the autonomy of the Greek city states around the end of the 4th century BCE. Following this event, the concept of praxis is not used in political philosophy in the same way for a very long time. We have to move forward to Hegel to find a new corresponding political philosophical concept in the history of ideas. Hegel uses his concept of *Sittlichkeit* as corresponding to the ancient concept of praxis.

The German word *Sittlichkeit* has no immediate correspondent in English. *Sittlichkeit* has the same connotation as the Greek word ????, ?*thos*, but *Sittlichkeit* has in addition a strong subjective dimension or maybe first of all a subjective dimension. This is the reason why it normally can be translated with the English term 'Ethical Life'. However, this translation has also the deficit that it is bound to the philosophical concept of ethics, whereas *Sittlichkeit*, according to Hegel, is bound to general society as well. A possible translation could also be 'decent life', 'social ethics', 'societal ethics' or simply 'normativity', but in the following paragraphs the term *Sittlichkeit* will be used as such.

Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* has been central in later political philosophy, but at the same time it has become a difficult concept because *Sittlichkeit* is no longer understood in the same spontaneous way as it was understood in early 19th century Germany. Therefore it is necessary to complement *Sittlichkeit* with a new interpretation of the concept of praxis.

I would like to illuminate this problem by considering Habermas' and Honneth's discussion of the concepts of praxis and *Sittlichkeit*. Both of them take their point of departure in the young Hegel's essay to formulate a concept of *Sittlichkeit*, but they reach very different conclusions. Honneth sees, following the young Hegel, that the concept of praxis cannot stand alone, but he is not able to create a new mediation between praxis and *Sittlichkeit*. The two concepts stand separated by Honneth. Habermas takes his point of departure from the young Hegel as well, but succeeds in reconstructing a concept corresponding to Aristotle's antique concept of praxis through a new concept of communicative action. Habermas is able to unfold this new concept of praxis with the same complexity and differentiation as was the case for Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit*. Yet, opposite to Hegel, Habermas's new concept of praxis calls attention to democracy as the ground for modern *Sittlichkeit*.

Aristotle's practical philosophy

The word 'praxis' has its origin in the ancient Greek language: ??????, (*praxis*) refers to performing an action, such as a passing a way, traversing a distance, causing or bringing about an operation. When a project has been fulfilled, it is called 'well done', ?? ???????? (*eu prattein*). It is from this point that Socrates, among others, takes

the step to the moral evaluation of life as praxis. According to Xenophon, Socrates speaks about *eu prattein* as a learning process with reference to realizing the good, *eu*, and herewith the good life, *eudaimonia* (Xenophon 1979: I, VI ff.). Herewith has the moral and political significance of the concept of praxis been thematized.

The word 'praxis' was later on taken over in classical Latin as a Greek word denoting an act, a deed. It is through Latin and French that the word *practizare* has been imported into English as the verb 'to practice' and the noun 'practisant', referring mostly to an instrumental act such as exercising a profession, for example *practizare in medicina*, to practice medicine (OED: practice). Practice can be used in relation to political, moral, and religious values as well.

There is not a substantial difference between 'practice' and 'praxis'. In English the Greek-rooted 'praxis' could even be regarded as subordinated to the Latin-rooted 'practice' and the two words can be used as synonymous. However, inspired by the 1960s translation into English of Marx's early writings (i.e. prior to 1849), 'praxis' became a concept to emphasize the moral and political dimension in practice and that is the reason why this concept is used in this paper. Still, it would not change much to use the broader word 'practice' (OED: practice; OED: practise, OED: praxis).

In Plato we do not find a systematic development of the concept of praxis. The explanation is that Plato emphasizes reason, *logos*, and insight, *gnosis*, as the essential, in opposition to praxis, which is not regarded to have any value in itself. For example, Plato's *Republic* (Plato 199; 1965) makes it clear that the fundamental political problem is how the class of leaders of the state can attain the right insight. Correspondingly, the two other classes, the guardians and the craftsmen, are described as practicing in a condition of intellectual blindness. From this perspective, it would simply be without any interest to develop a philosophy of praxis in the political sense. Plato's concern is first of all insight; praxis is secondary.

