

Disrecognition, moral progress and “second order disorders”

On Axel Honneth’s new theory of recognition

Desreconhecimento, progresso moral e “desordens de segunda ordem”

Sobre a nova teoria do reconhecimento de Axel Honneth

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Abstract: The subject matter of this article is Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition as it has been exposed in his more recent book, *Das Recht der Freiheit*. Throughout the paper his attempts to describe injustices within modern capitalist societies using the notions of pathologies and anomie will be analyzed and criticized, especially from the viewpoint of their inability to deal with processes and contexts of disrecognition (*Aberkennung*). With help of this category, Honneth’s diagnosis regarding the moral progress in modern societies, as well as his notion of second order disorders, as injustices will be confronted and, hopefully, complemented.

Keywords: Recognition. Disrecognition. Injustice. Moral progress.

Resumo: Este artigo visa tratar da teoria do reconhecimento de Axel Honneth conforme exposta em seu livro *Das Recht der Freiheit*. Ao longo do texto serão analisadas e criticadas as tentativas deste autor de apreender as desigualdades presentes nas esferas de reconhecimento descritas por ele em sociedades modernas. O principal foco de atenção aqui é a incapacidade dos diagnósticos sobre patologias e anomias em descrever processos e contextos de desreconhecimento (*Aberkennung*). Através desta categoria, por fim, o diagnóstico de Honneth acerca do progresso moral em sociedades modernas e das “desordens de segunda ordem” como injustiça será confrontado e, espera-se, complementado.

Palavras-chave: Reconhecimento. Desreconhecimento. Injustiça. Progresso moral.

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Introduction

In his recent work, *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Axel Honneth develops an analysis of what he calls ‘second order disorders’, that is, institutionalized social practices that misunderstand the real, social significance of freedom under modern interpersonal relations, state law and market economy. These misunderstandings are described by him as pathologies of social freedom that take place during (and do harm to) the process of understanding the social constitution of spheres of collective action. Accordingly, they are to be differentiated from the social injustice because they affect a higher level of social reproduction, a reflexive level in which what is at stake is the admission of individuals into the systems of norms and actions that constitute a society. In this case, a pathology of the system of reciprocal recognition must be viewed rather as a social situation in which, thanks to social norms, one or more individuals are prevented from understanding the real meaning of the practices and norms that result from their interaction (Honneth, 2011a, p. 157). What is clear from such a procedure is that Honneth’s main effort with the diagnosis of social pathologies is to identify the causes that prevent the realization of recognition norms that lie at the basis of modern spheres of action. Thus, he subsumes the problems of ‘lower level’ social injustice to the diagnosis of the current situation of institutionalized promises of moral progress represented by the underlying principles of recognition he tries to reconstruct. However, a problem resides in the fact that in characterizing social injustices like material maldistribution or misrecognition as factual counter-tendencies to the moral progress promised by the always more encompassing implicit norms of recognition, Honneth tends to treat them as prejudices inclined to disappear in the long term, rather than as the result of political dynamics in which not only the intersubjective norms of reciprocal respect play a role, but also the images people build for their communities through the mobilization of a political subjective collective imaginary. In doing this, Honneth, most likely inadvertently, lets the analysis of the moral grammar of social conflicts, the subject of his early attention, slip from the picture in his new theory of recognition.

However, along with the promise of reciprocal recognition, a series of trends regarding the institutionalization of practical differentiations among individuals within a community are also a hallmark of modern societies. As Jeffrey C. Alexander (2006) shows, the distinction between pure and impure in civil discourse helps structure boundaries among groups and individuals and the limits of who is a member of an imagined community and who is not.

Relating it to Honneth's concept of recognition, one could demonstrate that the emergence of imagined communities and their respective collective imaginaries can generate situations in which those norms of recognition are substituted by processes of disrecognition (*Aberkennung*). Those processes refer mainly to the solidification of borders that isolate those who fit in the imagined ideal of purity from those outside of it and, therefore, represent a counter-tendency to the realization of the ethical ideal of cooperative recognition. This process of imagining a purified community, one which purges those who deserve neither recognition nor respect should be taken thusly, as processes of disrecognition, for they represent the negation of the implicit norms of respect and recognition that regard all citizens of modern states.

