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The Problem of Work in Axel Honneth's Critical Theory

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Abstract

This thesis shows that although Axel Honneth's recognition based analysis of market-mediated social labour is resilient, it still requires further refinement and improvement. The objective of this thesis is to contribute to this end. Firstly, the thesis provides a qualified internal critique of Honneth's account, incorporating three elements: a) a systematic discussion of his arguments covering his early interventions on the topic up to and including his more recent writings; b) defence of Honneth's normative approach showing that the recognition theory provides robust rejoinders to functionalist objections, and to objections challenging the adequacy of his normative reconstruction method; c) a critique showing that Honneth's account has limited critical import in the context of contemporary 'ethicized' capitalism. The critique is based on the assessment that: i) recognition and autonomy, i.e. the norms underpinning Honneth's model representing preconditions of social freedom, have been integrated into the recent forms of work organisation while being re-signified in the process; ii) divorced from the moral grammar of social freedom norms acquire an ambivalent character and lose their critical potential.

Secondly, the thesis shows that a recognition-based critique of 'ethicized' capitalism can be recovered should changes be made to Honneth's standard recognition model. The thesis argues that, in addition to Honneth's claim that social actors need primary forms of recognition to realise their social freedom, moral self-realisation should be acknowledged as an additional condition of social freedom and a possibility of social labour. Further, it shows that the relationship between work, moral responsibility, and recognition is relevant for a critique of work because novel forms of work organisation face workers today with increased demands for autonomy and responsibility while denying them organisational preconditions for assuming moral responsibility for their work, i.e. co-determination rights. Because 'ethicized' capitalism is underpinned by the promise of moral self-realisation, which it systematically fails to fulfil, moral responsibility acquires critical potential.

Sommario

Questa tesi si propone di mostrare che l'analisi di Axel Honneth del lavoro sociale mediato dal mercato basata sulla teoria del riconoscimento, per quanto ancora valida e resiliente, richieda tuttavia un ulteriore perfezionamento. Obiettivo della tesi è quello di contribuire a questo scopo. In primo luogo, la tesi articola una critica interna e ragionata della teoria di Honneth, che incorpori tre elementi: a) una discussione sistematica delle sue argomentazioni, dai suoi primi interventi sul tema fino agli scritti più recenti; b) una difesa dell'approccio normativo di Honneth, che mostri come la teoria del riconoscimento fornisca una solida replica alle obiezioni funzionaliste e a quelle obiezioni che mettono in discussione l'adeguatezza del metodo di ricostruzione normativa; c) una critica che mostri come la teoria di Honneth abbia un'importanza critica limitata nel contesto del capitalismo 'eticizzato' contemporaneo. Tale critica si basa sulle seguenti valutazioni: i) il riconoscimento e l'autonomia, cioè le norme alla base del modello di Honneth che rappresentano le precondizioni della libertà sociale, sono state integrate nelle recenti forme di organizzazione del lavoro e in questo processo sono state ri-significate; ii) le norme separate dalla grammatica morale della libertà sociale acquisiscono un carattere ambivalente e perdono il loro potenziale critico.

In secondo luogo, la tesi mostra che una critica al capitalismo 'eticizzato' basata sulla teoria del riconoscimento può essere recuperata se si apportano modifiche al modello di riconoscimento standard di Honneth. La tesi sostiene inoltre che, oltre all'affermazione di Honneth secondo cui gli attori sociali hanno bisogno di forme primarie di riconoscimento per realizzare la loro libertà sociale, l'autorealizzazione morale dovrebbe essere riconosciuta come ulteriore condizione di libertà sociale e una possibilità di lavoro sociale. Infine, si propone di mostrare che la relazione tra lavoro, responsabilità morale e riconoscimento è rilevante per una critica del lavoro, poiché le nuove forme di organizzazione del lavoro mettono oggi i lavoratori di fronte a crescenti richieste di autonomia e responsabilità, mentre negano loro i prerequisiti organizzativi per l'assunzione di una responsabilità morale del loro lavoro, ovvero i diritti di co-determinazione. Poiché il capitalismo 'eticizzato' è sostenuto dalla promessa, sistematicamente tradita, di autorealizzazione morale, la responsabilità morale acquisisce un potenziale critico.

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Introduction

Axel Honneth is one of the leading theoreticians of the recognition paradigm in critical theory. The recognition theory draws attention to the role played by relations of mutual recognition in personhood development. It also clarifies the mediating role of recognition relations in social integration and reproduction. It provides conceptual and theoretical instruments capable of disclosing and producing analyses of social orders as orders of recognition. In addition to making normative contributions, i.e. disclosing the ethical and moral significance of recognition, the recognition theory also emerged as an effective program of social research (e.g. Nicholas Smith, "Work as a Sphere of Norms"). Correlatively, the theory discloses novel and productive standpoints from which socially entrenched forms of domination and directions of social development can be grasped. For example, it draws attention that economic subordination might rely on status orders denying entire groups primary forms of recognition, e.g. the undervaluation of 'female-gendered' occupations. Although the theory is still in the making- given that Honneth not only remains an active and productive scholar, he constantly returns to the premises of his theory seeking to clarify and further develop them, it has already received its fair share of attention, praise and criticism, as one would expect. Witness to this is the growing number of studies dedicated to it.[1] All in all, Honneth's theory seems well established, at least for now, in the landscape of contemporary critical theory.

There remain, however, aspects of the theory requiring further development. One of them is the topic of this thesis: the critical conception of work and work subjectivity emerging out of Axel Honneth's successive attempts to show that the recognition theory can make a distinct contribution to a critique of the market-mediated sphere of social labour. Some preliminary reasons for why the topic of work, in general, and Honneth's critical account of work, in particular, deserve close inspection can be offered straight away; others will emerge in the following sections. The topic of work is worthy of philosophical

[1] In addition to the titles mentioned in the following pages, *see,* among others, Danielle Petherbridge, *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth*; Jakobsen and Odin, *Recognition and Freedom: Axel Honneth's Political Thought;* Volker Schmitz, *Axel Honneth and the Critical Theory of Recognition.*

consideration due to the significance that work has for the lives of most of us. Work remains one of the primary activities we must engage in throughout our lives, an activity governed by stringent demands which, in turn, can play a significant role in how we come to live our lives and even in our identity development. Work matters not only for those engaged in it but also remains one of the primary activities contributing to the material reproduction of societies, at least for the time being. Although important for most of us and socially relevant, work represents a relatively marginal topic in contemporary social and political debates and philosophical discourse (Renault, "The Political Invisibility of Work"). In turn, Honneth represents one of the few contemporary scholars attempting not only to place work on the map of stringent philosophical problems but also to offer a systematic account of why it matters, of its ethical, moral, and social relevance, as well as proposing well-informed, empirically grounded analyses of the contemporary world of work. For these reasons, Honneth's account of work deserves scrutiny.

There are several excellent studies on Honneth's critical theory covering many of its central topics; yet, a study bringing together his various attempts to develop a recognition-based theory of work is lacking. Of course, Honneth's commentators and critics have not ignored his contributions to the topic of work. On the contrary, each of his central interventions gave rise to commentaries, appreciation and critique, usually in the form of articles. Articles, however, regardless if they seek to clarify, defend or dispute Honneth's arguments, usually focus, as expected given their structure, on specific aspects of his arguments, with no interest in offering an overview. We might expect overviews from the (growing number of) systematic studies dedicated to Honneth's critical theory. While some of them make room for the problem of work, neither of them, with very few exceptions, trace Honneth's arguments up to the present—for example, J-P. Deranty's excellent and comprehensive study, *Beyond Communication*, includes a clear and balanced view of the subject. However, because Deranty published his book (2009) a few years before Honneth's second major work, *Freedom's Right* (2011), the renovations to his argument that Honneth proposes in the said work are beyond the purview of Deranty's study. In turn, the book that Christopher Zurn dedicates to Honneth's work, *Axel Honneth* (2015), does take into account his second major work, i.e. *Freedom's Right,* and dedicates a good number of pages to the problem of work. Even so, published in 2015, Zurn's book could not have anticipated Honneth's recent effort to defend further and refine his argument, i.e. *The Idea of Socialism* (2018). Finally, Dagmar Wilhelm's study on Honneth's social philosophy offers a

well-articulated, qualified defence of his social philosophy, although not one devoid of criticism, covering his more recent writings in the process. On the other hand, her excellent study touches only incidentally on the topic of work and does not seek to provide a systematic view of it.

In summary, some reasons why I considered that it is worth problematising Honneth's account of work are the ethical and social significance of work and its somewhat marginalised status as a topic in contemporary social discourse, the robust attempts made by the recognition theory to recover the topic of work, and the lack of a systematic discussion of Honneth's account, one that would also cover his more recent interventions on the subject. Further reasons emerge once the problem of work is introduced (section 1), the aims and the main idea of this study are summarised (section 2), and its structure presented (section 3).

1. The Problem of Work: Basic Tasks

The approach and framework within which Honneth's arguments are presented, discussed, and problematised in this thesis start from the tasks his theory would need to fulfil in order to provide a well-founded critique of the contemporary world of work. This section presents the basic tasks, and the next section introduces the thesis' approach and its principal aims. Some of the tasks are derivable from the conception of critical theory defended by Honneth. In contrast, others are more specific to the problem of work approached as a topic for critical theory.

Basic tasks of critical theory

As the name suggests, critical social theories aim to articulate a critique of society. In Honneth's sense, a cogent critical theory would provide an encompassing critique. It would seek to provide an empirically accurate analysis of contemporary societies from the standpoint of a conception of good or just society, illuminating how the current order falls short of realising the identified ideal. It would identify the non-contingent reasons for why it fails, e.g. entrenched relations of domination, while also identifying within the social order processes of transformation already pointing in the direction anticipated by the theory, i.e. by the conception of better society representing the standpoint from which contemporary

societies are analysed and criticised. How ambitious such a theory is and the demanding tasks it entails can be seen when compared with 'less ambitious' types of critical theories. One of them is represented by theories aiming to 'solely' propose norms of social critique and provide moral justification for them without, however, going as far as assuming the task of showing that the identified norms are already efficient at the level of social life. These theories are mostly preoccupied with establishing that the standpoint from which they identify the wrongs of current societies relies on context-transcending norms understood as norms whose moral validity is independent of the social context to which they might be applied. Their main virtue is that they can reclaim validity for the social critique they ground insofar as their norms pass the test of moral validity, e.g. rationality and universality. On the other hand, these theories disregard the further question if the proposed norms are already efficient at the level of social reality in the sense of potential to engender social transformations in the direction envisioned by the theory. They disregard the question of how the social order they assess could give rise to the one envisioned by the theory. Consequently, they might be vulnerable to the objection that their normative standpoint represents a mere 'ought' whose social conditions of application might be lacking. The risk is that the theory and its critical standpoint are disconnected from critical and developmental transformations unfolding at the level of social life. At the other end of the spectrum would be those theories seeking to ground their critique on norms already at work within the social world, if not as the dominant ones, at least as ideals presupposed by critical tendencies already budding within the social world. Their main virtue is articulating an in-worldly standpoint of critique. Thus, they would be better placed to explain how and why their conception of a better society is not a mere 'ought' but one picking up real development possibilities. However, insofar as such an approach disburdens itself of the task to provide moral grounding for its norms, it might find it challenging to explain why it gives primacy to certain directions of transformations over other equally immanent and critically productive tendencies.[2]

Although sketchy, the depiction of the two alternative types of critical theory offered so far might serve its purpose, which is not to defend the more demanding conception favoured by Honneth as the best, but only to draw attention to the burdensome tasks it sets for itself. Both of the 'less ambitious' theories seek to ground their critical standpoint albeit in

[2] Maeve Cooke offers an illuminating account of the challenges raised by the task of navigating the demand of context-transcending justification of norms and the anti-authoritarian impulse of critical theory. It is the latter aspect that gives rise to the task of ensuring the pre-theoretical grounding of norms of critique, and renders undesirable a procedure seeking to deduce them independently of the social world and applying them from above, see *Re-Presenting the Good Society*.

two different ways: either on context-transcending grounds aiming to ensure the moral validity of its norms or on grounds internal to the social life ensuring their moral validity and social efficiency within the normative horizon of the society in question. In contrast, in the more ambitious sense defended by Honneth, the critical theory would imply grounding the norms in both ways: to provide moral grounding consisting in defending the moral validity of the norms on which it relies and in providing immanent grounding consisting in showing that the norms and the critical standpoint it proposes are not alien to the social world in question but represent the normative orientations of emancipatory transformations already budding in the social world.[3]

The twofold tasks identified so far can be immediately imported as general conditions that Honneth's critical conception of work would need to satisfy to be well founded. A critical account of work in particular, and the world of work in contemporary societies more generally, would need to: provide context-transcending justification for the norms constituting the critical standpoint from which the theory offers analyses of the world of work, illuminating in the process how the current world of work fails short of upholding the identified norms, while also disclosing the in-worldly instances pointing towards and engendering transformations in the direction anticipated by the theory. These general and rather formal tasks take a more concrete form once we apply them to Honneth's recognition theory. In order to contribute to a critical account of the world of work, the recognition theory would need to justify itself as an adequate theoretical framework for such a critique. It would need to show that principles of mutual recognition underpin the contemporary world of work, to identify them and provide them with moral grounding. To illuminate how the current world of work fails to uphold those principles, e.g. deny basic forms of recognition, while identifying the medium by which the violation of recognition norms is both disclosed and problematised within the world of work, illuminating in the process how a novel, more progressive organisation of work could emerge, one respecting the basic principles of recognition. For the time being, it might suffice to retain the two basic tasks facing the recognition theory: to show that norms of recognition underpin the sphere of work and to justify their context-transcending validity.

[3] For Honneth's discussion and critique of the 'less ambitious' critical theories while defending the more demanding conception , *see*, for example, "A Social Pathology of Reason"; "Reconstructive Social Critique".

Normative critique: a categorical mistake?

There is also a third task confronting attempts to ground a critical theory of the world of work. One that can be envisioned once we consider the possibility that normative critique might not apply to the sphere of economy, including the sphere of labour and production. A few words about the context that makes the idea of a normative critique of the contemporary world of work seem implausible help clarify the problem. In the past decades, the world of work slipped outside the purview not only of social and public debates but also of critical theory (Honneth, "Work and Recognition", 223-5). At first, this development might seem surprising given that the production paradigm still defined the basic contours of the critique of societies of late capitalism well into the twentieth century. Assuming the risk of oversimplification, the production paradigm, to which Karl Marx is the most important contributor, is based on the idea that social labour represents *the* activity through which human rationality- represented by the capacity to transform the environment for the sake of serving human purposes- unfolds and develops historically shaping both the social order and human subjectivity in the process (e.g. Smith and Deranty, "Work, Recognition and the Social Bond"). At least since Marx, it came to pass as almost self-evident among critical theorists that a critique of contemporary, capitalist societies must include the world of work because the structural ills, contradictions, but also possibilities of social development characterising societies of late modernity find their roots in the sphere of labour. From the standpoint of the production paradigm, the sphere of labour appears as a field of unavoidable tensions between the basic human possibilities of self-realisation embedded in the activity of social labour and their frustration by the capitalist organisation of labour. Once the production paradigm started to lose much of its appeal in the second part of the 20th century, the question regarding the critical potential of labour also receded into the background.

Although the disintegration of the production paradigm was an essential factor, a further, no less significant circumstance also contributed to eliminating the topic of labour from the purview of critical theory. The communication paradigm, emerging in the early works of Jürgen Habermas' and finding mature expression in his monumental *The Theory of Communicative Action*, that came to replace the production paradigm as the dominant framework in critical theory made no conceptual space for a critical conception of work. Against Marx, Habermas argues that the conflict-ridden expansion of the human species' productive powers does not represent the sole or even the primary medium through which

human freedom evolves at the species level, nor through which societies become more rational in the fullest sense of the word. Habermas grounds his critique of the production paradigm and his alternative view of social development on the categorical distinction between two conceptions of reason: instrumental/functionalist and communicative rationality. The human species would increase its freedom in the qualitative sense by freeing the communicative potentials of social interaction from irrational limitations, e.g. social domination, which, in turn, would ensure the constitution of norms governing social life that are rationally acceptable to autonomous persons. The shift to the communicative interaction paradigm made possible for the first time in the tradition of Left-Hegelianism to found a social theory not on the subject-object relation, i.e. the instrumental relation between the rational subject and an amorphous nature, a relation illustrated by the productive character of labour activity, but on the primary sociality of human beings understood as the capacity to achieve mutual understanding regarding a situation (Honneth, *Critique of Power*, Ch. 8). At the same time, Habermas devolves the status of labour to that of mere instrumental activity finding its reason to be in the necessity of ensuring the biological survival of the human species and the material reproduction of societies. As a result, labour loses its status of activity that could directly contribute to expanding the freedom potential of the human species. Conversely, the world of work loses the status of a sphere housing a specific potential of freedom, emerging as a sphere governed by technical rationality geared towards ensuring the ever more efficient forms of work organisation. The conception of the world of work not as a sphere of norm-mediated interaction governed by communicative rationality but as a sphere of instrumental action governed by functionalist rationality is, in Habermas' view, both legitimate and empirically convincing. The reason would be that the organisation of social labour in societies of late capitalism is governed not by norms but by 'norm-free' mechanisms and principles grounded in technical or instrumental rationality aiming at increased efficiency. This state of affairs would be justified given that the increased complexity of production in modern societies makes virtually impossible the coordination of labour and distribution of social wealth via norms; additionally, a system geared towards increased efficiency in production would, in the end, serve the rational aim of social labour that is to ensure the biological reproduction of the human species, and the material reproduction of societies (e.g. Jütten, "Habermas and Markets", 589-95). Habermas's critique of the production paradigm and his convincing arguments for a shift towards the paradigm of communication in critical theory legitimising in the process the status of the world of work as

a sphere governed not by communicative but by technical rationality, thus lacking the potential to expand freedom in the qualitative sense, adds philosophical legitimacy to the positivist case made by orthodox economics for which the conception of the economy as a 'norm-free' sphere represents a basic self-evidence.

As a consequence, any attempt today to recover the topic of work for critical theory takes place against a theoretical background denying that such an endeavour even makes sense in the first place. Normative critique would attempt to evaluate and diagnose transformations in the sphere of the economy more generally, and the world of work in particular, as if they are or ought to be governed by norms. If economic interaction and coordination, including work organisation and distribution of social wealth, is governed not by norms, being them norms of recognition or otherwise, but by 'norm-free', 'purely' economic imperatives and laws, e.g. the law of supply and demand, the price mechanism, then a normative critique of these processes would represent a categorical mistake. Against this background emerges a third task, in addition to the first two derived from the notion of critical theory, that Honneth's theory would need to fulfil in order to make his recognition theory useful for a critique of the world of work: he would need to justify and secure the possibility of normative critique in the first place.

The three tasks are as follows: against the theoretical *status quo*, Honneth needs to show that norms play a central role in the integration and reproduction of market-mediated organisation of labour. Secondly, he needs to show that the norms in question are grounded in relations of recognition, entailing that principles of recognition represent normative presuppositions of the contemporary world of work. Thirdly, he needs to provide moral foundations for his preferred norms, i.e. recognition and autonomy. If these three essential tasks are fulfilled, then the theory of recognition could disclose a standpoint from which the contemporary organisation of work can be measured and evaluated: should the current situation reveal stark divergence from them, e.g. participants to the world of work being denied forms of recognition where the denial represents a violation of the basic principles of mutual recognition, then the current situation would be unacceptable, rising in turn the question of what remedies are required and warranted.

2. Aims and Main Idea

Honneth needs to fulfil the three tasks identified in the preceding section in order to recover the topic of work for critical theory. Thus, a comprehensive discussion and

assessment of his arguments should keep all of them in view. While such a project is worth pursuing, this thesis is less ambitious. In this study, I let the the question of context-transcending justification to recede into the background, while I focus on Honneth's attempt to show that the sphere of the market-mediated social labour is normatively constrained and that his favourite norms, i.e. recognition and autonomy, represent normative presuppositions of the contemporary world of work.

There are several reasons why I decided not to attempt an exhaustive problematisation of Honneth's critical conception of work, focusing instead on whether his critical account answers the problem of immanence. One reason is purely practical; discussing all tasks would have exceeded the available time and space. The second reason is that the conception of emancipated society on which Honneth's critique relies is not very eccentric. Honneth's critical theory relies on two standpoints of critique: a conception of society securing for individuals basic forms of recognition, that is, a society free of structural forms of disrespect, and a conception of society securing individuals fundamental forms of freedom, thus societies that do not condemn anyone to a life of bondage. Without denying that the idea of a society free from disrespect and bondage should not be taken for granted and that it is vulnerable to biting critique, it seems *prima facie* plausible as a morally valid standpoint. Additionally, although marginalised, the question of moral validity is not entirely ignored in this thesis. Without seeking to make any distinct contribution to this debate, in the first and third chapters, I discuss and, to a certain degree, problematise Honneth's reasons for why the two sets of norms, i.e. recognition and autonomy, might provide credible answers to the question regarding the norms in light of which contemporary societies might legitimise themselves.

The remaining three reasons offer a more focused answer as to why the thesis concentrates on the problem of immanence. The first one is that the problem of immanent grounding is by no means secondary to critical theory. In a sense, it represents its beating heart, at least in the tradition of Left-Hegelianism, including figures such as Marx, the first generation of the Frankfurt School Tradition, Habermas, and Honneth, to name just a few. As Raymond Geuss points out, critical theory is first and foremost a theory of emancipation that seeks to produce a specific 'effect' within the social world. In his elegant phrase, "a critical theory has as its inherent aim to be the self-consciousness of a successful process of enlightenment and emancipation" (*The Idea of Critical Theory*, 58). What distinguishes critical theory from other types of social criticism is, as Geuss' characterisation suggests, the

specific relation it seeks to establish with the phenomenon of emancipation. As the "self-consciousness" of the "enlightenment" and "emancipation" process, it aims to make a practical contribution to the realisation of emancipatory potentials already embedded in the social world by showing that its critical diagnosis of the social world represents the theoretical counterpart of emancipatory tendencies already budding in the social world.

Following the above characterisation, the theory needs to identify developmental tendencies within the social world and provide theoretical and conceptual instruments that could disclose their significance as mediums of developmental transformations. As "self-consciousness" of emancipatory tendencies, critical theory depends on the existence of such pre-theoretical contexts of critique converging with its theoretical diagnosis in order to make sense in the first place. Indeed, beyond significant differences in the basic premises of their theories, the content of their diagnosis, and conclusions regarding the possibility of emancipation, critical theorists in the tradition of Left-Hegelianism share the basic methodological assumption that critical theory must be aware of its practical intent and incorporate it in its methodology. As Honneth points out, in the tradition of Left-Hegelianism "it was considered self-evident that a theory of society could engage in critique only insofar as it was able to rediscover an element of its own critical viewpoint within social reality" ("The Social Dynamics", 64). Honneth's emphasis on the relationship between critical theory and pre-theoretical contexts, which in his view, represents the basic problem of critical theory, is significant for his own with his predecessors. His critical engagement with Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, but also Foucault is shot through the lenses of the methodological demand that the critical diagnosis of societies they propose and the potential of emancipation they might have identified should be traceable to a 'pre-theoretical' context of critique (Honneth, *The Critique of Power*). More than this, his decision to shift away from Habermas' communication paradigm and towards Hegel's theory of recognition seems grounded on his assessment that Habermas' critical theory fails to fully clarify the context and normative presuppositions underpinning pre-theoretical forms of critique bearing emancipatory potentials. According to Honneth, Habermas' theory of social development, entailing that the process through which "the linguistic rules of communicative understanding are developed" mediates the moral development of societies, lacks a credible pre-theoretical counterpart. In Honneth's view, a phenomenon representing a promising candidate to the status of pre-theoretical counterpart of moral development is the moral experiences of social injustice, which, he argues against Habermas, "are not aroused by a restriction of linguistic

capabilities, but by a violation of identity claims acquired in socialization" ("The Social Dynamics", 70-1). As will be shown in the first chapter of this thesis, a peculiarity of Honneth's theory of recognition consists in seeking to establish a close connection between recognition as a theoretical framework and the fundamental moral expectations individuals bring into social interaction whose frustration can engender critical action, by disclosing the latter as basic expectations of recognition. Thus, the notion of critical theory defended by Honneth already singles out the problem of immanent grounds as the basic problem of critical theory. Applied to the problem of work, Honneth's approach would entail that a critical account of work could engage in critique only insofar as it is able "to rediscover an element of its own critical viewpoint within social reality".

The problem of work discussed in the previous section provides a further reason as to why it is worth focusing on the question of immanence in assessing Honneth's attempts to recover the topic of work for critical theory. The dominant view of the economy as a 'norm-free' sphere renders implausible any attempt to provide immanent grounding for a normative critique of market-mediated social labour. As will be shown in Chapters 2 and 4, some of the most incisive criticism faced by Honneth aims not at his claim that recognition and autonomy represent morally valid norms but at his claim that they represent normative presuppositions of the economy in contemporary societies. Additionally, some of his argument's weaker links and some of the more systematic changes he brings to his theoretical framework are directly connected to his claim that norms of recognition and autonomy play a central role in the integration and reproduction of modern societies in general, and the sphere of the economy in particular. Thus, solving the problem of immanence represents a precondition for the theory to engage in critique *and* is the most challenging task faced by a critical account of the world of work in capitalist societies.

A final reason is that the central aims of this thesis are bound to the problem of immanence. The aims consist in showing that although the critical account of market-mediated social labour Axel Honneth develops based on his theory of recognition is resilient (1), it also needs to be improved (2) and to make a contribution in this sense (3). To achieve these aims, the thesis needs to provide some preparatory work consisting in presenting and discussing Honneth's main contributions to the subject, covering his early articles, published prior to developing his theory of recognition, up to his more recent writings. The reason is that, as will be shown in Chapter 2, one needs to consider his various

attempts, including his early articles on the topic of work and the criticism they received, especially from Habermas, to make sense of the trajectory of his argument.

Against this background, the first aim, to demonstrate the resilience of Honneth's account, translates into the task of providing a defence of his normative account of the market-mediated sphere of social labour against functionalist objections and against objections targeting his method of normative reconstruction. As argued in Chapter 4, in *Freedom's Right* (FR), his second major work, Honneth offers compelling reasons for identifying social freedom, i.e. an intersubjective form of freedom based on mutual recognition, as a principle internal to the market sphere and as a credible candidate to the status of principle in light of which the market can secure legitimacy. However, unlike Honneth, I do not conclude that *FR* shows that social freedom remains a valid standpoint from which recent transformations in the world of work can be comprehended and criticised. The transformations of the market sphere in the past decades, leading to the emergence of what can be loosely labelled the 'ethicized' form of capitalism, dents the critical potential of Honneth's account. Not because the market-mediated social labour sphere emerges today as a 'norm-free' sphere but because it seems to incorporate and resignify the norms of recognition and autonomy, dissociating them from the grammar of social freedom. Thus, the second aim is to demonstrate how Honneth's account needs further improvement. I do so via an internal critique of his account of the contemporary world of work. When placed against the background of his methodological self-restrictions, e.g. his reconstructive approach, the transformations characterising 'ethicized' capitalism represent more than recalcitrant data; they challenge the basic methodological premises of his account, i.e. the premise that social freedom can be reconstructed *today* as an ideal internal to the market sphere.

A third and final aim consists in identifying unexplored normative resources of the recognition paradigm and employing them in strengthening the case that the recognition theory can make a distinguishable contribution to a critique of the contemporary world of work. The main idea, to which I arrive via an internal critique of Honneth's critical theory of work, is that a recognition-based critique of 'ethicized' capitalism- seeking to justify its norms as presuppositions of the market mediated sphere of labour- would benefit from exploring and exploiting the relation between work, recognition, autonomy, and moral responsibility. The hypothesis is based on several premises. One is that under the contemporary organisation of work, workers lack, for the most part, and for non-contingent reasons, a voice in the decision-making process establishing what to produce, under what

conditions and for whom. A second premise is that under these conditions, the workers' moral autonomy is severely limited such that only via irregular actions, e.g. protests, can they make their voice heard. However, they lack the means to ensure that their voice counts. A third premise is that the institutionalised norms and demands facing workers today also provide them good reasons to expect to be recognised as agents endowed with moral autonomy and to expect that taking part in the world of work does not entail being duped into becoming complicit in disrespecting others. It would follow that a work organisation denying workers a voice regarding what they produce, under what conditions and for whom, as the one prevailing in contemporary societies, is vulnerable to criticism because it violates some of its basic normative presuppositions. The more general point is that the relationship between work and moral responsibility can ground emancipatory critique of the market-mediated sphere of labour. Although Honneth's theory of recognition remains the framework within which the more general point is articulated, some changes to his standard recognition model are required to disclose and recover the critical potential that moral responsibility acquires in the context of 'ethicized' capitalism. The following section, especially the presentation of the final two chapters, offers some indications of what changes might be required.

3. Structure

The three-part structure of the dissertation is meant to achieve an equilibrium between the task of fulfilling the aims mentioned in the previous section and offering a coherent presentation of Honneth's dynamic work. Regarding the latter point, two aspects emerged as relevant for organising the discussion. Firstly, although the broad contours of his critical theory remain constant since their articulation in his first major book, *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth has constantly revised and attempted to improve his theoretical framework. Sometimes his revisions take more systematic forms, such as his second major book, *Freedom's Right (FR)*. As a result, two theoretical frames can be distinguished in his work: one articulated in *The Struggle* and refined in subsequent writings, and another introduced in *FR* and further defended in *The Idea of Socialism*. True, as argued in Chapters 3 and 4, the two theoretical frameworks are not only compatible, but *FR* aims to provide a systematic answer to problems and challenges left unanswered by *The Struggle*. However, to present and discuss their points of convergence and divergence, it was necessary to dedicate a chapter to each of them. The second aspect is that Honneth's critical theory of work is an

integral part of his more general theoretical framework. For example, his argument that principles of mutual recognition underpin the market mediated sphere of social labour becomes comprehensible only in the context of his more general argument regarding the role of recognition in social integration and reproduction. Due to the strict interdependence of the various elements of his theory, problems or weaknesses of his more general theoretical framework might also weaken his account of work. Additionally, as shown especially in Chapters 5 and 6, the reverse is also the case; problems and difficulties that at first seem specific to the problem of work might pose challenges to his more general framework.

For these reasons, I decided to dedicate Part I of the dissertation (Chapters 1 and 2) to a discussion of Honneth's theory of recognition with a focus on *The Struggle* (Chapter 1) and a discussion of the arguments in support of a recognition based critique of the economy with a focus on *Redistribution and Recognition?*, the book he co-authored with Nancy Fraser, although his early articles on work are also taken into account (Chapter 2). Part I concludes that Honneth needs to provide further evidence in addition to arguments offered in *The Struggle* and his debate with Nancy Fraser to substantiate the thesis that relations of recognition play a central role in the integration and reproduction of modern societies, including the sphere of the economy.

Part II (Chapters 3 and 4) focuses on his second major work, *Freedom's Right*. I interpret *FR* as an attempt to provide a more systematic account of the role that relations of recognition, now translated into the language of freedom, have played in shaping the normative infrastructure of modern societies. Chapter 3 discusses the basic premises of *FR*, signalling in the process the points of continuity and discontinuity between it and Honneth's previous works. Chapter 4 discusses his conception of the (labour) market as a sphere of social freedom. Part II concludes that *FR* offers mixed results. One assessment regards Honneth's attempt to show that the history of the (labour) market's transformations in the past century reveals social freedom as the value in light of which it can secure legitimacy. In this regard, I conclude that his account provides robust evidence for social freedom as one of the more credible *candidates* for the status of legitimacy conferring norms underpinning the (labour) market. On the other hand, I argue that the transformations of the (labour) market of the past decades characterising the current 'ethicized' or 'flexible' form of capitalism pose not only empirical but also methodological challenges to his attempt to grounding a critique of the market on the ideal of social freedom. The main problem is that in the past decades, social freedom seems to have been uprooted, losing its institutional anchorage and its status

of moral principle informing struggles for justice within the market sphere. Because of this, it does not seem plausible anymore to hold that the ideal of social freedom can be traced to pre-theoretical instances of critique within the contemporary world of work, which is a fundamental methodological precondition for Honneth's theory, as discussed in the previous sections. After considering his more recent book, *The Idea of Socialism,* where he attempts to provide a solution to this problem, I conclude that his argument remains unsatisfactory.[4]

In the third and final Part (Chapters 5 and 6), I attempt a contribution to a recognition-based critique of the contemporary world of work that takes the conclusion of Part II as its starting point: the current form of capitalism poses not only empirical but also methodological challenges to Honneth's theoretical framework. I show that a closer look at 'ethicized' capitalism reveals it not as a 'norm-free' system but as a constellation of transformations having recognition and autonomy at their core. Against this background, the thesis that social freedom has been uprooted needs to be qualified: not the norms of recognition and autonomy, but the moral grammar of social freedom has been uprooted. It has been replaced by an individualising normative logic re-signifying relations of recognition and the phenomenon of autonomy. Taking a cue from these transformations, I suggest that recognition and autonomy are *both* promises embodied in the contemporary world of work and ambivalent phenomena. In this case, a recognition-based critical theory must disclose the normative horizon within which their ambivalence can be comprehended and criticised.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Honneth's account of ambivalent recognition and argue that it has limited analytic and critical import. Firstly, I highlight the dyadic nature of his standard model. According to this model, the dynamics of recognition occur between parties who assume one of only two roles: the party conferring/denying recognition and the party receiving/being denied recognition. Against the dyadic account, I point out that relations of recognition might have already been dispersed into triadic ones, entailing not two but three primary roles. These situations can arise, for example, when nexuses of recognition relations involve a party securing recognition from another by acting in specific ways towards a third party, with the second party, acting as a mediator, determining what would be an appropriate attitude of the first party towards the third. Triadic relations entail the risk that the first party can secure self-recognition (via its relation with the mediating party) while contributing as an accomplice to acts disrespecting the third party. In these cases, the position of the first party is

[4] Axel Honneth's most recent contribution to the debate, *Der Arbeitende Souverän,* is not covered here because it has been published when this dissertation has been finalised. However, I do make some suggestions of how it might fit in the overall argument at the end of Chapter 4, *see* footnote 89.

neither one of a mere victim of disrespect nor of a mere perpetrator of disrespect. The argument is that Honneth's standard dyadic model is ill-suited for analysing and diagnosing triadic relations or the ambivalent forms of recognition they might generate. Furthermore, I contend that Honneth's emphasis on being recognised as the precondition of self-development does not fully reveal the contribution that recognition relations can make to autonomy-enhancing self-identification. The comprehensive scope of autonomous personhood development must encompass the condition of enjoying basic forms of recognition *and* providing adequate recognition to others. I refer to this second path towards self-recognition as moral *self-realisation*. Bringing these points together, I argue that one way in which recognition relations can become ambivalent and morally problematic is when they give rise to *trade-off* dynamics in which enjoying recognition comes at the cost of forfeiting moral self-realisation.

In Chapter 6, I argue that the current work organisation exposes employees to the moral risk of participating in forms of production that lead to the moral injury of others. This moral risk arises from the triadic nature of relations within the workplace, where workers' relationships with those affected by their work are refracted or distorted by the party mediating this relationship, typically those with the power to decide what is to be produced, under what conditions, and for whom. In this situation, the recognition employees have access to would be ambivalent, limiting their freedom. Evidence of this can be seen in the current situation where workers are encouraged to seek recognition and exercise autonomy within the workplace, while the same system of norms and work organisation (on which their demands for recognition and autonomy are based) also exposes them to the moral risk of becoming accomplices to moral injury by denying them the status of co-determining parties. I argue that the proposed critique is not external to the contemporary world of work because its norms can be recovered via a radicalisation of the promises of recognition and autonomy underpinning 'ethicized' capitalism. Finally, I suggest that the proposed critique finds its pre-theoretical grounding in a phenomenon that I describe, lacking better terminology, as struggles for moral responsibility rooted in experiences of moral guilt or shame.

Part I. Recognising Emancipation

Chapter 1: Recognition and Emancipation

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Honneth's conception of critical theory

Honneth identifies the problem of the pre-theoretical instances of critique as the 'basic problem of critical theory'.[5] In his view, a critical theory premised on the idea that critique sources, including the minimal conscience of moral outrage, have dried out is self-defeating. His critique of the 'totality administered society' thesis introduced by Adorno and Horkheimer in their classic study *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is illustrative in this regard. Following Honneth, the *Dialectic*'s deeply pessimistic conclusion that autonomous systems of power succeeded in closing down the possibility of critical action by conducting social actors to develop system-compliant subjectivities is not empirically grounded but self-referential. The *Dialectic* would fail to identify the pre-theoretical grounds of critique in societies of late capitalism because the basic concepts of social analysis used by Horkheimer and Adorno are unsuitable for disclosing and registering them (*The Critique of Power* Part I). He reproaches the authors of the *Dialectic* that they have failed to articulate a credible conception of social action. A credible one would make sense of the autonomy and the capacity of critique that social actors preserve even under conditions of dominance (*The Critique of Power,* Chapter 2).

Equally illustrative is Honneth's ambivalent attitude towards the work of Michel Foucault. On the one hand, he finds in Foucault's conception of society- as a field of conflicts and struggles- a promising route towards elucidating the critique engendering social dynamics. On the other hand, he reads in Focuault's writings on disciplinary systems a concept of society similar to the one proposed in the *Dialectic*, one in which systems of

[5] In addition to Honneth's *The Critique of Power* (esp. Chapter 1), see Horkehimer's classical article "Traditional and Critical Theory", also the Introduction to this thesis.

domination have been successful in preemptively closing down the possibility of critique targeting their social preconditions (*The Critique of Power* Chapters 5 and 6).[6]

In short, Axel Honneth is one of the most resolute defenders of the idea that social actors are not cultural dopes[7] at the mercy of social mechanisms aiming to reduce their critical vigilance. In his view, actors preserve the capacity to develop a consciousness of social injustice, if not to engage in coordinated critical action, even under conditions of domination. Based on this premise, it follows that the theory must give a balanced account of the critical capacities of social actors and avoid any of the two extremes. At one end would be the conception of subjectivity defined by abstractly construed capacity for autonomy unfettered by any social or psychological limitations. At the other end would be a conception of subjectivity as a passive agent whose life and psyche are shaped and governed by social forces.[8] As shown in this chapter, one of Honneth's contributions is articulating a conception of socially embedded subjectivity occupying a median place between the two extremes. On the one hand, he emphasises the importance of psychological and social preconditions for autonomy development; on the other hand, he argues that actors preserve a minimal capacity for emancipation even in adverse social contexts.[9]

Additionally, the premise that the language and the standpoint of critical theory must remain as close as possible to the practical standpoint of social actors remains constant beyond the changes his theoretical framework has undergone from his early to his most recent writings. For example, in one of his more recent articles, he states that "the cognitive labour that oppressed groups have to perform in their everyday struggles" represents the "undisciplined germ which a critical theory should bring into fruition within the sphere of the established sciences" ("Is there an Emancipatory Interest?" 919). However, Honneth does not assume that we, as social actors, are always awake to the relations of domination and practices of injustice in which we participate as victims or perpetrators. He is realistic enough to acknowledge that critical theory cannot be reduced to merely registering as many social

[6] Although in subsequent writings Honneth proposes a more positive reading of *Dialectic*, he does not renounce his basic intuition that critical theory requires a conception of social action that can account for emancipatory tendencies, e.g. Honneth ("The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique"). Honneth's assessments are open to debate and have received their fair share of criticism. For an Adornian critique of Honneth, see van den Brink ("Damaged Life"); for a critique of Honneth's reading of Foucault, see Kelly ("Foucault Contra Honneth").

[7] For Harold Garfinkel's concept of 'cultural dope' see Lynch ("Cultural Dopes").

[8] For Honneth's critique of both these conceptions and his attempt to articulate a third, in-between position, *see* Honneth ("Decentered Autonomy").

[9] As Deranty shows in his excellent study on Honneth's critical theory, the "fundamental intuition that Honneth brings to social philosophy" is "the notion of the real efficacy of individual and collective agency in the reproduction, and indeed in the historical transformation of society" (*Beyond Communication* 14).

actors' grievances as possible, nor can it rely solely on the 'cognitive labour' of the disadvantaged, because not every critical impulse worthy of consideration is publicly visible and critical consciousness does not always keep track of domination. Therefore, the critical standpoint of theory must also incorporate empirical findings from specialised sciences. Correspondingly, he does not deny critical theory the right to use instruments of theoretical research to produce general claims about the moral state of contemporary societies, nor does he deny the possibility that critical theory might be able to illuminate relations of domination that customarily elude the critical vigilance of social actors; nor does he deny that actors' socially mediated self-understanding might represent an obstacle towards their emancipation and that the findings of critical theory can contribute to emancipatory knowledge by providing general accounts of the distorting effects social dynamics can have on self-consciousness. Indeed, Honneth employs an array of instruments, from empirical studies to literary works,[10] to identify and articulate critical tendencies. These interventions would be legitimate if the theory could disclose them as the theoretical counterpart to the "cognitive labour" of the oppressed groups.

In addition to empirical findings, critical theory might have to rely on philosophical motifs to forge the basic concepts of social analysis that would allow categorical access to those social contexts capable of generating the 'germs' of emancipatory critique.[11] On the assumption that specialised social sciences- understood as those scientific corpora seeking to explain social dynamics- seek to provide value-neutral social analyses, they might not aim to establish that social processes are developmental or regressive nor to illuminate the phenomenon of emancipation.[12] In turn, to secure the possibility of emancipation and to justify emancipation as a constant of social life, the theory would need to identify social contexts of emancipation and show that they are not merely contingent occurrences but represent inalienable features of the social world and human subjectivity.[13] In this case, too, Honneth is adamant that no epistemic break can exist between what the critical theorist might

[10] An example of writing in which Honneth relies on literary works to support philosophical arguments is "Invisibility". However, he does not go as far as claiming that literary construction can provide by itself moral insight. See Honneth ("Literary Imagination and Morality")

[11] It can be argued that critical theory cannot dispense of philosophical motifs because it seeks to put into question the entire social framework rather than particular aspects of it. For the Hegelian philosophical motif in Critical Theory, *see* Honneth's "A Social Pathology of Reason". Even the critical theory of Foucault seeking to do without philosophical assumptions might converge with some Kantian motifs. See, for example, Hendricks ("Foucault's Kantian Critique"); Colin ("Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault").