Aristotle turns this perspective around. It is Aristotle that systematically develops a concept of praxis as a central concept in his philosophy. Upon the background of Aristotle's philosophy it is possible to establish a diaeretic schema for praxis that includes the praxis of Gods, plants, animals and human beings, such that they have all their specific form of praxis. According to Aristotle, the concept of praxis becomes one of the grounding concepts for the determination of the human being. It implies both theoretical praxis, *the?ria*, and practical praxis that can be devised in *praxis*, concerned with ethical and political action as an aim in itself, and *poi?sis*, a technical-instrumental action concerned with an external *telos* or aim.

In the first sentence of *The Nicomachean Ethics* it is said that praxis strives for a good, although Aristotle makes it clear that praxis cannot be bound to an external absolute idea (Aristotle 1982: I, vi, 13) and therefore should be bound to itself (Aristotle 1982: I, i, 1 ff.). Practical philosophy becomes herewith a separate part of philosophy where the task is to determine praxis as good both in the ethics in relation to the individual person and in the political philosophy in relation to the political community (*koin?nia politik?*) in the state (*polis*) (Aristotle 1977:1253a)

For Aristotle there should be an inner connection between the ethical perspective of the single person's praxis and the political perspective of the person's praxis in the political community in the *polis*. The single person cannot govern himself alone by his own reason. It is necessary for him to act upon a higher explicit reason, embedded in the law, and grounded in both phronesis (*phron?sis*) and reason (*nous*) (Aristotle 1982: X, ix, 12). In Aristotle's *Politics* it is even said that the *polis* is the ground for the single house (*oikos*) and the single person (Aristotle 1977: 1253a19 ff.). Praxis as ?*thos*, ???? can therefore only be realized in the *polis*. For Aristotle this is a prerequisite and therefore it is also said in the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as a form of introduction to the *Politics*, that the *polis* is prior to the household (*oikos*) and the single person (*ekastos h?m?n*) (Aristotle 1977: 1253a19). This unity in the concept of praxis between ?*thos* and *polis* is, for Aristotle, self-evident, and this is the reason why he does not invent a special concept like *Sittlichkeit* to express the inner relation between ethics and the political community in the *polis* that beforehand and in itself represents ?*thos* and herewith *Sittlichkeit*. Praxis is for Aristotle the same as to practice in accordance with ?*thos* in the *polis*, the city-state.

The historical dissolution of the relation between *praxis*, ?*thos* and *polis*

From the perspective of the history of ideas, the close relation between *praxis*, ?*thos* and *polis* is dissolved with the breakdown of the autonomy of the Greek city-states in the end of 4th century.

In the Hellenistic and Roman civilisations of the Mediterranean world this relation disappears. The concept of praxis becomes reduced to a concept about personal ethics that only concerns the individual person's conduct in life, without this being necessarily related to a larger societal context (e.g. the Stoic philosophy of life). The Greek concept of *polis* acquires a new meaning as well with its translation into Latin. Seneca translates Aristotle's passage in *Politics* about the human being as a political *being*, a *z?on politikon* (Aristotle 1977: 1253a3), into *animalis socialis*, a societal animal which implicates that *polis* is substituted by *societas*, society, and common ethics (*?thos*) with individual morals (*moralis*) (Arendt 1958: 23).

The same is the case in the early Christian theology as can be seen by Augustine, who created a political philosophy in *The City of God* in which it is a central point that the inner relation between common ethics and society, *moralis et societas*, understood as the Roman state, has been broken (Augustine 1998). According to Augustine, the common ethics, *moralis*, has its ground in God's state and not in the earthly state.

This problematic is taken up anew by Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages in his *Summa Theologica* (St. Thomas 1988) with his introduction of Aristotle's political philosophy to Christian theology. Thomas Aquinas tries to revive Aristotle's praxis concept as a unity of ethics (*moralis*) and society (*societas*). However, Aquinas's praxis concept is in the end hold up by a theological metaphysical concept of God and the divine world order. This theological metaphysical construction could not stand against the increasing individualization and secularization of the European society from the Renaissance through the Reformation, where the political and the economic changes posit a totally new agenda and where individualization becomes the new ground for the constitution of the new liberal political philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Adam Smith and Kant.