As a result of such limitations on Honneth's recent theory, a conception of disrecognition should be able to show how the opposing tendencies to the moral progress described by him appear in the present. This paper deals with such a category of disrecognition and is divided into three parts. In the first of them, Honneth's new version of his theory of recognition is briefly presented; in the second part, the limitations of this version are discussed; in the third, the concept of disrecognition and its advantages are made clear. With these steps, the existence of political dynamics of regression will be demonstrated, ones which should be seen as counter-tendencies to the moral progress of recognition described by Honneth without, however, giving up the whole framework of his theory of recognition.

Recognition as legitimation

At least since his philosophical exchange with Nancy Fraser, Honneth has been trying to deliver a model of social theory that avoids the differentiation between systemic and social forms of integration. In this respect, he is driven to explain how exactly the capitalist economy (traditionally thought as a systemic sphere) could be shown to possess the same moral norms of mutual recognition among its subjects that he sees as characteristic of social integration (Deranty, 2009, p. 269). Such a move meant to demonstrate that theories about the atomization of the markets are not able to understand the latter's communicative foundations; and specifically, it means demonstrating that current economic developments do not represent an atrophy of the social relations, but anomic – that is: disorganized – forms of the solidarity principle that underlies modern collective life (Honneth, 2011a, p. 360). Once it has been shown that also in the economic sphere there is a principle of reciprocal respect correlate to those on the spheres of personal or juridical relations, it should be possible to talk about specific forms of one and the same principle of

mutual recognition within all modern spheres of institutionalized social action, forms that potentially permit the realization of what Honneth, following Hegel, calls social freedom. These ethical values and collectively pursued ideals are connected by Honneth, following Talcott Parsons, with the presuppositions of legitimation within societies (Honneth, 2011a, p. 19). What is original about this thesis is that along with the statement that no society can survive and reproduce itself without achieving a certain level of legitimacy, it is supposed that this legitimacy is precisely achieved through the interactions of those concerned, which is from the beginning an attempt to give social expression to the norms of recognition tacitly accepted by the participants in social interaction.

Honneth's intention in his recent work is thus a procedure he calls a 'normative reconstruction' of those ethical principles of recognition that provide legitimacy to the institutional framework of our societies. What is being reconstructed in his work are, therefore, implicit norms of reciprocal solidarity that are present inside every sphere of socially institutionalized action. These norms, according to him, are embedded in all types of social action that potentially can come to fulfill the promise of social freedom contained in modern social institutions. In adopting such a procedure, Honneth intends, through a sort of hermeneutics of social action, to excavate social reality in search of the shared ethical principles that legitimate the complexes of collective action which organize public life in modern societies, namely the complexes of interpersonal relations, economic market and public sphere of democratic action. One is taken back to Honneth's early writings, where he developed a theory of recognition based on the achievement of social respect at three levels: love relations, juridical relations and personal esteem relations (Honneth, 2003, chap. 5). Contrary to that initial approach to the concept of recognition, he now doesn't understand it as the kind of relation among subjects in which they pursue something. He rather seems to be certain that recognition is expressed (albeit indirectly) in and through the interactions themselves which build up the social institutions. At the same time, he seems to be convinced that the institutional forms of action within a society can only be viewed as legitimate if they express the content of this preexisting relation of reciprocal recognition among the subjects and when this is acknowledged from these subjects, namely through the acceptance that the norms and expectations they possess are – or can be – realized within those institutions.