[12] Of course, there are exceptions to this conception of empirical science, especially in the case of critically minded sociological theories. For an illuminating distinction between the 'critical' and 'non-critical' social theories and the challenges faced by each of them, see Boltanski (*On Critique)*.

[13] Honneth explicitly assumes these exigencies (e.g. "The Point of Recognition", 243-4).

identify as emancipatory and what the social actors could recognise as such in light of their best judgement. The methodological condition that critical theory must satisfy remains in place: it must track its critical standpoint back to pre-theoretical sources. Because of this, the emancipation ideal underpinning critique must be checked against empirical findings and be revised if necessary.[14] Nevertheless, to serve the phenomenon of emancipation, the theory would require a framework that allows the integration of empirical findings from specialised sciences within the horizon of the problem of emancipation. In Honneth's view, the model of the struggle for recognition Hegel articulates in his early writings to account for the process by which social life transforms itself in the direction of supporting more developed forms of autonomy could fulfil these tasks. However, Hegel's theory can represent a credible candidate today only if it is actualised, amended and further developed and doing so is the task Honneth sets for himself in his first major work, *The Struggle for Recognition*, to which I now turn.

1.1.2 The struggle for recognition: basic features

Two major paradigms in modern social philosophy confer social conflicts a central role in the process by which social orders emerge. In the tradition inaugurated by Thomas Hobbes, the source of social conflicts is identified in egotistical self-interests rooted in the desire for self-preservation. In the tradition inaugurated by Hegel, as an explicit reaction to the Hobbesian account, perceived as reductionist, social conflicts can also arise when parties have their expectations for mutual recognition ignored or explicitly denied. In this case, struggles emerge not only for securing one's self-interest, e.g. the desire for recognition, but also because one of the parties has violated an established moral relation, e.g. relation of mutual recognition. Accordingly, contrary to the Hobbesian model in which the motivation for engaging in social conflict is amoral, e.g. the egotistical interest in self-preservation, in Hegel's model, the motivation behind the conflict is genuinely moral. It seeks to repair the moral injury suffered by the norm-violating act of the other party. It finds resolution once the parties reinstate the relation of recognition or a more developed one emerges. Finally, in the

[14] This is one of the lessons Honneth had drawn from the Marxist reliance on a conception of the proletariat as the agent of revolution and the crisis faced by it in the first part of the twentieth century when the integration of the working class within the capitalist system, and its contribution to fascist movements became a not easily ignored phenomenon, e.g. Honneth ("The Point of Recognition" 239). For the impact of the working class' loss of revolutionary impetus on the research programme of the Frankfurt School's first generation, *see* Dubiel (*Theory and Politics* Part I).

Hobbesian model, the destructive effects of struggles for self-preservation, coupled with prudence and strategic reasoning, explain the emergence of the social order meant to end the otherwise ineradicable conflicts. The social order is the outcome of a social contract between a central authority and the subjects, legitimising the authority's monopoly over violence and expropriating some of the subjects' autonomy in exchange for rights and security. In contrast, in Hegel's model, struggles for recognition play a role in the social order's emergence *and* further development. The norms legitimising established social bonds and institutions are tested and further developed via struggles for recognition.

Honneth finds the model of struggle Hegel articulates in his early writings promising as a model of social emancipation because it establishes an internal relation between social conflicts in the form of struggles for recognition and social development. Further, I follow Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's model to identify some of the basic features that, as will become clear throughout this chapter, Honneth incorporates in his social development model.[15] As the comparison with the Hobbesian model already suggests, Hegel's model establishes a categorical distinction between conflicts based on amoral motivations, e.g. self-interest, and those based on moral motives. The ingenuity of Hegel's argument consists in reconstructing the normative logic by which even conflicts that seem motivated by self-interest grow into morally motivated ones. Like Hobbes and other modern philosophers, Hegel reconstructs the rational foundations of human societies by identifying rational potentials already budding in the 'state of nature' understood as a primordial state of humankind in which no institutionalised social and political bonds exist. In Hegel's depiction, even in the initial situation, human interaction requiring no prior socialisation naturally produces "a kind basic mutual affirmation between subjects" (Honneth, *The Struggle* 43). Additionally, against Hobbes, Hegel does not depict the initial situation as one comprising isolated individuals but as families coexisting in the same geographical space. On this background, he sets out to elucidate the morally driven process of social development mediated by struggles for recognition.

The act that triggers the conflict resulting in the parties recognising each other as persons endowed with rights and the establishment of a system of rights, involves the seizure of a piece of land by one of the families. The seizure of land does not constitute an act of theft, as in the ‘state of nature’, the land belongs to no one. Instead, it is an act of appropriation driven by egotistical self-interests. From here, the story depicts the actions of

[15] Honneth’s interpretation is based on the texts from Hegel’s Jena period (*The Struggle* note 2, 183).

each party and their interpretation of the situation. The other parties perceive the act of seizing the land as signalling that they are excluded from using it anymore. Even though the party committing the act was guided by self-interest and did not intend to signal explicitly to the other party, the excluded party has no access to the first party's intention, only to the significance of the act. The excluded party reacts based on what the act signifies for *themselves*. Their reaction is to attempt to destroy the property in question, not only out of anger but also to signal back, to disturb the first party's egotistical self-absorption and make them *aware* of the excluded party as a *willing* agent, more precisely of what seizing the property *meant* for the excluded party. The intention achieves its goal: the party that has seized the land and has now suffered the act of destruction becomes aware of the other's perspective. Both parties have become aware of each other as willing actors and of the fact that one's self-relation can be disturbed by the actions of another.

However, the conflict cannot end here because not all parties have received satisfaction. The first party becomes aware that once the second party has destroyed the property, the situation reflects not the first party's initial intention but the second party's will. As Honneth explains

> "whereas the initially excluded subject has re-established itself in the other's consciousness by destroying the other's alien property and has thereby acquired an intersubjectively reinforced understanding of itself, the other must feel robbed of just this knowledge, since its own reading of the situation did not receive intersubjective approval." (*The Struggle* 46)

The act of destruction allowed the second party to acquire "an intersubjectively reinforced understanding of itself", but it also denied "intersubjective approval" of the first party's intention. By destroying the property, the second party ignored the initial intention of the first party, which, although aimed at seizing the piece of land, did not intend to offend the second party. To put it more plainly, while both parties have become aware of each other as willing subjects, awareness does not imply affirmation. Only the second party has obtained "intersubjective approval", not through an act of free will from the other party but by imposing its will at the expense of negating the first party's will. At this point, the conflict shifts from one over ownership into a "life and death struggle" for recognition. By risking their lives to force the other party to recognise oneself as a 'willing will', the desire for

self-preservation has been surpassed by the desire for recognition. Consequently, the dynamics of the conflict have changed from a struggle for self-preservation to a struggle for recognition. Finally, Hegel concludes the conflict with the *reconciliation* of the two parties, each coming to recognise the other as a person endowed with rights.

Nonetheless, as Honneth observes, there is a gap in Hegel's reconstruction. Hegel does not explain why the conflict should lead to reconciliation rather than a situation in which one party annihilates the other. In Honneth's view, this gap can be closed with the following explanation

> "it is the social experience of realizing that one's interaction partner is vulnerable to moral injury [...] that can bring to consciousness that layer of prior relations of recognition, the normative core of which acquires, in legal relations, an intersubjectively binding form." (*The Struggle* 48-9)

In Honneth's perspective, struggles for recognition realise their moral potential when the consciousness that one's self-relation, as well as the other's, depends on mutual recognition, is born. Struggles for recognition would entail the overcoming of egotistical drive and finding the promise of resolution in the consciousness that both oneself and the other are equally vulnerable to moral injury. This awareness of mutual vulnerability opens up the possibility of reconciliation in the form of mutual recognition of each other as individuals endowed with moral worth. Struggles for recognition would be categorically distinct from conflicts based on strategic interaction because the latter occurs within the horizon of self-interest, while struggles for recognition embody moral dynamics transcending egotistical self-interests. As a result, Hegel's model of struggles for recognition allows for morally motivated social conflicts and norm-driven social transformations.

However, Hegel's stylized account of moral struggles cannot be directly applied as a model of morally driven social conflicts to elucidate the dynamics of emancipatory transformations, which is Honneth's goal. This is because it does not directly translate into an analytical instrument for understanding social conflicts. For one, Hegel does not use the category of struggle to uncover the moral dynamics of social conflicts but as a tool to reconstruct the rational foundations of human societies, or rather the normative foundations of human societies that can reclaim the attribute 'rational'. In Hegel's account, the stylised conception of the struggle for recognition explains the dynamics that lead to establishing the

system of rights upon which rational human societies can be based. His account offers an alternative reconstruction to the one present in the social contract tradition, e.g. Hobbes, Locke. In the social contract tradition, the institutionalisation of rights emerges as a compromise between self-interested individuals consenting to relinquish some of their natural liberty in exchange for state-guaranteed security, as in Hobbes' account. In contrast, in Hegel's account, implicit relations of mutual recognition are thematised via struggles for recognition. The institutionalisation of the recognition order within which individuals emerge as persons endowed with rights would represent the resolution of struggles for recognition. However, if the struggle for recognition ends in the establishment of a system of rights, and if the existence of such a system is a precondition for there being a social order, it is not evident that *this* model can shed light on the dynamics of social conflicts arising *after* the establishment of the social order.

The Hegelian conception of social conflicts could clarify the dynamics of conflicts at the social reality level only if it also incorporates the preconditions of socially embedded action. The possibility of *social* conflicts must be rooted in the fundamental conditions characterising societies and not in the 'state of nature', nor as a process mediating the institutionalisation of social orders. For example, the struggle for recognition emerging in 'the state of nature' is not the consequence of norm violation since there is not yet any system of rights in place; it is the self-interest of the first party unbound by any moral or lawful commitment towards others that triggers the conflict. In contrast, in already-constituted societies, social interaction is norm-mediated and occurs within a system of norms, rights, and laws. If perceived violation of shared norms must play a role in the emergence of morally motivated conflicts, then a socially credible account would need to pay due attention to this condition. In summary, while the Hegelian concept of struggles for recognition makes conceptual space for the notion of morally based conflicts, in order to be used for an analysis of *social* conflicts, it needs to account for the changes that must occur in the dynamics of conflicts after the emergence of the system of rights.

Honneth is well aware of this problem and finds traces of an answer in the role Hegel assigns to the struggle for recognition after the institution of the rights system. Once such a system is instituted, everyone is justified to expect others to recognise him/her as a bearer of rights. In turn, the individual must recognise others as persons endowed with rights and, as a result, subsume his/hers will to the collectively agreed norms. The law demands obedience from each subject because, within the system of rights based on mutual

recognition, it embodies the participants' “universal will”. On the other hand, subsuming one's will to the law does not equal with the *de facto* dissolution of the particular into the general will. Even after the constitution of society, the individual retains their own will, including particular interests, beyond the mutual or universal interests shared with others that are codified in rights and protected by law. As a result, the individual might reject the demand to obey the law in favour of subjective interests.

In turn, the 'individual will' that the subject retains explains the possibility of 'crime' understood as an action that breaches the law. In Hegel's narrative, in committing the 'crime', the 'individual will' is driven by the feeling that one's particular interests are also worthy of recognition. The act of trespassing would represent a denunciation of the law's indifference to one's particularity, and its motivational ground would be a feeling of social disrespect in a way analogous to the feeling of disrespect in the first model of struggle where the act of destruction represents a reaction to a perceived act of disrespect. As Honneth points out, in both cases, "[b]y means of an act of provocation, a subject attempts to induce either a single other or the united others to respect the aspect of its own expectations not yet recognised by current forms of interaction." Specific to the situation following the "constitution of society" is that now the act appearing as a crime acquires the role of "a moral provocation, by which the 'universal will' of the united legal subjects are led to a further step of differentiation" (*The Struggle* 53-4). The rationale seems to be as follows: Individuals preserve their private will post-institution of rights, and their subjective expectations might become the ground for recognition demands that transcend the established system of legal rights. Although bound by the law, subjects might reject it, i.e. commit the crime, because the promise for recognition embedded in the law fails to satisfy their expectations for being recognised in their particularity. Such a possibility would make sense due to the abstract character of law, which is indifferent to the particularity of the individual subjects. Thus, following the Honneth-Hegel account, after the "constitution of society", struggles for recognition remain an inalienable feature of the social world; the dynamics engendering them would be rooted in the tension between the recognition promises embedded in social norms and those expectations of recognition that have not yet received social confirmation.

The aim of the discussion so far was limited to obtain a preliminary clarification of the conceptual space within which Honneth attempts to answer the question of emancipation. Three defining features of the recognition model emerged: the role of

recognition in self-identity, the idea of social order based on relations of mutual recognition, and the productive role of struggles for recognition in the normative development of social orders. However, as Honneth is well aware, Hegel's model must be refined and confronted with empirical findings before it can be employed as a post-metaphysical frame of critical social theory. The task would be to provide an account of struggles for recognition that is both convincing at the level of social reality, i.e. take into account the socially embedded character of subjectivity and interaction in social contexts, and retains a non-contingent relation with the idea of emancipation. The following sections show how Honneth tries to fulfil this task in *The Struggle* and some of his subsequent writings.

First, I discuss the premise seeking to explain the motivational ground of struggles for recognition by appealing to the anthropological significance of recognition. The premise is that humans need recognition to develop a robust sense of self. Due to this, denied recognition can take the form of moral injury (1.2.1 & 1.2.2). However, the emphasis on the anthropological significance of recognition raises the concern that Honneth's theory is foundationalist in the sense that it seeks to explain the possibility of social critique by recourse to ahistorical psychological needs, discounting the difference between psychological reality and explanations based on psychological motives on the one hand, and social reality and social explanations on the other hand. If the foundationalist interpretation is correct, Honneth's model of struggles for recognition is not convincing as a conception of social action (1.2.3). Second, I argue that the foundationalist interpretation is not credible because it fails to take seriously the second feature of Honneth's model of recognition. The second premise is meant to disclose the social origin of recognition expectations and consists of the social-theoretical claim that social orders encompass orders of recognition on which the system of norms and rights relies (1.3). Only after discussing these two premises will it be possible to introduce the basic features of Honneth's account of struggles for recognition as types of actions bearing emancipatory potential (1.4) and consider some of the challenges it faces (1.5).

1.2 The Anthropological Significance of Recognition

1.2.1 Recognition and subjectivity

At the very least, struggles for recognition must be non-contingent occurrences in human societies to represent a mechanism driving social transformation. To lend some degree of plausibility to this assumption, Honneth would need to trace their condition of possibility to generalisable features of human agency. If expectations for recognition represent a constant of human subjectivity and contribute to the emergence of struggles, then Honneth has laid the foundations for justifying why struggles for recognition might represent a constant feature of societies and, thus, why they might play the role of emancipatory force in social development.

The focus of this section is the thesis that recognition serves as an essential prerequisite for the formation of practical identity, understood as the norm-mediated self-relation that underpins our condition of practical agents.[16] In contrast to classical liberal conceptions of subjectivity that identify self-consciousness as the primary phenomenon of human agency, Honneth draws from the early writings of Hegel[17] an intersubjective conception in which interaction is the primary phenomenon because it is a precondition of self-development. The argument posits that practical self-identity is not something we are born with or something we can develop in isolation from others: it is a self-relation that we cultivate through interaction with significant partners.

In the recognition paradigm, this intersubjective conception of personhood is further qualified: to develop a robust sense of self, individuals need recognition from others. If recognition is a necessary precondition for developing a robust practical identity and if the latter is a fundamental condition for human subjectivity, then it might not be entirely implausible to assign basic expectations for recognition to human subjects. Consequently, if social actors carry basic expectations for recognition into social interaction, it could be

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[16] Deranty offers an apt description when identifying practical self-relation as the basic feature of Honneth's conception of practical subjectivity: "[p]ractical self-relation designates the basic conditions of selfhood, which, by allowing for the emergence of a sufficiently robust identity, enable the subject to engage in interaction with its environments. In Honneth, practical self-relation is thus tightly connected to, indeed almost overlaps with, the notion of "practical identity" (*Beyond Communication* 272).

[17] In *The Struggle,* Honneth argues that only in his early writings does Hegel defend the intersubjective account of social and self-development; in subsequent writings, he argues that it remains a basic feature also in Hegel's mature works, see Honneth (*The Struggle* 63); "From Desire to Recognition". To compare Honneth's interpretation of Hegel with alternative interpretations, see Deranty *(Beyond Communication* Chapter 5).

argued that, under other necessary conditions, the frustration of these expectations can act as a catalyst, generating social struggles pushing for more developed normative social orders.

Honneth dedicates the second part of *The Struggle*, following his interpretation of Hegel's model, to showing that the intersubjective theory of self-development proposed by the American psychologist Herbert Meads opens the path towards a post-metaphysical, empirically informed theory of subjectivity capable of identifying relations of mutual recognition as preconditions of self-development (e.g. 71). Due to space limitations, I will not enter the details of Honneth's interpretation here, limiting myself to presenting its main articulations.[18] In an article presenting the fundamental theses of *The Struggle*, Honneth gives a helpful overview of the key idea underpinning Mead's theory of self-constitution:

> "there is no doubt that the individual subject can attain a conscious identity only by placing itself in the external perspective of the symbolically represented other, from where it learns to view itself and its action as being a participant in interaction. The concept of the "me," which represents the image I have of myself from the viewpoint of my partners in communication, is to make it terminologically clear that the individual can bring itself to consciousness only in the position of the object." ("Decentered Autonomy" 186)

Honneth describes here the dynamics of a *praxis* representing the experiential origin of practical self-relation. Firstly, by adopting the "perspective of the symbolically represented other", one's interaction partner, we become aware of how the other grasps our actions and reactions, and we gain insight into ourselves as the object pole of their intentions. The 'objectification' of the self is both a pivotal moment in interaction and one of the poles in the practical relation-to-self. Secondly, the self-relation emerging from this intersubjective *praxis* is not a neutral act of self-identification; it does not take the form of 'It is me that has done X' but has an irreducible normative component. By learning to see oneself from the perspective of others, the individual learns first to decipher the expectations others have regarding oneself, and this is a first source of self-normativity.

[18] For the role, Mead's theory plays in the development of the intersubjectivist paradigm in critical theory, not only its relevance for Honneth's theory of recognition but also Habermas' theory of communicative action, *see* Deranty (*Beyond Communication)*.

Ontogenetically, individuals gain a first sense of self-worth, or in negative situations of self-deprecation or shame, via the others' reactions towards their performances. The *praxis* considered here might imply mature participants, but this is not necessarily so. One of the most crucial forms of interaction that leads to the development of a practical self-relation occurs between the infant and the caregivers and is often mediated by affective responses rather than verbally articulated communication.

The key point is that the development of a practical identity occurs through a specific *praxis*, an interaction in which the agent learns to adopt the perspective of others, interpret their expectations and, as a result, develops a sense of oneself as the recipient of their acts, reactions, and expectations. Consequently, the formation of a practical identity is an *intersubjective accomplishment* because it requires the cooperation of others; interaction is essential to develop self-awareness. The Hegelian addition to this intersubjective model of self-development consists of the thesis that only certain types of relations are conducive to forming a robust identity, i.e. relations of recognition.

Thus, following Honneth's Hegelian account, developing a positive self-identity is *an intersubjective accomplishment based on a particular class of intersubjective relations, i.e. relations of recognition*.[19] In Honneth's sense, 'recognition' designates a phenomenon with well-defined attributes. Examining these attributes will illustrate why the 'dynamics of recognition' can clarify the intersubjective process of self-development. Recognition is a decidedly positive phenomenon that refers to a relationship in which a person's value is confirmed. For instance, in love relationships, which both Hegel and Honneth take as the paradigmatic case of recognition, partners attend to each others' needs and desires. As implied by the example of carrying attitudes, acts of recognition are not neutral; more often than not, they involve significant gestures through which the recipient is not only identified or categorised as such and such but positively valued. As Honneth points out, the "expressive gestures" that must accompany the acts of recognition serve as marks of recognition because "only such bodily gestures are capable of articulating publicly the affirmation whose addition constitutes the difference between cognising and recognising" ("Invisibility" 120).[20]

[19] I take a cue from Pippin's interpretation of the Hegelian idea of self-development as 'intersubjective achievement' ("Recognition and Reconciliation").

[20] For further conceptual distinctions between recognition as a normatively charged action and the more neutral stance, characterising acts of identification, *see* Ikäheimo and Laitinen ("Analyzing Recognition").

Furthermore, acts of recognition are not limited to linguistic expression. We might say about our partner, 'He never tells me that he loves me, but he *shows* it every day' to imply that demonstrating love through significant gestures is more important than verbalising it. Conversely, we might say, `He always tells me that he loves me, but he never *shows* it!' to make the same point, emphasising that verbalising love is inadequate without corresponding gestures. Certainly, verbal expressions can also be adequate manifestations of recognition. For example, greeting someone is one of the most common forms of recognition. Nevertheless, verbal expression does not cover the entire pallet of recognitive acts. In summary, to recognise someone means to act, rather than merely express it linguistically, in a manner that practically affirms some aspect of the other's existence, such as their needs, desire, rather than merely identifying them as such and such attributes.

Considering the intersubjective process of self-development introduced above, the practical and bodily dimensions of recognition emphasise the transformative power of recognition in the positive sense, as it can influence our self-identity. The transformative nature of recognition is central to Honneth's model because it explains why and how withheld recognition is damaging and can lead to reactions such as resistance. This idea already plays a central role in Hegel’s account. It is implicit in the two types of struggles for recognition discussed in the previous section. The conflict becomes a struggle for recognition because each party is affected in their self-relation by the disrespectful acts of the other. In the dynamics of this conflict which is not only physical but also psychological, the negative impact of acts of disrespect on one's identity underscores the positive role that recognition can play in affirming and supporting a positive self-relation. Indeed, the positive power of recognition becomes evident in the last phase of the conflict, in which the two parties reconcile because they willingly grant each other recognition, thereby becoming reassured in their identity and newly acquired status.

1.2.2 A tripartite conception of personhood

Honneth's thesis that recognition is central to self-development is only a first step towards elucidating the idea that basic expectations for recognition can be attributed to human subjects. The second step must involve elucidating what such basic expectations would entail because there is no such thing as an abstract and empty expectation for

recognition in everyday life; there are countless expectations. For example, we might expect our neighbours to greet us when we meet them and feel disrespected if they do not do so because they have failed to recognise us as their neighbours and therefore worthy of a greeting. It is evident that no such mundane expectation of recognition can be considered basic since it does not represent a constant aspect of human agency, nor is it central to one's self-identity. Some individuals might even feel more comfortable not having to greet their neighbours or be greeted by them, preferring a situation of mutual indifference.

Honneth does not claim that any expectation for recognition, however innocuous, is a precondition for identity development, nor does he assume that the frustration of any recognition expectation, no matter how mundane, can lead to social conflicts in the form of a struggle for recognition. If such a simplistic view cannot be attributed to Honneth, he must identify those recognition expectations that are generalizable due to their fundamental role in identity development.

Once again, Honneth takes his cue from Hegel, who distinguishes three primary forms of recognition. These three forms of recognition are already implicit in the two models of struggles for recognition considered in the introduction to this chapter. Hegel describes the context in which the first struggle for recognition emerges as a 'state of nature' in which various families share the same geographical space. Implicit in familial relations is a primary form of mutual recognition that Hegel considers 'natural' in the sense of preceding the establishment of a rights-based community. This primary form of recognition refers to affective relations based on love, in which individuals can discover that their needs and desires are worthy through the confirmation of their lovable nature by their partners or caregivers. Secondly, let us remember that the first struggle for recognition ends once the parties learn to see themselves and others as persons endowed with rights. Being a person with rights represents the second fundamental form of self-identity disclosed by Hegel and adopted by Honneth. Finally, the second type of struggle for recognition, occurring after the emergence of the system of rights, points towards the expectation of a third form of recognition. The feeling of disrespect caused by the law's 'indifference' to one's particularity represents the motivation behind the act of 'crime,' understood as a violation of general norms. In Honneth's interpretation, the third form of recognition is the expectation of having one's particular traits – the dimension of one's personality that distinguishes us from others – socially recognized.

Honneth is aware that he cannot rely on Hegel's metaphysical premises to justify the tripartite structure of primary recognition relations. Because of this, he attempts to complement philosophical considerations with theoretical explanations supported by empirical evidence. The objective is to maintain the tripartite conception while replacing Hegel's metaphysical arguments with more 'materialistic' explanations. This argument can be reconstructed as a progression in three steps, aiming to translate the model into a "phenomenologically oriented typology" that can be "empirically validated against data from individual sciences" (*The Struggle* 93).

The first step involves the analysis of experiences of disrespect, serving as a pre-theoretical guide to identify basic types of recognition expectations. 'Disrespect', as understood by Honneth, refers to everyday life phenomena such as 'insult' or 'degradation', representing acts, attitudes, or practices by which the recipient is denied the status of a being worthy of moral consideration. While more brutal forms of disrespect can result in physical harm, what concerns Honneth is that they also lead to a specific form of psychological injury. Those exposed to various forms of disrespect are at risk of losing their self-respect, self-confidence, or self-esteem. The adverse effects of disrespect offer pre-theoretical confirmation, in everyday life, that human integrity depends on primary forms of recognition and guide the identification of these basic forms (*The Struggle* Chapter 6).[21] The first type of disrespect identified by Honneth consists of acts or practices of violence that harm the physical integrity of individuals, such as rape or torture. In such instances, the "feeling of being defenselessly at the mercy of another subject, to the point of being deprived of all sense of reality" accompanies the trauma caused by physical pain (“Integrity and Disrespect” 190). The subject risks losing essential confidence in themselves as autonomously acting subjects when deprived of control over their body. The structural exclusion of the subject from the community of rights within a society represents the second type of disrespect. According to Honneth, the injury produced by this form of disrespect does not only involve the impossibility of acting autonomously within the space opened up by the system of rights but also a feeling of not being treated as a morally responsible person. The subject is not treated as someone who would deserve and could act based on shared rights. As a result, "the experience of being denied rights is typically coupled with a loss of self-respect, of the ability

[21] As Deranty points out, Honneth’s approach can be aptly described as “methodological negativism”: “Honneth does not describe the normative conditions of individual autonomy and self-realisation in directly positive terms [...] The first step towards the normative framework is taken by reading it as the reverse image that emerges by contrast, when individual and social pathologies indicate in the negative what that order should contain” (“Injustice, Violence and Social Struggle” 303).

to relate to oneself as a partner in interaction with equal rights on a par with all other individuals" (191). The third type of disrespect involves the denigration of individual or collective ways of life, which implies the denigration of one's particular abilities, capacities, or cultural achievements. This form of denigration impacts the subject differently from the first two cases. Due to the pressure on one's self-identity exerted by structural forms of denigration, the individual "is no longer in a position to conceive of himself as a being whose characteristic traits and abilities are worthy of esteem" (191).

In the second step of the argument, the suffering produced by the three forms of disrespect is taken as guidance for conceptual clarifications, ultimately resulting in a tripartite conception of personhood or human integrity that aligns with Hegel's model. The rationale is that the suffering or lasting damage produced by forms of disrespect point towards the forms of recognition they negate. Humiliation, especially when taking the form of rape or torture, causes more than physical pain; it risks destructuring the basic sense of self-confidence, a necessary precondition for controlling one's body and psychic impulses. As embodied beings driven by needs and desires, humans depend on affective recognition from others, i.e. having their needs and desires cared for, in order to develop a basic sense of self-confidence. Thus, it makes sense that the trauma of having one's desires and needs discredited could destructure the primary certainty in one's body and lead to a tragic loss of self-confidence. The second type of disrespect accompanies the individual's exclusion from the right-based community living the "dishonour" of being denied the moral accountability proper to a "full-fledged legal member of that community" ("Integrity and Disrespect" 194). The specific suffering produced by this second type of disrespect is comprehensible because humans have the potential to develop a robust sense of self-confidence in one's capacity for moral autonomy, i.e. self-respect, and because they rely on recognition from others to actualise it. Finally, the suffering produced by the third type of disrespect, i.e. social denigration of acquired abilities and capacities, is comprehensible insofar as humans can develop a recognition-mediated sense of self-esteem entailing self-assurance that one's abilities and traits are socially valuable.

In the third and final step of the argument, Honneth draws on "data from individual sciences" to justify the tripartite conception of human integrity in addition to the justification drawn from the phenomenology of experiences of disrespect. He finds support in the object-relation strand of psychoanalysis for the thesis that, as embodied beings, individuals require affective recognition of their needs and desires to develop a basic sense of

self-confidence (*The Struggle* 95-107). The second thesis posits that actors bring into social interaction basic expectations of being recognised as fully-fledged members of the community on par with the others, where such recognition would take the form of fundamental rights protecting the autonomy of each member. He finds support for this thesis in historical and legal studies (e.g. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship, and Social Developments)* that trace the role that the struggles of those denied primary forms of rights had in expanding legal and political rights and the emergence of new classes of rights, e.g. social, by employing the moral grammar of equal autonomy. Finally, Honneth relies on support from historical and sociological studies (e.g. Barrington Moore, *Injustice)* to substantiate his claim that human subjects bring into the social world basic expectations that their ways of life and achievements receive adequate social recognition.

In short, Honneth seeks to justify the tripartite conception of personhood and the centrality of recognition for self-development via a phenomenology of experiences of disrespect supported by findings from specialised sciences. It is not unreasonable to attribute to humans the need for emotional recognition or love as a precondition for finding their needs and desires worthy of consideration, i.e. self-confidence, given their condition of individuals endowed with bodily needs and desires. The expectation of respect can be imputable to humans as beings endowed with moral autonomy. Receiving respect is a precondition for becoming confident in their capacity for independent judgement and employing it in guiding one's actions, i.e. self-respect. The expectation of being esteemed might be imputable to humans as beings endowed with particular abilities or traits. Enjoying esteem is a fundamental precondition for individuals to identify and trust their particular traits as worthy of being developed, thus fostering a sense of self-esteem (Honneth, "Decentred Autonomy").

This section examined the claim that basic expectations for recognition are imputable to human subjects. Honneth's intersubjective account of identity formation assigns relations of recognition a formative role and traces expectations for recognition to individuals' efforts to develop a positive self-identity. However, a problem arises at the "level of social reality" because the need for recognition has diversified into myriad forms, and not all expectations for recognition can carry the same anthropological weight. Honneth's solution, following Hegel, is to single out three primary forms of recognition as necessary for the full development of personhood.

1.2.3 From psychological needs to social struggles?

Social actors can fully develop their personhood potential along the three fundamental axes of recognition identified by Honneth only if the social order in which they participate incorporates relations of mutual recognition, thereby providing them with the opportunity to cultivate a positive self-relation through the experience of recognition. In other words, the recognition expectations anticipate the type of social orders that can accommodate them: orders based on symmetrical relations, specifically, relations of mutual recognition. Conversely, social orders characterised by asymmetrical relations, which divide social actors into those who have the social prerequisites to satisfy their fundamental recognition expectations (e.g., participating in relations of mutual recognition) and those who are socially condemned to a life of disrespect (i.e., excluded from relations of mutual recognition), would force certain categories of social actors to repress their basic expectations for recognition when engaging in social life. By anticipating the contours of the good society, recognition theory implies a specific concept of social development: the transformation of social orders towards more inclusive forms of symmetrical relations.

At this point, the question arises of how to interpret this process of normative development within the context of Honneth's theory, considering the premises we have explored so far. One interpretation presumes that by identifying the tripartite forms of recognition as prerequisites for the development of personhood and by acknowledging the detrimental effects of withheld recognition on self-identity, Honneth's theory positions the experience of having one's recognition expectations frustrated as the necessary and *sufficient* condition of *social* critique, particularly in the form of struggles for recognition that push for the transformation of social orders towards expanded mutual recognition. This interpretation of Honneth's account assumes that the centrality of recognition for identity development serves as the exclusive foundation for his theory of social emancipation. It suggests that the need for recognition is posited as an ahistorical constant that remains unaffected by the cultural and social milieu in which individuals are socialised. This need is deemed so fundamental to human beings that, in principle, any individual, regardless of the social and cultural background, will bring with them a basic set of recognition expectations that are impervious to the normalising influence of the social system of norms. Consequently, the normative expectations individuals acquire as members of a community are considered secondary in relation to this more primary and foundational need for recognition.

Furthermore, this interpretation implies that individuals' expectations of recognition and their negative experiences, such as disrespect and humiliation, are informed by a moral grammar and sense of justice not tributary to the social milieu in which individuals have been socialised. Therefore, when these basic expectations for recognition are frustrated, individuals will experience withheld recognition as a moral injury. Since all humans share the same need for recognition, and since no social or cultural context can subvert or ideologically distort this need, the mere experience of disrespect is seen as both a necessary and a sufficient condition for the emergence of contestatory actions aimed at expanding recognition relations. In this view, the possibility of social emancipation is solely grounded in anthropological factors.

The interpretation of Honneth's theory of recognition along the above lines can be labelled "foundationalist" because it assumes that his theory presumes pre-social psychological needs, e.g. basic expectations for recognition, as the foundation for providing justification and motivation for social critique. This foundationalist interpretation requires closer examination as it has generated some of the most biting criticism of Honneth's critical theory. A recurring objection stemming from this interpretation is that the recognition theory "explains" the constitution of emancipatory knowledge only by neglecting the social embeddedness of social actors. Specifically, to establish the status of struggles for recognition as forms of actions with emancipatory potential, it is necessary to explain the origins of the moral knowledge over and against established norms acquired by the struggling party. As shown in the previous sections, when discussing the basic features of the Honneth-Hegel model of struggles for recognition, especially when considering the fate of struggles for recognition after the institution of the system of rights, Honneth is acutely aware of this problem. He finds traces of an answer in the dynamics between subjective expectations of recognition and the law's indifference to the particularity of subject's expectations. The model of struggles as reactions to violation of "deeply-seated" needs further advances in this line of analysis and appears to provide an elegant answer to this conundrum. By assuming that basic needs for recognition influence agents' moral consciousness irrespective of what they have learned to distinguish as just or unjust within the system of norms of their socialisation, the origin of a sense of moral injustice motivating critical action that transcends the moral boundaries of the social order can be explained. In addition to moral expectations derived from the set of moral norms they internalise through socialisation, individuals would also carry a set of pre-social recognition expectations into the social realm. These pre-social

expectations for recognition can elucidate why individuals might engage in struggles for recognition against established normative systems. When they suffer deeply damaging forms of disrespect, they cannot help but perceive such acts as morally wrong, even when these forms of harm are socially normalised and do not violate established norms. In this way, it becomes comprehensible how and why those suffering from forms of disrespect might turn against the "law" or established norms, denouncing them as unfair or unjust because they cannot remain "indifferent" to their fundamental needs for recognition. The struggle arises from the psychological conflict between these "deep-seated" expectations and the social norms that limit or frustrate their realisation.

The elegant solution just presented indeed faces several compelling empirical and theoretical challenges. Firstly, there are cases where social orders can effectively negate the status of morally autonomous persons for specific groups without encountering significant struggles for recognition. A classic example is a slave-based society, where enslaved people are denied the status of autonomous persons with the right to determine their own lives. However, such societies have historically been able to reproduce themselves without substantial disruptions or widespread struggles for recognition. Similarly, in patriarchal societies, women may be socially denied the status of autonomous persons, with their lives being significantly controlled by men, such as fathers or husbands. The persistence of such societies throughout history raises questions about the assumption that normative systems failing to satisfy basic expectations for recognition, as identified in Honneth's model, will inevitably be rejected by the groups affected by them.

Secondly, it is neither empirically nor theoretically plausible that contestatory social actions are primarily rooted in a pre-social, anthropologically ingrained need for recognition, such that the frustration of this desire automatically reveals the social order as unjust. This is because, as socially embedded subjects, the self-understanding of social actors, including their experiences of moral suffering, is mediated "through a web of potentially distorting symbolic relations" (McNay, *Against Recognition* 138). Therefore, explaining social dynamics solely through unmediated psychological dynamics unjustifiably oversimplifies the complexities of social interactions and their causes. Furthermore, a direct link between psychological suffering and emancipation would require that relations of power and domination be inherently transparent to social actors, allowing their experiences and self-understanding to serve as reliable grounds for critique. However, this assumption is far

from self-evident.[22] Social actors might lack insight into the distorting effects of social relations due to their condition of "socially embedded subjectivity". In order to participate in social life as competent agents, individuals must undergo a process of socialisation, during which they become acquainted with the set of norms governing social interaction. The specific system of norms in a given society includes rights and responsibilities based on principles that determine who has what rights and duties under certain conditions. Consequently, the system of rights defines what constitutes an act of injustice in the context of social reality, what justifications must be provided for public demands for justice, and so on.

Hence, the first implication of social embeddedness is that individuals need to internalise the system of norms to become competent social agents. They must learn and adopt the "moral grammar" of society, using it as a guide in their interactions with others. As a result, the self-relation developed through socialising interactions is fundamentally mediated by social norms. Therefore, the objection raised contends that the self is more deeply socially embedded than the recognition theory suggests. As Lois McNay strongly asserts, a fundamental issue with the "ontology of recognition," which centres on self-identity formed through recognition, is that it "produces a psychologically reductive social theory where social relations are persistently viewed as extrapolations from the primary dyad of recognition." As a result, experiences of disrespect

> "are understood as spontaneous and self-evident phenomena rather than as the effects of the operations of power upon the body. This naturalisation of emotions results in a naïve and elliptical account of the movement from suffering to agency in struggles for recognition". (McNay 135-7)

Asserting that emotions are "natural" in the sense of being historically unchanging is problematic, especially considering the socially and historically contingent nature of human subjectivity. Given this perspective, it becomes challenging to accept an explanation of the potential for emancipatory struggles based on the conflict between "deeply-rooted" needs for recognition, which are assumed to be impervious to social influence, and the system of norms

[22] The objection that the recognition-based model of emancipation relies on the hardly defensible assumption that experiences of moral suffering caused by withheld recognition inherently disclose moral wrongs in the double sense that social actors acquire moral knowledge regarding their situation and in the sense that moral suffering is a sufficient ground for moral critique is recurrent in literature. In addition to McNay, see Fraser, “Distorted Beyond all Recognition; Kompridis, “From Reason to Self-Realisation?”.

that hinders the fulfilment of these "basic needs." Such an approach is not credible as a model for understanding *social* conflicts.

1.3 The Social Origin of Recognition

The foundationalist interpretation would be convincing if we assume that Honneth's intersubjective account of self-development is the sole basis upon which he seeks to explain the moral grammar of social conflicts. However, this interpretation is not convincing because the dependence of human subjectivity on recognition is just one of the theses that Honneth derives from Hegel's recognition model. Another equally fundamental thesis is that social orders incorporate relations of mutual recognition and that such relations are central to social integration (*The Struggle* 92).

An alternative interpretation to the foundationalist one emerges when we begin with Honneth's second thesis, which posits that relations of mutual recognition are inherent in social life, and understand their role in social integration before arriving at the thesis concerning the anthropological significance of recognition. From this perspective, the three relations to self identified as potentials for personhood development are not viewed as the realisation of ahistorical self-realisation potentials, but as possibilities arising from the differentiation of various patterns of mutual recognition. In this case, it's not some pre-social, anthropologically given concept of personhood guiding individuals' actions that leads to the expansion of identity possibilities. Instead, it's the differentiation of various spheres of recognition that gives rise to new possibilities of positive self-identification. The anthropological relevance of recognition is retained but assumes a different role than in the foundationalist interpretation. Here, it's not possible to derive the content of basic recognition expectations directly from the concept of personhood. The anthropological relevance of recognition explains only why individuals cannot be indifferent to being socially condemned to a life of disrespect. Starting with the role of recognition relations in social integration highlights the social embeddedness of human subjectivity from the outset. As a result, it might provide a more promising framework to address objections based on the foundationalist interpretation and clarify the moral dynamics of struggles for recognition at the level of social reality, as well as the grounds on which Honneth attributes to them the status of social actions with emancipatory potential.

Following the proposed interpretation, I identify in *The Struggle* and Honneth's subsequent writings not one but two attempts to justify the thesis that social orders rely on relations of mutual recognition. The first one builds on Herbert Mead's social psychology. Unfortunately for Honneth, as he is forced to acknowledge under pressure from critics, Mead's theory is less supportive of his thesis than it initially appears. Discussing Honneth's first less successful attempt is necessary because it provides valuable insight into some of the challenges his endeavour faces and prepares the context for his second argument. Honneth develops the second argument after *The Struggle* in several articles where he tries to clear out some of the ambiguities in his first attempt. As will become apparent, Honneth shifts the focus of his argument from strong anthropological claims to a more socio-historical account in order to offer a credible defence of his thesis regarding the centrality of recognition in social integration in general and the tripartite conception of personhood in particular.

1.3.1 The first attempt: Herbert Mead's social psychology

In *The Struggle*, Honneth claims that "the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition" (*The Struggle* 92). If this is the case, the expectations for recognition individuals bring in social interaction could be traced back to socially embedded promises for recognition. Honneth's thesis is based on two main premises. The first one follows from his theory of self-development and states that individuals rely on forms of mutual recognition to develop a robust practical self-relation. Let us note that the objections considered above do not challenge this premise; instead, the point of contention is that no direct implications regarding the structure or normativity of social life can be derived from conditions of identity formation. Now, the second premise is meant to fill in precisely this gap. The premise is that the development of practical self-relation is a functional precondition of social integration. In this regard, one must agree with Jean-Philippe Deranty that practical self-relation "carries the whole structure of Honneth's model of social theory" (*Beyond Communication* 273). If the development of practical self-relation is both a constitutive element of social agency and a precondition of social integration, and if relations of recognition represent preconditions for practical self-relation development, then it is not unreasonable to assign relations of mutual recognition a central role in social reproduction. The rationale would be the following: because individuals need recognition to develop a

sufficiently robust practical identity, and because the development of practical identity is a precondition of social integration, relations of mutual recognition must already be embedded in the social world if societies are to reproduce themselves.