Hegel – Praxis as *Sittlichkeit*

It is upon this background that Hegel takes Aristotle's problem about the connection between ?*thos* and *polis* up to discussion, not least in his *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 1955). Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is one of the most interesting political philosophical treatises about modern society. It presents in the most concentrated form the unity of all the many contradictions of modern society as one expression and concept that, according to Hegel, is the state, 'der Staat'.

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is a combination of Plato's *Republic* (Plato 1999; 1956) and Aristotle's *Politics* (Aristotle 1977). It comprises both a strong Platonic idealism and a form of Aristotelian pragmatic phenomenology. According to Hegel, from a philosophical perspective all contradictions are elevated (*aufgehoben*) into the unity of state. The state is *from a philosophical perspective* the precondition for the dynamic development of the contradictions in the institutions of civil society and herewith the upholding of society in a certain balance – at the same time as this development *from a genealogical perspective* leads socially to the concrete historically existing state (Hegel 1955: §256). This is similar to what we are reading in Aristotle's *Politics* when he writes that the city-state (*polis*) is by nature (*physis*) before the house (*oikos*) and any individuality (*ekastos h?m?n*) (Aristotle 1977: 1253a19).

Hegel summarizes the essential in modern political philosophy, Hobbes, Adam Smith, Rousseau and Kant, and gives them their full place at the same time as they become subordinated to his own political philosophical perspective.

Behind it all, we find Hegel's attempt to present a new modern edition of Plato's *Republic.* Hegel's introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* is first of all Platonist. As it is explained in the introduction, due to his idealism, Plato has on the one hand presented the Greek ?*thos*, the Greek *Sittlichkeit,* as an empty ideal of the Greek nature of ethics (Hegel 1955: 14). On the other hand, according to Hegel, Plato was aware of the fact that his own time was penetrated of a new deeper principle, which Hegel calls "die freie unendliche Persönlichkeit", i.e. the free boundless personality, that later on should be brought into history by Christianity, as Hegel has described it in many places (Hegel 1955: 14). It is in connection with this presentation in the introduction that Hegel writes his maybe most discussed and maybe most conservative political philosophical statement as well:

"*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich;*
und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig" (Hegel 1955:14).

This passage could be translated as follows:
"What is reasonable is what real exists,
And what real exists is what is reasonable"

The statement is very conservative because it seems, on the spontaneous level, to identify what is factually given in a society, the facticity, with what is reasonable or maybe even rational. However, if one does only see

the conservative political philosophical statement, although this is also the case, one misses the determinate point in Hegel's presentation that is the *idea*. The rational is synonymous with the idea (Hegel 1955: 14). The essential point is that Hegel wishes to present the *idea* in the modern state in a Platonic sense; he wishes to present as well the reason in the modern state, which in an Aristotelian sense contains and mediates the free boundless personality, the family, the institutions of civil society, the concrete state with its different forms of institutions, etc. This is the essential grip of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. In a paradoxical way, we have to do with an idealistic and at the same time pragmatic form of phenomenology such as it has been described shortly by Hegel himself in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, where he writes that the essential concern is in the temporal and passing to realize the substantial and immanent (Hegel 1955: 14 – 15).

What Hegel wants to do is to establish a "Staatswissenschaft" or a combination of political philosophy and political science. Herewith Hegel means to understand and describe the state as both reasonable and ideal (Hegel 1955: 15). In contrast, Hegel abstains from saying anything about how the state *ought* to be, or how it *could* be. Hegel's concern is not to instruct the state but on the contrary to realize "das Sittliche Universum", the ethical universe that the state *is* (Hegel 1955: 16).

It is evident that this project resembles Aristotle's project. However, for Hegel, it is essential that Christianity stands as the determinate historical event between antiquity and modern times, in the sense that it is with Christianity that the subjective freedom or the free boundless personality comes into history. This is followed up by the individualization, secularization and historical change that have been thematized above.

The consequence is that all the 'Staatslehre', all the theory of the state, should be turned around in comparison with the way in which it is presented by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Both treatises open by saying that all is striving towards a good and in *Politics* it is subsequently said that the highest aim (*telos*) for the political community is *polis*, the city-state. Opposite to this is Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, introduced by a determination of the individuality and the free will (Hegel 1955: § 4). Whereas the city-state for Aristotle represents fundamentally the *Sittlichkeit*, the task for Hegel is to construct and reconstruct the *?thos* in the state with a departure in the free will of the individual.