This conception of recognition as the fabric of society's legitimacy, however, puts aside the idea that subjects struggle for a sort of mutual evaluation of their merits and proceeds deeper into the idea that what those

subjects expect is, in reality, to be looked upon as fully capable of taking part in the institutionalized forms of social action. Said another way, the important notion of a public political struggle directing the progress of moral norms within a society is now substituted for the notion of participation in a society whose norms, although incomplete, are already given.¹ With such a shift in the conception of recognition, this notion is now freed from any conflictive dimension and rather resembles the idea of generalized cooperation, an idea which could find empirical evidence in the post-war German welfare state (Pinzani, 2012, p. 211; Siep, 2011). As a result, the notion of injustice also needs to be redressed to keep pace with a cooperative rather than conflictive fundamental concept of recognition. So, once he sees that implicit norms of recognition are responsible for the legitimation processes within modern societies, Honneth affirms that the normative patterns guiding the concept of justice must be based on embedded norms and values whose realization also leads to the establishment of moral relations of cooperation among subjects of a community. Here, justice means the preservation of the possibility of the subject's participation in those institutional contexts of mutual cooperation. In turn, this participation constitutes the core of the subject's normative expectations towards society. Accordingly, a reconstruction of those embedded norms and values can show what are the generalized expectations they would come to realize as social freedom. This means that in everyday interaction, the subjects engage in social contact with one another bearing some expectations about the way they will be viewed and treated by their partners. It is not hard to see that injustice is, at this level, directed against such pretensions to the recognition and full acceptance of one person's autonomy and capacity of participation on the normative level of the system of shared social norms. So, in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Honneth sees that unjust conditions are not to be found in the denial of recognition, in mistreatment or in a disrespect experienced by some individuals, but rather on this communicative level, as a result of misunderstandings about the way in which those legitimate spheres of action comprise social norms of recognition. More than a state of affairs that puts individuals in unfair situations, injustice is now grasped either as a matter of incomplete realization of the social norms which contain those principles of recognition, or as a matter of incomprehension and misunderstanding of those values and norms embedded in modernity's institutions. According to his normative reconstruction, the nonfulfillment of these norms can be seen as what occurs behind the establishment or institutionalization of distorted

¹ About the importance of a public struggle for recognition, see Honneth (2003, p. 260).

forms of that freedom. These are explained in two different ways: either as misunderstandings (*Fehldeutungen*) of the complete meaning of freedom's right, or as abnormal developments (*Fehlentwicklungen*) of the practices of freedom. The former kind of distortion is called pathology and the latter anomie.

According to Honneth, a pathology can be described as a situation in which, thanks to social causes, some or all subjects in a society are no longer capable of correctly understanding the significance of social practices and norms (Honneth, 2011a, p. 157). In opposition to an impediment to the participation in cooperative processes, that is, in opposition to exclusion or harms to participatory chances, Honneth affirms that pathologies act as "second order disorders" that rather signify the socially produced inability to understand the normative grammar institutionalized in social practices. As pointed out by Christopher Zurn, this means that in being the subject of an act of ideological recognition, a person will not be able to perceive the lack of substantial conditions which would allow for an emancipatory, intersubjective instance of recognition to take place. According to him, what happens in such situations is a distortion of the socially shared organizational level of formation of relations of recognition (Zurn, 2011, p. 349). From this point on, Honneth sets his own efforts in as a hermeneutic interpretation of some contemporary works of art that could help in revealing solidified or rigid behaviors. Moving away from the analysis of inequality and exclusion in the direction to social behaviors, he abandons, firstly, the investigation of *experiences* of injustice in favor of his hermeneutic diagnosis of pathological behaviors. At the same time, he seems to give his theory of justice the character of a comprehensive abstraction of the history of cooperative practices, so that also the dimension of the struggle present in his early work seems to be put aside.²

The problem is sharper when one comes to the issues of anomie, described as abnormal developments in the institutional realms of action. In this step, it is worth recapitulating that Honneth is still trying to normatively

² Zurn's critique is, in this point, very similar to the one presented here, insofar as he also approaches the identification of a gap between the conditions for true recognition and the evaluation contained in acts of ideological recognition, with emphasis on exposing the mechanisms and patterns that reinforce social situations of oppression. Even further, his own interest lies in the possibility of supplying explanations for the causes of social pathologies. Nevertheless, he did not seem to be interested in providing more than a "call to attention" to the necessity of explaining social pathologies with more precision. The intention of the present work is, precisely, to point to categories capable of fulfilling this task by way of understanding social disorders as the result of a lasting and enduring process of interaction among groups which act to keep others away from their own images of the cooperative tasks within society, that is, to *disrecognize* values concurrent to their own.