Although Honneth shares the thesis regarding the central role of relations of mutual recognition in social integration with Hegel, he disavows the metaphysical premises of Hegel's argument in *The Struggle*, relying instead on Herbert Mead's theory of social integration. At the time, Honneth considered that Mead's social psychology "allow[s] for a translation of Hegel's theory of inter-subjectivity into a postmetaphysical language" (*The Struggle* 70).

Following Honneth's reconstruction of Mead's theory, social interaction requires, as a precondition, that participants can understand the meaning of their partners' behavioural reactions and the meaning their behaviour has for the others. Accordingly, social interaction can take the stable form required for social life to reproduce if, among other conditions, a minimum of shared meaning obtains between participants. After identifying mutual understanding as a precondition of social interaction, the analysis moves towards elucidating its agential preconditions. In order to become participants in social interaction, e.g. to coordinate their reactions to those of others, individuals must be able to decipher the social meaning of their behaviour. In turn, individuals can acquire self-understanding of their behaviour's meaning for others only by producing in themselves the effects their behaviour has on others. Humans can produce this effect through verbal gestures. The peculiarity of such acts is that they affect not only the addressee who hears them but also oneself. As a result, "the vocal gesture - to which one can respond just like any other hearer - comes to have the same meaning to oneself as it has for one's addressees" (*The Struggle* 74). Only by understanding oneself from the perspective of the other participants can one grasp the meaning that one's behaviour has for others.

A step further, perspective-taking acquires a twofold role in light of which it emerges as the linchpin between the process of self-constitution and social integration. On the one hand, the capacity of perspective-taking represents an agential precondition of social interaction because, at minimum, it is necessary to achieve a minimal mutual understanding. On the other hand, perspective-taking also serves as the mechanism through which individuals develop self-consciousness. The role of perspective-taking in self-identification follows from the intersubjective conception of self-identification, as presented in the previous

sections, a conception that Honneth argues is shared by Mead's theory of individualization through socialisation. Honneth offers a helpful summary of Mead's idea:

> The development of the consciousness of oneself is connected to the development of consciousness of meaning in the sense that, in the individual experiential process, the latter prepares the way for the former: the ability to call up in oneself the meaning that one's action has for others also opens up the possibility for one to view oneself as a social object of the actions of one's partner to interaction. (*The Struggle* 74)

The consciousness of what meaning one's actions have for others is the primary phenomenon that makes the development of self-consciousness possible. The reason, as shown in the previous sections, and as Honneth reiterates in the continuation of the passage quoted above, is twofold: "individuals can only become conscious of themselves in the object-position" of intentional acts and experiencing oneself "in the object-position" is possible by taking the perspective the others assume towards oneself as the addressee of their behaviour.

So far, the analysis has focused only on the social preconditions of self-consciousness by highlighting the interaction and the work the subject must do on itself in order to develop it. However, this analysis is only preparatory. The point is to clarify the dynamics leading to the constitution of a practical self-identity. As can be anticipated, the dynamics similar to those leading to self-consciousness also drive the development of practical self-relation. The starting point is that, in addition to the precondition of mutual understanding regarding the social meaning of actions, social interaction includes norm-based interaction in which participants act based on and evaluate each other's behaviour in light of norms. Secondly, only if participants share a minimum of normative consensus can they coordinate their behaviour and act toward achieving aims or realise values.

Thirdly, norm-based social interaction, presupposing a minimal normative consensus, has its own agential preconditions. The agential basis of this consensus is the practical self-identity individuals must develop as knowledgeable participants in norm-based interaction. Practical self-relation can ensure a minimal normative consensus, and, thus, norm-based interaction because, following Mead, it represents a functional achievement of social interaction. It is an achievement because individuals depend on interaction to develop

practical self-relation. Such a relation is not generated by the individual in isolation from others but results from developing a consciousness of 'me' as the addressee of others. The individual develops a normative self-image, a practical self-relation, by appropriating the socially embedded value orientations significant others employ to evaluate one's behaviour.[23] Thus, practical self-relations represent a functional achievement of social interaction. Complementary, it is also a precondition of social interaction. The development of practical self-relation via internalisation of the normative standpoint of significant others is essential for securing a minimal normative consensus; this minimal consensus would make norm-governed social interaction possible.

Keeping in view the basic outline of Mead's theory of individualisation through socialisation presented so far, we can now approach the central question of this section: can Mead's theory of social integration offer a naturalistic account of Hegel's theory of recognition and provide support for Honneth's thesis that the imperative of mutual recognition governs the reproduction of social life? In *The Struggle*, Honneth answers in the affirmative because he assumes that the relation of mutuality obtained between members of the same community, engendered by the social dimension of participants' practical self-identity, equates with mutual recognition. According to Honneth, Mead's theory establishes that

> [w]ith the appropriation of the social norms regulating the cooperative nexus of the community, maturing individuals not only realize what obligations they have vis a-vis members of society; they also become aware of the rights that are accorded to them in such a way that they can legitimately count on certain demands of theirs being respected. (*The Struggle* 79)

Honneth assumes that because "appropriation of social norms" implies that individuals subject themselves to obligations towards others and become assured of their rights in relation to others, the resulting relation is one of mutual recognition. The rationale is that one becomes a community member by appropriating social norms in a twofold way. On one hand, individuals become competent participants by appropriating norms in light of which they can understand and evaluate *their* and others' actions, thus ensuring the

[23] "[b]y putting itself in the normative point of view of its interaction partner, the other subject takes over the partner's moral values and applies them to its practical relation to itself" (*The Struggle* 77).

intersubjective intelligibility of one's and others' behaviour. On the other hand, one is recognised as a competent participant by appropriating shared norms as self-norms in the sense that shared norms mediate one's normative self-image; by successfully developing a socially recognisable identity, one becomes intelligible and normatively demanding for others. Thus, on the one hand, by becoming a member of a community, individuals subject themselves to "obligations they have vis-a-vis members of society". On the other hand, being a member of a community one inherently subjects others, in virtue of shared norms, to obligations towards oneself.

Unfortunately for Honneth, it is far from evident that the relations of mutuality underpinning social integration disclosed by Mead are synonymous with mutual recognition. As shown in the previous section, Honneth has in view a precise phenomenon when speaking of 'recognition', one that points towards *symmetrical* relations of validation as its social preconditions of possibility. Relations of mutuality reinforced via "perspective taking" would be identical with mutual recognition *only* if all members of a community subject each other to the same norms implying symmetrical obligations and rights. However, not any form of mutuality entails symmetrical relations. For example, in slave-based societies, relations between enslavers and enslaved people are mediated by norms in light of which enslaved people are subjected to *asymmetrical* obligations towards their masters. Given Honneth's concept of mutual recognition as a symmetrical relation between individuals, the master-slave relation does not qualify as one of mutual recognition. However, such a community would imply mutuality based on shared norms. One might concede that even these norms ensure enslaved people a minimum of social visibility such that the masters are subjected to a minimum of obligations towards them. More generally, social orders based on asymmetrical relations can support the development of practical self-identities and thus satisfy the condition of social integration Mead's theory identifies as a precondition of social reproduction. Since such social orders cannot satisfy the condition of mutual recognition, given the restrictive sense of the concept used by Honneth, but satisfy Mead's condition of social order, the latter's theory is insufficient for grounding the thesis that "the imperative of mutual recognition governs the reproduction of social life". In short, Mead's theory identifies relations of mutuality and practical self-identity development as preconditions of social integration. However, it does not establish that relations of mutual recognition, representing a subclass of mutuality, nor that the practical self-relations entailed by the basic recognition

expectations implied by Honneth's tripartite conception of personhood are preconditions of social integration.

1.3.2 The second attempt: historicising recognition

Honneth provides further clarifications of his thesis in articles and exchanges following *The Struggle*. He acknowledges that Mead's theory of social integration is less supportive of his recognition theory than initially appeared because, in Mead's account, 'perspective taking' does not necessarily entail 'mutual recognition'. Although Mead's theory of social integration does some argumentative work by providing a socially embedded intersubjective account of subjectivity, since it explains the role of social norms in the development of practical self-identity, it does not demonstrate that socially embedded promises of recognition represent a functional precondition of social integration ("Grounding Recognition" 501-3). Thus, a new argument is required to demonstrate the centrality of recognition in social integration.

The starting point of the second argument is similar to the first one. It consists of the thesis that individuals become competent community members by internalising norms, including self-norms, in light of which they can decode the moral demands implicit in the various ways they and other social actors appear within the life-world. Because the system of norms incorporates schema of valuation picking up various dimensions of personhood as morally demanding, they would incorporate relations of recognition. From this, it would follow that social participants would be justified in demanding from others the kind of moral consideration, i.e. recognition, to which they have a right in light of their socially valuable attributes.[24] On the other hand, the condition that one becomes a member of society by internalising shared norms in light of which oneself and others appear as worthy is satisfied by virtually any society, including those based on the asymmetrical distribution of rights and

[24] As Honneth summarises, "we are to understand 'recognition' as a behavioural reaction in which we respond rationally to evaluative qualities that we have learned to perceive, to the extent to which we are integrated into the second nature of our lifeworld" ("Grounding Recognition" 513). In this regard, Honneth defends the *response* model of recognition according to which individuals possess those attributes worthy of recognition independently of being recognised or not; however, it is only through such acts that they can fully realise them ("Grounding Recognition" 510). An alternative model of recognition would be, as Ikäheimo points out, the *attribution* one according to which the relevant attributes of the persons are constituted through the act of recognition in the sense that "taking another person as a person that is understood as such taking and accepted by the other person" would be a sufficient ground of recognition (Ikäheimo, "On the Genus and Species of Recognition").

duties. For example, in patriarchal societies, women have the right to social recognition and thus have the possibility of developing a positive self-relation on the condition they internalise the self-norms and social roles specific to their nature of "woman", e.g. mother, wife. Indeed, in such societies, they might be socially valued for dedicating their lives to becoming a 'good mother' or a 'good wife'. Additionally, they could hold (gendered) rights and subject their male counterparts to moral obligations, although the relations along gender lines would remain asymmetrical. In short, the second argument leads to the same problem as the first; it establishes a functional relation between recognition and social integration by expanding mutual recognition beyond Honneth's sense since it includes asymmetrical relations.

At this point, Honneth has two main options. The first one is to stick to the thesis that promises for recognition are socially embedded because relations of mutual recognition, entailing symmetrical status between social actors, govern social life. In this case he would need to provide additional arguments than the ones considered above. The second one is to adhere to the above argument according to which social orders must encompass orders of recognition, and thus promises of recognition, because becoming a member of a community entails developing a socially recognisable identity that, in turn, is normative demanding in light of one's socially recognisable worthy attributes but give up the condition that orders of recognition must necessarily entail symmetrical relations. He decides on the second option and lets the notion of recognition order acquire a more historical character (e.g. "Recognition as Ideology" 326-7).[25] As a result, he needs to accept that societies based on strict *asymmetrical* relations between social actors, e.g. groups or typified agents, would also encompass orders of recognition. The upshot is that by letting the order and the ground of recognition vary historically, Honneth can explain the social embeddedness of promises for recognition by grounding relations of mutual recognition *within* the system of norms structuring social reality.

Two implications of Honneth's historicising move are crucial here. First, the status of his tripartite conception of personhood is downgraded. Self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem can no longer be the unqualified end point of fully developed personhood because promises for recognition pointing towards them cannot be embodied in any social order since relations of recognition corresponding to them are *not* present in any order of

[25] However, acknowledging the historical character of recognition orders does not entail for Honneth that one must succumb to moral relativism. I brush on the problem regarding the moral standards underpinning his account in the concluding section of this chapter.

recognition. For example, if developing a robust sense of self-respect depends on being socially assured of one's capacity to determine one's life choices freely, then in patriarchal societies, women lack access to the relations of mutual recognition conducive to self-respect as they are conducted to become 'good mothers' or 'good wives', entailing recognition based on gendered norms and being *de facto* placed under the tutelage of their male counterparts. Secondly, because Honneth takes the account of the tripartite conception of personhood as disclosing generalisable expectations for recognition, and they have their condition of possibility in social orders based on symmetrical relations, it follows that only a certain kind of societies would embed recognition promises along the three axes anticipated by his conception of personhood. Honneth proposes the concept of 'post-traditional' or modern societies as those types of societies in which becoming a member of a community entails participating in a system of norms based on symmetrical relations. Additionally, he is convinced that the basic expectations for recognition derived from the proposed tripartite conception of personhood can be identified as promises for recognition embedded in the 'post-traditional' societies.

The advantage of Honneth's historicising move is that, in principle, he can incorporate his tripartite conception of personhood into the response to the objection that his account of struggles for recognition is sociologically suspect. If 'post-traditional' societies embody the threefold promises for recognition corresponding to the tripartite conception of personhood, then he might be able to provide a social explanation for why struggles for recognition emerge, seeking to expand the relations of mutual recognition along the lines anticipated by his tripartite account of personhood, at least *in 'post-traditional' societies*. Such struggles would emerge as reactions to the failure of 'post-traditional' societies to fulfil their promises for recognition, promises that individuals would be led to develop by becoming competent agents in such societies, i.e. by internalising self-norms in the process of socialisation. In this way, he could defend his tripartite conception of self-development and address the objection that his account of subjectivity fails to account for the role of social norms in mediating the process of self-constitution.

1.4 Emancipation in 'Post-Traditional' Societies

1.4.1 'Post-traditional' societies

In *The Struggle*, it remains undecided whether Honneth's conception of full personhood refers to ahistorical potentialities of the human species or if they refer to a conception of personhood freed by certain types of societies only, e.g. 'post-traditional' or modern ones. In subsequent writings, Honneth rejects the first claim in favour of the second ("Grounding Recognition" 501). He retains the basic thesis that individuals need recognition in order to develop a robust, practical identity; however, its justification takes the form of a "retrospective speculation on the peculiarity of the intersubjective <<nature>> of human beings" guided by the "most highly differentiated recognition spheres" within a social order. The reason is that the basic need for recognition is "always shaped by the particular manner in which the mutual granting of recognition is institutionalised within a society" and "cannot simply be derived from an anthropological theory of the person" ("Redistribution as Recognition" 138).

Although the argumentative strategy changes in the sense that the anthropological argument moves into the background without disappearing, and social-*historical* considerations move into the foreground, Honneth retains the broad strokes of the concept of 'post-traditional' society introduced in *The Struggle* as the type of society freeing recognition as symmetrical relations between persons. The central role that recognition acquires in 'post-traditional' societies is due to two marks distinguishing them from 'traditional' ones. The first one regards the type of principles conferring legitimacy to the ‘post-traditional’ social order. In 'traditional' societies, the argument goes, the justification of the social order is anchored in metaphysical, cosmological, or religious narratives. In contrast, the normative order of 'post-traditional' societies, emerging from the centuries-long process of disenchantment, is far more fragile and contested because it depends on being reflexively acceptable to those called to subject themselves to its norms. Secondly, in 'traditional' societies, the individual's place in the nexus of rights is predetermined by its belonging to a social group or strata and by the place of the said group in the system of rights. In contrast, in modern societies, social status and identities become individualised. Individual attributes rather than group belonging become the ground on which individuals can secure fundamental rights and social standing.[26]

According to Honneth, the gradual individualisation of social status enhanced by the discrediting of religious narratives and, consequently, by the increased contestation of social

[26] Honneth makes these points *in The Struggle* (Chapter 5 123-7) and reiterates them in subsequent writings (e.g. “Redistribution as Recognition” 139-40).

hierarchies, leads to the differentiation of three primary social spheres. Each of these spheres are underpinned by specific principles of mutual recognition and embodying specific potentials of self-development: the sphere of love understood in the general sense of affective relationships individuals, the legal sphere, and the sphere of esteem. The three spheres are 'post-traditional' because they are individualising in a twofold sense. Firstly, they are individualising because participants encounter each other *as* individuals rather than exponents of various social strata within a strict social hierarchy. In the sphere of personal relations, participants encounter each other as individuals endowed with needs and desires. The *praxis* specific to this sphere is mutual care and loving regard between the partners. In the 'post-traditional' sphere of law, participants encounter each other as autonomous persons; the *praxis* specific to this sphere is one of mutual respect mediated by a nexus of subjective rights, ensuring that individuals can decide their life-orientation free from external compulsion. In the sphere of "individual achievement," participants encounter each other as individuals possessing socially relevant attributes, capacities or skills in light of which they can make particular contributions to the realisation of shared values; the *praxis* specific to this sphere takes the form of recognition for social contributions evaluated in light of mutually recognised values.

The three spheres are also individualising in a second sense: each embodies specific promises of self-development. In the sphere of love, participants have the opportunity to develop a sense of self-confidence that their needs and desires are worthy of consideration by experiencing recognition from their caregivers or partners in the form of caring behaviour aimed at satisfying their needs and desires.[27] In the legal sphere, participants can develop a sense of self-respect by experiencing social recognition in the form of legally guaranteed subjective rights. In the sphere of 'individual achievement', individuals can develop a sense of self-esteem by experiencing the social validation of their particular attributes or capabilities in light of their contribution to realising shared values (*The Struggle* Chapter 5; "Redistribution as Recognition" 138-43). In short, Honneth holds that the tripartite conception of personhood he defends stands for socially embedded possibilities of self-development emerging from the process of social differentiation of 'post-traditional' societies.

[27] In *The Struggle*, Honneth presumes that love relationships are based on symmetrical relations of recognition regardless of the social milieu; he corrects his view in later writings when he acknowledges that what promises of recognition love relationships embody is also influenced by the socially embedded order of recognition characterising a type of society or another (e.g. "Redistribution as Recognition" 138-9).

1.4.2 Struggles in ‘post-traditional’ societies

This chapter discussed the main steps of Honneth’s attempt to employ Hegel's model to support the idea that struggles for recognition embody emancipatory potentials. The key point would be that struggles for recognition can be emancipatory because they can contribute to disclosing self-development potentials and relations of recognition unrealised until then within the social world. Struggles for recognition would be normatively productive. To make this model credible at the level of social reality, Honneth needs to provide a convincing account of the critical potential of such struggles and the dynamics leading to realising their potential within limits set by the social-historical embeddedness of human subjectivity. The thesis that self-development potentials are not ahistorical but have a socio-historical character imposes additional constraints. Honneth must demonstrate the status of struggles for recognition as types of action embodying emancipatory potentials within the framework of 'post-traditional' societies. Therefore, the question is how and why struggles for recognition should represent the medium of emancipation in 'post-traditional' societies?

The discussion of the basic premises of Honneth’s model in the previous sections has laid the groundwork for answering this question. It is now possible to answer it by interweaving the strands of Honneth’s recognition theory into a narrative of struggles for recognition as collective actions embodying emancipatory potential in ‘post-traditional’ societies. When presenting Honneth's account, it might help to distinguish between factual conditions necessary for critical action to manifest as struggles for recognition and conditions of self-understanding.[28] The factual conditions are informed by the theses discussed above. The first thesis, as elaborated earlier, posits that social orders encapsulate orders of recognition, such that individuals develop their practical identity by internalising self-norms implicit in relations of recognition within the social world. Consequently, an implicit, perhaps un-articulated, awareness of one's dependence on recognition from others permeates social interaction, as participation in a social practice implies being placed in a status relationship with the others and necessitates at least an implicit understanding of one's position in order to interact effectively with them. Under pressure from critics, Honneth has further refined this

[28] Honneth does not employ this distinction. However, I employ it because it helps to disentangle the different levels of argumentation at work in his account of struggles for recognition.

thesis. In at least 'post-traditional' societies, participants in social spheres encounter implicit promises for recognition. The second thesis posits that individuals depend on recognition from others to develop a robust sense of the self. If this holds true, then those exposed to forms of disrespect that threaten their very sense of the self cannot be indifferent to the suffering such experiences produce them. Collectively, these prerequisites ensure the objective *possibility* that individuals in 'post-traditional' societies might develop an interest, in a manner of speaking, in further exploring and articulating the promises for recognition implicit underpinning social interaction, in articulating the moral significance of the suffering social disrespect has inflicted on them, and in engaging in practices of denunciation that target both the perpetrators and the normative order that validates their status.

Although necessary, factual preconditions are not sufficient to guarantee the emergence of struggles for recognition. Honneth must also identify the mechanism by which those experiencing disrespect can develop a sufficient understanding of their condition, specifically that they have suffered a moral injury, in such a way that they can also develop the motivation to take a critical stance. In *The Struggle,* Honneth identifies the feeling triggered by disrespect as 'shame' and draws on John Dewey's theory of emotions to elucidate how negative feelings, such as shame, can serve as a source of moral knowledge and motivate critique. As long as our interactions with others go well, there is no practical urgency to adopt a reflective stance towards our social involvement. Interactions go well when individuals' expectations in social interaction are negotiated and fulfilled quasi-automatically, without the necessity of making them overly thematic. Against this backdrop, experiences of disrespect manifest as points of breakdown in interaction; they suddenly confront us with the pain of our intentions or expectations being led down. Compelled to confront the shock induced by the experience of being disrespected, the individual might adopt a more reflexive attitude towards their situation, specifically the context generating the experience of disrespect, in an effort to make sense of it. Moreover, individuals can scarcely remain indifferent to the suffering produced by forms of disrespect, especially when it takes an acute form. The suffering might motivate the sufferer to strive to overcome this state, if feasible, by reacting in whatever way is necessary to restore the sense of self-worth that disrespect has eroded. In summary, experiences of disrespect can prompt individuals to adopt a more reflexive and actively engaged attitude towards the dynamics of recognition inherent in social interaction. Consequently, such experiences embody a dual potential: insight into the moral grammar of social interaction and the potential for action that

can translate into the motivation to endeavour to transcend the state of disrespect (*The Struggle* 136-8).

That being said, Honneth does not go so far as to assert that the potential for action and moral insight inherent in experiences of disrespect is actualised in every situation. Nevertheless, even when realised, the twofold potential of *individual* experiences of disrespect is insufficient to elucidate the emergence of collective action in the form of struggles for recognition. Additional conditions related to self-understanding must be present for individual experiences to culminate in collective action. Such a condition is alluded to in Honneth's characterisation of struggles for recognition as

> a practical process in which individual experiences of disrespect are read as typical for an entire group, and in such a way that they can motivate collective demands for expanded relations of recognition. (*The Struggle* 162)

Private experiences of disrespect can evolve into collective struggles for recognition when, under favourable social conditions, those subjected to social disrespect can engage in a *praxis* of mutual clarification within an intersubjective framework of interpretation. This allows them to articulate their demands for recognition as representative for an entire group. In addition, there must be in place or must emerge "a shared semantics" that supports the effort of those condemned to disrespect in generalising their experiences and demands to the entire group. The necessary semantics stem from "moral doctrines or ideas that are able normatively to enrich our notions of social community". When these ideas gain "influence within a society", they can "generate a subcultural horizon of interpretation", engendering a *praxis* of mutual clarification where private experiences of disrespect can be articulated as representative of an entire collective supporting, thus facilitating the emergence of collective struggles for recognition (*The Struggle* 163-4).

It should be noted that within Honneth's model, the moral ideals that support the creation of a "subcultural horizon of interpretation" are essentially the socially embedded principles of mutual recognition that underlie social spheres. To comprehend how these principles, which confer legitimacy to the social order, can also facilitate the development of critical semantics, Honneth draws attention to the inherent incongruity between the ideal but formal content of mutual recognition principles and the social interpretation of these principles that make them operational at the level of social reality. The key idea here is that

norms of recognition and recognitive attitudes can be improved or refined over time.[29] Consequently, established norms of recognition are inherently susceptible to criticism due to the normative surplus they contain.

With these final clarifications, we have elucidated the central aspects of Honneth's recognition-based account of emancipatory struggles within 'post-traditional' societies. Struggles for recognition derive their semantic condition of possibility from the validity surplus inherent in the mutual recognition principles that underpin core social spheres of 'post-traditional' societies. The disadvantaged can draw upon this normative surplus to challenge the asymmetrical distribution of status and opportunities for self-realisation, which is grounded in socially embedded, biassed interpretations of moral and legal principles. Through critical and creative reinterpretations of mutual recognition principles, the disadvantaged seek to reveal the irrationality of a social system that condemn them to a life of disrespect by: a) demonstrating that forms of disrespect, previously seen as individual experiences, are "typical of an entire group"; b) establishing that the experiences of disrespect are not mere contingencies but are legitimised by the current system of norms, with the social causes of disrespect traced back to the normative structure of society, including the social validation of asymmetrical status relations.; c) golding the institutionalised system of norms that endorse asymmetrical status relations accountable in light of the principles of mutual recognition, which should ideally be symmetrical and underpin social life. The insight gained through this process reveals the asymmetrical relations entrenched in the established system as outcomes of hegemonic interpretations. In Honneth's model, struggles for recognition serve as a medium of emancipation when they successfully transform socially disregarded expectations for recognition into novel, generalisable demands for recognition by utilising principles of mutual recognition underpinning the 'post-traditional' social order. This contributes to the expansion of recognition possibilities by capitalising on the surplus validity of moral principles.

[29] "norms of recognition are characterized by a 'normative surplus'; even when there is no apparent gap between *de facto* practices and implicit norms, the ideals associated with the distinct forms of recognition always call for greater degrees of morally appropriate behaviour, than is ever practised in that particular reality" (Honneth, "Grounding Recognition" 517). Honneth gives the example of welfare measures which would find their *raison d'etre* in a more adequate interpretation of legal autonomy, i.e. the basis of rights in modern societies, that considers not only legal guarantees under which it can be exercised by also its basic social preconditions. Welfare measures became rationally compelling, following Honneth, once it became clear that "members of society can make actual use of their legally guaranteed autonomy if they are assured a minimum of economic resources, irrespective of income" ("Redistribution as Recognition" 149).

1.5 The Struggle for Recognition: Basic Problems

The tone of the chapter thus far has primarily been expository and supportive of Honneth's theory. The interpretation has been focused on avoiding reductionist readings, including foundationalist interpretations. The initial premise was that a fair presentation of Honneth's theory must encompass all three of his fundamental theses: the intersubjective account of personhood, the concept of 'post-traditional' society that highlights the role of recognition in the integration of modern societies, and the emancipatory potential of struggles for recognition. The second notion was that none of these theses should be considered foundational. This is a crucial point because if any one of the three theses is viewed in isolation as the foundational premise, with the other two seen as mere projections or implications of it, then one might unjustifiably fault Honneth's theory by challenging the thesis taken as fundamental failing to considered the interdependency and mutual support the three theses lend each other.

The third idea was that the three fundamental theses of Honneth's model represent independent elements of a unitary articulation. As noted by J.-P. Deranty, all three of Honneth's theses are equiprimordial; the strengths of the theory lies in the relation of 'isonomy' emerging between its 'axioms'.[30] For instance, the passage from 'traditional' societies, reliant on strict hierarchical relations, to 'post-traditional' ones based on horizontal relations places individuals and their autonomy at the forefront of the question concerning the normative foundations of such societies. The distinct nature of normative orders in 'post-traditional' societies, where horizontal relations take precedence, underscores the importance of symmetric relationships between individuals capable of creating social bonds while preserving and enhancing participants' autonomy, i.e., relationships of mutual recognition. From a distinct angle, the intersubjective concept of self-constitution proposed by Honneth, which reveals primary forms of recognition as essential conditions for self-development, in conjunction with another characteristic of 'post-traditional' societies, where the primary rights bearers are individuals rather than social strata, lends further support to Honneth's third thesis. It asserts that struggles for recognition are not merely

[30] In this paragraph, I broadly follow Deranty's excellent reconstruction of Honneth's theory emphasising the isonomy of his basic 'axioms' ("Reflective Critical Theory").

contingent social events; they can take on the significance of conflicts over the foundations and conditions necessary for individuals to secure and enjoy fundamental rights, which protect the integrity of their personhood or even serve as the catalyst for the emergence of new rights. In any case, the key point is that Honneth's model of recognition does not adhere to a foundationalist structure where one thesis is considered primary, and the others are derived from it. Instead, it can be described as a constellation formed by the mutual reinforcement that his theories of subjectivity, social integration, 'post-traditional' societies and struggles for recognition provided to each other.[31]

The main aim of the chapter has been to approach Honneth's theory as an endeavour to address what he refers to as the fundamental problem of critical theory. This problem revolves around the identification of sources of emancipation within the world and the formulation of a theory capable of comprehending them. Honneth solution is that struggles for recognition can, at least in post-traditional societies, serve as the medium of emancipation. In this context, it makes sense that a theory of recognition is the most suitable for revealing their relevance to the issue of emancipation and providing a theoretical basis for their status. All of the fundamental theses of Honneth's theory, i.e. the recognition-based account of self-development, the conception of 'post-traditional' societies that highlight individuals as right-bearers and mutual recognition relations as capable of fostering social bonds while supporting the development of autonomous personhood, and the productive potential of struggles for recognition in disclosing novel normative standpoints, collectively contribute to substantiating the thesis that struggles for recognition are credible candidates to the status of social phenomena embodying emancipatory potentials in the context of 'post-traditional' societies.

In the remainder of this chapter, I adopt a more critical perspective towards Honneth's account. Firstly, it can be contested that the problem of emancipation is resolved only if Honneth can furnish additional justifications for why self-realisation serves as the ultimate goal of emancipation. One might argue that it is far from self-evident that the expansion of

[31] As Heidegren points out, any social or political theory is more compatible with certain conceptions of the human being rather than others, and *vice versa* certain conceptions of human subjectivity are more compatible with some social or political theories rather than others. However, "rather than trying to demonstrate necessary connections in one direction or the other – in the sense that a certain image of man implies a particular social theory and a certain political orientation, or that a certain political stance is simply projected back into a particular image of man" one can speak of "different possible *constellations* in the sense of a (more or less) coherent whole with regard to anthropology, social theory, and politics" ("Anthropology, Social Theory, and Politics" 433). As the author, I also hold that Honneth's theory of recognition can be read as such a constellation.

mutual recognition, ensuring access to prerequisites of self-realisation, constitutes the sole or most compelling standpoint from which to evaluate social orders and their transformations as developmental or regressive. In a similar vein, Honneth should offer additional reasons as to why individuals should consider the development of personhood as the highest good worth pursuing and and the ultimate objective of their emancipatory endeavours, as opposed to other values, such as equality.[32]

Furthermore, Honneth's acknowledgement of the historical variability of mutual recognition relations introduces a degree of historical relativism in his theory. This raises additional concerns about the perspective from which his theory can determine social transformations as emancipatory or regressive. If the tripartite conception of personhood can be traced to possibilities of selfhood rooted in the structure of 'post-traditional' societies, they lose their universal character and can no longer represent ahistorical prerequisites for self-development. In this scenario, struggles for recognition geared towards any of these three possibilities cannot unequivocally be considered an emancipatory force; at best, they would represent the mechanism of emancipation within the normative framework of 'post-traditional' societies. Since Honneth derives his concept of 'post-traditional' or 'modern' societies from attributes characterising Western or 'bourgeois-capitalist' societies, his account becomes susceptible to the accusations of 'Eurocentrism'. The question arises as to why the possibilities of self-development made possible by such societies should be used as the criteria for measuring the process of social emancipation. In his defence, Honneth might argue that modern societies have always been the focus of Critical Theory in the tradition of Left Hegelianism. However, one could counter this by noting that in today's global and interconnected world, the task of critical theory is to transcend its historical origin. In an attempt to address this challenge of historical relativism, Honneth employs a "robust sense of moral progress" to justify the moral validity of the tripartite relations of recognition identified by his theory as facets of autonomous subjectivity [33]

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[32] Christopher Zurn emphasises the methodological burdens faced by any attempt to make universalistic claims on anthropological grounds, see "Anthropology and Normativity" For further analysis of the problem of context-transcending justification faced by critical theories, see Cooke, *Re-Presenting The Good Society*; Kauppinen, "Reason, Recognition, and Internal Critique".

[33] Amy Allen's critique of Honneth's theory is based on the more general idea that the classical critical theories of the Frankfurt School, including Habermas, but also Honneth, end up defending a Eurocentric view of social transformations and history; she challenges the very idea of social progress as Western-centric (*The End of Progress*). For Honneth's argument that human self-realisation represents the implicit value from which social life is diagnosed not only within the tradition of Left-Hegelianism, but also in other strains of social philosophy including authors such as Rousseau, Nietzsche, or Hannah Arendt, see "Pathologies of the Social". For his conception of moral progress as the development of autonomous personhood via expansion of recognition relations, see "Grounding Recognition".

This study does not delve further into the intricate and challenging problem of justifying the norms proposed by the recognition theory in context-transcending manner, even though it recognises its relevance to critical theory. The primary reason for not delving into this issue is that it is secondary to the goals of this study. While Honneth aims to establish recognition as the *sole* foundation of a critical theory of contemporary societies, this study's objective can be addressed independently of whether he successfully defends his ambitious thesis. The less demanding question at hand is whether and to what extent the recognition paradigm can offer a *specific* contribution to the critique of the contemporary world of work. It may be contended that this question does not promise any significant insights. If recognition is not merely a social good that social actors may or may not desire but instead represents an essential precondition of self-constitution, and if relations of recognition mediate social integration, it is reasonable to assume that recognition may bear some relevance to the world of work. Nonetheless, such an assumption should not be made hasty. It is not self-evident that the question of a specific contribution can be answered positively when applied to the problem of work. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, Honneth's critics have put forth persuasive arguments that challenge the relevance of recognition theory to the world of work. They argue that, at best, it is irrelevant for clarifying the dynamics within the capitalist world of work and, at worst, it represents a counterproductive standpoint because it obscures the nature and origin of work-mediated domination and injustice. If this is indeed the case, the assumption that recognition, being relevant for self-development, must also be relevant for elucidating the emancipatory potential inherent in the contemporary world of work is far from self-evident and, therefore, warrants closer examination.

Another significant axis along which Honneth's theory can be critiqued is of central interest to this study. Honneth's goal is to revive and further develop Hegel's model of recognition and use it as a framework capable of disclosing in-worldly emancipatory potentials. To succeed in this endeavour, he would need to provide a sociologically credible account of critical action that takes individuals' condition as socially and historically embedded subjectivities seriously. The 'psychologism' objection, based on the foundationalist interpretation, highlights the challenge in this context. As argued, Honneth can address this objection if he can demonstrate that relations of mutual recognition are socially embedded. In other words, he must show that 'post-traditional' societies differentiate themselves in various spheres of recognition, embodying specific promises of self-realisation. As shown in the previous section, the twofold potential, encompassing both knowledge and action, of shared

experiences of disrespect is insufficient to guarantee the possibility of struggles for recognition. Semantics that mediate the *praxis* of mutual clarification, in which the disadvantaged must engage to articulate their demands for recognition, must also be established. However, the existence of the said semantics cannot be taken for granted.[34] Honneth must provide convincing evidence that such semantics are an integral part of social life. In this regard, the argument would involve reconstructing the moral grammar underpinning social integration, with the aim of unveiling the principles of mutual recognition governing the various spheres of modern societies. In *The Struggle* and adjacent writings, Honneth's argument is primarily limited to conceptual clarifications supported by empirical evidence from specialised sciences, rather than being carried out systematically. Consequently, Honneth's arguments considered in this chapter, at most, provide a pathway to follow by outlining the evidence he would need to furnish to establish the centrality and socio-historical efficiency of recognition in modern societies. Therefore, *The Struggle* leaves the argument incomplete. As will be shown in chapter three, it is only in his second major work, *Freedom's Right*, that he attempts to provide the required evidence through a systematic reconstruction of the moral grammar of modern societies.

Nonetheless, prior to delving into a discussion of Honneth's *Freedom's Right*, it is essential to evaluate the connection that his theory of recognition aims to reveal between work, recognition and emancipation. This will allow us to gain an initial understanding of the potential contribution that the recognition paradigm can offer to a critique of the contemporary world of work. As shown in the following chapter, the question concerning the moral framework of modern resurfaces, this time at the heart of the issue concerning the relationship between work and emancipation. Indeed, one might argue that the very relationship between work and emancipation becomes discernible precisely from the modern perspective.

[34] As Roger Foster argues, the liberal, individualising semantics of justice prevalent in Western societies might raise barriers to the emergence of emancipatory struggles for recognition ("Recognition and Resistance"). If this is the case, as Honneth also acknowledges in more recent works, it is urgent to identify a more promising alternative moral grammar immanent to contemporary societies. Honneth's solution to this problem, focusing on the problem of work, is problematised in Part II and III of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Work and Recognition

2.1 Introduction: The Problem of Work

This chapter explores Axel Honneth's initial attempts to establish a critique of market-mediated social labour based on his theory of recognition. Some introductory remarks on the modern revaluation of work and the relationship between social labour and social critique provide a preliminary understanding of the problem and the context in which Honneth formulates his arguments.

The positive revaluation of labour activity is one of the significant normative revolutions of modernity. In traditional societies, individuals of higher social status were exempt from the necessity of engaging in labour to secure their material conditions of life. Not having to work and relying on others for production represented a precondition for dedicating oneself to higher human activities, e.g. ruling or contemplation. With the advent of modern societies, there was a gradual reevaluation of labour. Some key milestones in this process include Locke's concept of labour as the origin of property rights. While nature as the creation of God is for the sake of the common use of humanity, one is morally entitled to private possession of what they have improved and transformed through their labour (Locke, *Second Treatise* Chapter 5). Adam Smith identifies the division of labour geared towards increasing specialisation as a critical factor in enhancing the productivity of work, which, in turn, contributes to increased social wealth (*Wealth of Nations* Book I). Smith's thesis illustrates the path of work revaluation that focuses on its instrumental value, according to which labour serves as a means to achieve goals independent of the work activity itself, such as the generation of greater social wealth.

Another dimension of revaluation focuses on the relationship between work and *subjectivity*. In this context, it is acknowledged that work has a profound impact on the individuals who engage in it. In classical pre-modern philosophy, there was an assumption

that work had a detrimental effect on the working subject, impeding the development of the human mind and the exercise of reason. Against this backdrop, the idea that work can positively transform the working subject, mediating the development of practical-technical reasoning, is groundbreaking. A notable example of this perspective can be found in Hegel's well-known chapter of *Phenomenology* dedicated to the master-slave dialectics, where the formative and emancipatory impact of work on human consciousness is emphasised (*Phenomenology of Spirit* Chapter 4). Additionally, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim assigns social labour a central role in the integration of modern societies. According to Durkheim, the integration of individuals into the social division of labour is an essential condition for establishing and sustaining solidarity-based social bonds that are necessary to integrate otherwise fragmented modern societies (*The Division of Labour*).

The list provided above is by no means exhaustive; it serves to illustrate a selection of key points in the revaluation of labour in modernity and to underscore the distinction between two of its values. On the one hand, there are accounts that emphasise its instrumental value, rooted in the idea of labour as a means to attain goods that are not intrinsic to it. An example of this perspective is the conception of labour as an activity that contributes to the production of social wealth and the material reproduction of societies. On the other hand, there are those who emphasise the role of labour in the development of subjectivity and cultivation of social dispositions, such as solidarity.

The problem with work arises from the fact that, although it can hold different values, not all of these values are inherently compatible. This becomes apparent when considering the social and structural prerequisites necessary for their realisation. Adam Smith argued that the increase in the productive power of labour and, by extension, social wealth, hinges on the development of a 'free' market. His argument posits that production driven by the need to meet market demand under conditions of free competition serves as the motivating force for technological advancement and the development of strategies to enhance the efficiency of labour. Smith exemplified this idea by looking at the transformative changes of his time in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This era witnessed the emergence of factory production and mechanisation of work, enabled by technological progress, which allowed for a level of production control and organisation that had never been seen before. However, as Smith also noted, the downside of this increased division of labour required by factory production is that work activity becomes progressively monotonous, mechanical, and fragmented. This, in turn, could have a detrimental impact on the mental and emotional well-being of the working

subjects (Hill, "Adam Smith" 341-8). Furthermore, the Hegelian conception of good work also highlights the importance of specific social conditions. According to Paul Redding, within Hegel's framework, working can positively contribute to the flourishing of human subjectivity if labour has a clear end and purpose, culminating in the production of an object that enables the working subject to grasp the entirety of their activity "as chained in relations of ends and means". However, this condition appears to be at odds with the modern organisation of labour, which promotes increased specialisation and fragmentation of work activities. This fragmentation results in the finality of work no longer being an identifiable object but rather the realisation of tasks that serve as mere means towards a finality escaping the control of the worker (Redding 60-61). Writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Durkheim was well aware that social labour could not fulfil its role in social integration if its organisation were left solely to the dynamics of the market institution, devoid of ethical or moral constraints. Social labour can fulfil its social role only if the ethical-moral norms presupposed by it, which Durlheim did not doubt to exist, are brought to bear on the division of labour ("Social Division of Labour" Book III).

Work and critique of capitalist societies

When the realisation of different values of labour depends on different and often opposing social preconditions, such as the social organisation of work, the central question becomes which value should take precedence over the others, implicitly determining what value should govern the division of labour.

Karl Marx's response to this problem is noteworthy due to its contribution to further developing the problem of work, even if not not providing a complete resolution.[35] According to Marx, the tension between the preconditions necessary for increasing the productive force of labour and those necessary for realising its ethical and social potential is not rooted in any contradiction within the essence of labour itself. Instead, it is a manifestation of the contradictions inherent in the modern organisation of labour, which is dictated by the imperatives of the capitalist market. Marx's analysis suggests that the capitalist system, based on private property and driven by self-interested economic agents who compete to maximise

[35] I follow Axel Honneth's excellent presentation and critique of Marx's conception of work ("Work and Instrumental Action" 15-26); see also Marx, Karl, "*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts"*; *Grundrisse; Capital: Vol 1*.

their economic goals at the expense of others, rather than cooperating for the realisation of common goals, is incapable of generating bonds of social solidarity. Additionally, because workers lack control over their work activities, they are deprived of the formative experience of making the products of their labour an expression of their personality. In summary, Marx argues that the increased productive forces within the capitalist system primarily serve the reproduction and accumulation of capital, rather than the improvement of human life. Furthermore, he posited that the organisation of labour for the purpose of capital accumulation is susceptible to structural economic crises that could ultimately lead to the system's demise.