Aristotle can immediately transfer his ethics to the city-state because the city-state is constituted fundamentally after the same model, namely a striving towards the good. In contrast, the situation is totally different for Hegel, because he cannot transfer his original Kantian ethics without mediation to the state. Hegel's theory is a praxis-oriented conflict theory where the fundamental problem is to describe how the subjective freedom, the free boundless personality, can find itself as a mediated relation at a certain historical moment to a historically determined state. As Hegel states:

"To comprehend *what is* is the task of philosophy, for *what is* is reason. As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a *child of his time*; thus philosophy, too, is *its own time comprehended in thought* (Hegel 1955: 16; Hegel 1991: 21).

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is fascinating because Hegel accomplishes this project about the modern state as a concept about 'praxis as *Sittlichkeit*' in civil society within the state. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is a new interpretation of the unity between the idealism in Plato's *Republic* and the pragmatism in Aristotle's *Politics*.

Hegel sets with his concept of 'praxis as *Sittlichkeit*' a new agenda for ethics and political philosophy that extends to our time. It is also in Hegel's spirit (Hegel 1955: 13 – 14) to ask anew whether society has been changed in such a way that his concept of 'praxis as *Sittlichkeit*' has become irrelevant or whether it is still relevant but should be modified and, if so, to what extent.

Honneth – From praxis as a struggle for recognition to post-traditional *Sittlichkeit*

One of the latest major interpretations of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is offered in Axel Honneth's *Recht der Freiheit* (Honneth 2011). Honneth's treatise can be seen as an essay developing a new edition of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* for our time, where the concepts of praxis and *Sittlichkeit* are very central. Therefore it can be interesting to look at how Honneth solves the thematized relation between praxis and *Sittlichkeit*.

In the introduction, entitled 'the theory of justice as societal analysis', Honneth tackles also the afore-mentioned question about the relevance of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. On the one hand, Honneth emphasizes Hegel's project about presenting the reasonable in the institutions of his time and to call attention to the fact that *Sittlichkeit* was already realized in the central institutions of society (Honneth 2011: 16 – 17). On the other hand, Honneth emphasizes that it is not only society, but also the philosophical way of arguing that has changed significantly since Hegel's time. The normative stability that was found at Hegel's time has changed towards a greater reflexivity and henceforth greater uncertainty about applicable norms (Honneth: 2011: 17). In addition, the experience of the Holocaust has, according to Honneth, dampened the imagination that there should be a continuous development of reason in society.

It is difficult to see the validity of the latter argument by Honneth. After the major upheaval of the French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic wars, it is difficult to see that the normative standards would have appeared more stable at Hegel's time. The Holocaust may seem to be a trump card, but it might have been used too much. vHowever, Honneth uses this argument as a point of departure for his critique of the fundamental idealistic principle of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* when he writes:

"For us, the children of a materialistic enlightened age, Hegel's idealistic monism as a precondition for the spirit is not really imaginable. Therefore Hegel's idea of an objective spirit realized in the social institutions must be grounded in another way" (Honneth 2012: 17).

It is in this formulation that we should find the turning point in Honneth's presentation of his project in relation to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. It is not difficult to understand that Honneth could wish to reject Hegel's central perspective, which he calls "idealistic monism", and Hegel's idea about the objective spirit realizing itself in the institutions. Idealistic monism and objective spirit are totally strange concepts for our time. However, the

problem is that the interesting thing about the *Philosophy of Right* is exactly that Hegel, by means of this strange philosophical grip, is able to give a concentrated presentation of modern society that has not its equal in the history of philosophy.

It can be questioned as well whether Honneth escapes from Hegel's idealism when he introduces the idea of freedom (die Idee der Freiheit) as ground for his theory of justice (Honneth 2011: 18), immediately after having rejected Hegel's metaphysical ground. It is not so easy to be post metaphysical!