reconstruct the moral norms subjects reciprocally fulfill through their roles in social action. In the spheres of institutionalized collective action, however, one can also find forms of social action that divert from reciprocally shared norms of action, namely, forms of action based on a conscious avoidance of cooperation. Following Honneth's characterization of such forms, these social developments are not to be seen as misunderstandings of the communicative basis of interaction and of the social arenas, but rather as anomic forms of realization of the practices of freedom inscribed in reality. As far as the pathologies were seen as generalized individual behaviors that mistook partial forms of freedom for its entirety, he now tries to avoid such an atomistic view by stating that an anomie can not be seen as a contingent form of behavior, but as a deviance from the expected development pattern of the historical realizations of those norms of recognition (Honneth, 2011a, p. 230). While the pathologies represent an embodiment of misunderstandings, the anomie are social embodiments whose source must be sought elsewhere, least of all the norms of recognition themselves.

Limits of ethical norms in modernity

As discussed, Honneth believes that in the institutionalized modern spheres of social action are inscribed certain norms that point to the realization of moral ideals originated in the mutual necessities of the subjects involved in collective action. Nevertheless, he is also aware that in reconstructing these norms, one inevitably arrives at different institutional behaviors than the ones normatively expected, or more specifically, at abnormal developments. Since these are not to be confused with partial realizations of the normative potential of freedom – that is to say, misunderstandings about the real meaning of freedom – they should be looked after in the gap between the current state of affairs and the promise inscribed in the respective sphere to which they correspond. To summarize the mentioned promises of social freedom and their respective spheres of social action, one can say that what should be made possible is that in personal relations, individual needs and particularities assume their social face; that in economic relations, the individual interests and capacities assume their social face; and that in political public relations, the individual intentions to self-realization assume their social face (Honneth, 2011a, p. 233). All of this supposes, it is clear, that the passage to those social faces occurs through the successful cooperation of the subjects involved in each one of the respective spheres of interaction. It is important to note also that it is exactly this gap between norm and reality that permits the historical moral progress of modern societies in the direction of more inclusive forms,

for it is the potential of an increase in the legitimation of society through the inclusion of even more different conceptions of life that drive some groups to wish to be included, as well as it is the desire to be included and recognized that drives them to struggle for the enlargement of a society's scope of inclusion (Honneth, 2003, p. 259).

Although these latter considerations draw directly from Honneth's work, in each one of his considerations about what normative reconstruction actually finds as a current institutionalized social behavior, he sees the hurdles to the moral progress made possible by the institutionalization of the forms of action as the effects of an irrational prejudice, which, in the long run, certainly will be put aside as its source dries up.³ This means that Honneth seems to believe that the historical dynamics, that is to say, the institutionalization of claims resulting from struggles for recognition, will be able to naturally overcome the counter tendencies observed in each one of ethical life's spheres of action. Although his diagnosis is based on a reconstruction of social processes that took form during the last two hundred years, his view is, as noted by Pinzani (2012, p. 213), still pervaded by a certain welfare optimism. The most important problem, however, does not lie there, but rather with the carelessness about the origins of such anomie within social historical dynamics. On the one hand, that points to a dissolution of the critical sense of his theory since an emancipatory, moral tendency is always already supposed to be found among the human necessity of social integration, thus not being a matter of conscious deliberation, democratic communication or any of the likely *political* activities. On the other hand, what is contrary to that tendency is seen as a disorganized, weak form of institutional action and not as a politically conscious opposition to the dynamics that have historically contributed to the institutionalization of social freedom. As Ludwig Siep has noted, Honneth's concept of recognition not only resembles that of the young Marx in that it expels almost all the conflictual dimensions Hegel saw in this practice, turning it, therefore, into a similar notion to those of reciprocity and solidarity. Even more problematic is the fact that such a concept would be a counterintuitive one, since "the openness, flexibility and pluralistic structures of modern economies and societies" would hardly fit with "a view of society as a common enterprise with a common product" (Siep, 2011, p. 130-131).