Marx identifies work as the activity with the potential to generate the will necessary for bringing about the anticipated emancipatory social changes in his critique of capitalist societies. In this way, he imbues labour with a revolutionary potential. His basic argument revolves around the notion that the contradictions within the capitalist system are not merely systemic but also define the social condition of the working class. Consequently, the proletariat is subject to various forms of alienation. Firstly, there's social alienation, as the working class experiences its life as determined by the impersonal forces of the market. Then, there's personal alienation, where the product of one's labour is not seen as an externalisation of one's free intentions but rather as an alien object, often reduced to a mere commodity. Finally, there's economic precarity, as the working class is subjected to economic exploitation within the capitalist system. According to Marx, these conditions provide the preconditions for revolutionary action. They give rise to shared consciousness among the working class regarding universal human interests, such as economic justice and ethical flourishing. This shared consciousness includes an understanding that the capitalist system is inherently unjust because it violates the universal interests of humanity. It also fosters a shared will to transform and overcome the system of private property and the capitalist economic structure.

In the early part of the twentieth century, it became evident that the social transformations in Western societies did not align with Marx's predictions regarding revolution. Contrary to Marx's expectations, the working class did not display the revolutionary zeal ascribed to it, and it appeared that integration into capitalist societies was feasible. Adding to the challenges to the Marxist theory, the societies that managed to overthrow the capitalist system in an attempt to create new types of societies, supposedly capable of resolving its presumed contradictions, struggled to generate the anticipated social wealth or establish a more humane organisation of labour.

In the end, Marx's theoretical framework faced challenges, even from sympathetic but critically minded commentators. Jürgen Habermas' made groundbreaking attempts to chart a new path beyond the limitations of Marxian theory, which played a significant role in shaping the debate in the subsequent decades. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Habermas devalues the significance of labour for the issue of emancipation by reducing it to its instrumental character. He argues that labour holds fundamental value because it serves as the activity through which the human species ensures its biological and its societal material reproduction. However, in contrast to Marx, he contends that the qualitative expansion of human freedom does not primarily result from the expansion of productive and creative capacities of labour. Instead, it arises through a categorically different form of action: the liberation of the communicative potentials within social interaction from irrational constraints, such as power and domination. This, in turn, ensures the establishment of norms governing social life that are rationally acceptable to autonomous individuals.

Habermas does not subject the sphere of labour, responsible for material reproduction, to the governance of communicative rationality. He denies that social labour substantially contributes to the qualitative expansion of freedom. Moreover, he believes that the increased complexity of production coordination in modern societies makes it nearly impossible to coordinate labour activity and wealth distribution through norms. Consequently, he argues that the organisation of production and distribution of wealth through "norm-free" economic mechanisms geared towards increased economic efficiency is the correct way to go, as is *de facto* the case in market-based capitalist societies (Habermas, "Labour and Interaction"; McCarthy, Chapter 1). For our discussion, the critical point to note is that the view of the economy as a disembedded sphere, decoupled from social and normative constraints, represents not only Habermas' response to the problem of work but is also the prevailing perspective concerning the relationship between 'economy' and the 'socio-cultural' order in capitalist societies.

Against this backdrop, Axel Honneth's endeavour to develop a recognition-based critique of the contemporary world of work indeed faces significant challenges. Following the conception of critical theory defended by Honneth, a critique of work requires a theoretical framework capable of categorically disclosing the moral grammar of social life in such a way that the moral-practical standpoint of social actors and their critical actions are disclosed as part and parcel of social reality. This perspective clashes with the prevailing "economist" accounts of the economy, which depict it as a socially disembedded sphere

where "norm-free" mechanisms, such as the price mechanism, take precedence over norms in coordinating actions. Economist descriptions are set up to omit the normative dimension of economic interactions, making the task of critiquing their description of the 'economy' a necessary initial step toward establishing a critical understanding of economic life. In this regard, the dominant 'economist' perspective clashes with Honneth's 'normativist' account of social life. 'Normativism', in the context of our discussion, entails the view that norms play a central role in social integration and coordination across various social spheres. As shown in the previous chapter, Honneth defends precisely such a view. Therefore, he needs to provide a theoretical frame capable of unveiling the normative facticity of the market-mediated social labour and the emancipatory potentials it embeds.

As Nicholas Smith points out ("Work and the Struggle for Recognition" 47-8), there are a number of specific tasks that such a frame would need to fulfil in order to ground a critical account of work: it needs to provide a conception of work that establishes criteria for differentiating 'good' from 'bad' work. These criteria must emerge as features intrinsic to the world of work, not as externally imposed conditions in order to secure their immanent character. Social actors should be able to recognize the moral validity of these criteria within the context of work. The framework should allow the grounding of a critique that demonstrates how contemporary societies fail to meet the identified criteria. It should show that this shortfall is not merely a contingent issue but a more or less enduring feature of market-mediated social labour. Honneth would need to fulfil these tasks to provide a theoretical account disclosing labour as an activity bound to in-worldly emancipatory dynamics.

The tasks identified above provide the standpoint from which two of Honneth's attempts to articulate a critical conception of work are discussed in this chapter. The chapter comprises two main parts. The first part presents the theoretical framework within which Honneth articulates his critical model of work and his complementary critique of 'economist' descriptions (2.2). Not one but two such models are present in his writings: the expressive (2.2.1) and the recognition model (2.2.2). The first part ends with discussing the functionalist critique of Honneth's normative account (2.2.3). Part two (2.3) recovers a second argument by which Honneth seeks to defend his normative account of the market-mediated sphere of social labour meant to answer the functionalist objections. The second argument is premised on the thesis that while the world of work might not be *de facto* governed in its totality by norms of recognition, its *legitimacy* depends on being so (2.3.1). Further on, the argument is

measured against an equally sophisticated revised functionalist objection (2.3.2). The chapter ends with some proposals for how Honneth's second argument might be improved (2.3.3).

2.2 Towards a Critical Conception of Work

2.2.1 The expressive model[36]

An objection Honneth has repeatedly raised against 'economist' approaches is that their descriptions fail to provide an empirically accurate portrayal of how the material reproduction of bourgeois-capitalist societies takes place. In his view, the 'economist' depiction of the capitalist world of work, encompassing the division of labour and the principles of material distribution, as a 'norm-free' sphere decoupled from social bonds, i.e. the dis-embeddedness thesis, fails to reveal the normative *facticity* of the economy in general and the market-mediated sphere of social labour in particular.[37] This line of critique is already present in his early writings of the 1980s, predating the development of his theory of recognition. In "Work and Instrumental Action," an article published during this period, Honneth attempts to challenge the prevailing 'norm-free' view of the world of work by questioning the self-evident nature of the instrumental concept of labour that underpins dominant economist accounts. As the name suggests, the instrumental account[38] does not assign any intrinsic value to work; it defines work as the activity through which humans ensure their biological reproduction and the material reproduction of their societies via the outputs of their work. According to this account, not only is the value of work purely instrumental, but workers also develop only an instrumental relationship with their work.

[36] Here and in the following subsection, I employ Smith's distinction between three models of work: the instrumental model, the expressive, and the recognition model considered. In his earlier writings, Honneth defended an expressive model before turning to the recognition model; both have been employed against the instrumental conception of work. *See* Smith, Nicholas. "Three Normative Models of Work."

[37] Honneth is not alone in arguing that the description of economic life depends, among other things, on the basic set of concepts through which economic reality is analysed, such that the economist view is one among others, albeit the dominant one. As Lisa Herzog concludes her persuasive study on the Smithin and Hegelian conceptions of the market, "all ways of looking at the economic realm are informed by theories and heuristics" (*Inventing the Market* 159).

[38] I follow the analysis of the instrumental model of work proposed by Nicholas Smith, see "Three Normative Models of Work" 187-92.

They would have no ethical interest in their work, as work would primarily serve as a means of making a living.

Against the instrumental conception, Honneth argues in "Work and Instrumental Action" that its apparent self-evidence results from a twofold process that obscures the role work might play in shaping, for better or worse, the subjectivity of workers and the social implications this might hold. The introduction of the Taylorist organisation of labour in the first part of the twentieth century illustrates the first process. The Taylorist reorganisation of work transforms labour by breaking it down into a repetitive and monotonous process of task execution, making it nearly impossible for the working subject to experience the activity as having finality in an object of one's own making. Honneth summarises the rationale of the Taylorist organisation of work as follows: The first premise is that 'freeing' production from the necessity for the working subject to develop a high level of technical knowledge can result in a more efficient labour organisation. The deskilling of labour becomes a factor of production. Secondly, although technical knowledge remains a fundamental component of production, it is transferred from the level of work execution to the level of technical planning. Consequently, technical knowledge is expropriated, and the factory leadership gains a monopoly over it. This development enables a near-total top-down control of the production process. The bottom line is that the Taylorist organisation *makes* real the notion of work as mere instrumental action ("Work and Instrumental Action" 26-28).[39]

Secondly, Honneth argues in “Work and Instrumental Action” that the impoverishment of work experience under the Taylorist organisation finds its theoretical counterpart in the conceptualisation of work solely through the lenses of economic rationalisation. He finds illustrative the transformation of the concept of work in the field of sociology of work. Initially sociological theories of labour employed a more expansive concept capable of acknowledging the role of work in personality formation, and sought to integrate this dimension in the diagnosis of the capitalist world of work. It was subsequently replaced by the much narrower concept of work as production activity evaluated solely in terms of its production rate. Suggestive in this regard is the transformation of industrial sociology from an empirical science that investigated "the cultural and psychological significance of factory work for the industrial proletariat" into a "science of productive rationalisation" (29). Max Scheler's phenomenological philosophy and Hannah Arendt's

[39] As Honneth mentions in “Work and Instrumental Action”, his analysis of the Taylorist organisation of labour follows Harry Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.

deflationist notion of work also contributed to establishing the instrumental notion of work as the one revealing its 'essence'. One could hardly exaggerate the influence of Arendt's distinction, inspired by Aristotle's classification of human activities between *poiesis* (instrumental activity for the sake of producing objects) and *praxis* (action for its own sake), where only the second one is retained as an expression of fundamental human capacities, i.e. speech and action (Arendt, *The Human Condition*). Habermas' distinction between labour and interaction further justifies the instrumental conception of work ("Labour and Interaction"). Honneth suggests that these theoretical accounts are problematic because they are uncritical, conferring theoretical validation to a form of work that only recently has found its counterpart in social reality due to a particular work organisation. This contributes to rendering invisible the relation between work and subjectivity, and the significance this relation might have for a critique of the contemporary world of work. This point is already implicit in Honneth's observation mentioned above: that "the cultural and psychological significance of factory work for the industrial proletariat" ceased to be a theme of investigation for industrial sociology. Although the phenomenon itself could not have disappeared, what changed was the self-understanding of the discipline, once it turned into a "science of productive rationalisation," and the (narrower) concepts through which it came to analyse the work relations in industrial contexts. The narrow conception of labour illustrated in the Taylorist organisation is problematic because it neglects an inalienable dimension of the world of work: the subjectivity of the workers and the interdependence between subjectivity, work, and its organisation.

It is worth mentioning that challenging the ‘economist’ view by problematising the relation between work and subjectivity might, in fact, represent a more astute move on Honneth’s part than it seems at first. As Dale Tweedie argues, the mere instrumental conception of work, which marginalises the relationship between work and subjectivity, is not necessarily self-evident even from the standpoint of orthodox economic theories, or at least was not taken as self-evident by classical theories. The reason would be that even classical orthodox economic theories must factor in not only the productivity of work, but also the ‘costs’ that working has for workers (“A Critical Assessment of Orthodox Economic Conceptions of Work”). From this standpoint the critique of the instrumental conception of work could represent a first step towards an internal critique of the basic assumptions of the ‘economist’ model of the world of work.

Beyond this, "Work and Instrumental Action" also aims to make a positive contribution by identifying those dimensions of work that are rendered invisible in the standard account. In this regard, Honneth draws attention to empirical evidence showing that working subjects' relationship with work activity remains mediated by norms even in societies of late capitalism. Workers bring into the workplace expectations of autonomy and they perceive the autonomy-diminishing effects of the Taylorist reorganisation of work as a violation of moral bonds. To substantiate this point in the mentioned article, he uses the findings of a study by the French sociologist Bernoux that registers the strategies developed by workers in an industrial plant faced with the Taylorist organisation. Bernoux identifies four dimensions of work activity in which workers intervene and assume initiative by violating the rules imposed by management. These are workers' management of time and rhythm, control over the workspace, development of techniques independently of management supervision, and "cooperative reorganisation of factory technology". In each case, workers would react to what they view as an unfair expropriation of their work autonomy (47-8).

Furthermore, Honneth suggests that expectations of work autonomy, as exhibited by the workers in Phillipe Bernoux's study, are not merely contingent; instead, they are expressions of generalisable interests that can be traced back to the anthropological significance of work. To substantiate this point, he proposes a normative conception of work recovered from Marx's early writings. According to Marx, inspired by Hegel and Feuerbach, the capacity to have our skills and abilities externalised through work activity in objects of our own making represents not a contingent but a defining, anthropologically significant attribute of the human species. The ethical and indeed anthropological relevance of work, understood in terms of the externalisation of one's capacities and abilities, becomes comprehensible on the background of the Hegelian thesis informing Marx's account, according to which acts of externalisation describe the formative process of human subjectivity. Humans become conscious of their abilities and capacities by externalising them in objects of their own making and by experiencing them as such objectivations of their capacities. In this way, work as a productive activity acquires a central role in developing human subjectivity ("Work and Instrumental Action" 18-19).

In a final step, empirical findings and theoretical considerations are brought together in a critical assessment of work organisation in societies of late capitalism. First, only some forms of work can support the human strive for self-realisation. Marx identified the essential

characteristics of a work-from allowing individuals autonomously realise their human capacities in craftsmanlike work. Craftsmanlike work frees the ethical potential of work because it requires working subjects to use their knowledge and fully engage their abilities and skills to fulfil work tasks and autonomously organise them in a self-contained process. From this standpoint, the capitalist organisation of work appears as an obstacle to realising the ethical potential of work activity. Within the division of labour favoured by capitalism, the ethical substance of labour risks drying out and being replaced by 'abstract labour'. The latter refers to a form of work fragmented into independent tasks-components. Working is reduced to repeatedly executing one or very few tasks requiring little skill or technical knowledge ("Work and Instrumental Action" 22-24). From this perspective, the Taylorist organisation of work appears not only as a radicalisation of the tendency to fragment the work activity and expropriate the workers' autonomy but also as the exponent of an 'economist' logic whose outcomes repress the realisation of fundamental human possibilities. Bernoux's findings would provide empirical support for the assumption that the moral demands anticipated by the expressive model, i.e., the deeply rooted expectations of work autonomy, remain anchored even in the world of work of late capitalism. The workers' subversive actions aiming at preserving a minimum of autonomy in the face of the deleterious effects of the Taylorist organisation of work would provide empirical support for the thesis that even in societies of late capitalism, workers have not renounced their interest in securing a minimum of control over their work and retain some autonomy in executing their work tasks.

At first, Honneth's account seems to fulfil the tasks of a critical conception of work delineated in the introduction to this chapter. To recall, the first task is to provide an account of work capable of identifying generalisable features of labour that could ground moral demands. The expressive model of labour does this by showing that work has the potential to either support or frustrate the realisation of fundamental possibilities of autonomous subjectivity. The second task involves identifying non-contingent features of the labour organisation that can either support or frustrate the realisation of these possibilities. Honneth's account achieves this by showing why the Taylorist organisation of work strongly diverges from an organisation of work that would guarantee workers a minimum of autonomy in executing and organising their activity. The third task involves disclosing the demands for work autonomy not only as highly significant for human subjectivity but also as promises embedded within the contemporary world of work. To show this, Honneth relies on

sociological findings to substantiate the assumption, implicit in the expressive model, that working subjects always, even if only counterfactually, "anticipate the features of a self-contained, self-directed work procedure" which embodies "the worker's knowledge" ("Work and Instrumental Action" 24). Workers' subversive actions attempting to maintain a minimum of autonomy would represent the in-worldly instance of critique to which the theoretical diagnosis can be traced.

However, as Habermas argues, Honneth seems to commit a "genetic fallacy" in his argument when seeking to derive the principles of work organisation underpinning the capitalist world of work from the generalisable expectations of the working subjects (Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics" footnote 14). In order to demonstrate that the identified expectations can be traced back to norms underpinning the organisation of work in contemporary societies, Honneth would have needed to show that the moral grammar in question, rather than the principle of increased efficiency, validating the Taylorist organisation, is the one underpinning the organisation of labour in capitalist societies. He would have had to show that work autonomy is a basic presupposition of work organisation in modern societies. To justify this thesis, the generalisable expectations workers bring into the work world are sufficient only if they can also be disclosed as the counterpart to moral norms underpinning work organisation. In Honneth's defence, it must be pointed out that his argument has an additional premise. His claim is not only that workers bring into the world of work deeply-rooted expectations that their autonomy is respected but also that a minimum of autonomy might represent a precondition for increasing the efficiency of production because it would allow workers to use the knowledge they acquire through working. Indeed, in the mentioned article, Honneth emphasises the conclusion of Bernoux's study, according to which the workers' subversive actions were not damaging to production; on the contrary, in each of the four types of interventions, they seem to "bring a comprehensive work competence to bear which in each particular situation is superior to the scientific knowledge of management" (48). The rationale is that the top-down organisation of work demanded by the Taylorist organisation cannot ensure efficiency because working confronts subjects with technical challenges that are best solved by employing context-specific competencies acquired by directly engaging in work activity. Since within the Taylorist organisation of work management is separated from working activity, it must follow that workers must enjoy a degree of autonomy and control over the production process allowing for initiative and creative problem-solving as a functional requirement of efficient production. Even if

accepted, this further premise actually concedes the counter-point. Because the principle of efficiency would justify the demands for autonomy, it does not follow that autonomy represents a promise underpinning the organisation of work in capitalist societies; instead, it would represent, at best, one of the means to increase production efficiency.

Honneth acknowledges the validity of Habermas' objection in subsequent writings. He remains adamant, however, that critical theory cannot be satisfied with analyses of the world of work that disavow its normative dimension. In his view, it remains a central task of critical theories to challenge the 'economist' descriptions by forging concepts of social analysis capable of providing access to the moral grammar of social labour, as well as articulating a theoretical framework capable of disclosing the moral presuppositions of the capitalist organisation of labour ("Introduction" *The Fragmented World* XVIII). As can be anticipated, and as shown below, Honneth holds that the recognition paradigm has a role to play in disclosing the normative presuppositions of the economy.

2.2.2 The recognition model

Honneth's first attempt to articulate a critique of work focuses on the question if the Taylorist organisation of work makes justice to the moral expectations that workers bring into the workplace- expectations that presumably carry anthropological weight. In *Redistribution as Recognition?,* the book co-authored with Nancy Fraser*,* he takes a different angle. Here, his argument starts by challenging a different self-evidence of the 'economist' account, which assumes that in societies of late capitalism, economic distribution has freed itself from normative constraints and is governed solely by 'norm-free' mechanisms and economic imperatives. He objects that this account is empirically inaccurate. The assumption that wage rates can be explained by mere economic factors, such as labour supply, is contradicted by statistical findings showing that for the same type of job, there is a payment gap along gender lines. Such statistical findings reveal the role of gendered norms in predetermining the wage rates and devaluing women's work achievements. Empirical evidence shows another way in which gendered patterns of valuation influence wage levels: wage returns of professions or occupations in which women come to represent a disproportionately higher percentage than men tend to drop along gendered lines of distribution regardless of 'pure' economic considerations, such as workers' efficiency. The role of gendered norms in influencing the

economic value of different occupations and performances represents counter-evidence to those accounts presuming that the economy has become detached from social bonds ("Redistribution as Recognition" 153-4). The contention is that rather than being completely detached from one another, the 'economy' and social life remain practically intermeshed even in societies of late capitalism.[40]

In his second attempt to challenge the 'economist' perspective, as in his first attempt, Honneth follows a similar structure: a negative step that challenges the prevailing the 'norm-free' conception of the economy on empirical grounds, is followed by a positive step that attempts to provide an account that, presumably, recognizes the normative dimension of the economic sphere. More specifically, in *Redistribution as Recognition?* Honneth proposes an account of the economy aiming to clarify the practical intermeshing of the economy and social life in societies of late capitalism. However, in contrast to his attempt in "Work and Instrumental Action" where he builds on an anthropological conception of work and only then moves towards the question regarding the normative presuppositions of the capitalist world of work, in *Redistribution as Recognition?* he starts from a conception of the bourgeois-capitalist societies as a specific order of recognition and only then seeks to identify the place of the economy within it. By starting from the normative presuppositions of the bourgeois-capitalist societies Honneth's second attempt aims to avoid the reiteration of Habermas' "genetic fallacy" objection that, as shown in the previous section, revealed the weakness of his expressivist account.

More decidedly than in *The Struggle,* where the various spheres of recognition characterising post-traditional societies reflect the previously distinguished practical self-relations and relations of mutual recognition mediating them, Honneth is at pains to provide a historically more convincing analysis of bourgeois-capitalist societies as an order of recognition. The comparison with honour-based societies leads the way. In the mentioned societies, unequal political power between various social groups translates into unequal material distribution. Access to material resources is predetermined by the estate to which one belongs and the place of one's group/estate within the strictly hierarchical social status order. Following Honneth, the legitimation crisis of the honour-based social order resulted in the emergence of an egalitarian order, e.g. legal equality, and a 'meritocratic' order in which

[40] As Honneth formulates it, "[n]ot only which activities can be valued as "work," and hence are eligible for professionalization, but also how high the social return should be for each professionalized activity is determined by classificatory grids and evaluative schemes anchored deep in the culture of bourgeois-capitalist society" ("Redistribution as Recognition" 153-4).

unequal social status became justifiable only on the condition that it expresses the particular and differentiable contributions individuals make to the realisation of societal goals. If in the honour-based systems agents contributing to societal goals are primarily groups/estates, in the 'meritocratic' order, the primary contributors would be the individuals. Additionally, in pre-modern societies, the contribution each group is supposed to make is predetermined by a rigid schema of valuation; in the second system, what counts as a contribution to the realisation of societal goals, and the value of each contribution is a matter of debate and contestation ("Redistribution as Recognition" 138-143). More specifically, Honneth presents the emergence of the capitalist-bourgeois societies as the gradual process triggered by the legitimation crisis of the pre-modern honour-based social order resulting in the differentiation of three primary social spheres, i.e. the sphere of intimate relations, law, and social achievement, each governed by specific moral principles underpinned by relations of mutual recognition.

Honneth's analysis sets the stage for approaching the question of what principles govern the material distribution mechanism in bourgeois-capitalist societies. Firstly, he identifies the achievement principle- according to which individuals have a right to a share of social wealth proportional to their contributions- as the "one normative resource bourgeois-capitalist society provides for morally justifying the extremely unequal distribution of life chances and goods". It represents the basis upon which social participants can rely to provide a "rational" justification for their expectations regarding the social distribution of 'life chances and goods' in light of their achievements because "its legitimising principle contains the normative claim to consider the individual achievements of all members of society fairly and appropriately" (148-9). Secondly, according to Honneth, an additional distribution mechanism is represented by the state sanctioned welfare measures and the legal principles legitimising them. Emerging in the second part of the nineteenth century in Western societies aimed at redressing the widespread material and social precarity of large parts of the population, the welfare measures are interpreted by Honneth as an expression of the "hardly disputable assertion that members of society can only make actual use of their legally guaranteed autonomy if they are assured a minimum of economic resources, irrespective of income" (149). However, welfare measures would represent only a secondary mechanism of redistribution meant to ensure a minimum of economic resources for everyone, which represents the material preconditions for the effective realisation of legal and political rights. In summary, Honneth answers the question of what material (re-)distribution

mechanisms emerge in bourgeois-capitalist society by pointing out that historically two core moral principles of modern societies, i.e. the achievement, and equality principles, have acquired the role of legitimising and guiding the process of material distribution.

In addition to providing a normative conception of material distribution in bourgeois-capitalist societies, intended to explain the practical intermeshing of the economy and social life, the recognition account also aims to make a distinct contribution to a critical conception of work and overcome the limitations of the expressive model defended by Honneth in his early article. In this regard, a defining characteristic of the recognition model is that it provides a frame disclosing the relation between material distribution and organisation of labour. Indeed, Honneth's thesis that the principle of achievement governs material distribution in capitalist-bourgeois societies already suggests a close relationship between material distribution and social labour. The implicit assumption that the achievement principle, in contrast to the equality principle, can be used to justify demands for material redistribution by *those* who have contributed through their work to the realisation of societal values represents the link between economic distribution and labour. Thus, the complete picture of the recognition based conception of the economy proposed by Honneth will emerge once the conception of labour presupposed by the achievement principle is considered.

Honneth's most articulated conception of labour complementing the account of the economy as a sphere of social achievement is introduced not in his debate with Fraser but in a more recent article, "'Labour', a Brief History", published four decades after "Work and Instrumental Action". As in the case of his first attempt to justify a normative account of work, here, too, Honneth's clears the path towards his favoured account via a critique of the dominant conception. This time, he targets the productivist conception of work, defining it as the activity through which quantifiable products are fabricated. The question is why *this* notion of labour gained primacy in modern societies since other forms of labour that do not fit the productivist conception were also part and parcel of modern societies.[41] He rejects the argument that its domination is explainable by its ubiquity in the period of industrial production because the assumption that most of the working population was employed in industrial production in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution is not convincing on

[41] Honneth has in view "all those preparatory and auxiliary activities that enable the process of production to occur in the first place" done by "domestic and service workers", i.e. cooking, cleaning, transportation etc., to which the category of administrative work has been added in the past hundred of years ("'Labour', A Brief History" 152).

empirical grounds. The service 'sector' comprising "domestic servants" and "administrative activity," employed a significant proportion of the work population even at the zenith of 'industrial society'. Although industrial labour "remained only a vanishingly small sphere of employment throughout the entire 19th century", it "was made central to the cultural self-understanding of the societies of the day" (Honneth 154-5).

If the productivist concept of work became dominant not because the activities it denotes as work were ubiquitous, what other factors could explain it? In Honneth's view, its dominance is due to the fact that it incorporated two essential features that were fitting for the frame of political economy; two features that appeared essential from the standpoint of industrial capitalism (159-60). The first is "the property of remoulding a physical object," and the second is that the outcome of this form of work, i.e. the physical object, can be easily rendered into a commodity, thus easily integrated in the circuit of market demand (150). Thus, the question of what activity was really labour was answered economically: "only that labour for which there was a quantitatively measurable, recognised demand in the marketplace" counted as socially relevant labour (160). The implication is that the productivist conception became dominant not because it adequately disclosed social labour at the level of social reality but because it served the bias of the 'economist' standpoint of which is a part. To substantiate the idea that the dominance of the productivist paradigm is due to 'economist' biases, instead of being adequate for describing the labour activity at the level of social reality, he provides a brief historical excursus tracing the corrections that the dominant productivist account underwent under pressure from struggles and criticism aiming to secure visibility and recognition for forms of labour that did not fit the dominant concept. He identifies some of its main stages in the sociological correction introduced by Max Weber, who drew attention at the beginning of the twentieth century to the increasing relevance of bureaucratic and administrative activities that, although they did not fit the productivist conception, still represented significant contributions to the economy; these corrections, in turn, opened the way for the recognition of the contribution that service work makes to the economy (155-6). Additionally, the feminist critique of unpaid housework challenged the assumption that relevant activities are only those for which there is market demand and which, consequently, can command wages (159-60).

If work takes forms that, from the productivist standpoint, are not discernable as types of work because are not conducive to the production of physical objects, and if an adequate conception of work would need to be non-reductionist, then it should be expanded beyond the

productivist paradigm. In this regard, transcending the productivist paradigm does not entail for Honneth returning to the expressive model he defended in his early articles. The reason is that his critique of the productivist conception of work inherently applies to the model he defended in his early writings given that the expressive account incorporates the basic premise of the productive account according to which labour properly speaking entails the production of objects, with the further addition characterising the expressive account that good work would allow workers to produce objects expressing their talents, abilities, and so forth.[42] What, then, is the notion of labour now defended by Honneth?

Against the productivist concept, Honneth proposes a concept based on the idea of lifeform reproduction. According to him, "all the routine performances in a society that contribute to maintaining the universally favoured components of a given lifeform have to count as 'labour' in the sense of socially essential activities" ("'Labour' a Brief History" 162). In 'post-traditional' societies where the material content of 'societal values' cannot be but a matter of dispute and negotiation, the question regarding the essential components cannot be answered in advance. If this is the case, then it is not possible to provide once and for all criteria for what would qualify as 'social labour'. Thus, it makes sense that Honneth's answer to the question of what activities are "required for the totality of social labour today" is limited to registering those forms that emerged historically from various forms of criticism of the dominant productivist conception, disclosing in the process activities contributing to social reproduction that until then remained unacknowledged. He distinguishes three types of activities differentiated in relation to the beings towards which they are exercised: natural objects/artefacts, persons, and symbols/data, respectively. Working on them entails, at least in principle, different types of actions attuned to the phenomena they are dealing with: transformation/production in the case of work on 'nature', caregiving or teaching concerning persons; analysis and calculating of data in the case of "social and economic processes" (161). Of the three "activity profiles", only the first one would qualify as work in the

[42] The turn towards the recognition paradigm might have provided Honneth with additional reasons to depart from the expressive model. While the recognition paradigm is decidedly intersubjectivist, identifying relations of recognition as preconditions for self-development, the expressive model gives primacy to the subject-object relations since it assumes that self-development unfolds through acts of externalisation having as their addressee objects, or more generally, external nature. Thus, there is a *prima facie* divergence between the anthropological premises of the two accounts of self-development. On the other hand, some of Honneth's commentators have argued that the two models' anthropological premises can be convergent. Deranty argues that in addition to intersubjective relations identified by Honneth, interaction with external nature, with 'reality', also plays a vital role in self-constitution (*Beyond Communication* 467-81). For the argument that Honneth's early and recognition model could be made compatible because they share the same basic norms, e.g.' expression' and 'cooperation', see Deranty, "Expression and Cooperation as Norms of Contemporary Work". For an argument favouring the incompatibility thesis, see Boston, "New Directions for a Critical Theory of Work".

productivist model, i.e. productive activities in the strict sense transform 'nature' for the sake of producing "useful commodities". In contrast, Honneth's notion identifies all of them as types of social labour insofar as each of them, in its way, contributes to the reproduction of the social "lifeform".

At this point, we can bring together the elements of Honneth's recognition based account of the economy considered so far. His account is based on the conception of the bourgeois-capitalist societies as a specific order of recognition, albeit a fragile and contested one since it cannot rely on transcendent grounds to legitimise itself but on normative consensus. The sphere of the economy, broadly speaking, would be one of cooperation that has its reason defined by the task of maintaining "the universally favoured components" of the social lifeform, with the qualification that what these components are is a matter of constant debate. 'Labour' refers to those activities and performances through which the life form is maintained and reproduced, again with the qualification that what counts as 'labour' might become subject of dispute and indeed of struggles for gaining social or intersubjective recognition for one's efforts as labour. Finally, one would be entitled, as a contributor, to a share of material goods produced through cooperative efforts in virtue of the achievement represented by one's particular contribution, again with the observation that what counts as an achievement and what would be a fair share can become subject of debate and of struggles for recognition of one's efforts as a genuine achievement. Accordingly, Honneth's recognition model identifies three components of economic life: "universally favoured components of a given lifeform", labour as activities essential to the reproduction of the lifeform, and achievement based material distribution.

All the three components are *norm-mediated* because the question concerning each of them demands answers based on normative resolutions. It cannot be decided via 'pure' economic principles, such as the price mechanism, the principle of efficiency, or the law of supply of demand, what are the "universally favoured components of a given lifeform" because it depends on social participants to identify and arrive at normative consensus in regard to what components of their lifeform are fundamental and worthy of reproduction. Implicitly, the questions regarding the activities contributing to social reproduction and thus worthy of the status of social labour, and what counts as an achievement require normative resolutions.

The recognition model has taken the first steps towards denting the self-evidence of the 'economist' descriptions portraying the sphere of the economy as 'norm-free' sphere

having a system-like nature by disclosing the normative dimension of the three components,. It is true that at the level of social life, schemas of valuation and decision-making processes become institutionalised, mediating action coordination and fulfilling the task of normative consensus quasi-autonomously. In this case, economic life might appear as if 'norm-free' mechanisms drive it. Honneth could hardly deny that the economy can take this appearance. However, the point of his argument is that such an appearance is just that- an as-if- because, in the end, questions can arise regarding the features of the lifeform worth preserving, what counts as work, and what counts as an achievement. 'Norm-free' mechanisms cannot provide answers to these questions, normative resolutions are required instead.

Further on, the system-like appearance of the economy might lose its self-evident character in situations of crisis in which derailments of the economy compel the participants to the 'system' to raise once against the critical question regarding its foundations. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that having to provide counter evidence to the 'economist' descriptions, Honneth points towards the critique participants to the capitalist system articulate at the level of everyday life. For example, his critique of the productivist conception of labour relies on the feminist critique that denounces the role of gendered norms in devaluing those forms of work performed mainly by women, such as care or household work, and minimising their social contribution. Findings like these would reveal, in Honneth's view, that "the social demarcation of professions- indeed, the shape of the social division of labour as a whole- is a result of the cultural valuation of specific capacities for achievement" ("Redistribution as Recognition" 153). Similarly, he relies on feminist critique to show that gendered norms already infiltrate the presumed 'norm-free' mechanisms of material distribution, eschewing the distribution of social wealth to the detriment of women. This happens when women receive lower wages than men for the same kind of work, or when professions are devalued once they are identified as 'feminine'. Consequently, struggles over redistribution would be misinterpreted when reduced to conflicts based on strategic interest by which economic actors seek to maximise their share of social wealth; instead, they would represent morally motivated struggles based on experiences of disrespect fuelled by the consciousness that while one's work represents a social contribution, one's particular achievements are unfairly under-valued or not recognised as a social contribution in the first place.[43] The latter would be

[43] According to Honneth, redistributive struggles "typically take the form of social groups, in response to the experience of disrespect for their actual achievements, attempting to throw the established evaluative models into question by fighting for greater esteem of their social contribution, and thereby for economic redistribution" (*"Redistribution as Recognition"* 154).

the case when the established demarcation of professions places outside the category of work worthy of social recognition activities that nevertheless contribute to the reproduction of the lifeform. All in all, the point of Honneth's critique is that the critical actions of the participants to the economy should be recognised as part and parcel of the reality that descriptions of the economy should disclose. In that case, the norms providing motivational and justificatory grounds to these forms of critique also belong to the 'stuff' constituting the reality of the economy.[44] They should find a place in descriptions of the contemporary world of work. In this sense, the 'economist' description presenting a 'norm-free' image of the world of work loses its self-evident character.

Honneth's recognition account can contribute to the realisation of the tasks of a critical conception of work, as considered in the introduction to this chapter, in the following way. It provides criteria for distinguishing between a 'good' and a 'bad' organisation of economic life. 'Good' arrangements are those that ensure participants can secure adequate recognition for their activities as socially relevant labour and for their particular contributions in the form of a fair share of social wealth. 'Bad' arrangements are those that devalue contributions either by failing to ensure their recognition as labour or by devaluing their achievements. The pre-theoretical foundation for this standpoint would be represented by the various attempts of social actors to challenge established schemas of valuation and deny them recognition for their efforts. These pre-theoretical forms of critique are not contingent occurrences but find their normative condition of possibility in the promises for recognition underpinning economic life. As Honneth points out, the principle of distribution based on particular achievements "contains the normative claim to consider the individual achievements of all members of society fairly and appropriately" (148-9). In turn, the principle of achievement would find its grounding in the constitution of the sphere of the economy as one of cooperation for the sake of "maintaining the universally favored components of the social lifeform."

2.2.3 The functionalist objection

From the standpoint of Honneth's normative account, the 'norm-free' descriptions of the world of work would represent theoretical artefacts insofar as they are obtained through

[44] In Honneth's view "mental or social attitudes" represent "second-order facts that belong no less to reality, because they exercise constant pressure to make changes to first-order social facts", e.g. institutions ("Rejoinder" in *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays* 399).

basic concepts set up to bracket the normative dimension of economic life. Well aware of the challenges that the dominant 'economist' mindset poses to any attempt to revive the idea of critical theory of work, Honneth could not settle for only providing a negative critique; equally important is to identify and thematise the cracks in the 'economist' descriptions by disclosing the normative facticity of the economy. Not one but two critical conceptions of work are present in his writings. I considered the strengths and weaknesses of the first model in light of the tasks a critical concept of work must fulfil. Because the second model is the one favoured by Honneth to date, albeit as will be shown in the following chapters, it too underwent some changes, and it is more developed than his earlier one, a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses will require more space. To start with, this section introduces the objection that Honneth's strict 'normativism'- the assumption that norms have real efficiency within the economy- is not convincing on empirical and theoretical grounds.

Nancy Fraser objects to Honneth's 'normativism', underpinning his reconstruction of the recognition order of bourgeois-capitalist societies; in her view, the empirical intermeshing of 'economy' and 'culture' is not sufficient to warrant Honneth's treatment of economy as a normatively embedded sphere governed by principles of mutual recognition. In order to make the discussion more manageable, it might be helpful to follow Fraser's typology of social theoretical frameworks. According to her, there are four ways in which the relation between 'economy' and 'culture' or moral-social norms can be conceptualised. The first two frames are monistic and represent either versions of 'economism', already considered in this chapter, or 'normativism'. Radical forms of 'economism' propose a frame of social analysis treating social stratification, including the status order, as an outcome of economic relations. It applies to fully marketised types of societies in which market mechanisms determine not only material distribution but also the social status of actors. Conversely, 'normativism' analyses social stratification, including economic relations, *solely* as the outcome of moral-social norms. In Fraser's typology, 'normativism' is reduced to 'culturalism', according to which kinship relations mediated by 'cultural' values predetermine the social order, not only one's social status but also one's place in the system of material distribution. In such societies, social status predetermines access to economic resources. Consequently, 'normativism' rejects beforehand the possibility that norm-free economic imperatives would give rise to social hierarchy independently of social bonds.

Further on, Fraser contrasts the two mentioned forms of monism with dualist theoretical frames. Beyond their differences, the dualist ones are based on the assumption that

social stratification is the outcome of at least two, not one, types of social rationality. The first dualist framework, labelled 'substantial dualism', presumes that there are two separated social orders and forms of social integration, one based on 'norm-free' economic imperatives, and another based on 'cultural schema' of valuation (Fraser, "Social Justice" 48-59).[45] The second dualist framework is the one Fraser prefers. According to it, the 'cultural' schema of valuation represents *one* factor, along norm-free market mechanisms, influencing the division of labour and material distribution. She agrees with Honneth that critical theories must account for the empirical entwinement of 'economy' and 'culture'. However, in her view, the empirical relation between 'economy' and 'culture' favours a particular type of dualist frame at the expense of monistic ones. She defends *perspectival* dualism because, in her view, it offers the most credible account of the relationship between 'economy' and 'culture'. Perspectival dualism shares with the first type of dualism the thesis that two different types of social rationality govern social stratification, i.e.' economic' and 'cultural'; however, against the 'substantivist' variant of dualism, she rejects the claim that two orders of social stratification correspond to two strictly separated social spheres, arguing instead that they are practically intermeshed and can be distinguished only analytically ("Social Justice" 60-4).

With the main frames in place, we can now take a closer look at Fraser's critique of Honneth. As can be anticipated, in her view, Honneth's approach represents a typical example of 'culturalism'. Against it, she posits that 'cultural' schemas of valuation embedded in the economic sphere do not annul the autonomy of economic imperatives. In her view, it is unreasonable to assume that cultural schemas of valuation predetermine the integration of economic actions and their consequences given that market integration implies complex operations and de-personalised forms of interaction. Consequently, adequate explanations of economic mechanisms and the structural changes in the capitalist system are possible if the economy must be analysed and theorised as a 'norm-free' system and not as a normatively mediated sphere of social interaction. Secondly, globalised capitalism shows that economic mechanisms are impervious to cultural differences. Therefore, it is unreasonable to assume that the effects of capitalism in global contexts can be understood as outcomes of norm-mediated interaction. Again, an adequate understanding capable of generating

[45] The two-level conception of society proposed by Habermas- according to which in contemporary societies, social integration takes the form of 'system integration' in certain social spheres, e.g. the economy, and normative integration in others, e.g. moral-cultural spheres- would represent the classic example of 'substantive dualism; see, for example, Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2.*

convincing explanations requires treating the economy as a de-personalised system governed by norm-free imperatives ("Distorted Beyond All Recognition" 211-6).