In our time, we are maybe not able to give a presentation like Hegel's, but the *challenge* in Hegel's presentation is his "idealistic monism", supported by his idea of "the objective spirit". In so far as we find Hegel's monistic one-sided and extreme concentrated presentation interesting, at the same time as we are not able to sustain his metaphysical perspective or simply his idealistic perspective, we are still intellectually challenged to try to find a an acceptable interpretation for our time that, *from a philosophical perspective*, can compete with Hegel's presentation. The question is therefore whether it is possible to formulate one sustainable principle for our time that can match Hegel's metaphysics.

For Honneth, that is not possible. Honneth's *philosophical* interpretation of Hegel declines to a form of *sociological* oriented societal analysis, i.e. "Gesellschaftsanalyse" (Honneth 2011: 31), which can be interesting and informative, but lacks the philosophical grip, the philosophical concept's one-sidedness, that can turn all the perspectives around, and herewith form the ground for the formulation of new concepts of praxis and *Sittlichkeit* that can be relevant for our time.

Honneth has a concept of praxis as a 'struggle for recognition' that he retrieves from the young Hegel and that he develops in his treatise *Kampf um Anerkennung* (Honneth 1992). The struggle for recognition is a differentiated concept of action that includes love, rights and solidarity (Honneth 1992: 148 ff.) and that has its counterpoint in violence (*Vergewaltigung*), loss of rights (*Entrechtung*) and disrespect (*Missachtung*) (Honneth 212 ff.). Honneth realizes in the end of *Kampf um Anerkennung* that it is necessary to offer a mediation of a concept of *Sittlichkeit* that he can thematize formally and shortly (Honneth 1992: 274 ff.). However, in *Kampf um Anerkennung*, Honneth presents only a formal concept of *Sittlichkeit* without any substantial or institutional differentiated content. It is this project that Honneth takes up in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, in which he formulates four premises for his development of a concept of *Sittlichkeit*.

The first premise is that every society is bound to a common orientation that is grounded in ideals and values. There is therefore always, according to Honneth, a common legitimization problem with respect to justifying values in every society (Honneth 2011: 18).
The second premise is that justice is not an independent objective standard. It must, according to Honneth, be determined by historical and social standards of value that are indispensable for the reproduction of social values. Honneth speaks in this context about a *reconstruction* of values and about the necessity to focus on values that are indispensable for the reproduction of a society (Honneth 2011: 20).
The third premise is concerned with the *method* for such a normative reconstruction. To this end, according to

Honneth, Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* and Aristotle's notion of praxis should be recovered as an intersubjective habitual practice and not as predetermined convictions (Honneth 2011: 24).
Finally, there is the fourth premise, namely that it should be possible to criticize values in society mediated through a concept of *Sittlichkeit* (Honneth 2011: 28). Honneth, for the sake of example, mentions Hegel's concept of corporations as a platform for critique of the labor market (Hegel 1955: § 250 – § 256).

Honneth's final conclusion is that such a theory about justice understood as an analysis of society, or *Gesellschaftsanalyse*, is totally dependent upon the way in which a critical interpretation of social norms in the institutions is done. Such a critical interpretation should make it possible to reconstruct a concept of praxis as a form of "post-traditional *Sittlichkeit*" (Honneth 2011: 31).

Honneth's treatise is formally built up like Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: it comprises parts A, B and C, where part C, like Hegel's own, produces a great analysis of praxis or *Sittlichkeit* in the institutions (Honneth 2011: 219 ff.). Hegel's own presentation in part C is a systematic and dialectic presentation of the dynamic and contradictory constitution of the modern state and civil society. Family and the institutions in civil society form, according to Hegel, a special unity in the state, which is presented both from an actor perspective and a social systemic perspective. In contrast, in Honneth's work we do not find such a developed unity in the state. Honneth is giving a side-ordered action-oriented presentation of three themes concerning social freedom, namely: personal practice in relation to friendship and family; business practice; and finally political practice with democratic will formation, public sphere, and democratic society based on the rule of law and political culture.

Compared to Hegel, Honneth has an extreme concept of praxis, in so far as all sociality is seen as one-sided, i.e. from an actor perspective. Honneth has no form of social systemic perspective. There is even no economic system, for the economy is only seen under the sociological actor perspective (Honneth 2011: 317 ff.).