³ Especially clear is the passage about same sex marriage on pages 268-269 of *Das Recht der Freiheit*, or on page 295, where he assumes that the pressures against the institutionalization of a marriage centered on autonomy will break in the short or long term.

Nevertheless, Honneth advocates a tradition he calls normative functionalism, whose most important representatives, Hegel and Durkheim, would agree, in opposition to the Marxist tradition, that it is necessary to first describe a normative social system, and only then is it possible to characterize it as a system of imposed relations. Again, the problem is that Honneth sees as the reference point of the social analysis the way in which norms and values become the bearers of legitimacy of the social rules accepted by a society's members, which means, using Durkheim's terms, that any deviance from the expected patterns of functioning of those norms is a form of anomie. What Honneth considers decisive in favor of this normative functionalism against the Marxist critique of the market economy, however, is the fact that contrary to the latter, the former does not argue for an alternative solution to the anomie originated in labor contracts or exploitation, but appeals to a description of these anomie as deviances of patterns accepted and legitimated through the institutionalization of a series of norms always already present as promises in the economic sphere of the market (Honneth, 2011a, p. 356-357). As such, however, Honneth's model fails to grasp two issues mentioned by Beate Rössler: First, the generalized commodification internal to the life-world, and consequently, it fails to understand which activities could be set forward without being deformed by their marketized use and which ones could not; second, it fails to perceive the structural position of submission enjoyed by certain activities in the social division of labor, consequently impeding Honneth's theory of recognition of analyzing contexts of alienated work or even of unemployment.⁴

An investigation that intends to grasp these forms of injustice would have to develop an analytical category capable of describing processes and contexts where members of a society are expelled from the arenas in which one can dispose of the privileges assured by the institutionalization of the norms of social freedom. Without claiming that this category would grasp the task in its entirety, the analysis of such processes could start with one such category as the one here referred to as "disrecognition" (*Aberkennung*).

Disrecognition and injustice

The notion of disrecognition is based on Honneth's recent theory of recognition in two aspects: it too considers that social action depends on a

⁴ Rössler (2007, p. 152). It was not Rössler who mentioned contexts of unemployment, but Josué Pereira da Silva (2008) in his comments on the relation between work and recognition.

certain level of moral legitimacy to be institutionalized, and it also considers that this legitimacy results from moral norms within the community. Contrary to Honneth's theory, however, it considers that institutionalized social action does not occur primarily as a unidirectional vector in historical dynamics, but rather as the result of political conflicts around competing moral worldviews. If this is taken into consideration, one would be driven to assume that if the implicit principles of recognition are not completely embodied in social reality, it is the result of a social reality which contains tendencies that are directed toward different conceptions of the good life in contrast to the ones that are inscribed in normative larger principles of recognition and, most important, that these alternative tendencies also possess a certain level of legitimacy among the people concerned. Since Honneth (cf. 2011b, p. 13) himself agrees with the diagnosis that the increasing purge of significant parts of the population from the spheres of ethical life also constitutes a trace of present day societies, a theory of justice should not satisfy itself with second order disorders analysis, or with the assumption that history will take its course, but rather investigate how these purges occur.

In his presentation of the idea that the so-called "popular democratic republics" of Eastern Europe failed in creating legitimacy patterns different from the ones widespread in "capitalist western", Raymond Geuss delivers, albeit unintended, two interesting insights. The first one regards the diagnosis that no system of thinking could claim the role of a transsubjective authority in present-day capitalism, for the main characteristics of this system lie in individual consumption, self-affirmation and in the simultaneous group pertaining and differentiating of the latter towards others (Geuss, 2013, p. 99). The second one regards the fact that such relations of belonging must be seen as conceptions which refer to morality, ethics, obligations and the shared life (Geuss, 2013, p. 89). Since one could imagine that the maintenance or loss of legitimacy in a society depends on its capacity to reconcile the moral support of its members, it is also necessary to admit that the creation of the internal legitimacy of the groups that coexist in a society is also based on moral conceptions, although here on moral conceptions shared only by the group members (or by those who intend to join the group). Nonetheless, following the diagnosis of a growing tendency to a hardening of group difference, one must also admit that different moral conceptions can be found at the level of social action. Although one could argue that in democratic societies institutionalized forms of action can coexist harmoniously, there are many examples which show how the institutional