Fraser's critique is based not only on empirical counter-evidence but also on social-theoretical considerations. The starting point is that action coordination can take not one but two forms: social integration mediated by shared norms and system integration mediated by de-personalised, 'norm-free' mechanisms. The suggestion is that Honneth is not only empirically but also theoretically naive in rejecting the market's system-like nature, stubbornly assuming that it can be analysed via a scheme of social integration suited for interpersonal forms of interaction, e.g. dynamics of recognition. The question is not if cultural valuation might play a role. Indeed, Fraser agrees that this must be acknowledged as a valid point. Instead, the question is if, say, the division of labour and factors influencing the wage rate are also predetermined by market mechanisms independently of such cultural forms of valuation. To use some of Fraser's examples, is it not the case that wage rates are also influenced by political-economic factors such as the cost of credit, the ease with which firms can move their operations in zones with lower wages, and international currency exchange rates and so forth? If the answer is affirmative, and if economic imperatives, e.g. profit maximisation, govern phenomena such as wage rates, then it cannot be the case that wage rates are or can be in capitalist societies the expression of social esteem attached to the various occupations. To maintain that wage rates are *solely* the expression of cultural schemas of valuation, Honneth must show either that the mentioned 'norm-free' economic factors do *not* influence wage rates and thus go against economic common sense or show that "cultural" schema of valuation influence the economic mechanisms in each case. The decisive test for Honneth's frame, the above objection suggests, consists in providing adequate explanations of how bourgeois-capitalist societies reproduce economic subordination. In order to fulfil this demand, he would need, at the minimum, to provide a theoretical account capable of *explaining* the fluctuations of wage rates in terms of the esteemed order of bourgeois-capitalist societies. In the background of this objection, there is a hardly dissimulated view that Honneth's account is theoretically naive. Faced with the brutal reality of an economic system constantly trumping moral limits, one can retreat behind moral-ethical conceptions of the economy only at the cost of giving up any attempt to adequately analyse capitalism.[46]

[46] For similar objections see Simon Thompson, “Is redistribution a form of recognition?” 93-5.

In Fraser's view, 'perspectival dualism' incorporates the most convincing aspects of the competing frames while avoiding their weakness. It would manage to account for the relation emerging in practice between 'economy' and 'culture', as Honneth does, but it offers a weaker and *prima facie* more credible interpretation of it by making room for evidence pointing towards the influence of 'culture' over 'economy'. Against Honneth's frame, it also promises to account for evidence showing the independence of 'economy' from 'social-cultural' constraints. If material distribution, and implicitly economic subordination, is predetermined by economic imperatives but also influenced in some cases by 'culture' then, concludes Fraser, an adequate theoretical frame must provide two types of explanations of economic subordination; thus, a dualist rather than monistic frame would be more suited for the task.

It must be said that the functionalist objection raised by Fraser does not necessarily annul the relevance of the recognition theory for a critique of the economy. It could remain relevant so far Honneth embraces the weaker version of the embeddedness thesis, as Fraser defended. According to it, the 'cultural' schema of valuation might impact economic interaction *along with* the functioning of 'norm-free' mechanisms. In this case, Honneth may justify the relevance of his recognition frame for a critique of maldistribution, at least in those cases of economic subordination having their origin in denigrating 'cultural' value schema as shown by the example of the gendered schema of valuation of achievements. Unfortunately, however, the weaker version collides with the methodological monism underpinning his theory of recognition. His monistic approach forces him to reject the weaker version of the embeddedness thesis, although, in light of Fraser's criticism, a dualist approach seems the more promising path. The reason is that Honneth's monistic frame is set up to trace any form of subordination to cultural patterns of valuation, methodologically negating that social stratification can also have its origin in the functioning of norm-free market mechanisms. However, if, in addition to the 'cultural' schema of valuation, economic mechanisms not governed by norms play a role in reproducing economic subordination, then his monism does not suffice. As Fraser points out, Honneth's frame *cannot* offer a well-founded critique of *how* relations of domination are reproduced in capitalist societies because it cannot explain how "market mechanisms give rise to economic class relations that are not mere reflections of status hierarchies. Neither those relations nor the mechanisms that generate them can be understood by recognition monism" ("Distorted Beyond All Recognition" 214). Nicholas Smith adds further nuance to this objection when suggesting that even if one assumes with

Honneth that capitalist markets remain normatively embedded in the strict sense of predetermined economic mechanisms, an unexplained issue still remains: "not the indifference of market mechanisms to norms of mutual recognition, but their tendency to subvert those norms" ("Recognition, Culture, Economy" 342).

Honneth is well aware that his recognition frame is not set up to "adequately explain development processes" in capitalist societies, even less the functioning of capitalism ("The Point of Recognition" 248-9). However, he holds on to the thesis that capitalist markets are normatively embedded. In the following, I show that in addition to the first argument presented so far- based on the empirical entwinement of 'economy' and 'culture'- and which is the aim of Fraser's critique, Honneth proposes a second argument based on social-theoretical considerations regarding the preconditions on which the integration and reproduction of bourgeois-capitalist societies can secure *legitimacy*.

2.3 The Point of Legitimacy

2.3.1 Legitimacy: a market immanent problem

The social-theoretical thesis representing the starting point for the second argument is that moral justification of the social order represents a quasi-functional condition of social integration and reproduction of societies, including capitalist societies ("The Point of Recognition" 249-50). This thesis shifts the focus of the debate from the question of how economic subordination in capitalist societies can be explained to whether the way the economy functions is *legitimate*. It would be justified to reject the question in favour of purely functionalist accounts if one or both of the following assumptions hold: either the market has been decoupled from social bonds and has acquired a 'system-like nature', therefore the question of legitimacy does not apply to it, or the 'norm-free' mechanisms and the 'purely' economic principles governing it are sufficient for justifying its way of functioning and its outcomes.

I offer several reasons against the mentioned assumptions' validity. Although Honneth does not list them explicitly, they are convergent with his argument. Firstly, assuming the

decoupling of the market from substantial ethical constraints, the case remains that this outcome is not itself the result of some autonomous dynamics but the outcome of a historical process dependent on political *action* in the form of institutional reforms aiming at 'dis-embeddedness'. This point is illustrated by the fact that the question if the market should be let to function completely independent of normative constraints can and has resurfaced time and again precisely in situations of acute crisis. Situations of crisis have fuelled doubts regarding the market's legitimacy, the critique of its socially deleterious consequences and motivated political measures aiming at restraining its adverse effects (Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*).

Secondly, the conception of the market as a 'system' does not annul the fact that its reproduction depends on social actors assuming and developing specific attitudes and dispositions and taking up their share of social burdens. More than purely functional considerations are required to justify the burdens market participants must assume and the dispositions they must develop. There seems to be a gap between what justification can be derived from the aim of increased efficiency of production, which for the working subject translates, among other things in, effort and suffering, and what the working agents as human agents would find as a reasonable or compelling justification for taking part in the production process on the terms laid out for them. The smooth reproduction of the economic system depends on closing the normative gap between the justification of the system in terms of functional aims and the translation of these abstract reasons into justifications capable of motivating working subjects not only to take part in the capitalist system of production but also develop the required dispositions. While appearing as evident at the level of system theory, explanations based on ideas such as the naked interest in efficiency and increase of returns fails to convince at the level of social reality: such reasons are insufficient for motivating agents to engage in economic and productive activities. As Max Weber has shown, the pure desire for profit-making is not sufficient to explain why capitalist rationality developed; for such an explanation, one must consider its 'spirit' or ethos, that is, the ethical ideals conferring to economic activity a greater, more general even religious purpose, beyond mere private self-interest (*The Protestant Ethic*). Karl Polanyi offers further evidence when challenging the thesis that the promise of higher wages is sufficient to explain working subjects' willingness to participate in the capitalist system. Many forms of coercion had to be put in place in order to drill the market logic in the working subjects, from corporal punishment, low wages, "legal compulsion and parish serfdom", "labor police" to "the final

stage [...] reached with the application of 'nature's penalty', hunger" (*The Great Transformation* 173). Closer to our current situation, the French sociologists Boltanski and Chiapello show that ethical and moral justifications play a functional role in the integration of subjects in the economic system, capital owners and workers alike (*The New Spirit of Capitalism)*. Neither sheer material necessity, nor abstract justifications in terms of 'material progress' and 'efficiency in the satisfaction of needs' are sufficient for solving the problem of integrating the working subjects in the capitalist organisation of labour; normative justifications must be additionally offered.

Thirdly, the inputs on which the system's reproduction depends appear from the standpoint of social actors as demands for action or for assuming prescribed roles. Because of this, there is always the possibility that participants subject, in turn, the system demands to demands for justification. The fact that practices of contestation represent a more or less constant feature of the social world shows that the legitimacy problem is not merely academic but practical. Social cooperation would become highly fragile without the possibility of even fragmentary and temporary moral consensus. Since moral principles answer the question of legitimacy, while the failure to solve this problem bears the risk of endemic conflict, they must play an essential role in social integration and coordination, even in the case of the 'system-like' character of social spheres. In turn, economic imperatives, e.g. profit maximisation, *cannot* single-handedly answer the question of legitimacy. Even if the market favours profit maximisation, the question remains of why profit maximisation should be the end point of economic life. This question cannot be answered merely by repeating or listing once again the market imperatives; norms must be provided and justified. Indeed, historically the emergence of the market went hand in hand with moral and political justifications transcending 'pure' economic reasons, relying on conceptions of the common good or social improvement (*The New Spirit of Capitalism*, "General Introduction").

Suppose functionalist accounts are not sufficient to absolve the market of the task to secure its legitimacy. In that case, the empirical intermeshing of 'economy' and 'morality' acquires renewed significance when grasped from the standpoint of the legitimacy problem. Such relations would not be merely contingent, such as cases of instrumentalisation of culture by the economy. The intermeshing of 'economy' and 'morality' would represent an essential precondition for the problem of market legitimation to receive an answer in the first place because by themselves economic imperatives cannot ensure the legitimacy of the market. Thus, the question arises of what norms or principles could ensure its legitimacy.

In the second step of the reconstruction, Honneth's normative account of the economy can be interpreted as his answer to this question. In order to represent a credible candidate, the account would need to meet two basic conditions: norms of recognition need to be disclosed as being immanent to the bourgeois-capitalist world of work, and the identified principles of mutual recognition need to be justified as morally valid. Regarding the first condition, as shown, Honneth is convinced that the moral grammar of recognition is already at work in bourgeois-capitalist societies. To reiterate, he relies on the feminist critique disclosing the gendered character of the norms that predetermine the value of social contributions, of what counts as work, and of the wage rate attached to various professions in contemporary societies. In the same vein, he argues that in bourgeois-capitalist societies, the moral grammar of struggles over distribution discloses them as reactions to the experience of having one's social contribution ignored, rendered invisible or diminished due to hegemonic valuation patterns. He counter-poses to the taken-for-granted interpretation of struggles over distribution as reactions fueled purely by economic considerations, a more complex account capable of taking into consideration not only the explicit demands of such struggles, such as demands for material redistribution, but also the moral experiences and grammar by which they seek to publicly justify their demands. Honneth constantly returns to findings from historical and sociological research on the labour movement to substantiate his interpretation of distribution conflicts as morally motivated struggles fuelled by experiences of misrecognition.[47]

Regarding the second condition, Honneth's assumption that the identified principles of mutual recognition are morally valid requires further clarification. When distinguishing between various ways the relationship 'economy'- 'culture' can be framed, the notion of 'cultural embeddedness' and 'normativism' were not sufficiently differentiated. To the extent that the discussion was limited to the opposition between 'norm-free' and 'normative' accounts of the market, the mentioned distinction was not essential. At this point, however, designating Honneth's 'normativism' as 'culturalism' invites misinterpretations, especially if 'cultural' refers to a particular set of values and ethical orientations shared by a particular group within a pluralist society. Honneth's account is not 'culturalist' insofar as the principles of mutual recognition do not express particular 'cultural' sets of values. He does not defend

[47] Honneth has repeatedly relied on the works of E.P. Thompson, Richard Sennett, and Jonathan Cobb, among others, to support his claim that labour struggles were not driven solely by strategic interests but, in a good measure, by experiences of disrespect perceived as forms of injustice. See Honneth, *The Struggle*, Chapter 8; "Redistribution as Recognition" 131. Some of the works on which Honneth relies are E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; Sennett and Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class.*

some ‘cultural-theoretical’ monism (which would imply the idea of homogenous culture) but ‘moral-theoretical’ monism. He presumes that different morally valid recognition principles can be traced to a genus encompassing different species of relations of mutual recognition (“Redistribution as Recognition” 157).

More to the point of our discussion, his account of the third sphere of recognition, underpinned by the achievement principle, would represent the answer to the question of the conditions under which the market can secure social legitimacy. To recall, he holds that the achievement principle represents in modern societies the “backdrop of normative legitimation which, in case of doubt, has to provide rational grounds for publicly justifying the privileged appropriation of particular resources like money or credentials” (“Redistribution as Recognition” 148). Honneth regards the achievement principle and the notion of work, as contribution to the reproduction of the “universal features of the lifeworld”, as morally relevant because, in his view, they can be traced back to the general interests of human subjects. This idea can be clarified as follows. As shown in the previous chapter, Honneth’s theory of recognition points towards a tripartite conception of personhood as the endpoint of self-development in ‘post-traditional’ societies. One of these self-relations refers to a self-esteem relation individuals can develop by securing social recognition through esteem for their particular abilities, attributes, or life choices. Esteem would represent a generalisable expectation that individuals bring into social interaction in ‘post-traditional’ societies. What Honneth’s analysis of the recognition order of bourgeois-capitalist societies adds to this picture is a more concrete answer to the question of what the sphere of esteem might entail. He claims that by taking part in the third sphere of recognition of bourgeois-capitalist societies, governed by the achievement principle, individuals should, in principle, have the opportunity to cooperate with others. They cooperate by making particular contributions in the form of socially relevant work to the realisation of shared values. In turn, promises of esteem would be socially embedded as forms of recognition validating the worthiness of various particular contributions graspable in light of the shared values.[48]

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[48] In Honneth’s social-recognition model, social labour represents the activity that inserts individuals into the main esteem order of bourgeois-capitalist societies, thus opening up the possibility, at least in principle, for a fuller development of their personhood by acquiring social esteem, in turn enhancing their sense of self-esteem, i.e. that their particular talents and abilities are worthy. Without rejecting the ethical relevance of the social dimension of work, some scholars have faulted Honneth’s model for failing to recover the ethical relevance of working as an activity that shapes the workers’ subjectivity. For an attempt to develop a critical conception of work grounded in the thesis that the activity of working is central to self-constitution- defended by recourse to Christophe Dejours’s “psychodynamics of work”- see Dejours and Deranty, “The Centrality of Work”; Deranty, “What is Work?”; Deranty, “Work as Transcendental Experience”. For a systematic attempt to articulate and defend a critical conception of work aiming to identify the multifaceted relevance of work for individual and

From the standpoint of the proposed reconstruction, Honneth's second argument can be summarised along the following lines: the first move starts from the social-theoretical premise stating that any society relies on a set of moral principles having the quasi-functional role of justifying the social order, including the justification of how burdens and rights among social actors are socially distributed. Since social actors do not merely take up social roles and responsibilities but also engage in practices of contestation and critique, socially embedded moral principles also have a role in mediating social conflicts. Furthermore, regardless if the market is conceptualised as a norm-free system or as a social-moral sphere, this does not annul the fact that market participants are expected to develop specific attitudes and types of behaviour, assume burdens and acknowledge rights. Consequently, the risk of contestation of the distribution of burdens and privileges among market participants is a more or less permanent feature of the market-mediated sphere of social labour. Indeed, a point missed by some of Honneth's critics is that the problem of market legitimation should *not* be understood solely as a theoretical problem but as a practical-political problem arising out of economic interaction, especially in contexts of crisis, between parties struggling over the terms of economic interaction. If this is the case, the market cannot disburden itself of the legitimacy question.

Given the proposed interpretation, Honneth's account of the bourgeois-capitalist would represent his answer to the question of legitimacy (and not solely as a frame aiming to analyse the intermeshing of 'economy' and 'culture'). He distinguishes three recognition spheres differentiated by the relations of mutual recognition underpinning them, pointing towards specific moral principles. Based on the achievement principle, the third sphere establishes that individuals' share of material and economic resources is an expression of social esteem for one's contribution to the realisation of societal goals. The share of material resources is fair when it proportionally reflects one's contribution. However, Honneth carefully distinguishes spheres of recognition from actual institutions; this distinction opens up the possibility that different moral principles can cross the same institution and that the same institution can embody different moral principles at different times or epochs.[49] This

social well-being, see Dejours et al., *The Return of Work in Critical Theory*. An important distinction between the two accounts is that Honneth works with the self-assumed restriction of identifying those norms of work that can be disclosed as presuppositions of the bourgeois-capitalist social order, an echo of his acknowledgement of the '"genetic fallacy" objection, while the "psychodynamic model" does not bound itself to the same methodological restrictions.

[49] This is one of the main differences advertised by Honneth between his account of bourgeois-capitalist societies and the one Hegel introduces in his *Philosophy of Right,* from which Honneth takes inspiration. Although Honneth follows Hegel in identifying the three elemental spheres of recognition defining the

point is important because Honneth resists reducing the third sphere of recognition, governed by the achievement principle, to the market institution. On the contrary, drawing on the feminist critique of 'economism', Honneth emphasises that an important part of the work necessary for social reproduction is done outside the market, such as household work.

Furthermore, the market institution would pertain to the third sphere of recognition given its role in the material reproduction of bourgeois-capitalist societies. The fact that the market represents, in capitalist-bourgeois societies, a core institution regulating the distribution of material and economic resources brings it into the purview of those moral principles legitimising economic and material appropriation. Following Honneth, in bourgeois-capitalist societies, the relevant principles are that of legal equality and achievement since they can confer legitimacy to how material resources are distributed and appropriated. The recognition-based concept of self-development and the identification of socially mediated self-esteem as an essential precondition of self-development in 'post-traditional' societies confers moral weight to the expectations of individuals that, at a minimum, they have access to social practices and spheres embodying the promise of esteem. The achievement principle represents the criteria in light of which the basic expectations of esteem can be judged, thus acquiring moral relevance. The concluding move brings all the premises together. Since the market also requires social legitimation and it plays a central role in material distribution, Honneth concludes that its legitimacy depends on accommodating the principle of achievement.

In summary, the functionalist objection is that *de facto* market mechanisms produce economic subordination also by functioning independently of normative constraints. It states that 'normativism' is inadequate because it relies on the premise that moral norms govern the 'economy'; consequently, it is conceptually and methodologically incapable of providing critical guidance in those cases where economic subordination is the result not of misrecognition but of mere economic imperatives. Honneth's rejoinder to the functionalist objection is meant to convince by shifting the discussion to a more preliminary level at which the assumptions of the objection are made visible and challenged. The point is that even if the market happens to trespass moral norms, this does not invalidate the fact that the market also needs moral legitimation; from this standpoint, the significance of trespassing is that of violation of moral norms. Thus, the distinction between those instances where the 'cultural'

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recognition order of bourgeois-capitalist societies, he departs from Hegel, who, in Honneth's view, "also wanted to equate them with the institutional complexes typical of his time," e.g. the sphere of love with the family, the sphere of esteem with the state. ("Redistribution as Recognition" 145-6).

schema of valuation seems to influence the market and those in which market mechanisms are indifferent to moral norms should not invalidate the 'normativism' nor speak in favour of functionalist or dualist accounts; the instances of trespassing would be vulnerable to criticism and demands for reparatory action *because* they have violated the conditions under which market participants could offer their moral consent. This point, I suggest, is expressed by Honneth's claim that "[e]ven structural transformations in the economic sphere are not independent of the normative expectations of those affected, but depend at least on their tacit consent" ("The Point of Recognition" 250).

2.3.2 The functionalist objection revised

In an incisive and well-balanced article, Christopher Zurn argues that Honneth's attempt to show that the problem of market legitimacy requires normative resolution and that the theory of recognition can disclose and identify the norms in question pushes him into an unresolvable dilemma. Zurn finds the argument that the capitalist system cannot avoid the question of legitimacy, that it is morally embodied, convincing if the argument is read at a "high enough level of abstraction". The argument, the suggestion is made, hinges on the thesis that the functioning of the capitalist system depends at least on a set of institutionalised legal conditions, such as the right to private property and measures regulating labour contracts, that constrain and make possible economic integration. Zurn concedes to Honneth that the normative boundaries of capitalism can be conceptualised as "the expression of socially-shared evaluations of the comparative worth of different tasks, and by extension, those who have the ability and determination to carry them out", at least in democratic states. Therefore, the author concedes to Honneth that it might be possible to "reduce economic relations to a socially shared esteem dispositive by means of legal relations" at "a very high level of abstraction" ("Recognition, Redistribution" 105).

The main problem of Honneth's argument, claims Zurn, surfaces once it is placed within the broader context of Honneth's critical theory. Recalling the basics of Honneth's critical theory might help us better grasp Zurn's astute objection. Honneth endorses the idea that social integration and interaction are governed by moral principles rooted in relations of mutual recognition. Correlatively, structural social subordination would be anchored in institutionalised biassed interpretations of moral principles generating constellations of duties

and rights that give rise to (socially entrenched) forms of denigration or misrecognition. Finally, Honneth holds that morally motivated struggles represent the social mechanism of emancipation. More precisely, he proposes the concept of struggles for recognition as a social struggle fueled by shared experiences of social injustice triggered by socially entrenched forms of withheld recognition. Against this background, Honneth's rejoinder to the functionalist objection raises the question of how far the norms of recognition should determine the actual functioning of capitalist societies in general, and the market in particular, for his conception of emancipation from economic subordination through struggles for recognition to be convincing. In the scenario best supporting Honneth's case, the division of labour and the mechanisms of social wealth distribution would be entirely determined by the principles of equality and achievement. If this were the case, economic subordination and injustice would be rooted *solely* in hegemonic interpretations of recognition-based moral principles. In this case, it is plausible to interpret struggles over redistribution as collective actions challenging hegemonic interpretations of evaluative schema governing the distribution of social wealth and identify them as a potential medium of social emancipation within the economic sphere.

Zurn doubts that Honneth's account can pass the empirical test necessary to make the described critical framework operational in capitalist societies. The objection is analogous to Fraser's and adds that regardless of the problem of legitimation, it is empirically doubtful that the market mechanisms and other factors influencing the division of labour and material distribution are predetermined solely by norms. Consequently, even if it is conceded to Honneth that, at a very abstract level, the market requires moral legitimation and that social agents experience the adverse effects of market mechanisms and economic imperatives as forms of disrespect, it does not follow that a direct link can be established between the moral grammar disclosed by experiences of economic injustice and the nature of the mechanisms producing economic subordination, as Honneth's methodological monism presumes.

A more defensible interpretation of Honneth's embeddedness thesis would be that the recognition order of bourgeois-capitalist societies represents *one* factor influencing the division of labour and material distribution without negating the autonomy of economic mechanisms. In this case, "culture functions as a structural constraint upon the economy, even as the latter exhibits its own internal dynamics" (Zurn, "Recognition, Redistribution" 117). As shown when discussing Fraser's similar objection, Honneth might be able to defend the weaker version of the embeddedness thesis if he follows this path, but only at the cost of

giving up the monism of his theoretical framework. According to Zurn, the weaker version of the embeddedness thesis entails that no strict relation can be established between the experiences of economic injustice of social actors and the social-theoretical explanations of their causes. On the assumption that market mechanisms retain their autonomy, even if their practical entwinement with the cultural schema of valuation is also accepted, it cannot be that all experiences of economic injustice are traceable to patterns of misrecognition since also the norm-free dynamics of the market must produce some forms of subordination triggering experiences of injustice. In this case, the frame proposed by Honneth would lack the conceptual and theoretical instruments for identifying what types of factors are responsible for economic subordination in each case, such as normative or functional factors. Because of this, the theory is incapable of mediating and providing guidance for struggles against economic subordination, or worse, insofar as it is methodologically set up to articulate and justify solely recognition demands, it might end up suggesting incorrect remedies and thus misplace the aim of critique, such as entailing reconfiguration of patterns of recognition where economic subordination has its origin in mere economic imperatives (Zurn 117).

Zurn's critique leads to the conclusion that Honneth's argument is faced with an unresolvable dilemma: either hold onto the abstract but justified thesis that the market cannot escape the demand for legitimacy and point out that principles of recognition represent the leading candidates in light of which the market can secure social legitimacy, or hold onto empirical evidence showing that norms of recognition are indeed embedded in the capitalist market, thus justifying the relevance of his recognition frame for a critique of economic subordination. The first option entails defending the embeddedness thesis at a very 'high level of abstraction' and entails giving up the pretence that the recognition frame can guide emancipatory struggles in the sphere of 'economy'. The second option entails accepting that economic subordination might also have causes independent of 'cultural' schema of valuation. In this case, Honnet needs to give up his methodological monism in exchange for a dualist or pluralist account that can provide critical guidance regarding *all* forms of economic subordination in capitalist societies. Either way, the objection goes, Honneth's argument is insufficient to warrant the robust version of the embeddedness thesis required by his methodological monism. Because of this, Honneth's recognition frame cannot serve the aim of mediating and enhancing the realisation of emancipatory potentials embedded in the economic sphere of bourgeois-capitalist societies. In Zurn's view, Honenth would be well advised to follow the second option: to give up the monism of his social theory developing an

account of capitalist modernisation based on a pluralistic framework rather than the unidimensional recognition frame (118).

2.3.3 The embeddedness thesis: a reconstruction

In this final section, I propose an interpretation of the embeddedness thesis that avoids the dilemma identified by Zurn and strengthens Honneth's argument. To prepare the ground, I offer some reasons why methodological dualism is not necessarily preferable to Honneth's monism given the theoretical-practical aims of the critical theory of work. Methodological dualism conceptualises the market as having a system-like nature, independent of normative constraints, but this assumption is not easily reconcilable with the methodological self-restrictions of critical theory. One assumption of critical theory is that the norms of critique are immanent in the social world in the sense of underpinning the sphere of social life that is the object of analysis and critique. It is not enough to argue that economic subordination is morally wrong and to trace its causes to market mechanisms; it must also be shown that the norms are also embedded in the market to fulfil the condition of *immanence*. Otherwise, critique risks taking the form of an 'external' evaluation based on mere moral 'ought' lacking social efficiency. While 'external' critique is not problematic in itself, critical social theory cannot be satisfied with providing external evaluation given its self-imposed methodological constraints of identifying in-worldly emancipatory potentials. In this regard, it is not evident how a conception of the market as a 'norm-free' system is compatible with the idea of immanent critique. Fraser's perspectival dualism is an illustrative example. She emphasises the autonomy of market mechanisms and argues that economic subordination is at least partially the effect of 'norm-free' mechanisms; yet, she argues that economic subordination is morally wrong because it violates the moral principle of parity of participation, representing the normative foundation of her perspectival dualism, which she takes as socially embedded. Because economic subordination is morally wrong, she concludes that reforms are necessary to bring the market under moral constraints. More generally, perspectival *dualism* sides with 'moralist' or 'culturalist' accounts against those taking the market as entirely independent of moral constraints. It argues that the market falls under the purview of substantial moral norms. However, it also sides with functionalist approaches arguing that the market exhibits a system-like nature functioning independently

of moral constraints against those arguing that the market is constrained by moral norms, e.g. Honneth's 'moral' account of the market. Finally, perspectival dualism also embraces the critical theory's methodological assumption that norms of critique must be socially embedded. In this regard, it argues against 'external' criticism evaluating the social world from the standpoint of moral principles justified independently of social reality, and faults it for not establishing if and how the said principles are embedded in the social world. It is far from evident that such an approach, encompassing *prima facie* divergent claims, is entirely consistent.[50] At a minimum, it is not self-evident that methodological dualism is necessarily better placed than methodological monism to ground a theory of emancipation within the capitalist world of work. Regardless of whether it is successful or not, Honneth's argument that socially efficient moral norms underpin the market is not the expression of theoretical naivety but an attempt to satisfy the methodological self-restriction of critical theory that is the condition that the norms of critique are immanent to the sphere in question in such a way that they can support emancipatory struggles.

The remainder of this chapter aims to reconstruct Honneth's thesis that the market does not escape the moral legitimacy problem in a way that avoids the dilemma identified by Zurn. I propose to rehearse Zurn's objection in order to highlight some of its basic assumptions. This step is necessary because, as will be shown, the assumptions on which Zurn's and similar critique relies are far from evident. As he concedes, a careful reading of Honneth's rejoinder to objections raised against his embeddedness thesis shows that his thesis is plausible if read at a 'very high level of abstraction'. Ultimately, even the capitalist system relies on minimal moral norms to secure social legitimacy. Even more, he concedes to Honneth that the norms might be traceable to relations of mutual recognition. However, the objection goes, 'abstract integration of distribution and recognition' is insufficient to explain how maldistribution occurs in capitalist societies. Defenders of the embeddedness thesis must produce more concrete interpretations backed up by empirical evidence that can guide social critique.

Furthermore, Zurn identifies two possible interpretations of Honneth's embeddedness thesis, a more substantial and a weaker version, that ought to fulfil the mentioned task. Zurn rejects each of them as fundamentally flawed. The strong interpretation of the embeddedness thesis implies that the market is not only *de jure* but also *de facto* determined and governed

[50] Nicholas Smith raises similar doubts regarding the consistency and constancy of Fraser's dualist approach ("Recognition, Culture and Economy" 329-36).

by the moral schema of valuation, such as norms of recognition. Honneth's critical theory would greatly benefit if the strong interpretation were empirically justified because it could be established a close link between experiences of economic injustice, the moral grammar of economic subordination mediating such experiences, and the social causes of economic subordination, e.g. socially entrenched patterns of misrecognition. The strong version of the embeddedness thesis is rejected because the moral principles identified by Honneth do not ultimately predetermine the contemporary form of capitalism; the market's trespassing of normative constraints and its indifference to moral norms is taken as proof that there are *functional* rather than *contingent* reasons for why a morally embedded market in the strong sense is impossible.

The second interpretation is less demanding and states that moral norms go some way in influencing market outcomes but are not the only factor predetermining economic distribution. Even if justified, Honneth cannot fall back on the weaker version because it conflicts with his methodological monism. Suppose recognition norms represent only one factor influencing the division of labour, with limited impact on material distribution. In that case, a comprehensive analysis of the capitalist system must also account for the other factors irreducible to recognition dynamics, i.e. economic imperatives. To satisfy this condition, Honneth would need to give up his methodological monism because an analysis of economic subordination based on experiences of misrecognition triggered by maldistribution is adequate only when denigrating patterns of valorisation are the direct causes of maldistribution, but not in those cases in which the causes are economic imperatives. Zurn finds the weaker version more plausible *because* it seems more convergent with the contemporary form of capitalism, e.g. norms of recognition are today embedded in the capitalist world of work.

The central point is that both interpretations are tested against empirical evidence of how the market functions *today* in the context of globalised capitalism, where the said evidence is implicitly taken as proof of *functional* limitations on how far moral norms can go in determining market interaction and economic imperatives. It is assumed in both cases that there are some hard limits to how far moral norms can influence market outcomes. The assumption is based on empirical evidence drawn from how capitalist markets function *today*. Therefore, a fundamental assumption underpinning Zurn's critique, an assumption in light of which the dilemma he identifies appears most forceful, is that there are some hard limits to how far moral norms can go in determining market outcomes, limits that find empirical

confirmation in the way in which the market functions *today*, and theoretical justification in *economic* explanations.

The assumption underpinning Zurn's critique is far from evident and should not be taken at face value by *critical* theories. Indeed, one might wonder if it is wise for *critical* theory to take positivist accounts of the market as the guideline for its analysis of capitalism. Even if it is accepted as an empirical fact that moral norms have a limited influence on the market, should not a critical account of capitalism question rather than take for granted the legitimacy of this state of affairs?[51] The premise put forward here is that the thesis of legitimacy- the task of legitimacy as a quasi-functional requirement- is meant to function not against the fact that moral constraints have a limited influence on the market but against the *meaning* of this fact. The question would be not if the limited purchase of moral norms regarding the market is factually correct today, Honneth would have a tough time challenging it, but if it is self-evident that this fact *signifies* that there are functional limits to how far moral norms can influence the market. A step further, the question would be if it is self-evident where the line should be drawn regarding how far normative embeddedness of the market can go: is the line the one drawn today, as the above objection seems to presume?

In more direct terms, Honneth's embeddedness thesis might be unwarranted when interpreted as a depiction of how capitalism functions *today*. However, the objection might lose some of its force if the embeddedness thesis refers to how the problem of legitimation unfolds historically within the sphere of economy. In this case, the focus of the debate would be the socio-historical process by which moral constraints encroach on the market. The embeddedness thesis would refer to the process by which the 'abstract' and, at first, rather implicit moral constraints of the capitalist market are transformed from potentialities, from 'oughts' underpinning the market without real efficiency, into forces gripping various dimensions of the market. There is textual support that this interpretation is imputable to Honneth in his debate with Nancy Fraser. Consider Honneth's example of "how historical changes can be brought about by innovations whose origins lie in nothing other than the persuasive power- or better, the incontrovertibility- of moral reasons" ("Redistribution as Recognition" 149). According to him, the emergence of the welfare state would correspond

[51] J.-P. Deranty takes a step further in challenging the assumption that economic science can, in fact, provide uncontroversial findings making the assumption of Zurn's critique even less evident: "It is simply not the case that one can simply gesture towards economic science and trust that it will be able to provide uncontroversial descriptions, explanations, and predictions of economic phenomena. However, the way in which Fraser and Zurn refer to the necessity of an explanation of economic injustice through the "causes of injustice," seems to gesture towards such value-neutral economic analysis" ("Critique of Political Economy and Contemporary Critical Theory" 310).

to a norm-mediated process by which the principle of equal legal treatment "penetrates" the "previously autonomous sphere of social esteem". The institutionalisation of social rights would be the result of a social learning process, driven by critical reinterpretations of legal equality, at the end of which it became established in the public consciousness that it is not sufficient to provide legal guarantees of personal autonomy in the form of rights in order to *de facto* guarantee those rights, the social and material preconditions for their realisation must also be secured. It became established that "members of society can only make actual use of their legally guaranteed autonomy if they are assured a minimum of economic resources, irrespective of income" (149).

The proposed interpretation is not only imputable to Honneth, but his argument would gain strength if his embeddedness thesis would refer to the social-*historical* dynamics playing out between moral norms, e.g. principles of mutual recognition, and shapes the market can take. In this case, objections to his thesis based on how the capitalist market is *today,* taken as evidence for hard limits that the functional requirements of the market impose, are not decisive anymore. The question of where these lines should be drawn becomes a socio-historical one, indeed a critical question. Honneth might have a right to such an approach given that capitalism does not arrive in only one shape but in significantly different varieties, some more sensitive to substantial moral constraints than others.[52] From this standpoint, not snapshots of contemporary forms of capitalism, but the historical unfolding of the relation between the 'abstract' condition of moral legitimacy and transformations of how the capitalist market functions would be the benchmark against which Honneth's account should be measured.

An interpretation of the embeddedness thesis gradually emerges from what was said so far that is not reducible to either of the two interpretations identified and criticised by Zurn. Nonetheless, it incorporates claims from both of them. The stronger and weaker interpretations of the embeddedness thesis are not mutually exclusive once the *historical* character of the phenomena they refer to is allowed to surface, such as the historical character of moral norms, the market's shape, and the relation between the two. According to the strong

[52] Hall and Soskice distinguish two contemporary varieties of capitalist markets, liberal market economy and coordinated market economy. They argue that the suitability of one model or another cannot be decided on 'pure' economic terms, e.g. efficiency, since both can be efficient at ensuring economic coordination, but depends on social institutions and socio-historical contexts within which they develop (*Varieties of Capitalism*). Even more, as MacMillan shows, Honneth's recognition approach to the economy finds points of convergence with at least one strain of economic theory- institutional economics- premised on the idea that the economy (including the market) is institutionally constituted and that "institutions play a decisive role in structuring and regulating economic activity" ("Recognition Theory and Institutional Labour Economics" 110-1).

reading, the thesis refers to a situation where moral principles govern market interaction and coordination of economic activity. In the reading proposed her, the strong thesis is imputable to Honneth not as a description of a state of fact but as an endpoint of a historical process of emancipatory transformations of the market representing the unfolding and gradual realisation of the 'abstract' moral constraints underpinning capitalist markets. According to the weaker reading, Honneth's embeddedness thesis states that norms of recognition influence without determining how the market functions. In the reading proposed here, the weaker reading is indeed imputable to Honneth as a claim regarding the form of the capitalist market *today*. The key point of the historical perspective proposed here is that the degree to which moral norms influence the market today *cannot* be taken as revealing some functional, or hard limits to how far norms can influence 'pure' economic imperatives. The historical character of moral norms, the market's varieties, and their relationship might reconcile methodological monism with evidence that moral norms partially constrain today's market, thus escaping the dilemma identified by Zurn. The two can be reconciled if the partiality of moral embeddedness is not 'essentialised' but read as a stage in a conflict-ridden social-historical transformation process, engendering various forms of the market-based economy. As a stage in an ongoing process, the limited purchase of norms today reveals not some presumed functional limits to how far the market can become normatively embedded but, eventually, the limits of the current shape of the market and the necessity of normative expansion. In this case, the fact that market participants are exposed to deleterious effects of 'norm-free' mechanisms 'freed' from normative constraints could find its counterpart in specific experiences of disrespect, which, in turn, could become the ground for expansion of the norms' encroachment on the market.

At this point, the reinterpretation of Honneth's thesis and argument proposed here is a hypothesis suggesting how the argument could be further developed. Honneth would need to provide more convincing evidence that the social spheres of the capitalist-bourgeois societies rely on principles of mutual recognition. He does provide some historical evidence for his theory of modern societies as constituted by spheres of recognition in his debate with Fraser. However, there is a long way from such remarks to a systematic account. Equally important, the task emerging so far reminds us of the problems identified at the end of the previous chapter. I argued that the critical theory Honneth develops in *The Struggle* still needs a more systematic account of the relationship between recognition principles and emancipatory social transformations that provides more robust evidence for the role of recognition norms in

modern societies. Similar conclusions have followed from Honneth's attempt to defend the conception of the market sphere as a sphere of recognition. In the second part of this study, chapters 3 and 4, I show that his second major work, *Freedom's Right*, can be interpreted precisely as an attempt to answer the problems identified so far, among other issues. More than this, in *Freedom's Right*, Honneth follows an argumentative strategy convergent with the one suggested by the reinterpretation of his embeddedness thesis proposed in the final section of this chapter.

Part II. Reconstructing Emancipation

Chapter 3: Reconstructive Critical Theory

3.1 Introduction

The first part of this study discussed Honneth's attempt to recover the topic of work for critical theory. The first chapter prepared the ground by presenting the framework of his recognition-based critical theory. Honneth identifies struggles for recognition as types of social action carrying emancipatory potential in both the objective and subjective sense. In the objective sense, they would represent the social mechanism mediating developmental transformations in the moral grammar underpinning social interaction and the distribution of rights. Through the struggles for recognition of those faced with structural misrecognition or social disrespect, new accents of normative horizons can be opened within the social world, new perspectives from which the institutionalised system of norms appears to serve the interests of the dominant group at the expense of the others. In the subjective sense, through the *praxis* of mutual clarification preparing the way for such struggles, the disadvantaged can become aware of their experiences as a shared condition and gain the support necessary to develop a critical attitude towards the normative social order.

Further on, as shown in the first chapter, the thesis regarding the role of struggles for recognition in emancipatory social transformations relies on several premises. First, it is supported by an intersubjective conception of personhood, according to which humans need recognition to develop a robust sense of the self. Honneth identifies three forms of recognition, pointing towards an ideal of personhood development along three axes: self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem. While in *The Struggle*, due to ambiguities in his argument, Honneth seems to posit, at times at least, the tripartite conception of personhood as referring to ahistorical potentials, already in his debate with Nancy Fraser, he is clear that no concept of socially embedded potentials of self-development can be derived from an anthropology of the person. This conclusion brings into sharper relief the relationship between the theory of recognition, i.e. its critical standpoint, and modern societies. As a consequence of this shift in focus, Honneth pays greater attention to problems and challenges involved in unearthing and justifying the promises for self-realisation embedded in

'post-traditional' or modern societies. Yet, as argued in the previous chapters, more robust evidence is needed to support his conception of modern societies as social orders comprising three primary spheres of mutual recognition than offered in *The Struggle* and his debate with Fraser.

As shown in the second chapter, Honneth's conception of the economy as a sphere of mutual recognition faces biting criticism. The functioning of the market, the objection goes, cannot be explained by appeal to the normative logic of recognition, or any other norms for that matter, because the market is governed by norm-free mechanisms, e.g. the law of supply and demand, the price mechanism. Honneth's rejoinder, I argued, is that the market depends on social legitimacy to secure its right to exist, regardless of whether norms *de facto* govern it or not in all its central aspects. From this perspective, the conception of the market as a sphere of mutual recognition represents his answer to the question of what basic moral norms must obtain if the market is to secure legitimacy. The second chapter concludes that Honneth's argument remains incomplete insofar as he does not provide robust evidence showing that norms of recognition emerged as the ground on which the market could secure legitimacy; showing this would require demonstrating that norms of recognition have acquired in modern societies social-moral efficiency in the sense of shaping the market institution. In summary, Honneth needs to justify the centrality of relations of recognition in the integration and reproduction of modern societies in general and the sphere of the economy in particular in order to justify a recognition-based critique of market-mediated social labour. Conceptual analysis backed up by findings from empirical sciences is insufficient in this regard. A systematic account is required, one that can show that dynamics of recognition did and continue to play a role in shaping the institutional order of modern societies, including the sphere of economy.

The second part of this study, comprising the current and the next chapter, traces Honneth's attempt to improve his critical theory. As will be shown, solving the problems just mentioned is at the core of the changes he brings to his theoretical framework. Although he has continually attempted to improve and clarify the premises of his theory, providing additional support and answering objections, in the end, he sought to further develop his theoretical framework not by working out its various dimensions separately but by engaging in another systematic effort. The outcome of this endeavour is his *Freedom's Right (FR)*, arguably his most remarkable work to date. Thus, it makes sense that while the first part of

this study had at its centre his first major work, *The Struggle for Recognition*, equal space and attention is offered to his second major work.

In this, third chapter, I present and discuss the general framework introduced in *Freedom's Right (FR),* preparing the ground for the next chapter comprising a more focused discussion of Honneth's argument for a conception of market-mediated social labour within the framework articulated in *FR*. This chapter consists of two main parts. The first one (3.2) introduces the basic premises of *FR* and clarifies in the process the points of continuity with his previous writings and some of the conceptual and theoretical innovations introduced in the mentioned book. I conclude that *FR* does not represent a radical shift in Honneth's work but an attempt to answer precisely those problems left hanging in his prior writings. Part two of this chapter (3.3) looks at some recurring objections raised against the methodological innovations and the reconstructive stance of *FR*. The common denominator is that the theoretical framework and the method introduced in *FR* are at odds in more than one way with the ethos and the primary aims of critical theory. I argue that Honneth's frame is robust because it can offer convincing rejoinders to recurrent criticism, although I stop short of providing a *tout court* defence of it.