Honneth is not able to transform his concept of praxis into a concept of *Sittlichkeit*. Aristotle's concept of praxis and Hegel's concept of 'praxis as *Sittlichkeit*', although in different manners, are essentially related through a series of mediations to *polis* and state. The consequence of Honneth's sociologically oriented philosophical perspective is that Honneth has no concept about the state. It is not thematized in a philosophical sense, but only factually, in a sociological and social historic sense. The consequence is that Honneth is not able to thematize in a philosophical sense 'praxis as *Sittlichkeit*'. The paradox here is that Honneth, with his extreme one-sided concept of action, is not able to transform this concept of praxis into a concept of *Sittlichkeit*. To conclude, Honneth lacks the unifying idea or another form of unifying transmission principle that can mediate the transition from praxis to *Sittlichkeit*.

Habermas – Praxis as communicative action

It is such a transmission principle that Habermas is able to construct in his theory of communicative action (Habermas 1981). Habermas develops the general cultural historical and cultural political ground for this theory

in his cultural-philosophical treatise about the creation and decline of the public sphere, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas 1962). Habermas develops the more specific philosophical perspective with an initial reference to Hegel's Jena lectures about the phenomenology of the spirit, 1803-1806 (Habermas 1968: 9). Hegel's lectures are connected to his fragmentarily developed 1802 *System of Sittlichkeit* (Hegel 1923b) that, according to Habermas, is influenced by the political economy of the time and is normally seen as a preliminary study to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Hegel 1952), not least in the Marxist tradition (Lukács 1968: 398 ff.).

According to Habermas, Hegel is concerned with a special type of formation (*Bildung*) of the spirit that later on disappears in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit.* The spirit's absolute reflection of itself, *subordinated* in relation to language, work and *Sittlichkeit*, is not regarded as essential. On the contrary, according to Habermas, Hegel's perspective is here that it is *the dialectical relation* between linguistic symbolization, work and interaction that constitutes the concept of the spirit (Habermas 1968: 10). Thus, it is the three dialectical patterns, linguistic symbolization, work and interaction, which *together* constitute and penetrate the spirit in its specific forms for the existing consciousness.

With this hermeneutical maneuver Habermas succeeds, following the young Hegel's Jena lectures, to ground a new concept of praxis that can match Aristotle's concept of praxis as an all-encompassing concept of action. This concept of praxis is differentiated, like the one by Aristotle, between, on the one hand, interpersonal and social communication and praxis (*logos* and *praxis*), and, on the other hand, a teleological doing and technical instrumental action (*poi?sis* and *techn?*).

Habermas grounds here his concept of praxis as communicative action, which he develops later in different fields such as ethics, politics, philosophy of law and critical theory. For Habermas it is a central perspective to focus on praxis as *Sittlichkeit* mediated through communicative action in the institutions of society under a democratic government. Under this perspective, Habermas could be called the philosopher of democracy.

According to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, the state precedes the family and civil society from a *philosophical* perspective, whilst the state follows after the family and civil society from a *genealogical* perspective, and it should finally have a hereditary monarchy that could be able to secure the decisive *monological* procedures of decision (Hegel 1955: § 281). In contrast, according to Habermas, the state should have a democratic government that not only shall ensure *dialogical* procedures of decision in the state, but also shall ensure praxis as dialogue and communication as the fundamental relation in the family and institutions of civil society.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that Aristotle grounds a concept of praxis that becomes one of the fundamental concepts in the history of modern political philosophy. Hegel leads this concept further with his concept of praxis as *Sittlichkeit*. Honneth and Habermas are both grounded in the young Hegel's writings when they try to extrapolate what is essential in Hegel's concept of praxis and generate a new concept, which may be valid for

our time. Honneth is standing by Hegel's concept of recognition, which he is subsequently forced to leave many years later when rediscovering Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit*. However, Honneth fails to reconcile praxis and *Sittlichkeit*. In contrast, Habermas sets language in a hermeneutic maneuver as a substitute for Hegel's concept of spirit. With this new, effectively metaphysical concept, he is able to formulate a practical philosophy in which both praxis and *Sittlichkeit* are summarized in communicative action. Habermas's practical philosophy follows Hegel's and extends its roots into the history of ideas, back to Aristotle's foundation of the concept of praxis and, in a broader sense, to the antique democracy of Athens.

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