framework of modern societies can be caught among irreducible moral conceptions.⁵

This means that different groups build different mental images about what it means and what are the requirements for membership into a certain community and, on a larger scale, of the society they imagine for themselves. Needless to say, such images constitute always mutating social imaginaries that differ among groups according to their conceptions of the moral membership, or said another way, according to whom they recognize or disrecognize as members of their imagined community (s. Anderson, 1983, introd.). This process of constituting the social imaginary is described by Jeffrey Alexander who states that ‘distinctive symbolic codes (...) are critically important in constituting the very sense of society for those who are within and without it’ (Alexander, 2006, p. 54). According to him, these binary codes structure categories of the pure and impure in social discourse. Consequently, these symbolic terms are what define the centrality of some activities and give a legitimate or illegitimate meaning to the positions occupied by the subjects. At the same time, within a group that assigns itself as pure, there exists the belief that some of the others deserve neither the same freedoms nor support, for the former ‘conceive them as being unworthy and amoral, as in some sense “uncivilized”’ (Alexander, 2006, p. 55). The formulation of a symbolic code which delimits those who should be included and who should be excluded is not a distinctive trace of conservatives, but lies at the very core of democratic societies. For Alexander, the conception of democracy upon which a society rests is rather the result of an understanding about the good life and the sympathies and antipathies it provokes, consequently also the moral traceable homogeneities and differentiations which inform the imagined community to which one belongs. Putting Alexander’s formulations in perspective with Honneth’s view of cooperative integration, as much as with Geuss’ insights about the internal legitimation of a group and the consequent differentiation, one arrives at the picture of a political dynamic through which subjects can act as much by participating in institutions and routines of cooperation, as well as by denying the members of groups different from their own the full recognition of their value for those cooperative practices. The importance of the political dynamics within a community could barely be put aside, since,

⁵ Ultimately, it is true that a certain type of non-commitment to the community could also exist that does not necessarily point to the moral devaluation of the other. An example can be observed in East-German *Kneipen*, which announce the accepted currency to be the Deutsche Mark, amounting to a form of denying the current state of affairs without, at the same time, devaluating the ones linked to it.

as Max Weber has exposed, the ground above which the community develops itself is not the custom or the perception of the custom, but the political mobilization of a subjectively shared sense of pertaining (Weber, 1922, p. 21). The distinction between *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, thereby not only shows the formation of minor groups within large contingents of people, but also enlightens the strong subjective bonds which tie the members of the community and oppose them to external others. This political dynamic of disrecognition, more than a deviance from the path of institutionalization of reciprocal norms and values of solidarity, is the result of movements which lie at the very ground of democratic societies and can generate forms of injustice different from the ones described as “second order disorders”.