3.2 *Freedom's Right* : Basic Premises

A first point of continuity between *FR* and Honneth's previous work regards his continuous reliance on Hegel's philosophy. The philosophical motive of *The Struggle,*, i.e. the three-fold relevance of recognition in self-development, the constitution of the social order, and normative grammar of social conflicts, is obtained via a reinterpretation of Hegel's Jena writings. *FR,* in turn, is squarely reliant on Hegel's mature works, especially his *Philosophy of Right*. This move is significant because at the end of the first part of *The Struggle*, Honneth claims that of interest for critical theory can be only Hegel's early writings in which relations of mutual recognition are identified as the basis of social life, and struggles for recognition are assigned a productive role in the moral development of social life. He argues at the time that Hegel leaves behind the proto-philosophy of intersubjectivity of his early work in his more mature writings in favour of a philosophy of consciousness denying to struggles for recognition any productive role in social development. In the meantime, Honneth's assessment of Hegel's mature work has become more favourable. He now

considers that the recognition category remains central throughout Hegel's philosophy and that it can accommodate the role of struggles for recognition in moral development should certain renovations be made to it. *FR* represents the culmination of his gradual reprisal of Hegel's mature work.[53]

Although Honneth's interpretation of Hegel is of interest for placing his account on the map of contemporary philosophical theories, a detailed discussion of his reading of Hegel would surpass the limits of this study. As in the previous chapters, questions regarding the adequacy of his interpretation will be pushed into the background for the most part. The rationale is that although Honneth's account in *FR* represents an attempt to actualise the spirit, if not the letter of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, his argument must stand on its own feet to convince. Therefore, the focus is on his argumentative strategy and its basic premises, rendering implicit for the most part, although not wholly ignoring his reliance on Hegel's philosophy.

3.2.1 Readings of *Freedom's Right*

A central aim of Honneth's book is to demonstrate the centrality of freedom in modern societies. This aim is reflected in the tripartite structure of his work. *FR*'s Introduction and Part I present the main premises of the study including an analysis of three modalities of individual freedom Honneth identifies as the 'fundamental values' of modern societies. Part II offers an analysis of the institutions bound to the first two modalities, i.e. negative and reflexive freedom, while Part III is dedicated to an analysis of three other institutions, i.e. sphere of personal relationships, the market and the public political sphere, that in Honneth's view are for the sake of realising the third modality of freedom, i.e. social freedom. A detailed study of the entire work is outside the purview of this chapter. Instead, I focus mainly on those sections and arguments of Honneth's work that promise an answer to the problems identified in the previous chapters that need to be solved if a recognition-based critique of the capitalist world of work is to emerge from Honneth's project. To reiterate, within the recognition paradigm, social orders are vulnerable to critique if they limit or deny individuals access to social preconditions of primary forms of self-realisation. As shown in

[53] Honneth dedicates several studies to Hegel's mature work preparing the methodological innovations and the shift of focus, e.g. from intact self-identity to individual freedom, introduced in *FR (Suffering from Indeterminacy*; *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*; "The Realm of Actualized Freedom").

the previous chapter, the seemingly disembedded character of the market sphere poses significant obstacles to such a critique of the capitalist world of work. Unless it can be shown that the market institution embodies promises for self-realisation, critique from the standpoint of self-development must appear as merely free-floating, lacking the character of 'immanence'. However, it is not self-evident that *FR* is set up to solve the identified problems. Indeed, there seems to be textual support for at least two alternative interpretations, as a theory of modern societies and as a theory of justice, that, if correct, would place Honneth's project on a different orbit. In the following, I present the two alternative readings. Although they can reclaim some plausibility, only the third interpretation, as critical theory rooted in social analysis, defended here, gives us the full scope of Honneth's *FR*.

Theory of modern societies

It seems justified to read *FR* as a theory of modern societies because out of the three parts of the book, the second and the third discuss core modern institutions such as the legal sphere, the family, the market and the public sphere, comprising more than three-quarters of the entire work. The action-theoretical conception underpinning Honneth's analysis of modern institutions in *FR* comes to the fore when approaching his work as a theory of modern societies. According to his conception, societies comprise subsystems of action that are oriented towards the realisation of values. Its basic premise is that the realisation of values represents a fundamental condition of social integration and reproduction of societies. According to Honneth, this conception of society giving weight to values, makes it possible to identify the central values of modern societies. Thus, it is unsurprising that his analysis of modern societies is normatively laden. His analysis does not focus on whatever disciplinary techniques or strategies of power might be in force at the level of social reality within different spheres of modern societies to squeeze out of participants the desired behavioural reactions and compliance. Instead, his analysis is guided by the question of what value various modern institutions serve. The point is not to register what the participants believe would be the values in question but to disclose interaction within the various action subsystems as geared towards realising values. Even so, he does not defend the hardly convincing thesis that the defining value of an institution is socially transparent in every case, nor does he assume that institutions remain within their ethical boundaries. On the contrary, he is well aware that an analysis seeking to unearth the fundamental values of social spheres

cannot merely register the norms that happen to hold at a time or another. An operation of *normative reconstruction* would be required by which patterns of interaction are brought to light not as they appear empirically in each case but as typical, idealised forms of interaction characteristic of various social spheres. As will be shown in the next chapter when I discuss the tasks and challenges involved in the normative reconstruction of the market, such an operation requires preliminary conceptual clarifications and convincing empirical evidence taking into account not only the state of the social sphere at a given time but its state in light of its origin and significant transformations.

On the one hand, it is hard to avoid the impression that Honneth's focus on the role of values in social integration is somehow arbitrary so far *FR* is read solely as a theory of modern societies, especially since in the mentioned book, he makes no explicit effort to rebut alternative readings of modernity. Although Honneth is not alone in holding that the conception of society as subsystems of actions geared towards the realisation of values provides an adequate framework for analysing modern societies,[54] such an approach is certainly not the only one. Indeed, one might take other societal processes as defining modern societies, such as the gradual but decisive impingement of instrumental reason into the life-world, as Habermas did, or the origin of a particular form of power, e.g. the birth of biopolitics, as Foucault did, to name just two of alternative high profile accounts.

On the other hand, Honneth's dispute with Fraser, discussed in the previous chapter, already provides reasons why he might favour the approach taken in *FR*. To recall, he draws attention to the idea that social arrangements and institutions, including the market, can secure legitimacy only insofar as there are good reasons for participants to consent to them. Suppose *FR* supports the said point, and as shown below, there are good reasons to make this assumption. In that case, access to the problem of legitimacy as a social problem could be granted precisely by an action-theoretical conception of society set up to analyse the values grounding social institutions. The fundamental values orienting various social spheres would represent the default answer, implicit in the social order, to the question of legitimacy. Since social reproduction depends, among other things, on the condition that social participants assume and follow through demands embedded in various institutions and so far, the realisation of values is the non-contingent outcome of institutionalised interaction, then institutionalised demands for types of action, behaviour, and action coordination could

[54] In addition to Hegel, Honneth takes cues from Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and the American sociologist Talcott Parsons, all of whom defend similar socio-theoretical premises (*FR* 3).

reclaim validity if they are necessary for the realisation of the values in question. Thus, an action-theoretic conception of society disclosing social spheres as being for the sake of realising institutionalised values brings the problem of legitimacy at the core of social integration and reproduction, which is one of the main points Honneth raises in his debate with Fraser, as shown in the previous chapter. In short, it would make sense to dedicate a consistent part of *FR* to distilling the norms underpinning core modern institutions if the main scope is to unearth or reconstruct those norms representing the ones in light of which modern institutions can secure legitimacy. Additionally, such a conception could justify the possibility of institutional critique as an inalienable feature of the social world. Critique would represent the practice by which social actors raise questions regarding the worthiness of the action systems they are called to sustain as participants. It would find its condition of possibility in the normative facticity of social institutions. Assuming that Honneth has the twofold aim mentioned in mind, it makes sense that he would work with the conception of society comprising systems of action for the sake of realising values. In turn, those analyses focusing *solely* on the dynamics of power discounting in the process of the autonomy of norms or values in guiding institutional interaction as well as bracketing the role of norm-mediated critique of participants, such norm-free frameworks of analysis would not be suited for the aim Honneth has in view.[55]

Theory of Justice

The peculiar conception of society defended by Honneth, according to which values underpin modern institutions in light of which they can reclaim legitimacy, serves the argument he introduces in his previous writings. To recall, the argument posits that social spheres, including the economy, cannot disburden themselves of the task of securing legitimacy, thus they must be normatively embedded. The relation between the conception of society introduced in *FR* and the problem of legitimacy is made explicit by Honneth's statement that a central aim of his study is to "develop a theory of justice based on the structural preconditions actually existing in society" (*FR* 3). From this standpoint, *FR* would represent an attempt to ground a theory of justice. This second reading is justified because, in

[55] For example, although a conception of society informed by Foucault's theory of power might recognise the centrality of norms in social integration and reproduction of social orders, it might foreclose the question regarding the moral validity of norms. For comparison, see Saar ("Immanent Normativity"; "Power and Critique"); Petherbridge ("The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth").

a sense, *FR* is precisely an attempt to *thematize* the basic principles of justice governing, so to speak, the distribution of rights in modern societies. Honneth proposes a theory of justice aiming to distil the principles of justice- in light of which the justness of social order is evaluated- out of principles already at work in the social world. In this regard, the reading of *FR* as an attempt to articulate a theory of justice incorporates the first one, i.e. as a theory of modern societies, since the substantial part dedicated to the analysis of core modern institutions represents a necessary step to unearth the principles of justice underpinning the said institutions. In this sense, the 'theory of justice based on social analysis' notion is spot on since the principles in question would be obtained via a reconstructive analysis of social institutions within the action-theoretical framework described above.

As already suggested, Honneth's account is reconstructive- it seeks to obtain its norms of justice out of the principles at work within the social world. Its peculiarity surfaces once contrasted with the dominant constructivist approaches. More fashionable than reconstructive ones, constructivist approaches seek to obtain their principles of justice via procedures by which validity criteria are obtained independently of social reality. Here the emphasis would be on devising procedures of validation that are not tributary in any way to the standards at work in the social world, the aim being to obtain non-partisan, universally valid, even if only formal, principles of justice. The constructivists, too, aim to obtain standards capable of evaluating the justness of social order, but rather than evaluating the social order in light of norms already at work within it, they seek to justify them independently of it and only in a second step apply them to social reality. The main reason is that, according to constructivists, an essential condition for obtaining valid principles of justice that can reclaim universal validity is to bracket any pre-theoretical, socially rooted understanding of norms. The operation of bracketing is required to avoid the risk that norms with only relative validity- limited to the social world from which they are extracted- infiltrate the principles of justice. In order to avoid this danger, constructivist theories rely on procedural methods aiming to determine not the substantial norms but the procedure by which valid principles should be generated. This procedure usually entails positing a very thin conception of rational subjectivity, lacking cultural, social or thick psychological characteristics in a pre-social situation of deliberation in which it must decide freely the norms and principles of a just

society- a principle of justice would be valid in so far it can be generated as the outcome of free consensus between rational subjects posited in the initial situation of deliberation.[56]

From the standpoint of constructivist approaches, the procedure of reconstruction as a method for obtaining norms and principles of justice is highly problematic because it risks validating norms with relative validity. Accordingly, Honneth would need to provide reasons why reconstructive approaches are preferable to the dominant constructivist one. He offers several reasons in *FR* and adjacent articles. Although they are not necessarily decisive, they serve here to illuminate the full scope of his account. Firstly, Honneth targets the presumption of constructivist accounts according to which principles of justice should be obtained independently of social reality. Although these principles aim to work as standards for evaluating social reality, the procedure by which they are obtained does not guarantee that they apply to the social world. Constructivist theory development does not guarantee that the obtained principles can be operational in supporting transformational critique at the level of social life. Instead, a relation with social reality might be established but only in a second step, not of theory development, but of theory application, in which empirical circumstances are considered. Because the two steps are disconnected, the risk emerges that the obtained principles "prove completely untenable once faced with the stubborn reality of institutions and cultural habits" (*FR* 83). The case might be that the principles of constructivist theories demand actions and social transformations by which societies would be brought in line with the said principles, thus becoming more just, while the social preconditions of the required transformations are lacking within the social context in question. In this instance, their demands would take the form of mere *ought* devoid of social efficiency; they would provide a conception of just social order, failing to clarify how and if it is realisable. The procedure justifying the moral validity of their principles would not demonstrate that the principles can play an active role in supporting transformative social critique.

A second objection starts from the premise that even proceduralist accounts must posit a minimum of attributes characterising the individuals, i.e. their condition of autonomous rational individuals, taking part in the deliberative process forging the principles of justice. However, they take autonomous and rational subjectivity as valuable not because it is the outcome of the operation of deliberation producing the principles; this cannot be so because the value of autonomy and rational subjectivity are presumed beforehand, preceding

[56] For a more detailed discussion of the basic premises of constructivist positions, see Miriam Ronzoni's illuminating article "Constructivism and Practical Reason."

the operation of deliberation. Such a move, in Honneth's view, is highly problematic because, as a result of this, "the theory must unintentionally anticipate the normative results of the procedure by positing specific conditions of autonomy" ("The Fabric of Justice" 38).[57] Because constructivist theories, too, the objection goes, rely on a conception of subjectivity taken as valid prior to the validation procedure, at least some of its norms and preconditions must be justified by a different type of procedure.

The two presumed limitations of the constructivist approaches is precisely what reconstructivist theories seek to overcome. The latter aims to unearth rather than construct the minimum of normative consensus that must be presumed even by the constructivist approaches, the minimal consensus preceding the operation of deliberation; it is also better placed to demonstrate that its principles are applicable within the social world given that they are reconstructed from in-wordly norms.

Although not decisive for settling the debate in favour of reconstructive approaches,[58] Honneth's emphasis on the close relationship between standards of justice and social reality suggests that the scope of *FR* is not exhausted by the aim of providing a theory of justice. His emphasis makes most sense if we shift the perspective and approach *FR* not as a theory of justice in the usual sense considered so far but as an attempt to provide the foundations of a critical theory of modern societies, where 'critical theory' is understood in Honneth's sense, considered in the previous chapters. The contention is that while both readings of *FR*, as a theory of justice and as a theory of modern societies, find textual support, neither gives us the full scope of *FR,* nor reveals the most cherishable justification of Honneth's project. In turn, the reading proposed in this chapter, irreducible to the first two, although it incorporates them, is that *FR* does not depart fundamentally from Honneth's previous work. As in *The Struggle*, the underlying task in *FR* is to provide the starting point for an answer to the "basic problem of Critical Theory" as a theory that posits itself as the self-consciousness of the process of emancipation. Because critical theory assumes this practical-theoretical aim, it

[57] Honneth substantiates his objection by employing his intersubjective account of personhood. He argues that the conception of autonomous subject underpinning dominant liberal conceptions of justice is unconvincing, implying that the principles of justice grounded on it are also unsatisfactory, *see* Anderson and Honneth ("Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice").

[58] For further discussion on the debate between constructivists and competing conceptions of justice, see, e.g., Bagnoli, Carla ("Starting Points: Kantian Constructivism Reassessed").

must make its own norms that govern the emancipation process at the social reality level.[59] Further on, I show what the third reading entails.

Critical Theory

As shown in the first chapter of this thesis, Honneth assumes the methodological self-restriction that fundamental critique (fundamental in the sense that it aims at norms having the function of legitimising the social order and the mechanisms of social integration) needs to be traced back to pre-theoretical social contexts capable of engendering such a critique. A critical theory assuming the task of establishing a close, non-contingent relation with pre-theoretical critique would need to provide a convincing description of the context within which social critique can emerge at the level of social reality. If social reality is value-laden such that socialised actors interact within a value horizon, then a sociologically credible analysis of their actions must be made explicit rather than cover up this normative dimension. Based on the assumption that values are part and parcel of this context, the critical theory would favour a conception of society as proposed in *FR*. Of course, Honneth would need to show that the anticipated features of institutionalised social interaction do indeed obtain. However, this task already pertains to the execution of the project, and in order to be carried out, it would need to assume an action-theoretical conception of society.

Additionally, the concept of society introduced in *FR* serves critical theory aims by providing the key to securing the possibility of fundamental critique. Within this theoretical framework, social critique aiming at the norms in light of which the social order reproduces itself can emerge if and when social actors clarify for themselves the values grounding the social institutions' appearance of legitimacy and acquire critical insight into the failure of social institutions to uphold fundamental values. Finally, the close relationship between pre-theoretical critique and theory demanded by the methodological assumptions of critical theory is ensured by what Honneth calls 'normative reconstruction'- the operation aiming to thematise the fundamental values underpinning social reproduction and their relation with social institutions. By making the fundamental values in light of which modern societies reclaim validity explicit, normative reconstruction appears as the theoretical complement of

[59] Similarly, Angela Marco interprets "the various phases of Honneth's theory of recognition", including *FR*, as "progressive articulation and deepening of the insight" that "[t]he action of individuals is guided by normative orientations *pre-theoretically* rooted in social practice" ("On the Consistency of Axel Honneth's Critical Theory").

the efforts of the critically engaged social actors to interpret and clarify the values underpinning their interaction.

Furthermore, Honneth's reconstructive approach favouring a theory of justice rooted in social analysis makes sense when considering the basic requirements of critical theory. From the standpoint of the 'basic problem of critical theory', i.e. the task of establishing a non-contingent relation between the norms of critique and social reality, it makes sense to emphasise that the norms guiding the theory should not be alien to the social world; they should be recoverable if not directly at least reconstructed, from the moral grammar of the social world. In short, the methodological self-restriction of the critical theory, according to which a non-contingent relation must be established between theory and social *praxis*, favours reconstructive approaches. The second peculiarity of Honneth's theory of justice, emphasising the relation between justice and values, would find justification in the conception of society considered so far. If values pertain to the 'stuff' out of which social reality is made, having the role of legitimising institutional demands, actions and practices, then a theory of justice aiming to establish a non-contingent relation with pre-theoretical *praxis* would need to factor in the value-laden character of social life in order to become operational at the level of social reality. While, as will be shown in the final section of this chapter, it would be all too easy to fault Honneth's analysis of modern societies as unilateral or his reconstructive account of justice on methodological and even empirical grounds; it is crucial to keep in view that his approach is intentionally 'eschewed' by the aim of grounding a critical theory of modern societies capable of identifying and mediating emancipatory tendencies within the social world. It is the methodological *self-restrictions* derived from the conception of critical theory defended by him that favour, so to speak, the 'peculiar' conception of society and the theory of justice introduced in *FR*.

3.2.2 Individual freedom as fundamental value

Three fundamental theses of *FR* emerged from the discussion so far: the action-theoretical conception of society pointing towards the role of fundamental values in social integration, the conception of the theory of justice based on social analysis pointing towards the task of identifying norms of justice applicable to the social world, and the close relation between the normative standpoint and social reality pointing towards the scope of

founding a reconstructive critical theory of modern societies. Considering the premises discussed so far, we can now introduce a further premise of *FR*. As the title of *Freedom's Right* suggests, Honneth identifies individual freedom as the fundamental value of modern societies.

Built around individual freedom, *FR* seems to depart significantly from the normative standpoint of *The Struggle*. Individual freedom seems to replace recognition and self-realisation as the basic categories of his critical theory. This break is, however, only apparent. In the final chapter of *The Struggle*, Honneth argues that the three basic possibilities of self-realisation rooted in the tripartite conception of personhood represent preconditions for individuals to live autonomous lives, at least in 'post-traditional' societies (*The Struggle* Chapter 9). Even more, in articles published after *The Struggle* seeking to clarify the normative foundations of the recognition theory, he introduces personal autonomy as the endpoint of self-development ("De-centered Autonomy", "Grounding Recognition"). In this regard, the centrality of individual freedom in more recent writings is the outcome of further clarifications of his early stance rather than a radical departure.

Secondly, the notions of individual freedom introduced in *FR* preserve close relations with the idea of mutual recognition. Honneth distinguishes not one but three notions of freedom: negative, reflexive and social freedom, respectively.[60] The concept of *negative* freedom establishes that "regardless of which desires are fulfilled, the pure, unhindered act of choice suffices for the resulting action to qualify as being 'free'" (*FR* 24). In contrast, *reflexive* freedom isolates a particular class of acts as 'free'. Here, the distinction between free/unfree is established by the self-relation implicit in the subject's various acts. On the one hand, there are those acts genuinely belonging to the self because the individual can endorse them as their own, and those originating in alien inclinations or impulses. Following this notion, "individuals are free if their actions are solely guided by their own intentions" (*FR* 30). The third one is social freedom, a notion Honneth borrows from Frederick Neuhauser (*FR* 43), standing for a post-metaphysical and decidedly intersubjective reinterpretation of Hegel's concept of 'objective' freedom. Social freedom is based on and expands the idea of freedom as positive self-identification mediated by intersubjective relations, i.e. relations of recognition. The next chapter offers a more detailed discussion of social freedom when I discuss Honneth's notion of the market as a sphere of social freedom. Here, the presentation of the three notions of freedom is limited to clarify the sense in which each of them depends

[60] e.g. Axel Honneth ("Three, Not Two Concepts of Liberty"); cf. Isaiah Berlin ("Two Concepts of Liberty").

on relations of mutual recognition and prepares the ground for the question of what singles them out as fundamental values.

The relation between freedom and mutual recognition is most apparent in the case of social freedom since, as mentioned above, it already comprises the idea of mutual recognition. Beyond this, relations of recognition play a role in realising the other two modalities, albeit not constitutive for their meaning, since, according to their sense, the constitution of 'free' intention is independent of mutual recognition. In turn, relations of mutual recognition would be among the essential social preconditions for negative and reflexive freedom to take root within the social world. For example, chapter four of *FR* provides a normative reconstruction of the legal sphere of modern societies showing that the normative grounding of subjective rights, granting individuals the right to withdraw from social commitments in order to pursue their private, egotistical interests within the limits of the law, is represented by individuals' mutual recognition that their negative freedom is not only ethically desirable but also morally demanding. In a similar vein, chapter five provides a normative reconstruction of the institutional complex ensuring the possibility of reflexive freedom; here, too, specific relations of mutual recognition are disclosed within the system of action characterising the modality of freedom in question.[61] Due to limits of space, I will not pursue further Honneth's argument regarding the centrality of mutual recognition for all three notions, limiting myself to only signalling the relation between mutual recognition and individual freedom underpinning *FR* in order to emphasise the points of continuity between it and Honneth's previous work.

The preliminary discussion of the tripartite conception of freedom and the vantage point from which Honneth analyses it, e.g. the emphasis on their dependence on relations of mutual recognition and the suggestion that they are socially realised via different systems of action, also serves to disclose Honneth's unconventional approach to the phenomenon of freedom. Although he distils the three notions of freedom out of modern intellectual history by drawing on contributions made by Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, among others, it is their status as *fundamental values* of modern societies that arrests his attention. Until now, the notion of 'fundamental value' has been used very laxly, referring to those values in light of which social institutions can reclaim legitimacy. With the thesis that individual freedom

[61] "The systems of action associated with individual freedom, i.e. legal and moral freedom, are also regulated by norms of mutual recognition. Subjects only manage to grant each other a state-protected space for egocentric detachment or the entitlement to a morally justified position once they have ascribed to each other a certain status in light of a shared norm – a status that entitles them to the consideration shown them by other subjects" (*FR* 125).

represents the fundamental value, it is now possible to take a closer look at what this can entail and introduce the reasons Honneth offers to support this thesis. *FR* introduces three preliminary reasons why individual freedom is 'fundamental'; each reason, as will be shown further on, discloses a specific sense of 'fundamental value'. The first reason is that individual freedom has succeeded in "leaving a truly lasting impression on our institutional order" (*FR* 15). Secondly, it represents the ground of "all modern ethical ideals" in the sense that the normative legitimacy of social orders is measured in light of their capacity to ensure and protect the autonomy of individuals. So much so that the notion of 'social justice' has become "inseparable from the principle of individual autonomy" (15-6). Thirdly, since the French Revolution, social movements for justice placed their demands for recognition under the banner of individual freedom (*FR* 17).

At first, the listed reasons appear arbitrary. Why should not other empirical facts be picked up as 'fundamental' about modern societies, say the techniques and dispositifs of population control and governance investigated by Michel Foucault? Against the background of these incipient objections, the reading of *FR* proposed above starts paying dividends by allowing us at least to make sense of Honneth's otherwise baffling reasons. As argued so far, he defends a conception of society based on the idea that institutions are for the sake of realising values. In this regard, 'fundamental' would be those values underpinning the institutionalised patterns of behaviour contributing to the reproduction of core institutions. Accordingly, it would make sense to link the claim that individual freedom is 'fundamental' with the presumed fact that it left a "truly lasting impression on our institutional order". Secondly, another aim consists in grounding a theory of justice on social analysis. From this follows a second sense according to which 'fundamental' would be those values that inform the discourses of justice in modern societies. Thus, it would make sense to argue that individual freedom is 'fundamental' because it informs principles of justice at work in such societies. Finally, I suggested that *FR* is an attempt to ground a reconstructive critical theory of modern societies attuned not only to the dominant discourses of justice but equally important to the dissenting voices of those struggling for justice in the various social spheres by securing the possibility of fundamental critique. In this way, a third sense of 'fundamental' emerges, referring to those values that informed social struggles; that oriented the social actors engaged in social critique. Accordingly, it would make sense to support the thesis regarding freedom as being 'fundamental' by pointing towards its role in enhancing movements for social justice.

Of course, Honneth would need to show that freedom is fundamental in the threefold sense considered so far. In *FR*, this is done via normative reconstruction applied to core modern social spheres that, the argument goes, are for the sake of realising the three modalities of freedom mentioned above, i.e. the sphere of legal freedom, of moral or reflexive freedom, and three spheres of social freedom (the sphere of personal relationships, the market and the public sphere) respectively. In each case, Honneth applies the method of normative reconstruction to social spheres in order to show that either of the three modalities of freedom is fundamental in the threefold sense just mentioned: the systems of action corresponding to each sphere would be convergent with the sense of freedom, the grammar of justice governing the distribution of rights in each sphere would be convergent with the idea of freedom, and the conflicts and disputes over the content and justification of rights in each sphere would be oriented by the modality of freedom in question. As shown in the next chapter, this is in fact the case regarding his reconstruction of the market sphere. I contend that his reconstruction of other core modern spheres as spheres of freedom follows the same guidelines identified above.

However, before seeing if Honneth succeeds in demonstrating the centrality of freedom in the threefold sense just mentioned- at least regarding the sphere of market-mediated social labour- it will be wise to consider some batteries of objections targeting not the substance of his argument, e.g. the results of his reconstruction, but the form and method of his approach- his reconstructive account. Measuring *FR's* basic premises against objections will allow us to disclose yet another way in which freedom emerges as the fundamental value of modern societies, at least in Honneth's view.

3.3 Against Reconstruction: Recurrent Objections

The strengths and weaknesses of Honneth's framework are more straightforward when his theory of justice and the analysis of modern institutions are considered *not* in isolation from one another but as elements of a critical theory of modern societies geared towards the question of emancipatory transformations. This being said, even some of Honneth's more sympathetic commentators doubt the suitability of *FR* as a critical theory. In

this section, I assess Honneth's theory against three recurrent batteries of objections.[62] First, it can be argued that even if critical theory needs to incorporate reconstructive operations, it should focus not on the dominant or fundamental values but on the normative horizon of dissenting voices. As David Borman points out, critical theory must aim to give voice to dissenting voices, to forms of critique that are otherwise rendered invisible or discounted as merely subjective reactions by the dominant discourses of justice, as Honneth did in his previous writings.[63] In turn, an approach that takes cues from institutionalised values risks muting precisely those dissenting voices and experiences of injustice that do not fit the dominant grammar of justice. In this regard, holds Borman, the reconstructive approach in *FR* would be at odds with Honneth's own position in his earlier writings and the practical-political aim of the critical theory of articulating dissenting demands for justice ("Bourgeois Illusions").

The objection would hold if Honneth's normative reconstruction were limited to only registering the justice discourses of the dominating parties, of those defending the *status quo*, marginalising in the process the dissenting voices. In this case, Honneth's account would speak the language of power, rendering unintelligible genuinely critical standpoints. However, this is precisely what his normative reconstruction is set up to avoid. As in *The Struggle*, Honneth remains convinced that access to the moral grammar of social life, to the fundamental values of modern societies, can be gained only via an analysis of the moral grammar orienting the struggles of the disadvantaged. What *FR* adds to this picture, I contend, is the idea that even critique and emancipatory movements have their own history, which can be made the subject of normative reconstruction. The second idea is that critique is not always impotent against the *status quo*, it is not always duped or misdirected, but it succeeds, at least from time to time, to leave its imprint on institutions and (re-)configure the for-the-sake-of. From this standpoint, in *FR*, Honneth would seek to reconstruct the traces left on institutions by the struggles over the norms and values in light of which modern

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[62] Christopher Zurn offers a valuable overview of the core objections that can and have been raised against *FR* (*Axel Honneth* 192-205). Some are discussed in this section, while others are approached in the next chapter once additional premises of Honneth's study are considered. However, the aim is not to cover the entire spectrum of objections since some of them target aspects of *FR* that are not at the centre of this study, e.g. the capacity of Honneth's frame to answer problems regarding global social phenomena.

[63] In "Moral Consciousness and Class Domination", Honneth argues that critical theory should forge concepts of social analysis capable of identifying forms of social critique that are not "recognized by the political-hegemonical public". In "Recognition as Redistribution", he argues that the moral grammar of recognition is relevant for critical theory not because demands for recognition have been incorporated into public discourses of justice in the past decades but because it promises to clarify the moral core of experiences of social injustice regardless if they have passed or not the threshold of public visibility (133-4).

institutions could secure the rational consent of social actors. Rather than assuming the standpoint from above- taking for granted the discourse of power- *FR* incorporates the history from *below* of modern social spheres, from the standpoint of the various forms of critique they faced and registers the normative progress brought about by critical movements. Indeed, it is worth emphasising the point made in the previous sections. One of the reasons Honneth offers in support of individual freedom as a fundamental value is precisely the fact that dissenting movements placed it on their banners in their struggles for social justice. Additionally, according to Honneth, the operation of normative reconstruction is informed by the idea "that a certain class of the Spiritual [Geistigen]– namely, normative ideas– have the ability to shape and remodel social reality in accordance with their own content. It is *in and through social struggles* that their claims to validity come to fruition" ("Rejoinder", *Critical Horizons* 207, emphasis added). That this is the case will be shown in more detail in the next chapter regarding the market sphere, although the same approach characterises his account of the other social spheres analysed in *FR.* Since the objection targets the ethos of reconstruction and not its substance, i.e. its results, the offered reasons might suffice for now.

The following two objections disclose other interesting angles from which Honneth's reconstructive approach can be challenged. One objection states that the conformist ethos of Honneth's approach goes against the revolutionary ethos proper to critical theory. As Jörg Schaub argues, one of the most worrisome aspects of Honneth's approach in *FR* is that reconstruction drastically limits the critical span of his theory. The theory would be limited to merely registering those situations in which modern institutions fail to uphold the values in light of which they, presumably, could reclaim legitimacy within the modern normative horizon. Taking the fundamental values of a society, understood as the values in which the social order seeks to legitimise itself, as the ground of critical theory entails limiting the critical vision of the theory to the normative horizon constituted by the said values. In order to satisfy the condition of immanence, of disclosing the in-worldly character of its norms, the objection goes, Honneth ends up legitimising the current *status quo*. Because of this, the ethos of *FR* can be, at most, corrective or reformist but not genuinely emancipatory; it cannot articulate a vision of a more just society transcending the modern normative horizon.

This limitation would be problematic for a theory that posits itself as critical so far the ethos of the Left-Hegelian tradition of critical theory to which Honneth subscribes is properly speaking revolutionary. In this tradition, fundamental critique of modern, capitalist societies is demanded because these societies raise barriers to the realisation of fundamental human

possibilities, because they legitimise economic exploitation, or are the outcome of systems of domination that had become autonomous. In other words, critical theory is not satisfied with providing merely internal forms of critique by measuring institutions against established norms; more than this, it seeks to ground an immanent-*transcendent* form of critique capable of disclosing a more emancipated form of society that can be realised only by transcending the normative horizon and the social organisation of the present societies. Instead, the possibility of normative revolutions is precisely what the reconstructive approach in *FR* seems to deny (Schaub, "Misdevelopments, Pathologies, and Normative Revolutions").

Before assessing if and how Honneth might answer Schaub's astute objection, a further objection must be considered, raising similar, albeit not identical, points. The objection is that reconstruction is not a suitable approach for fulfilling one of the primary tasks of critical theory: to demonstrate the moral validity of its norms. The method of normative reconstruction would not be suitable as a procedure justifying the rationality of institutionalised norms because reconstructive approaches rely on principles at work within the social world, lacking a procedure by which their moral validity, such as universality, is established. Because of this, Honneth's account is vulnerable to the charge of conventionalism- the view according to which norms are valid *because* they pass as valid within the social world or *because* social actors might endorse them for the time being. Conventionalism is inherently problematic because a principle is not morally valid only because someone or an entire group believes it to be so. Thus, the objection goes, Honneth's reconstructive approach is inherently problematic because it lacks a method for testing the moral validity of norms other than the doubtful condition that social actors accept the norms.[64] To make things worse, Honneth defends a theory of justice based on 'worthy' values. In his view, following Hegel, justice does not represent a value in itself but the realisation of ethical values; thus, the sense of justice would be comprehensible only within a value horizon. 'Just' would be those norms and principles ensuring that one receives what one is due, where the ground would be the addressee's worthiness. Consequently, 'just' would be those institutions whose norms ensure that participants can recognise each other as worthy

[64] For objections against the reconstructive approach of Honneth's theory along the mentioned lines, see Claassen, "Social Freedom and the Demands of Justice"; Freyenhagen ("Honneth on Social Pathologies" 141-2). McNeill argues that Honneth's method of normative reconstruction can, at best, demonstrate the immanent character of the norms picked up by his theory of justice; beyond this, he would need a second procedure in order also to demonstrate "the rationality and normative coherence of existing social institutions" ("Social Freedom and Self-Actualization"). From Hegelian quarters, Andrew Buchwalter argues that normative reconstruction could satisfy the condition of rationality only on the background of Hegel's 'metaphysics' of Spirit which Honneth disavows ("The Concept of Normative Reconstruction").

contributors to realising fundamental values (*FR* 4-5). Nevertheless, such a theory must fail the test of rationality because it is not credible that in highly pluralistic societies such as the ones of late modernity, a rational consensus can emerge regarding any set of values. Based on the assumption that values or conceptions of the good are inherently particularistic, not universal, any theory of justice founded on values must fail the criteria of universality.

Although the objection of conventionalism seems similar to Schaub's objection that Honneth's approach takes for granted the normative horizon of modern societies, there are differences between them. The objection that critical theory should not deny the possibility of normative revolutions is *not* bound to the assumption that the norms of critique must be universalistic; on the contrary, the objection can also be grounded on critical accounts that read universalistic stances as legitimising relations of power and domination. In this case, normative revolution might also occur against the universalist pretence. Beyond this difference, neither objection denies that reconstruction has *a* role in critical theory. For example, Schaub does not deny the merits of normative reconstruction in making explicit the normative infrastructure of bourgeois-capitalist societies while arguing that such a necessary step must be complemented with a second method by which the obtained norms and values can be criticised independently of the normative horizon of such societies (Schaub 119-20). Similarly, the demand for moral justification does not deny that reconstruction is a necessary step towards identifying socially embedded values and norms, just that the identified norms must, in the second step, be evaluated through a second distinct procedure. All in all, each of the two objections challenges from different perspectives the capacity of reconstructive theories seeking to ground principles of justice on institutionalised values to satisfy the condition that its norms are also context-transcending.

Further, I show how Honneth might answer the two objections by drawing on the arguments he introduces in *FR* and on several rejoinders he offers in subsequent articles. In *FR* and his previous writings, he explicitly endorses the methodological self-restriction of the critical theory, according to which it is not sufficient to demonstrate the transcendent character of the critical standpoint; the norms themselves must be already at work within the social world. As he points out, transcendence must represent a feature of immanence itself ("The Point of Recognition" 243-4). It is worth keeping in view this point because the force of the two objections mentioned above originates in good measure from the fact that their emphasis on the condition of transcendence simultaneously covers up the constraints that the condition of immanence places on norm justification. The point might become clearer if we

recall the objection discussed in Chapter 1 targeting Honneth's argument in *The Struggle*. The objection was that Honneth's theory of recognition fails to take the social-historical embeddedness of human subjectivity seriously and the role of socially embedded semantics in mediating the self-understanding of social actors. Honneth posits needs, the objection went, capable of engendering critical action and critical knowledge as pre-social. Consequently, he discounted the role of socially embedded norms in mediating actors' self-understanding. The result is an account of critical social action that fails to be social in the proper sense of the word because it does not clarify the social context within which it emerges and its social preconditions. As a result, critical action emerges not as social action but as spontaneous reactions rooted in psychological needs. In short, the objection was that Honneth's account failed to satisfy the condition of *immanence*.

Honneth sought after *The Struggle* to clarify the basic premises of his account, to meet the objection, by emphasising the role of socially embedded norms of recognition both in the constitution and justification of the recognition expectations actors bring into social interaction. Out of these efforts, it has emerged with some clarity the task of providing a more robust justification for the centrality of recognition norms in the integration and reproduction of modern societies. In order to fulfil this task, it would be required to engage in some form of reconstruction to show that social actors could have access to the norms that the theory identifies as the ones that ought to orient emancipatory efforts. Except for accounts presumed on the idea that it is the theorist's privilege to disclose the truly emancipatory norms to the otherwise ignorant social actors, accounts that are vulnerable to the objection of authoritarianism and paternalism, critical theory must trace its norms to pre-theoretical grounds within the life-world. In this sense, the reconstructive approach in *FR* does not betray the ethos of critical theory. An account of social critique that takes the social-historical embeddedness of human subjectivity seriously, as well as the task of demonstrating that the norms favoured by the theory have acquired real efficiency at the level of social life, needs to take a reconstructive approach (Honneth, "Reconstructive Social Critique"). The methodological self-restrictions of critical theory predetermine Honneth's reconstructive approach to some extent.

The main point is that Honneth's turn towards the reconstructive approach represents an attempt to solve one of the methodological demands of critical theory, one that would need to be fulfilled even by the framework advocating the necessity of normative revolution. The demand is that the theory needs to provide a credible account of emancipatory action as

social action compatible with the action potential and critical capacity of social actors *as* socially embedded subjectivities. On this ground, one might ask if critical accounts seeking to ground the possibility of normative revolutions can do so without securing the immanent character of this possibility. They would also need to provide a sociologically convincing account of the agents recognising the necessity and direction of normative revolution as socio-historically embedded subjectivities. In order to avoid the objection that such a normative rupture relies on a conception of critical social action that is merely spontaneous and thus fails to be credible as social action, the proponents would need to clarify the social context in which these types of actions can emerge. For example, one would need to show how such revolutionary norms- that by definition need to be alien to the normative horizon within which social actors are socialised- manage to secure intersubjective validity such that it can engender social movements and discourses of justice within the still given normative horizon. For what it is worth, as shown in the first chapter, Honneth's model of struggles for recognition seeks to clarify at least some of the normative conditions that must be in place, e.g. creative reinterpretations of moral principles that disclose novel normative standpoints.

The contention is that the objection that Honneth's reconstructive approach betrays the ethos of critical theory because it is not sensitive to the possibility of normative revolutions relies on a too comfortable *abstract* notion of 'normative revolution'. To make the possibility of normative revolution the ground of a competing conception of critical theory, one must satisfy the condition of immanence by anchoring it in-worldly. Even the revolutionary norms would need to be disclosed as already pre-theoretically embedded in the social world and as socially efficient in order to explain how they could engender critical social action. However, fulfilling this task might require admitting that the operation of reconstruction must play a more central role than assumed by the objection- not only the fundamental values would need to be reconstructed, but also the revolutionary ones would also need to be reconstructed as part and parcel of the established normative horizon in order to explain how they can become socially efficient in a sociologically convincing manner. Suppose this condition is accepted. In that case, the question emerges if such 'revolutionary' norms- not only embedded within the social world but also socially efficient, at least in the sense of engendering revolutionary action- remain 'revolutionary' in the sense of the term underpinning the objection: as norms that somehow represent an irruption of a new normative horizon.

In the same vein, the objection of conventionalism- premised on the idea that critical theory cannot rely solely on reconstruction to demonstrate the moral validity of its norms but requires an additional procedure of validation- loses some of its force if to the ethos of critical theory also pertains the condition that transcendence must be disclosed as a feature, a possibility of immanence itself. To avoid the emptiness of mere 'ought' divorced from social reality, it would be required to show that whatever standards Honneth's approach fails to uphold are nevertheless embedded within the social world in one way or another, that they have acquired efficiency as standards in light of which norms can pass as valid. If this is the case, we might ask what standards Honneth's account fails to observe such that his reconstructive approach would be conventionalist, and can they be recovered via normative reconstruction? As mentioned above, the standard would refer to the condition of universality as the sign that the norms in question can secure the rational consensus of social actors.

Accordingly, the objection of conventionalism taking issue with the reconstructive *character* of Honneth's approach might lose the appearance of self-evidence if the fundamental value identified in *FR*, i.e. individual freedom, can satisfy the condition of universality such that satisfying this condition is a further reason for why it emerges as the 'fundamental value'. On the one hand, as shown in the previous section, Honneth offers three reasons why freedom is a fundamental value. He does not identify individual freedom as the fundamental value of modern societies merely because social actors might endorse it. He presumes that it has left "lasting impressions" on modern institutions and oriented struggles for justice, and underpinned modern discourses of justice. On the other hand, all these reasons, even if substantiated via normative reconstruction, would represent historical facts, showing how things were in the past; they would only reveal the standpoint of the moderns. By themselves, they seem insufficient to justify freedom as fundamental in the sense of arresting rational consensus or having context-transcendent validity, e.g. universal validity across societies.