In Honneth’s description, the diagnosis of a barbarization of social conflict clearly matches with Claus Offe’s definition of the term, specifically as the barbarity attributed to the ones which do not share our values, allowing us to treat them as if they were not addressees of reciprocity rights, or as the barbarity which purges some fraction of the population of any norms of belonging (Claus Offe, 1996, p. 264 et seq.). Offe’s diagnosis, however, draws attention for forms of barbarism he sees in “Mikro-Naturzustand”, that is, forms of everyday barbarism that erode civility and moral sensibility, thus demarcating lines between three groups of persons: winners, losers and disqualified. Not only the terminology used by Offe to describe the situation, but especially the consequences of the competition between winners and losers against the disqualified resembles what Barbara Kaletta called “Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit” or “group-focused enmity” (Kaletta, 2008, p. 40 et seq.). This concept is explained by Kaletta as a reaction to the lack of appropriate and necessary recognitional components of integration in the spheres of functional-structural action, communicative action and cultural expressive action. This lack generates not only a tendency to crises within those spheres (respectively structural, regulation and cohesion crises), but also permits a dismissal from the social obligations, leading to a condition in which the lack of recognition generates hostile mentalities toward other groups (Kaletta, 2008, p. 39). From here, she proceeds to demonstrate that the results of such an animosity towards groups lead to a disintegration of social relations, especially because, as she notes through a series of interviews, the animosity is directed mainly towards groups inside one’s own society. The story thereby comes full circle and brings the description of relations of disrecognition unto the distinctions traced by Weber and Alexander, but also to the importance of the categories of recognition mobilized by Honneth.

A remaining task is to understand the factual processes and contexts in which such relations of disrecognition occur. Among the examples of relations and contexts of disrecognition, one can mention the following: Within interpersonal relations, the growing tendencies to atomization and exhibitionism as forms of an aggressive affirmation of an identity that protects oneself from the world; in ethics, one can think of the death penalty or iron-hand punishment debates, and in politics, on the transitional justice in countries that emerge from bloody dictatorships respectively as forms of denying the right to cooperation to those who do not fit in the imagined society ideal and of denying claims for recognition to one's activities in the building up of the present state of affairs of a society;⁶ in public culture, one can think of the stigmatization of certain groups according to their tastes as a form of disrecognizing their capacities of acting together cooperatively on the establishment of worldviews (s. Gordy, 2009; Živković, 2011); in the labor market, finally, one can think of the depreciation of subsistence in poor countries, or in the activities of self-exploitation in urban and rural areas of developing countries as a form of disrecognizing the merits presented by these actors and, therefore, as a justification for keeping them outside of the acceptable relations of recognition.⁷

Amid tendencies to atomization and differentiation, that is to say, amid a diagnosis of the eschewing of shared values, the process of not recognizing someone else can therefore assume the face of purging the latter from the set of values considered to be legitimated in that society, or put another way, of disrecognizing them as moral partners in social action. Decisive here, on the one hand, is that restrictive forms of recognition can be legitimated by significant portions of a population, although not necessarily by the institutional framework of that society – think about the well known expression “a good robber is a dead robber”. Secondly, since at least the 18th century, once all citizens are citizens of some state that provides her or him with rights (Colliot-Thélène, 2011, p. 30), such processes represent the alienation from

⁶ Literature about justice and penalty can be found in Batista (2012). An interesting survey on this subject was conducted by the Brazilian Senate and is published under the title “Reforma do Código Penal. Pesquisa de opinião pública nacional. Outubro/2012” <http://www.senado.gov.br/noticias/agencia/pdfs/Reforma_do_C%C3%B3digo_Penal1.pdf> (4th of August 2014). About post-dictatorship one can look at the specific cases of Brazil and Yugoslavia, at: Schincariol (2013), Teles and Safatle (2010), Polónyi (2010), Čolović (2003) and Gordy (2013).

⁷ The extensive literature about the relations of work and recognition include works being developed on the internal dynamics of labor and recognition, as exemplified for Kontos (2014). On the rearrangement of work relations in the beginning of the 21st century, see Therborn (2008) and Standing (2011).

something which previously existed. What is necessary, in this case, is to have at hand a conceptual category that permits a theory of recognition to analyze the constitution of the social imaginary from the viewpoint of the creation of a form of injustice that represents neither a second order disorder in the normative understanding of communicative values, nor a weakness in the historical process of embodiment of those communicative norms, but rather the result of political processes that concur to the destruction of modernity's recognition network by way of denying some people the chance to reciprocally build this very network. What Honneth calls a "barbarization of social conflict" could then be better grasped with an analysis of the social imaginary that occupies itself also with such a form of injustice.