In Honneth's defence it should be noted that by 'normative reconstruction', he does not have in view an operation limited to registering the values that happen to hold in institutionalised practices. Instead, the aim is to disclose the idealised forms representing not yet realised 'objective possibilities' of the social world in light of which the quotidian practices and value-beliefs can be evaluated and criticised should they frustrate the fulfilment of the said ethical potentials *(FR* 8-9). Thus, normative reconstruction is also *forward-looking*. Nevertheless, to the further question of why should moderns still cherish

individual freedom, or why should we, any of us, validate it further still, the 'limited' forward-looking stance of reconstruction taking a cue from institutionalised values cannot, one might conclude, offer a convincing answer to the objection of conventionalism.

The conclusion would be settled except for an additional fourth reason offered by Honneth in *FR* for why individual freedom represents a peculiar value, a fourth sense in which it is fundamental. The central point, already implicit in *FR* but made explicit only in his subsequent rejoinders, is that social orders depend on the capacity for self-determination of the human subjects to realise its ontological possibilities, e.g. legitimacy. I reconstruct Honneth's argument along the following lines. First, "individual self-determination, i.e. the power to arrive at one's own judgements, is not just some contingent human quality, but the essence of our practical-normative activity" (*FR* 17), carrying *anthropological* weight. Secondly, social reality is not natural in the sense of being completely independent of human will but constituted. In contrast to natural orders, social orders carry the possibility to be legitimate or illegitimate, where this possibility represents a defining ontological attribute for them. Social orders achieve their ontological potential and fulfil their concept when they are legitimate (given that they are not merely natural but constituted orders). Thirdly, because humans have the capacity for self-determination, i.e. the power to arrive at their own judgements, they can inquire into the justness of social orders in which they participate. As Honneth points out, the "desire for justice is merely an expression of our subjective capacity for justification". The human capacity for self-determination turned desire for justice engenders the possibility that the legitimacy of social orders becomes, for human subjects as social actors, a question whose resolution might require transformations of the social orders, should they appear as illegitimate, that put them on the path towards fulfilling their specific ontological attribute- legitimacy. More directly, social orders depend on the human capacity for self-determination, on free human subjects capable of discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate orders and developing a desire for justice to fulfil their concept, so to speak- to become legitimate social orders.

Against this background, individual freedom is fundamental not only because it points towards a defining capacity of human beings, e.g. self-determination, but also because it reveals the true nature of the social world and the proper relation between social reality and social actors. In Honneth's words, "by socially institutionalising the principle of individual freedom, we have achieved a reflection of the "real"– that is, the only justifiable form of the– grounding of social orders. As long as social formations cannot be ratified by the autonomous

consent of every individual, they cannot serve as justified forms of social interactions" ("Rejoinder", Critical Horizons 210). Social preconditions ensuring the possibility of self-determination, social orders in which individual freedom has become the fundamental value, i.e. social orders encompassing systems of action geared towards freedom, would represent basic steps towards a society in which its normative order, e.g. the fundamental value, reflects and in a sense contributes to realising its defining ontological possibility, e.g. legitimacy.

If sound, the above argument has two significant implications. Firstly, insofar as social orders can secure legitimacy only if they are "ratified by the autonomous consent of every individual", then at a minimum, social actors would need to enjoy basic forms of freedom to be in the position to confer their autonomous consent. Institutionalising the individual freedom principle would represent a precondition for the social order to realise its defining ontological attribute- legitimacy. It would follow that individual freedom is fundamental in a fourth sense: it acquires the status of transcendental condition of legitimation of social order. Secondly, the close relation between freedom, the human capacity for self-determination, and the legitimacy of social orders would provide further reasons why freedom might have a head start over competing values that could reclaim the status of fundamental values. Insofar as the alternative values need to pass the test of "autonomous consent" to be ratified, their validation depends on the more fundamental condition that forms of freedom have already been institutionalised. Thus, individual freedom would represent a peculiar value in the sense that its realisation ensuring that subjects could consent freely to the social order would represent a precondition for the other values to be validated, i.e. passing the test that subjects could consent freely to them, as fundamental.

It can be objected that the argument by appeal to the anthropological significance of freedom and the socio-ontological thesis regarding the nature of social orders establishing a close relationship between the two, i.e. between self-determination and the 'real' of the social order, is incompatible with Honneth's reconstructive approach. To reiterate, Honneth's normative reconstruction promises to disclose individual freedom as fundamental in a threefold way: as a value that left 'lasting impressions' on modern societies, as a value underpinning modern discourses of justice, and as a value orienting struggles for justice in modern societies. Assuming that his reconstruction shows this, its results would reveal *socio-historical* facts regarding the centrality of freedom in modern societies. Thus a validity gap remains between the less demanding validity of socio-historical facts and the more

demanding validity of the anthropological and socio-ontological claims underpinning the argument presented in the above paragraph. One cannot ground, the objection might go, claims that aim at transcendental validity on socio-historical findings.

Without claiming that Honneth succeeded, it is important to keep in view that at least he tries to link the two levels of justification. According to him, the close relation between the legitimacy of social orders, justice and individual freedom is not only a "historical fact", as would presumably normative reconstruction show, but the outcome of a centuries-long learning process.[65] The outcome of this process would be the knowledge that "[o]ur individual self-determination and our insistence that a social order be 'just' are joined by an indissoluble bond, because our desire for justice is merely an expression of our subjective capacity for justification" (*FR* 17). I contend that Honneth's claim that we have acquired knowledge regarding the close relation between social orders as legitimate or just, the desire for justice and the capacity for justification is not necessarily incompatible with his reconstructive approach if we understand it as the product of second-order *reflective* judgements rooted in the presumed results of normative reconstruction according to which, the hypothesis would be, freedom has acquired the threefold role of fundamental value considered in the previous section.[66] The reflective stance would surpass the contingency of the empirical results (revealing the *de facto* centrality of individual freedom) by disclosing the rational reasons, so to speak, for why freedom is fundamental. The assumption is that reflective judgements revealing the peculiar status of freedom can be rooted in the results of normative reconstruction, which, presumably, would show that within the past centuries, the relation between the capacity for self-determination of individuals, the condition of the legitimacy of social orders, and the necessity for the expanding of freedom have emerged as facts within modern societies. Of course, in this case, the burden of the argument would fall on the results of normative reconstruction since it would need to provide evidence regarding the learning process sketched here. It starts to make sense, thus, why more than three-quarters of *FR* is dedicated precisely to this task. However, since the objection of conventionalism takes issue with the form and method of Honneth's argument and not directly with the results of the operation, the crucial point here is that neither the form nor the method lead to a conventionalist stance in any of the more trivial senses of the notion.

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[65] Following Honneth, “the critical model of the Frankfurt School presupposes if not precisely a philosophy of history then a concept of the directed development of human rationality” in order to ground the possibility of emancipatory developments (“Reconstructive Social Critique” 56), also “A Social Pathology of Reason”.

[66] I take a cue from Deranty’s point that in Honneth, reflectivity is “identified as a key methodological requirement of social theory” (“Reflective Critical Theory” 75).

After taking stock of some of the recurrent batteries of objections raised against Honneth's reconstructive approach, and in light of discussed rejoinders, I find the reasons introduced by Honneth in *FR* and discussed in this chapter robust enough to justify the pretence of individual freedom as a *credible candidate* for grounding a reconstructive critical theory of contemporary societies. However, I do not believe that Honneth's argument can be defended *tout court.* As in the first chapter, when the problem of transcendence emerged regarding Honneth's theory of recognition, here, too, a decisive answer to the question of transcendence is not essential for pursuing the fundamental question of this study. The main reason, as in the first chapter, is that this study focuses on the first task of critical theory- demonstrating that the norms guiding the critical assessment are non-contingently involved in the integration and reproduction of modern societies. This limited focus has to do with the central question of this study: if and in what way Honneth's framework can recover the theme of work for critical theory. In this regard, the previous chapter revealed that the main difficulties associated with the problems faced by Honneth's account have to do not so much with the worry that his conception of the sphere of economy is too conventionalist, but on the contrary with worries that his conception is too disconnected from social reality, failing the condition of immanence- the condition of showing that norms underpin the sphere of economy. Indeed, it is ironic that his theory can and has been criticised for erring in two opposite directions simultaneously. One objection goes that it is too naive to assume *against* the dominant view that norms carry social efficiency in all social spheres, including the sphere of economy. Another objection goes, as in the case considered here, that it is too conservative because the reconstructive approach legitimises the *status quo*. Anyhow, since the focus of this study is on Honneth's critical account of the contemporary world of work and since it seems that, at least regarding the market and the problem of work, Honneth's argument risks erring in the direction of utopian justification divorced of social reality, rather than in the direction of defending the *status quo,* I will not pursue the problem of transcendence further.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that *FR*'s full scope, tasks and challenges are better understood if we read the book as a renewed systematic attempt to ground a critical theory of modern societies within the same methodological self-restrictions characterising Honneth's

earlier attempts. *FR* is an attempt to solve problems internal to the conception of critical theory defended by Honneth rather than representing a conservative turn in his work. To reiterate, *FR* does propose a peculiar theory of justice and a peculiar reading of modern societies. It can be held accountable concerning each of them, but in order to understand the full scope of the argument and the tasks implied by it, we must also consider its *peculiarity*; as argued, it is the methodological self-restrictions assumed by Honneth that favour so to speak an action-theoretical conception of society taking into account the role of values in social integration, as well as to favour reconstructive accounts of justice. Additionally, the preliminary discussion of the threefold notion of individual freedom made it possible to clarify the notion of 'fundamental value'. In turn, the concept of 'fundamental values' allowed us to delineate several tasks the normative reconstruction need to fulfil in order to provide a minimum of plausibility to the thesis that each of the three modalities of freedom plays the role of fundamental value within the social spheres assigned to them. Honneth's claim that individual freedom left enduring traces on modern societies points towards a first task: normative reconstruction must show that various modern institutions have indeed come under the grip of freedom. The claim that freedom underpinned modern discourses of justice points towards a second task: to show that the moral grammar at work in various social spheres does indeed point towards freedom. Finally, the third reason, according to which struggles for social justice translate their demands in the language of freedom, gives rise to the third task: to provide further evidence that critique did and does indeed speak the language of freedom within the various social spheres. With the basic premises and tasks of *FR* in place, it is now possible to turn to the central topic of this second part of the study: Honneth's treatment of the sphere of market-mediated social labour within the theoretical framework of *FR*. As will be shown in the next chapter, the market mediated sphere of social labour also gives rise to additional tasks specific to it.

Chapter 4: The Market and Social Freedom

4.1 Introduction

In *Freedom's Right (FR)*, Honneth engages in a normative reconstruction of two spheres of the market: the labour and the consumer market. Due to limits of space, but mainly because the labour market is most relevant for assessing Honneth's contribution to a critical conception of the world of work, this chapter focuses on it and brackets his treatment of the consumer market. In this chapter I present Honneth's normative reconstruction of the labour market as an argument for the thesis that social freedom represents the standpoint of emancipatory struggles within and the principle of legitimacy underpinning the labour market. The chapter has three main parts. The first part (4.2) covers two of the three premises of Honneth's argument. Firstly, there is the premise that the normative reconstruction of the market sphere is justifiable because, like any other social sphere, the market depends on normative guidelines to function properly (4.2.1). Secondly, there is the premise that freedom represents the fundamental value of the market (4.2.2). The second part of this chapter (4.3) comprises three sections. The first two sections (4.3.1 and 4.3.2) discuss the third premise of Honneth's argument, according to which social, rather than other modalities of freedom emerged as the adequate resolution to the problem regarding the content of freedom promised by the market. The second part ends with a discussion of the recurring objections raised against Honneth's argument (4.3.3). Overall, the tone of the first two parts is mainly expository and friendly towards Honneth's argument. The final part (4.4) assumes a more critical stance. I argue that the normative reconstruction fails to show that social freedom preserves its status as an emancipatory standpoint, given the transformations the market sphere undertook in the past decades. The overall assessment is that although the argument is robust, it fails to fully convince when applied to the current situation of the market sphere.

4.2 Normative Functionalism, Freedom, and the Market

4.2.1 Normative functionalism

In *FR*, Honneth defends a variant of 'normativism' similar to the one discussed in the second chapter of this study. This time, however, he takes cues from the premise- shared by Hegel and Émile Durkheim's accounts of the economy- according to which the market needs to be embedded within social relations of solidarity preceding contractual duties that "obligate economic actors to treat each other fairly and justly" in order to fulfil its function of "harmoniously integrating individual economic activities in an unforced manner" *(FR* 181). Honneth acknowledges that interpreting these pre-contractual obligations in the strict sense of functional requirements would fly in the face of empirical evidence showing that the market can function even when the presumed moral constraints are violated (183). In order to solve this conundrum, he proposes a broader conception of functionalism labelled 'normative functionalism'.[67] In contrast to the narrower conception that solely considers institutions' seemingly processual character as belonging to their inner workings, here, values and norms are acknowledged as part and parcel of the institution's reality. More precisely, normative functionalism identifies the attitudes, expectations, and normative consensus emerging between participants as an integral aspect of institutional reality.

The action-theoretical concept of society introduced in *FR*, considered in the previous chapter, further clarifies normative functionalism. Because societies comprise subsystems of action geared towards realising values, the said norms and values must be disclosed and considered in order to establish whether a society functions properly. Additionally, because participants are not indifferent towards the worthiness of those values, nor indifferent towards the success or failure of institutionalised practices in ensuring their realisation; in other words, insofar as the possibility of critique is rooted in social life, the problem of legitimacy must be recognised as a functional problem alongside the realisation of norms. Accordingly, the argument in *FR* continues the line introduced by Honneth in his debate with Nancy Fraser, according to which the market, even as a 'norm-free' system, depends on tacit or

[67] Honneth draws attention to the fact that normative conceptions of the market are not specific to Hegel and Durkheim, suggesting in the process that normative accounts of the market are not mere relics of the past but survives within the heterodox tradition of 'moral economism' comprising figures such as Karl Polanyi, Talcott Parsons, among others (*FR* 185-90). See also Fassin ("Moral Economy: A Critical Reappraisal") for an analysis of the notion of 'moral economy' beyond the one used by Honneth.

explicit resolutions regarding the grounds of its legitimacy.[68] Against 'norm-free' functionalism, normative functionalism is alert that the legitimacy problem can arise within the market sphere and pertains to its facticity (183-4). Thus, normative functionalism represents an extension of Honneth's action-theoretical concept of society to the market sphere. The implication of normative functionalism is that- as a core institution of modern societies- the market sphere (including the labour market) should be analysed as any other social sphere implying that it, too, must contribute in its own way to realising fundamental values. Consequently, normative reconstruction of the labour market represents a legitimate operation (*FR* 196-7).

Against the above presuppositions of normative functionalism, which, in turn, explain the possibility of normative reconstruction, it could be pointed out that the labour market lacked normative embeddedness when it emerged as a distinct institution in the first part of the nineteenth century. Honneth acknowledges this point, nevertheless, he holds that, since then, the market has been placed on the orbit of social 're-embeddedness'. His historical account would show this by tracing some of the central stages of the mentioned process. More precisely, as shown in the following sections, he argues that the struggles of market participants, especially the workers' struggles for justice, played a decisive role in the labour market's normative embeddedness. It is via morally motivated struggles that the question of legitimacy arose as a problem *immanent* to the market institution, revealing in the process that it cannot be resolved via the 'norm-free' laws of the market, requiring instead normative resolutions.

In order to see what support *FR* might offer for the above premise, I shall now turn to Honneth's historical recounting of the context in which the 'free' labour market emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For most of Western history, the market has been socially and normatively embedded, e.g. work relations were integrated into political and moral nexuses rather than representing a distinct sphere. In a few decades, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the traditional constellation of rights and obligations governing the terms on which the lower strata could and had to engage in socially productive work started losing its grip on the social organisation of labour. A process of social dis-embeddedness of the economy started at the end of which the elements of a 'free' labour market emerged giving

[68] As Hans Arentshorst argues, when Honneth speaks of the ‘embedded market,’ he does not mean that moral norms “are always factually at work in the market, but it means that the economy is always dependent on them for its moral legitimacy” (143). I would only add that nor does Honneth mean that norms are never at work in the market, as his normative reconstruction is meant to show.

rise to a new constellation of rights and obligations. The traditional nexus of ethical and political relations that placed the lower strata in dependence on lords and local authorities gave way to the institution of the 'free' contract, the latter acquiring a central role in ensuring the coordination of economic interaction. Workers were now allowed the 'freedom' to secure work, should it be available, if they agreed on the terms offered. The owners of private capital could employ the available workforce insofar as they found the contractual terms acceptable. In this way, the labour market was to be freed from traditional moral and ethical principles that had become obsolete, at least so argued its proponents.

The proponents of the 'free' labour market assumed that the new institution could ensure the coordination of economic activity solely through its 'norm-free' laws, without the necessity of any thick normative embeddedness. This assumption was soon put to the test in a rather brutal manner. Against the highly optimistic views that the 'free' market would not only increase the level of social wealth but better the lives of all, it became clear already in the first part of the nineteenth century that market dynamics triggered an unseen process of impoverishment of the lower classes that shocked the public consciousness. The workers' despairing condition, 'the social problem' as it became known, showed that entering into contractual relations provided no guarantee of work security, decent pay, or humane working conditions. Given that the new institution had catastrophic effects on one category of market participants, i.e. the 'free' workers, it is not surprising that workers' movements denounced the market outcomes as illegitimate and morally problematic. The question regarding the market's legitimacy, the question if the 'norm-free' economic mechanisms were sufficient for securing the legitimacy of the market outcomes, emerged not as a theoretical but as a social-practical issue engendered by the deleterious effects the new institution had for the more significant proportion of the market participants (*FR* 223-8). As Honneth observes, "[t]he fact that the poorer classes began to practice stronger, morally articulated forms of resistance made a significant contribution to politicising the analysis of the social consequences of the new organization of labour" (*FR* 227).

Honneth's finding that workers' organised resistance contributed to "politicising the analysis" of the market can be reconstructed as an argument in support for 'normative functionalism' along the following lines. The first claim would be that such struggles reveal that the market's 'norm-free' laws are insufficient to legitimise economic outcomes in the sense of harnessing the free consent of the participants. It might be acceptable to let the 'norm-free' mechanisms solely decide economic outcomes only insofar as they are morally

acceptable. If these conditions are not met anymore, the market might lose its legitimacy in the eyes of participants, and since the market mechanisms cannot, at least not by themselves, confer legitimacy to economic outcomes, at least not in the eyes of all market participants, e.g. workers, the resolution of these crises must consist in the institutionalisation of norms that would ensure that the market remains within its legitimate boundaries. The second claim would follow from a more functionalist reading of the workers' collective forms of resistance. In this regard, relevant would be the fact that they could disrupt the market dynamics, at least to a certain degree, through protests and strikes. The fact that forms of resistance could disrupt the market dynamics would speak against the idea of the market as governed by 'norm-free', autonomous mechanisms. Thus, the second claim would be that the market can *function* as a 'norm-free' sphere only insofar as the participants accept not only its outcomes as legitimate but also assume and act based on the dispositions and rules that need to be followed for the market as a 'norm-free' system were to function in the first place. In this regard, the 'disorder' produced by protests and strikes would provide empirical counter-evident to the assumption that the market can function solely in virtue of its 'norm-free' mechanisms. Taken together, the two dimensions of the workers' disruptive practices considered so far would show that legitimacy emerges time and again as a problem within the market, a problem requiring normative resolutions because the market's 'norm-free' laws can function only insofar participants abide by them. From this standpoint, it would make sense that workers' collective forms of resistance could have "made a significant contribution to politicising the analysis of the social consequences of the new organization of labour".

Against the argument, it can be objected that workers' attempts to resist the deleterious effects of the market, their moral denunciations and their demands for political intervention provide evidence for the thesis that the market functions in *indifference* from normative constraints, thus the opposite of Honneth's take on the subject. The thrust of the objection is that only by blurring the distinction between the market's internal dynamics governed by 'norm-free' mechanisms and reactions- in the form of external constraints- to the effects the market forces might have on social life can Honneth provide a minimum of plausibility to his interpretation. Honneth unjustifiably assumes, the objection goes, that demands for political interventions meant to contain at least some of the market's most deleterious effects somehow reveal the market's dependence on norms. In contrast, the facts are the opposite: *external* constraints or reparative measures are necessary *because* the market

functions independently of norms.[69] Because the market continues functioning even in morally or socially defined crises, external interventions are necessary in the first place. From this perspective, the workers' struggles might represent an important mechanism by which crises are made publicly visible and necessary measures taken. However, both the notion of 'crisis' and the demanded measures are external to the market. Honneth's 'normative description' does not *disclose* the 'normative facticity' of the market but *construct* it by blurring the distinction between forces that might have an impact on the market but which are external to it, e.g. protests, political interventions, and the 'norm-free' dynamics internal to it.

The objection makes the most sense from the standpoint of the narrow conception of functionalism, disavowing beforehand norms as external to the functioning of institutions. From this standpoint, an adequate 'description' of the market would require purging it from any form of normativity, thus confirming the 'norm-free' appearance of it. In this case, the distinction between tendencies internal and those external to the market corresponds to the distinction between market dynamics that are purely 'functional' versus the practical standpoint of social actors, including those taking part in this institution. Consequently, the interventions motivated by moral or political norms fall outside the market's facticity. The workers' moral expectations and the morally and politically motivated reforms would appear as *external* interventions even when accepted as justifiable and necessary. Thus, the objection is based on a twofold assumption. The first one is that it is possible to empirically distinguish between 'pure' functional dynamics purged of 'norms' and 'norm' governed social actions. The second is that solely presumed functional dynamics are internal to the market. External to it would be norm-governed actions and interventions, even when these actions aim to contain the market. Honneth's argument presuming that workers' struggles give us access to the normative facticity of the market, the objection goes, fails to convince because norms are neither 'functional', nor internal to the market.

A rejoinder to the objection emerges if the significance Honneth attaches to workers' struggles is read within the larger context of the theoretical framework articulated in *FR*. The strict distinction between the 'functional' and the 'normative' underpinning the objection fails to account for the irreducible relation between the 'functional' and 'normative' that Honneth's normative reconstruction aims to disclose. More precisely, it fails to consider the peculiar character of social, indeed*, functional roles*. A careful reading of *FR* shows us not only that Honneth is aware of the methodological significance of social roles but he explicitly

[69] For objections along the above lines *see* Jütten ("Is the Market a Sphere of Social Freedom?").

relies on their functional-normative character in justifying his methodological assumption that access to the moral grammar of at least some social spheres can be gained via analysing the role based interactions of participants (*FR* 123-7). Taking a cue from his suggestion that the institutional complex of the market economy relies on role obligations (*FR* 127-8), we can ask what roles would be freed by the labour market. The workers' freed' from their bondage to lords or local authorities emerging as economic actors now more or less at liberty to enter contractual relations would represent the first category. Since they could not rely on non-wage based incomes, they depended on the labour market to find employment and hopefully make a living. The second category would be the owners of private capital who depended on the 'free' labour market to secure the workforce they required to turn their capital into profit-generating production.

'Free' workers and owners of capital do not represent contingent subjectivities but types of roles, so to speak, *immanent* to the institution of the 'free' labour market. They refer to individuals *as* participants in 'free' contractual relations, 'free' workers depending on the market to find employment, and owners of capital depending on the market to find a labour force. These are not ahistorical, free-floating categories but *functional* roles emerging with the institution of the 'free' labour market.[70] The 'free' labour market would depend on the existence of 'free' workers looking for employment and employers seeking to employ a workforce; the labour market would make possible interaction between the two social agencies.

Suppose the 'free' worker represents a functional role within the market institution. Should it not also pertain to the market types of action and role-based interaction made possible by the institutional complex of the 'free' market? Further on, suppose the institution of 'free' contract is a precondition of the market institution. In that case, agreements and disagreements regarding the terms under which participants can consent to contractual terms should also represent possibilities specific to this institution. From this perspective, the possibility that market participants engage in critical action, e.g. protests, and denunciation of the established terms of the contract, is *rooted in* the institution of the 'free' labour market. These actions would be immanent when agents act based on their roles, when the normative

[70] Yeomans and Litaker provide further substance to the idea that 'economic agency' and the working of the capitalist economy are interrelated by mapping out contemporary economic institutions from the standpoint of the agencies or subjectivities they rely on, e.g. "productive agency", "consumptive agency", "accountive agency". As Honneth, they endorse the Hegelian premise regarding the relationship between freedom, subjectivity and institutions.

dimension of their roles mediates their justification and motivation to act: interpretations of rights and burdens grounded in their condition of participants to the said institution.

To sum up, even in the case of market-mediated organisation of labour social roles represent functional conditions for action coordination. They are the institutional embodiment of rights and duties that individuals are demanded to fulfil, performing one's role represents a functional condition for action coordination. To function, the market needs, at the least, that agents are willing to participate under given conditions. When those called to take part in this institution engaged in protests, various forms of resistance, sabotage and so forth against the effects of 'norm-free' mechanisms, e.g. the price mechanism, it became clear that the market's presumed laws, e.g. the law of supply and demand, could not solve this kind of crisis. The conception of the 'norm-free' market as an institution capable of ensuring its reproduction must lose its self-evidence if the said 'norm-free' principles and dynamics prove insufficient to solve the problems they create and normative criteria are needed to justify the situation as legitimate or justify various measures or interventions.[71] Because of this, the norms required to secure normative resolutions to and mitigate the crises threatening the functioning of the market would also pertain to its 'facticity'. In this way, Honneth's premise that it is possible to reconstruct, rather than merely 'construct', the norms belonging to the market's 'facticity', i.e. those in light of which it could secure legitimacy, and do so via an analysis of the struggles over justice within the market sphere and the impact they had on the market institution gains some initial plausibility.

4.2.2 Freedom and the market

So far, the discussion was limited to the arguments *FR* offers in support of the thesis that normative reconstruction of the market makes sense methodologically- that it is not entirely implausible to assume that struggles for justice of market participants might provide

[71] As Karl Polanyi argues, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' social history reveals the fictitious nature of a completely self-regulated market. Attempts to realise it in practice had to be time and again counter-acted by containing measures in order to avoid the destruction of society: "Society protected itself against the perils inherent in a self-regulating market system- this was the one comprehensive feature of the history of the age" (*The Great Transformation* 79). Of course, there are also important differences between Polanyi's and Honneth's arguments. The first argues that society needs and has repeatedly intervened to *restrain* the market because the dis-embedding tendencies of the first endangered the market's society's very existence. In contrast, Honneth would argue that the containment measures represent actions by which the market's *own* moral presuppositions are brought to bear on it. Nevertheless, both scholars share the central premise that the 'free' market governed by 'norm-free' mechanisms risks producing crises it cannot solve, problems that require normative resolutions.

access to the normative facticity of the market. With these clarifications in place, it is now possible to turn to the second premise of Honneth's argument- regarding the content of the norms constituting the market's normative facticity. We would expect that the normative reconstruction is guided by the value of individual freedom since it represents in Honneth's view the fundamental value of modern societies. While this is the case, keeping in line with the methodological restrictions of *FR*, Honneth cannot derive the premise that individual freedom represents the fundamental value of the market from his conception of modern societies as societies for the sake of freedom but must recover it as a dimension of the market's facticity. Thus normative reconstruction needs to provide evidence that the said value underpins the labour market, i.e. the market's legitimacy depends on securing participants' freedom.

Here too, Honneth confers an important role to the phenomenon of struggle. According to him, the struggles between participants over the norms that ought to govern market interaction represent the mechanism *immanent* to the market by which the normative presuppositions of the market are disclosed and, in good measure, brought to bear on it.[72] The first pages of Honneth's historical account show that from the early stages of the labour market development, freedom emerged as the value to which both the participants defending the new institution and those challenging it appealed in defending their claims. An exception is the short period in the initial stage of the conflict when workers appealed to moral norms inspired by Christian and traditional ethics in denouncing the market as incompatible with basic norms of decency and humanity. However, because these norms gradually but irreversibly lost their grip on the labour organisation, the workers inquired into the normative logic underpinning the new institution to justify their denunciations. Since the idea of a 'free' contract was the only available normative foothold in the new institutional complex, workers were compelled, in the end, by the lack of alternatives to explore the normative resources offered by the right to a 'free' contract to justify their demands for more humane forms of work, and social protection.

This second strategy- employing the grammar of freedom- seemed more promising for several reasons. Even the market proponents tied its legitimacy to securing the freedom of market participants. The new institution was also set up to 'recognise' market participants in

[72] "In our normative reconstruction [...] we should proceed by attempting, in an idealizing manner, to uncover the path in the historical development of the capitalist market that has led to a gradual realization of its underlying principles of social freedom, principles that secure its legitimacy and have emerged under the pressure of social movements, moral protests and political reforms" (*FR* 197).

either available roles, i.e. 'free' workers seeking employment or employers. Because of this, a critique of the market based on the idea of freedom seemed more promising in gaining a grip on the market insofar as the idea of employment based on 'free' contractual relations represents a fundamental presupposition for market interaction, for the distribution of rights and duties to secure legitimacy. Either willingly or for lack of alternatives, workers had to learn to see themselves through the lenses of their newly acquired roles to use the normative resources underpinning the market. Individual freedom emerged as the value through which the market could secure legitimacy, but also in light of which it could be criticised from within (*FR* 227-8).

The argument in favour of normative functionalism and the thesis that from the first stages of labour market development, freedom emerged as the value orienting the disputes over the norms in light of which it could secure legitimacy are not the end point of Honneth's argument, but preliminary steps preparing the ground for his central thesis. According to him, social freedom emerged as the adequate resolution to the question regarding the modality of freedom promised by the labour market. However, not making the task of providing a reconstructive argument in favour of this thesis too easy, he acknowledges that from its early phases, there were not one but two interpretations of freedom competing within the market sphere. One was defended by the 'private capitalist actors', and another was pushed for by the workers' movements. In his words, on

> "the one side, the private capitalist actors, stood for a purely individualistic understanding of the freedom of contract, according to which it is entirely up to the owners of the means of production to decide upon the conditions under which they employ labour; the other side, the industrial workforce, believed that the system of contractual freedom normatively implied social conditions under which this freedom could in fact be realized." (*FR* 228)

To anticipate, the "purely individualistic understanding of the freedom of contract" defended by capital owners cannot support Honneth's hypothesis since it lacks the cooperative ethos characterising social freedom. In turn, the second interpretation- stating that contractual freedom must incorporate the "social conditions under which this freedom could in fact be realised"- will emerge as more promising. Honneth might obtain evidence for the immanent character of social freedom if he can show that the realisation of "the social conditions" demanded by the workforce points towards attributes characterising social freedom. Of course, it would be improbable that workers have been guided by the explicitly

articulated ideal of the market as a sphere of social freedom in their struggles. Instead, the point would be to provide evidence that social freedom can be reflectively reconstructed as the standpoint from which the moral grammar underpinning the workers' struggles and their demands for justice makes the most sense. At the same time, it should be emphasised that the premises of Honneth's argument considered in this section confer equal validity to both modalities of freedom identified in the above quote. Both the 'individualistic' interpretation of it and the one drawing attention to its social preconditions of realisation are compatible with the notion of normative functionalism, with the premise that freedom is the fundamental value of the market and the assumption that the normative presuppositions emerge out of the conflicts between the participants regarding the norms governing their interaction. Because of this, it might not be surprising that the most significant challenges to Honneth's conception of the labour market as a sphere of social freedom are posed by the conception of the market as a sphere of 'individualistic' or negative freedom, as will be shown in the final part of this chapter.

4.3 Social Freedom Within the Market

This second part of the chapter reconstructs and discusses the evidence that Honneth's normative reconstruction of the labour market offers in favour of identifying social freedom as an adequate resolution to the legitimacy problem. Keeping in view the plural sense of fundamental value identified in Chapter 5, normative reconstruction would need to provide evidence that social freedom emerged as the normative horizon of struggles for justice within the (labour) market sphere, and that it left its traces on the market institution, i.e. institutional reforms took place by which the market acquired the attributes of the social freedom sphere. The tasks are further clarified by identifying the basic characteristics the market would need to exhibit to qualify as a sphere of social freedom; this is done via an analysis of the concepts of 'social freedom' and 'spheres of social freedom' introduced in *FR* (4.3.1). The resulting tasks provide, in turn, valuable guidelines for assessing, in the following section, the evidence that normative reconstruction offers in favour of the thesis that social freedom emerged as the fundamental, legitimacy conferring value of the labour market (4.3.2). The final section discusses several recurrent objections raised against the operation of reconstruction and its results (4.3.3).

4.3.1 Social freedom: concepts and tasks

As shown in Chapter 5, Honneth holds that freedom is the fundamental value of modern societies. Additionally, *FR* introduces three attributes in light of which values are fundamental: they ground the moral grammar of justice employed by participants in the social sphere, guided struggles for justice within the social sphere in question, and left their traces on social institutions. Accordingly, the normative reconstruction of the labour market would need to show that social freedom has acquired the listed roles in order to provide a minimum of plausibility to Honneth's thesis that social freedom is the fundamental, legitimacy conferring value of the labour market. Before considering the evidence Honneth's reconstruction provides it will be required to introduce the concept of 'social freedom' and 'sphere of social freedom'. Doing so will allow us at the end of this section to have a better grasp of what the mentioned tasks entail for the social modality of freedom.

A characteristic of social freedom, in Honneth's account, is its decidedly intersubjective character. 'Free' are only those 'acts' that can receive the reflexive endorsement of the individual *and* command the reflexive approval of others. Additionally, the acts representing the elements of intersubjective freedom must be such that the free act of each party is possible only as a *complementary contribution* to the realisation of the free act of the other party. For example, suppose we desire the affection of a particular other. In this case, the very realisation of the act, e.g. experiencing the other's affectivity, depends on the other contributing actively to the realisation of our own desire, so much so that only via the free act of the other can we realise our own free act. Our act is *not* possible in isolation from the other's actions since the reciprocal acts of the other must complete our act to realise it. Only in such cases can we speak of freedom in the intersubjective sense had in view by Honneth, one based on relations of mutual recognition demanding participants to act in a recognitive way towards each other as a precondition for fulfilling their own (complimentary) aims (*FR* 44-5; "Three, Not Two Concepts of Liberty").

However, intersubjective is not yet *social* freedom. It becomes social only if the cooperative interaction characterising intersubjective freedom takes the form of socially integrated behaviour patterns. In this regard, as Hegel's concept of 'objective freedom', social freedom establishes "a connection to the concept of the institution or the medium by

viewing behavioural norms as a social precondition for recognizing the complementary nature of aims and desires" (*FR* 45). What the "connection" entails becomes more evident once we look at the roles social institutions must play in the realisation of social freedom. Individuals rely on social institutions to achieve social freedom, *not* because only through institutionalised interaction can they realise intentions developed *outside* social practices. More than this, individuals can discover complementary aims and desires only by participating in certain types of social institutions. In this sense, the role of social institutions is not limited to the adjuvant function of enhancing or stabilising intersubjective forms of freedom; they are a condition for the *existence* of *social* freedom in the first place because they mediate the learning process by which individuals discover those of their intentions that are complementary to the others' intentions and discover themselves as members in a general community (*FR* 49). This role becomes clearer when considering the second function of institutions. They intervene in the individual's relation-to-self in order to allow individuals to acquire "an intersubjective understanding of their freedoms in the first place". By being socialised into social practices "aimed at mediating the realisation of complementary aims," subjects "learn to view themselves as self-conscious members of communities that guarantee freedom" (*FR* 49). Thus, the shift from interpersonal relations to social institutions is possible based on the concept of social institutions as objectified relations of mutual recognition- this is indeed the concept of social reality introduced by Hegel and endorsed by Honneth. In this regard, the basic claim of social ontology underpinning Hegel's account of 'objective' freedom is that individuals experience social institutions as bundles of demands 'asking' them to comport themselves such that they, i.e. the individuals, discover and fulfil reflexively endorsable aims (*FR* 47-8).

With the concept of social freedom in place, it is now possible to turn to the question regarding the defining attributes of social freedom spheres. The systems of action for social freedom are distinguishable in light of the types of subjectivities they support, the types of interests they favour, the grammar of justice governing them and how the coordination of interaction occurs. First, according to Honneth, the subjectivity specific to social freedom develops within social roles. By taking up social roles, individuals are 'encouraged' to develop subjectivities that support the cooperative nature of interaction specific to social freedom. By growing into a social role, the individual is called to assume a bundle of demands addressed to him/her in virtue of 'who' the individual is, e.g. of the practical identity represented by the social role. In order to balance the relation between individual

autonomy and social obligations embedded in social roles, Honneth adds the condition that only those social roles that are "reflexively acceptable" are conducive to genuine social freedom. Thus, Honneth gives a modern spin to the concept of role by placing the condition that even if the individual takes it up, it does not guarantee the possibility of social freedom. Instead, the individual is entitled to evaluate the moral validity of the role by reflecting on the validity of the demands confronting her/him (*FR* 126).[73] Secondly, the demands facing the participants refer to the contributions they should make to the realisation of the worthy interests of others. It follows that in spheres of social freedom, participants should pursue interests that are not only reflexively endorsable by them but also represent *complementary generalisable interests* since only the complementarity of the intentions can ensure the possibility of free cooperation. Thirdly, because social freedom is based on relations of mutual recognition, its normative order presupposes "the reciprocal ascription of a normative status, which makes up the substance of all relations of recognition" (*FR* 125). As free contributors to cooperative interaction, participants in spheres of social freedom would expect from others the kind of behaviours that would allow them to fulfil their own aims. It follows that within spheres of social freedom, the moral grammar governing the distribution of rights and burdens is geared towards cooperation. Because one knows herself and is known by others as a contributor to the realisation of the aims of others, and because the practice is such that realising one's worthy aims contributes to the realisation of the worthy aims of others, then demands to have one's worthy intentions realised acquires for the others the status of moral obligation.[74]

Finally, without the possibility of negotiating and deliberating on the various aspects of the cooperative process- including the content of complementary aims and the mutual obligations they ground- the cooperative ethos on which spheres of social freedom depend could hardly be maintained. The reason can be traced back to the central attribute of social freedom according to which only by taking part in the *praxis* specific to it can participants understand their complementary interests. However, this condition is even more precarious in

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[73] Beate Rössler ("Kantian Autonomy") argues that the condition of 'reflexive acceptability' pointing towards the Kantian sense of autonomy according to which social contexts do not bind the autonomy of individuals is at odds with the Hegelian premise underpinning Honneth's notion of social freedom according to which individuals need to take part in institutions of freedom in order to develop 'free' intentions. Honneth ("The Normativity of Ethical Life") argues, in turn, that the Kantian sense of autonomy is already embedded, at least as potentiality, in the dynamics of mutual recognition (grounding the possibility of social freedom).

[74] "[t]he role obligations entailed by cooperative action bear traces of what we customarily call 'morality', for each person must treat the others in a way that allows their respective purposes to be achieved" (*FR* 125).

modern societies where the behavioural demands attached to social roles "only represent vague sketches" offering only the most general guidelines for interaction (*FR* 127). Consequently, the deliberative *praxis* specific to social freedom spheres can be maintained only if all participants have secured a minimum of decision-making power granting them the status of co-determining party.

To sum up, the concepts of 'social freedom' and 'sphere of social freedom' go some way in circumscribing the tasks that the normative reconstruction of the market should fulfil to support the thesis of the market geared towards the ideal of social freedom. The first attribute consists of the institutionalisation of complementary social roles mediating cooperation. The second attribute involves identifying complementary generalisable interests that each participant can realise through cooperation. Following Hegel and Durkheim, Honneth anticipates that market participants are guided by the interest in securing a minimum of economic autonomy via fair remuneration and the interest in securing a dignified social status.[75] Correlatively, as participants in a cooperative effort, actors would employ the grammar of cooperation in justifying their demands that others contribute to the realisation of their 'generalisable interests' but would also have an interest that the institutional preconditions for their realisation are in place. In this case, expectations that one secures economic autonomy through work would be justifiable in light of the contribution that one's work makes to the material well-being of others. Expectations that one secures social esteem through working would be justifiable in light of the social relevance of the contribution that one makes through working. Further on, as a sphere of social freedom, the market would need to embed the institutional preconditions necessary for market participants to arrive at normative resolutions regarding the organisation of their interaction that are reflectively acceptable to all, i.e. mechanisms of co-determination.

Thus, the attributes of the market as a sphere of social freedom further clarify the evidence that normative reconstruction should provide to support the claim that social freedom represents the fundamental, legitimacy conferring value of the market: normative reconstruction needs to show that in their struggles for justice workers aim at economic autonomy, social recognition and co-determination while defending their demands by employing the grammar of cooperation. Additionally, to substantiate the claim that the market has been put on the path towards social freedom, that social freedom left its traces on the

[75] In addition to *FR* (224, 249-50), also Honneth ("Work and Recognition").

market institution, it would be required to show that its transformations can be made comprehensible as necessary steps towards social freedom.[76]

4.3.2 Towards social freedom: struggles and reforms

This section discusses the support that Honneth's historical account can offer to the claim that the market has gradually acquired the attributes characterising spheres of social freedom identified above and that these transformations illustrate the process by which the normative presuppositions of the market, i.e. the value in light of which it could secure legitimacy, were brought to bear on it. I identify in Honneth's reconstruction several milestones differentiable in light of the types of demands orienting workers' struggles. There would be the stage of struggles for social protection and minimum economic autonomy (throughout the nineteenth century), struggles for co-determination, and struggles for social recognition of social contributions. In each case, the struggles and demands need to be linked to changes and transformations in the institutional set-up of the market in order to substantiate the presumption that identified transformations make the most sense from the standpoint of social freedom.