Conclusion

In a similar way to that of Christopher Zurn, this paper tried to call attention to the underdeveloped theme within the theory of recognition of the diagnosis on the causes of social pathologies. However, while Zurn emphasizes different methodological approaches for the grasping of pathologies, here was proposed the development of a set of categories that could be capable of facing the issue through an emphasis on political dynamics that are largely ignored by Honneth's new model of social theory without giving up the presuppositions of the normative reconstruction he presented.⁸ But since he himself has already tried to categorically describe the distortions of recognition and freedom through the concepts of pathologies and anomie, one must also be careful enough to put forward a distinction between the disorders identified by Honneth and the issues left aside, the ones which are better grasped with an analysis of processes and contexts of disrecognition. Accordingly, one such theory of disrecognition would carry the following tasks: to present the concept of disrecognition and its relation with Honneth's recent normative model and with his social diagnosis of pathologies and anomie; to differentiate the concept of disrecognition from the concept of disrespect found in Honneth's early works;

⁸ To my knowledge, not only Zurn, but also Denílson Werle and Rúrion Melo point to the necessity of development of political criteria for the theory of recognition (s. Werle and Melo, 2008, p. 197). Their idea, however, was that a fourth sphere of institutional action could be described, namely, a sphere of democratic political action. This was made by Honneth in *Das Recht der Freiheit*, although not with the intention of describing a norm of unbiased commitment, as demanded by the authors. Honneth wanted, rather, to conceive the spheres of recognition as arenas where the conditions of social freedom (instead of *relations* of recognition) could be embodied. That change in his conception means, according to Sobottka and Saavedra, that the realization of social freedom contains an existential dimension and the spheres of recognition are now to be viewed as modes of expression of freedom (s. Sobottka e Saavedra, 2013, p. 140).

to sketch out situations in which processes and contexts of disrecognition are established.⁹

The proposed emphasis on political dynamics within the community, as was demonstrated, points to a source of conflict that is encompassed by the theory of recognition, for both the epistemic differentiation of pure from impure and the establishment of group-focused enmity do not deny the idea that principles of recognition constitute the fabric of society's legitimacy. On the contrary, Alexander is aware of the necessary mutual commitment to shared norms both in and outside one's own group, that is, of the tense relation between individual rights and wishes and collective obligations.¹⁰ Additionally, Kaletta (2008, p. 38) notes the relation between the lack of recognition and the constitution of crises in society's integrative system.

Finally, it is worth briefly pointing out, along with the contributions of Alexander and Kaletta, how important a vivid concept of politics can be inside a theory of recognition, especially if one takes into consideration the tasks sketched above for a theory occupied with the issues of disrecognition. According to Emmanuel Renault, the whole architecture of Honneth's social theory can be viewed as an attempt to retrieve a Marxist critique of present-day social relations, a task that could be achieved since once this theory was able to present the relations of claims for recognition and the demand for institutional change, they would appear as contradictions inside the social system and therefore point to its internal critique and transformation (Renault, 2009, p. 238). It is, of course, not necessary to try to make a Marxist out of Honneth, but as someone influenced by the humanist Marxism developed in Yugoslavia in the 1960s, it is most likely that the idea of politics as the space where human beings exert their creativity, solve their conflicts and establish their norms of cooperation (s. Djurić, 1979, p. 109) could very well be a good hint to the further development of a theory of recognition.

⁹ As it is easily noted, for the sake of space, this article deals only with the first task, in a very brief mode. Regarding the last step, it should also be made clear what is the specificity of disrecognition processes as opposed to processes of differentiation among groups that do not generate situations of submission and oppression.

¹⁰ Alexander (2006, p. 53). Honneth has written on Alexander's book with a very positive opinion. Nevertheless, he still criticizes the fact that Alexander supposes norms and ideals of solidarity which could only be empirically and historically found once the actors have come into interaction and not beforehand, as a sort of atemporal ideal (Honneth, 2013, p. 6). In more than one sense, this critique resembles the one Honneth directed to Marx in his defense of Hegel and Durkheim as the guides of his normative reconstruction (s. Honneth, 2011a, p. 330).

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