The first phase spans the nineteenth century and opens with the catastrophic effects that the emergence of the 'free' labour market had for workers. Following Honneth's narrative, the workers' movements emerged out of the need to develop at least "rudimentary forms of collective resistance" that could offer them a minimum of social protection from the deleterious consequences of market 'liberalisation'. Along this path, mutual help

[76] Honneth's concept of the market has been criticised as un-Hegelian. More realist than Honneth, the objection goes, Hegel was aware that the market served individualistic interests and did not support an ethos of cooperation among participants. Timo Jütten, for example, argues that Honneth conflates Hegel's notion of the market with his broader notion of 'civil society' where only the latter makes room for the idea of cooperation. In Honneth's defence, I would point out that his reconstructive approach is alert to transformations undergone by social institutions and the necessity of revising the basic concepts through which they are analysed in light of such transformations. As in the case of other Hegelian notions of social institutions tributary to the reality of Hegel's time, e.g. his conception of the family, his notion of the market too might require some work of renovation in order to make it relevant today. Additionally, in Honneth's view, Émile Durkheim made significant contributions in this direction by unearthing the moral presuppositions of the division of labour in modern societies, expanding the notion of the market as a social sphere. In this regard, Honneth's notion of the market might be un-Hegelian in the strict sense; however, granting this point is unproblematic insofar his notion is meant to be Hegelian-Durkheimian, and is meant to reflect transformations in the market form that took place after Hegel's time, and which could not have been anticipated by him. See Honneth *(FR* 178-98; "Work and Recognition"). For criticism of Honneth's notion of the market along the mentioned lines, see Timo Jütten (192-4); Liza Herzog (*Inventing the Market* 55, footnote 124).

organisations developed, allowing workers to "cooperatively coordinate the necessary defence measures" (*FR* 230). Honneth introduces this development as a learning process through which workers became aware of themselves not merely as individual economic actors but as social actors; they became aware that by participating in productive activities, they make a distinctive contribution to social wellbeing and thus became aware of sharing a social condition. Most importantly, following Honneth, workers' collective resistance was enhanced "by the growing awareness of their significant contribution to economic growth through the productivity of their labour" (*FR* 231). The suggestion would be that the consciousness of making "a significant contribution to economic growth" is convergent with *certain* forms of self-identity, conceptions of work, and work-based interaction rather than others. For example, collective actions engendered by the consciousness of making a "significant contribution to economic growth" would be highly convergent with the self-understanding as social contributors.[77] Further, this self-understanding would be compatible with an interpretation of work not merely as a means to maximise economic interests but as a cooperative activity for mutual benefit.[78] Workers' collective resistance, engendered by their self-understanding *as* social contributors and their interpretation of their work as a social contribution, would point towards a conception of the market-mediated organisation of labour as a sphere of cooperation. Honneth takes these features of the workers' struggles as signs that they saw themselves as participants in what ought to be a sphere based on a minimum of cooperation rather than seeing the market as a sphere of untamed competition.[79] In this way, a first relation is established between the collective demands of workers and the cooperative grammar characterising social freedom.

If Honneth could establish if and in what way the demands and the cooperative grammar underpinning workers' struggle managed to infiltrate, so to speak, the wider society and engender institutional reforms in the direction of transforming the market towards the ideal of a social sphere based on a minimum of cooperation rather than one based on the untamed competition he could strengthen the relation between social freedom and the market. From this perspective, it makes sense that Honneth's reconstruction picks up on the institutionalisation of rudimentary welfare measures in the second part of the nineteenth

[77] Compare, for example, the subjectivity and the forms of interaction supported by cooperative freedom discussed in the previous section with the subjectivity and interaction pertaining to individualistic freedom that Honneth recovers from the liberal tradition (*FR* 21-28; also *FR* Chapter 4).

[78] For an overview of models of work, e.g. instrumental, expressive, recognition *see* Chapter 2 of this thesis.

[79] "[b]y joining together in clubs, cooperatives and self-help organizations, workers had taken a first step toward preventing egoistic and strategic behaviour and awakening overarching feelings of responsibility." (*FR* 232)

century since they might appear as a first step in the desired direction, at least at first. Because the welfare measures vindicated some of the workers' most pressing demands, e.g. minimum social protection, they would provide social confirmation that the workers' demands for recognition carry normative weight. One might reconstruct the significance of welfare measures as speaking in favour of social freedom along the following lines. Workers' demands for social protection ensuring a minimum of economic autonomy represents a generalisable interest whose validity is comprehensible from the standpoint of social freedom; since welfare measures vindicate some of these demands, even if only partially, then these measures could be seen as a positive development through which the market is brought a step closer towards social freedom. Furthermore, the welfare measures would signify that crystallisation of social consensus stating that the promise that market participants enter freely into contractual relations cannot be realised insofar as material distribution is left merely to 'norm-free' mechanisms, e.g. the law of supply and demand, the price mechanism. Additionally, welfare measures could be read as a minimum condition ensuring that all parties entering into 'free' labour contracts can do so 'freely'- at a minimum, this would require a more balanced relation of power, allowing all parties to refuse blatantly disadvantageous offers of employment. Because state-guaranteed social protections put workers in a better position to resist and refuse dehumanising and exploiting forms of work, thus increasing their bargaining power, these measures could represent stepping stones towards participating in the institution of labour contracts freely. Thus, the measures would appear as freedom-enhancing.

Nevertheless, it would be too hasty to conclude that the rudimentary welfare measures institutionalised at the end of the nineteenth century speak unequivocally in favour of *social* freedom. Unless Honneth can show that the demands for social protection, the beneficial effects these measures had, *and* the moral grammar underpinning them converge with the cooperative logic characterising social freedom, the positive evaluation of welfare measures from the standpoint of social freedom would be too hasty. Against the positive assessment, as Honneth himself points out, it should be considered that the welfare measures were institutionalised via the mechanism of *subjective rights,* entailing a relation of rights between the state and individuals as private persons. The state now recognised the individuals' rights to a minimum of social protection without which they could not exercise their legally guaranteed rights. However, workers were entitled to these rights not because of their contribution to the social well-being but as private individuals entitled to legal freedom.

Because of this, the welfare measures might have been freedom enhancing; however, they engendered not the realisation of social but of individualistic freedom. While the discussion would require ample space, here it might suffice to point out that the normative logic of subjective rights is inherently individualising, diverging from, even opposing social freedom's cooperative logic. For example, in order to articulate their demands for social protection within the normative logic of subjective rights, the workers had to learn to understand themselves not as social agents sharing a social condition but as *private persons* relying on the state to protect their fundamental rights.[80] The normative logic characterising subjective rights had de-solidarising implications: workers were encouraged to react in an individualistic way to perceived injustices and employ an individualistic logic of justification. "[I]n the case of conflicts and debates", subjective rights "suggested a return to merely individual action, thus crippling growing impulses for collective self-organization" as a result, the emergence of the welfare state enhanced "an almost unstoppable process of individualization" (*FR* 230-1). The bottom line is that the moral grammar discernable in these transformations points towards a process of individualisation representing an obstacle to the emergence of social consensus that the economy relies on norms of cooperation. Thus, from the standpoint of social freedom, welfare measures appear as ambivalent rather than unequivocally positive development, which is also the conclusion drawn by Honneth, as shown by the above quotes.

The emergence of the first elements of the welfare state does not provide decisive evidence in favour of social freedom. Nevertheless, it was essential to cover this topic in our discussion of Honneth's historical account because it is highly significant for further comprehending his operation of reconstruction. The interpretation of the welfare measures shows that he is well aware of the complex conditions that transformations need to satisfy to speak in favour of social freedom. More so, it suggests that the results of normative reconstruction are not a foregone conclusion. On the contrary, evidence favouring Honneth's preferred hypothesis must pass internal validation tests. The welfare measures did not fulfil all conditions because the grammar in light of which they were justified does not fulfil the condition that it appeals to the cooperative character of market interaction, making use instead of the mechanism of subjective rights.

Returning to Honneth's historical account, the fact that workers secured minimal social protections not as contributors but as private individuals, i.e. through the mechanisms

[80] "[t]he social claims granted by the state were exclusively addressed to individual workers, thus administratively extracting them from the communities they had managed to establish" (*FR* 230).

of subjective rights, suggest that the terms on which parties interacted within the labour market, eschewed from the beginning by asymmetrical power relations favouring employers over workers, remained in place. The workers lacked virtually any control over their destiny within the market since they lacked any *institutional* means to influence their work organisation within the company or the distribution of economic benefits. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century and beyond workers had to engage in strikes, boycotts and other forms of resistance in order to gain minimal concessions. Unsurprisingly, thus, co-determination rights have been a constant demand of workers' movements. Workers' struggles for co-determination bore their first fruits during WWI when due to "the demands for increased production and the high concentration of capital" labour movements acquired the necessary leverage to secure some degree of co-determination rights regarding wages and working conditions *(FR* 238). Again, Honneth is well aware that drawing overly optimistic conclusions would be too hasty. The co-determination rights secured in the first part of the twentieth century were episodic and very limited; they and the "discursive mechanisms" through which they could be exercised were promptly dismantled no later than the end of WWI. However, not all traces were obliterated. The workers' unions retained co-determination as an ideal worth striving for at least for the subsequent decades of the twentieth century. Finally, in the post-WWII period rights to co-determination and discursive mechanisms were reinstated allowing unions to influence how work is organised within companies to a certain degree.

Struggles for co-determination and the emergence of co-determination rights are more telling for the conception of the market as a sphere of social freedom than the institutionalisation of welfare measures. Participants in institutions of social freedom are expected to actively contribute to realising others' worthy interests by virtue of their social roles. However, because social roles and the demands they embody in modern societies have lost their self-evident character, what counts as 'worthy demands' becomes the subject of constant negotiation (*see* section 4.3.1 above). Mechanisms of co-determination would ensure that those called to assume a role or another have the real possibility to co-formulate the shared norms. They also represent a basic condition for the *praxis* of negotiation and mutual clarification- by which parties can identify complementary interests- occurs in the first place. Thus, the mechanisms would represent an essential precondition for cooperative activities to be governed by norms protecting the freedom of all and to minimise the risk that established

norms *de facto* legitimise some (partisan) interests at the expense of other contributors. In short, they represent a *sine qua non* condition of social freedom.

In contrast, co-determination is not essential in spheres based on non-cooperative interaction in which individuals can pursue their self-interests independently from others' contributions. In these spheres, each individual would be free to set aims for himself/herself independently of the others within the boundaries of the law. The normative logic more suitable to these systems of action is not social, but negative freedom understood as the liberty to follow whatever aims one considers worthy free from external interference as long as they do not infringe on the freedom of others to do the same.[81] Given the significance that co-determination acquires from the standpoint of social freedom, it becomes understandable why in Honneth's view the labour movements' successful attempts to secure at least some co-determination rights are highly significant "in terms of the enablement of social freedom" (*FR* 238).

Honneth is realistic enough to consider the possibility that co-determination rights are explainable, at least partially, as necessary concessions given the socio-economic situation and challenges of the post-WWII period. For example, to fulfil the primary task of rebuilding the economy in the post-war period it was necessary to mitigate potential class conflicts. Nevertheless, beyond these strategic interests he also detects a significant change of ethos within the sphere of the economy in the post-WWII period represented by a "feeling of social egalitarianism that demanded state intervention in the economic sector", facilitating, thus, a more stringent "regulation of the labour market." This feeling of solidarity, the suggestion goes, might represent the motivational basis for the "attempt to ensure the common good within a private capitalist framework" aiming at containing "class conflict and perhaps even eliminate it" (*FR* 240). Although he stops short from stating it explicitly, the suggestion is transparent enough: in this period, not only workers' struggles, their demands and the moral grammar they employed, but also the broader social consciousness regarding the scope of the market are convergent with the normative logic of social freedom, with its cooperative ethos.

Finally, Honneth's historical recounting traces a third line of development corresponding to the third characteristic of spheres of social freedom identified in the previous section. As participants in spheres based on cooperation, individuals expect recognition of their contributions. As a sphere of social freedom, the market would secure to the participants the possibility of distinguishing themselves in light of their contributions to

[81] E.g. *FR* Chapter 4; "Three, Not Two conceptions of Liberty".

realising shared values through their work. Thus, the first source of social recognition refers to the esteem that an occupation can secure compared to others. As in the case of the other axes of social freedom, here, too, social history cautions against over-optimistic conclusions. The social-cultural grind of valuation in light of which social contributions were measured marginalised the contributions that one makes through work, as well as further downplaying the contributions made by forms of work deemed as 'unskilled' or as less 'intellectualist'. Reiterating some of the points defended in his earlier writings- discussed in the second chapter of this study- Honneth shows that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Taylorist reorganisation of work radicalised the existing divide between skilled and unskilled work because it imposed a reorganisation of production aiming to make it more efficient by increasing the dependence of production on machines and correspondingly lowered the level of skill required to fulfil work tasks. At the same time, Taylorism led to the differentiation of a managerial class of workers whose tasks were mainly administrative. The increased divisions within the working class negatively impacted class solidarity since the newly emerging administrative and managerial employees sought to secure a higher social status by distinguishing themselves from the workers directly engaged in production. On the other hand, the measures taken in the post-WWII period aiming to reduce competition along class divides also improved to some degree the recognition relations embedded in "the capitalist organisation of labour" (*FR* 241). Nevertheless, even in this period, which overall Honneth assess as a period of positive developments, "[t]he historically established hegemonial interpretation" of the achievement principle according to which the social value of labour activities increase with the degree of intellectual exertion and initiative they require remained in place (*FR* 241). Because of this, the post-WWII period cannot be associated with an increase in the social visibility of forms of work deemed low-skilled, given the still dominant grind according to which work activities demanding an increased level of "intellectual creativity and initiative" are worthy of a higher level of social esteem.

Honneth finds evidence that the workers' status improved in the post-WWII period along a second axis of social recognition. While the quality of work activity was affected by the Taylorist organisation of work the overall status of the working class in the broader society improved. The suggestion here is that the post-WWII reforms of the labour market lead to more egalitarian dispositions across social divisions allowing workers as a class to enjoy for the first time a higher social status. More specifically, the establishment of co-determination mechanisms allowed workers to participate in the firms' decision-making

process via the unions. The improved standing within firms, e.g. as more equal partners, is associated with an increased feeling of self-respect given that workers "no longer had to regard their situation as inevitable or as the result of uncontrollable economic processes" but could take a more active role in influencing their work conditions (*FR* 241). Finally, workers' self-respect was also improved by access to social opportunities of self-realisation, e.g. broader access to higher education, along with "increased opportunities for consumption" (*FR* 241). Although fragmentary and incomplete, the transformations in the grammar of esteem and the increased opportunities for distinction characteristic of the post-WWII period provide, in Honneth's view, further support for the idea of the market as a sphere of social freedom. This point might not be entirely unreasonable considering that the correlation between self-determination via co-determination, the increased social status enhanced by co-determination, and the development of a more positive self-relation, i.e. increased self-respect, reflects precisely the kind of interdependence characterising social freedom in which participants in cooperative activities have the chance to develop a positive self-relation by assigning each other the status of contributors having the right to co-determine shared-norms. To sum up, Honneth's assessment of the post-WWII period from the standpoint of work-based social recognition representing the third axis of social freedom is positive but reserved. Even in this period improvements did not emerge along all axes of social freedom, although the social status of workers did improve.

So far, I have considered the evidence that normative reconstruction offers to support the thesis that the ideal of social freedom emerged within the market sphere and gradually acquired the role of moral principle grounding both demands for justice and institutional reforms. The endeavours of social movements to 'socialise the market from below' played a central role in the reformist process by which social freedom acquired institutional anchorage, albeit other factors were also important such as changes in the composition of capital (e.g. *FR* 232). All in all, the post-WWII period offers the most robust evidence in favour of Honneth's thesis that social freedom represents an ideal immanent to the market in the twofold sense of the standpoint from which market participants evaluate the moral validity of the market-based organisation of labour and as norm institutionalised within the labour market. However, it would be wise to consider several recurring objections raised against his reconstructive argument before drawing any preliminary conclusions.

4.3.3 Reconstruction or construction?

Although the list of objections considered below is not exhaustive, it covers recurring objections that test core elements of Honneth's argument. The first one is that the interpretation of workers' movements as being for the sake of social freedom is not convincing because Honneth's stylised notion of workers' struggles would be obtained at the cost of marginalising recalcitrant data. The second objection is that the results of normative reconstruction fail to demonstrate that the market can become a sphere of social freedom. The third objection is that the argument does not engage with alternative interpretations of the market, failing thus to explain why the narrative proposed in *FR* is more credible than others. Beyond their differences, I contend, the objections are premised on the idea that the results of normative reconstruction represent theoretical artefacts constructed via careful selection of empirical material, friendly interpretations, and marginalisation of recalcitrant data. All in all, the objections state that the argument failed to demonstrate the centrality of social freedom within the market sphere.

One objection goes that the conception of workers' struggles in *FR* represents a theoretical construct based on a selective reading of empirical evidence. In his historical recounting of the workers' movements, the objection goes, Honneth gives precedence to those confirming his favourite narrative. For example, he affirms that most workers' movements striving for social protection were guided by a conception of the market convergent with the ideal of social freedom, except for the Marxist-oriented ones. Without further explanation, he excludes the more radical movements seeking not the transformation of the market from within but its overthrow through revolutionary action as irrelevant to the normative reconstruction of the labour market (*FR* 228-9). Critics take examples such as these as telling evidence that the argument is based on a 'careful' selection of empirical data, dismissing without justification recalcitrant findings (e.g. Jütten 197; Claassen 97; Solinas).

One could hardly deny that normative reconstruction involves a degree of stylisation and selection of empirical material and that it highlights some findings at the expense of others. However, we should recall that Honneth's aim is to thematise the moral grammar underpinning the (labour) market- the aim is to make explicit the market's normative presuppositions. True, nowhere in *FR* is it made explicit the criteria used in deciding what empirical findings are the most relevant ones and what can be minimised without prejudice. Nevertheless, I contend that some criteria of selection are implicit in *FR*. It should be recalled

that the reconstruction does not aim to provide a detailed empirical analysis of *all* workers' struggles, movements, or organisations that gained social momentum but maps out the moral grammar underpinning the struggles for justice of market participants. The explicit demands and criticism of various workers' movements are not the endpoint of analysis; they represent the empirical material from which moral grammar needs to be distilled. Seemingly divergent movements might rely on similar moral grammar. In this case, bringing into the foreground some movements at the expense of others might not vitiate the analysis if the 'marginalised' ones share the same normative standpoint as the ones discussed.

Correspondingly, Honneth argues that the conception of the world of work as a sphere of social freedom is highly convergent with the Marxian ideal of organising social labour on cooperation. Honneth assumes that the Marxian ideal of emancipation from economic heteronomy would be translatable into the grammar of social freedom (*FR* 49-51).[82] In this case, the divergence between the two accounts would not regard the normative standards of critique but the question of whether the organisation of labour in line with social freedom is compatible with a market-based organisation of labour. While not denying the existence of exploitation and alienation forms of work in market-based societies, two pillars of Marxist critique, Honneth argues that these ills are not structurally rooted in the market organisation of labour; instead, they would represent empirical phenomena correctible through adequate reforms, and criticisable from within the market-based organisation on the assumption that norms of social freedom underpin the market sphere (*FR* 194-6). In this case, the marginalisation of Marxist movements in the history of the labour market told by *FR* does not necessarily represent an attempt to dismiss recalcitrant empirical evidence. On the assumption that social freedom can be disclosed as the normative standpoint even of Marxist movements, such movements would also point towards the normative standpoint defended in *FR*.

The rationale presented so far might not work in any and each case, the same way the assumption that Marxian critique of capitalist societies is grounded on a conception of freedom highly convergent with the one defended in *FR* can also be disputed.[83] Without denying that this might be so, I limit myself to only reiterating the point made in the previous

[82] Honneth argues that his conception of social freedom as highly convergent with the normative standpoint of the socialist tradition in *The Idea of Socialism*. I broach this point in the following section of this chapter. For further discussion regarding the contribution Honneth's theory of recognition might make to Marxian critique of capitalist societies, see Deranty, "Marx, Honneth and the Tasks of a Contemporary Critical Theory"; cf. Borman ("Labour, Exchange and Recognition").

[83] For interpretations of Marx's conception of social freedom that challenge Honneth's concept of the market as a sphere of social freedom, *see* Jütten ("Is the Market [...]?" 190-2); Wilhelm, Dagmar (Chapter 6, section 6.3).

section: normative reconstruction encompasses several internal tests and criteria that function through cumulation. As shown, the explicit demands of workers' movements are important for singling them out as relevant but insufficient; the moral grammar through which they are articulated must also be considered. Beyond this, at least in the case of Marxist movements, Honneth engages explicitly with the normative presuppositions of Marxian critique and argues that they are convergent with his own conception of a more emancipated work organisation. Against this background, the objection that normative reconstruction relies on a friendly selection of empirical data that benefits the narrative defended in *FR* seems rather facile.

A second objection targets the role assigned to the conflicts between market participants in disclosing the normative presuppositions of the market. The assumption is that given the central role assigned to the normative orientation of market participants and the moral grammar of struggles in normative reconstruction, it follows that Honneth's argument in favour of social freedom is entirely reliant on showing that market participants have developed certain beliefs, e.g. that the market can and should follow norms pointing towards the ideal of social freedom. However, the objection goes, assuming that market participants did *believe* that the market could be transformed in the direction of social freedom, it still does not follow that the market *can* be a sphere of social freedom. On the contrary, the participants' beliefs regarding institutions and organisations are inherently fallible and do not represent evidence for how institutions can or do work. Concluding possibilities of institutional transformation based on the normative orientations of social agents represents a highly contestable method of grounding critique on social analysis (Jütten 197-8). The objection would be convincing if this is all that normative reconstruction does. As shown, the operation of reconstruction is not limited to registering the moral beliefs of market participants but also to identifying those institutional reforms and political measures that represent steps towards social freedom. Thus, in addition to support drawn from struggles, evidence regarding the capacity of norms to shape the market institution, albeit in a rather fragmentary way, is fundamental for supporting the conception of the market as a sphere of social freedom (Honneth, "Rejoinder", *Critical Horizons*).

The third objection is that the reconstruction of the market's history from the standpoint of social freedom is not the only one finding empirical support. At least two alternative standpoints can provide convincing accounts rooted in empirical evidence: the functionalist conception of the market as a 'norm-free' sphere and the liberal conception of it

as a sphere of negative freedom. Because the standpoint of social freedom completely absorbs Honneth's normative reconstruction, the objection goes, he fails to compare his interpretations of phenomena with equally plausible but different ones, even less does he explain why his interpretations are the adequate ones (e.g. Zurn, "The Ends"). Indeed, Honneth does not make explicit in every case why his interpretation is the most convincing; however, as shown in the previous sections, he is far from dismissing alternative conceptions of the market. He does not consider only one standpoint from which the market's transformations could be comprehended, but three potential candidates: the market as a 'norm-free' sphere, as a sphere of individual and social freedom, respectively. More than this, his normative reconstruction is meant to provide reasons against the competing accounts. An argument against the 'norm-free' conception would be that analyses of economic interaction and coordination from its standpoint lead to a truncated analysis of the market's 'facticity', as discussed in the first section when the claim that the question of legitimacy emerged time and again within the market sphere was considered. Additionally, he is well aware not only that two interpretations of freedom emerged within the market sphere, one pointing towards the value of individualistic freedom, but also that some phenomena might point towards negative rather than social freedom. A good example is his interpretation of welfare measures; as shown, he acknowledges that it is via the mechanism of subjective rights pointing towards the value of negative freedom that the welfare measures were legitimised. Further on, his assessment of some reforms as steps towards social freedom, e.g. co-determination rights, is given only in light of a cumulative number of conditions, e.g. rights for co-determination make sense in light of a conception of the market as a sphere in which cooperation plays a role. In this regard, among other findings, struggles for co-determination and the institutionalisation of co-determination mechanisms would converge with the idea of social freedom and speak against a reconstructive argument in favour of negative freedom. In short, although not always explicitly, Honneth offers reasons for why certain phenomena are better understood from the standpoint of social freedom while acknowledging that empirical evidence speaks against any facile confirmation of social freedom in other cases.

Additionally, drawing on the basic premises of *FR*, I would propose a further argument in favour of Honneth's 'biassed' approach, starting from the peculiar character of its 'bias'. As any other critical theory unsatisfied to merely propose standards of critique but also seeking to establish the existence of in-worldly phenomena that could lead to social developments in the desired direction, his account is methodologically 'eschewed' towards

emancipatory tendencies. The moment when workers secured co-determination rights and discursive mechanisms were institutionalised is highly significant from the standpoint of emancipation. By securing rights to co-determination, as Honneth points out and as mentioned in the previous section, the workers "no longer had to regard their situation as inevitable or as the result of uncontrollable economic processes". Thus, the possibility of gaining some control over the "economic process" depends on the existence of specific institutional and organisational preconditions, e.g. co-determination mechanisms. In this way, a non-contingent relation between emancipation and co-determination mechanisms has emerged, presuming that self-determination represents the mark of emancipation.

The conceptions of the market as a 'norm-free' sphere or as a sphere of negative freedom would *not* be best placed to disclose the relation between emancipation and co-determination. Even more, each of them would raise barriers to even registering the existence of emancipatory tendencies. The fact that self-determination is hampered when the market takes a 'norm-free' sphere form and that this form is dependent on specific institutional configurations would disclose it as a (surmountable) obstacle towards emancipation. Indeed, the normative reconstruction from the standpoint of social freedom reveals the 'norm-free' form as a surmountable obstacle by showing that "economic processes" appear to participants beyond any control *if* specific institutional configurations are given, i.e. lacking mechanisms of co-determination. Correspondingly, the 'norm-free' conception is not set up to register the emancipatory potential of market's forms embedding co-determination mechanisms, nor the lack of co-determination as a ground for struggles. Even less is it set up to register the evidence that struggles for justice of market participants provide against the idea of the market as a *necessarily* 'norm-free' system.

In the same vein, if co-determination mechanisms represent a fundamental precondition of workers' emancipation from heteronomy,[84] the case is that the relation between co-determination and emancipation is rendered invisible from the standpoint of the

[84] Honneth is not the only scholar in recent years who has attempted to recover the relation between workplace co-determination and emancipation. Ruth Yeoman argues that meaningful work carries genuine emancipatory valences because it allows the realisation of basic human capacities, showing, further on, that workplace democracy represents a basic precondition for ensuring that work is organised in such a way that it acquires the attributes of meaningfulness *(Meaningful Work and Workplace Democracy)*. Hirvonen and Breen provide an argument for workplace democracy starting from the idea that the organisation of work must respect some minimal conditions of recognition, e.g. mutual respect, correcting and complementing in the process Honneth's, in their view, too abstract socio-historical approach ("Recognitive arguments"); cf. Jütten argues that even if accepted, the condition that forms of work organisation satisfy minimal forms of recognition is insufficient to ground demands for workplace democracy ("Dignity, esteem, and social contribution"). For a recent overview of debates on workplace democracy, see Frega et al., "Workplace Democracy".

conception of the market as a sphere of negative freedom insofar this viewpoint would normalise the individuals' understanding of themselves and the others as being driven by the interest in utility maximisation and their participation into the market as an opportunity to compete at the expense of the others. Thus, presuming that co-determination is not incompatible with the market institution, and Honneth's normative reconstruction provides evidence that it is not, also presuming that there is a non-contingent relation between co-determination and emancipation, then the reconstruction of the market from the standpoint of the 'norm-free' conception or from the standpoint of negative freedom would fail to register the emancipatory potentials within the market sphere; they would fail because they are not set up to register the significance that co-determination has for emancipation.

In turn, as shown, co-determination represents an essential precondition of social freedom, thus a reconstruction of the market from the standpoint of social freedom would be well placed to register the emancipatory tendencies within the market sphere. In short, it is the methodological 'bias' towards the phenomenon of emancipation of Honneth's account, a bias rooted in the practical interest of critical theory, that would account in some measure for his 'bias' towards the normative reconstruction from the standpoint of social freedom at the expense of competing conceptions, i.e. the 'norm-free' and the sphere of negative freedom accounts.[85] True, stated in these terms, the argument is nowhere to be found in *FR*. However, unless the interpretation of Honneth's work- as reconstructive critical theory- proposed in the previous chapter is entirely off the mark, the proposed argument is at least compatible with the ethos and the basic premises of his framework.

Of course, owning the methodological 'bias' cannot absolve Honneth of the responsibility to provide evidence that there is convergence between his theoretical frame and empirical phenomena. However, as shown, his normative reconstruction does take important steps in the direction of showing that there is convergence between the basic concepts of the social freedom model and transformations of the labour market. All in all, I contend that given the arguments presented so far Honneth's normative reconstruction provides robust evidence for the thesis that social freedom represents one of the more promising *candidates* for the standpoint of critique within the market-mediated sphere of labour. This being said,

[85] According to Mariana Texeria's interpretation, Honneth's critique of negative freedom from the standpoint of social freedom might provide a fruitful path towards a critique of instrumental reason attuned to contemporary societies. In this way, suggests Texeira, *FR* reconnects Honneth's critical theory with a central theme of the Frankfurt School- the critique of instrumental reason ("Can Honneth's Theory Account for a Critique of Instrumental Reason?").

however, I would not go as far as defending his argument entirely. As shown in the next section, his account remains vulnerable to compelling critique.

4.4 Social freedom uprooted

The discussion so far made explicit the argumentative strategy underpinning Honneth's reconstruction and provided a qualified defence of it against recurring objections. Further, I assume a more critical tone and argue that Honneth provides less convincing reasons for the claim that *today* social freedom would preserve its status of critical standpoint from which the market mediated organisation of labour should be diagnosed.

4.4.1 'Dis-organised' capitalism: problems on all fronts

The normative reconstruction of the market does not conclude with the triumph of social freedom. As Honneth acknowledges the market does not qualify today as a sphere of social freedom by any means because no sooner did the regulation of the labour market in the post-WWII period bring it closer to the ideal of social freedom that in a relatively short period, i.e. during the 1980s and especially the 1990s, they were dismantled almost completely (*FR* 244). Companies began to focus almost exclusively on profit maximisation, disengaging themselves from cooperative relations with the workers' representatives; the unions lost their co-determination rights in the process. The real value of wages dropped in the past decades and the de-regulation of the labour market led to an increase in part-time and temporary employment. As a result, a significant segment of employees finds themselves in low-paid, insecure jobs. All these factors contribute, in turn, to a higher risk of economic precarity among wage earners. Economic precarity, loss of co-determination rights and widespread job insecurity fuel the workers' loss of self-recognition and status (*FR* 244-6). Today, neither labour legislation nor the division of labour or the organisation of workplaces provides the preconditions of social freedom, i.e. economic security, social recognition, and co-determination. Consequently, the labour market cannot qualify as a sphere of social freedom. Social freedom has lost its institutional anchorage.

One could argue that recent transformations invalidate Honneth's reconstructive argument since today, after two centuries of transformations, the market seems to confirm the 'norm-free' or, at least, the liberal accounts as the ones describing its normal evolution while the phase of embeddedness would represent the anomaly. In Honneth's defence, I would point out that he does not defend a deterministic and linear conception of progress that would exclude stages of regression. On the contrary, as shown in the previous sections, he is well aware that developments are fragmentary, imperfect and reversible. The fragile co-determination rights that some unions gained in the first decades of the 20th century were lost, to only be recovered after WWII. Even more, only a conception of development as a fragile and reversible process, rather than a deterministic one, would be compatible with Honneth's basic action-theoretical conception of social transformations because in the action-theoretical frame development does not occur behind the backs of social agents. Improvements depend to a significant degree on the social actors' inputs and collective actions; thus, regressive transformations cannot be excluded beforehand. In turn, the mentioned objection would be most forceful on the assumption that the present form should reveal the 'essence' of the market dynamics, thus closing down the possibility that in the future the balance will swing once again in favour of social freedom. However, neither of the critics raising the objection (e.g. Zurn, "The Ends") seems willing to defend the linear conception of historical evolution required for the objection to be decisive.

A second development in the relations embedded in the world of work is even more problematic for Honneth's argument. As in the past, we might expect that those most affected by the 'de-socialising' effects of these transformations, i.e. the wage earners, seek to avoid at least their most deleterious effects via collective forms of resistance. Suppose Honneth could provide evidence that workers' associations denounced the 'de-socialising' tendencies and established a relation between the moral grammar of their demands and social freedom. In that case, it could be argued that social freedom retains a foothold, as it did in the past, as the normative horizon of critical action within the market sphere. Unfortunately for Honneth, he does not find robust evidence in this direction. Evidence shows that workers met the market transformations with a widespread feeling of injustice and engaged in various forms of resistance; however, these critical impulses fail to coagulate into collective movements (*FR* 246-7). Worse still, the 'de-socialising' tendencies seem accompanied by significant changes in the workers' self-perception, pointing away from social freedom.

The widespread 'individualisation of responsibility' is telling, especially when compared with the more cooperative ethos of the past. Today, even the workers assume the individualistic view that responsibility for one's 'occupational destiny' and economic success is imputable solely to individuals. The individualistic stance translating in a changed attitude towards oneself and others would represent an additional factor enhancing the 'de-solidirising' and 'de-socialising' developments already present within the world of work. Analogous to the relation between the solidaristic and cooperative attitudes enhancing the workers' past struggles and the conception of the market as a cooperative sphere for the benefit of all, the individualist stance prevailing among workers today is related to an altered conception of the market. Today, workers no longer view the market as a sphere of cooperation but as a sphere where participants primarily seek to maximise their economic interests assuming solely individual responsibility for their success or failure (*FR* 247-51). Although in Honneth's view there is no relation of causality between structural transformations of the market and changes in workers' self-perceptions, the latter would converge with the first in explaining to some degree the lack of widespread solidaristic and cooperative attitudes necessary for collective forms of resistance to coagulate, representing a further reason for why organised resistance failed to emerge.

Lack of organised resistance and changes in workers' self-perception does not represent only recalcitrant data but cut to the core of Honneth's methodological assumptions. As shown throughout this study, he articulates the basic categories of his critical theory so that an internal link can be established with the practical standpoint of social participants. Witness to this is the twofold role of recognition in this theoretical framework. For example, he develops his theory of recognition so that it becomes the linchpin between critical social theory and pre-theoretical social critique. Social actors have good reasons to take a critical attitude towards the social order when it fails to make true the basic recognition promises it embeds. Because social orders encompass relations of recognition, struggles for recognition are more than contingent occurrences. Pre-theoretical demands for recognition appear as types of actions having the potential to engender social critique by challenging forms of domination that rely on structural misrecognition. The frame of social freedom preserves the internal link between the critical standpoint of theory and pre-theoretical critique. For example, normative reconstruction aims to disclose social freedom as the reflexive standpoint from which participants' critique of the market becomes comprehensible. Honneth could claim that social freedom represents an ideal internal to the market and, in a second step, seek

to disclose it as the normative presupposition of interaction within the sphere of the economy, as long as he could rely on pre-theoretical forms of critique pointing towards transformations convergent with the ideal of the market as a sphere of social freedom. On this background, it becomes clear that the transformations of the past decades pose significant challenges to his account, given that the ideal of social freedom seems to have lost its twofold immanent character. It lost not only its institutional anchorage, but market participants also seem to have assumed the normative logic of individualistic freedom such that they no longer measure the rights and wrongs of the institution through the lenses of social freedom. As a result, social freedom seems to have also been uprooted in a second sense: as an ideal inspiring and guiding critique within the market sphere.

4.4.2 *The Idea of Socialism:* from workers to citizens

Although Honneth is well aware of the challenges posed by the market transformations of the past decades to his normative reconstruction, *FR* does not offer a solution other than registering them as moral regress (*FR* 252-3). The beginnings of an answer can be found in *The Idea of Socialism (TIS)*, a short book in which Honneth seeks to respond to, in his view, undeserved criticism *FR* received. Against the objection that *FR* is a conservative work seeking to defend the *status quo* of modernity, he argues that it can be approached as an attempt to further the ideals of the socialist paradigm, as movement and theory, under the changed social conditions of the present. He now tries to show that social freedom represents the ideal implicit in the socialist vision of an emancipated society.[86]

In the context of our discussion, the most relevant pages are those where he tries to identify the bearer of the ideal of social freedom within the current sphere of work, given the implicit conclusion of the argument in *FR* that social freedom seems to have lost its capacity to engender critical movements within the market sphere. To reiterate, the reconstruction of the labour market identifies workers' struggles as having contributed significantly to ushering in the reforms that put the market sphere on the path towards social freedom. Because of this,

[86] For further discussion and criticism of Honneth's attempt to reinterpret the socialist paradigm from the standpoint of social freedom, *see*, among others, Petrucciani, "Rethinking Socialism with Axel Honneth"; Piromalli, "Socialism through Convergence"; Frega, "Reflexive Cooperation". For rejoinders, *see* Honneth, "Recognition, Democracy and Social Liberty: A Reply."

one might expect that Honneth engages in renewed efforts to provide evidence of workers' efforts to oppose the current 'de-socialised' form of the market from the standpoint of fair cooperation. Nevertheless, in a surprising turn, he now suggests that such an approach would be unfruitful. Even more, he offers several reasons why a critique of the market from the standpoint of social freedom should not seek to anchor itself pre-theoretically in the participants collective actions, even if they emerged.

Critical theory should be attentive to the experiences and suffering of the oppressed, the argument goes, yet, it should not equate them with the social movements that have passed the threshold of public visibility nor limit the standpoint of critique to the demands of successful social movements. Identifying organised movements as the potential agents of emancipation would not be wise because not all forms of social suffering worthy of public attention have the chance to become publicly visible; conversely, socially visible demands for justice are not a trustworthy indicator of "the actual extent of heteronomy and degrading dependence in the economic sphere" (*TIS* 72). In all fairness, Honneth has already expressed worries in his past writings that publicly visible demands for justice might not be the most reliable pre-theoretical standpoints of critical theory. For example, in his debate with Fraser, he cautioned that critical theorists should not be satisfied with favouring only those demands of justice that have acquired social visibility for the time being ("Redistribution or Recognition?" 115-6).

Honneth's argument against identifying the participants collective actions as the pre-theoretical standpoint of critique seems to negate the premises of the interpretation of his argumentative strategy proposed in this chapter. Before discussing the solution he proposes in this book to the problem left hanging in *FR*, I take a closer look at this divergence for two main reasons. If the interpretation of Honneth's reconstruction proposed in this chapter has indeed missed the point of his argument, then the internal critique of his account proposed in this section falls apart. Additionally, as will be shown, the solution proposed in *TIS* becomes more straightforward by working through this seeming divergence.

When discussing the reconstruction of the labour market, the connection between the standpoint from which the reconstruction is articulated, e.g. social freedom, and the normative standpoint orienting the workers' struggles have been emphasised. I argued that given Honneth's methodological self-restrictions, it would make sense to attempt disclosing the labour sphere as a sphere of social freedom via a reconstruction of the value horizon within which the workers' struggles unfolded. *FR* offers substantial textual support, as shown

in the previous sections, that the normative reconstruction of the labour market establishes a non-contingent relation between the workers' collective struggles and the process of market social embeddedness. The workers' movements are interpreted as an important force behind 'the socialisation of the market from below' (e.g. *FR* 231). Beyond this, I would argue that the proposed interpretation and the remarks in his book on socialism become compatible once we consider an essential distinction between them*:* the latter takes *as its starting point* the situation with which the normative reconstruction in *FR* ends. Normative reconstruction of the labour market was necessarily past-oriented in that it covered the period from its emergence in the nineteenth century to the present. In this period, there is evidence that the workers' struggles play a significant role in the socialisation of the labour market. However, the reconstruction ends with the present situation in which the workers' movements seem to have lost all their emancipatory potential, so much so that no traces of collective resistance to market de-regulation are identified; in turn, *TIS* picks up the problem precisely from this point (*TIS* 1-5). Accordingly, the argument is now future-oriented, seeking to account for the current situation in which the critical potential within the market seems to have dried out. The focus on the normative achievements of the workers' struggles in the normative reconstruction of the labour market up to the present is not in contradiction with the thesis that the existence of such struggles cannot be taken for granted in the current context.

One might object that neither of the offered reasons is decisive; in the end, the point remains that in one place (*FR*) workers' movements do play a central role, while now Honneth cautions against linking the possibility of emancipatory transformations to the emergence of workers' movements even within the market sphere. This objection warrants a second look at the role of workers' struggles in the argument in *FR*.

I hypothesise that it is possible to make sense of the central role of struggles in the first case and the decoupling of critique from them in the second case because the relation between the workers' struggles and critique of the market is both *non-contingent* and *conditional*. It was non-contingent because it did make sense for workers' movements to push for the socialisation of the market in the direction of social freedom, given their self-understanding. As shown, workers' collective resistance was engendered by their consciousness as social contributors and the market as a sphere that ought to be governed by basic norms of cooperation. By becoming aware that social recognition is due to them, given the social significance of their work- as an activity contributing to social well-being- the workers' self-understanding establishes a non-contingent relation with the idea of the market

as a socially embedded sphere. The relation is non-contingent since the transformation of the market into a sphere of social freedom would represent the precondition for workers' securing social recognition of their status as contributors to the realisation of societal goals. By having an interest in the realisation of the preconditions that ensure the vindication of their demands based on the grammar of cooperation, workers' movements could represent a significant force pushing for the 'socialisation of the market from below'.

Although non-contingent, the relation was also conditional. Workers' movements could play a central role in the market's socialisation only as they continued to understand themselves as social contributors engaged in cooperation with the other actors and evaluate the 'dis-embedded' market as an obstacle to realising their freedom in cooperation with others. However, it is precisely the social understanding of the market and the collective self-understanding of market participants, i.e. workers, that has been dislocated in the past decades for the first time in the market's history.[87] Today seems to prevail a self-conception of market participants even among workers as agents geared towards maximising their economic interests in competition with other individuals seeking to do the same. These changes are so decisive, Honneth suggests, that the emergence within the market of collective movements pushing for re-socialisation is implausible. In short, the premise that workers' struggles represented a socialising force in the past but not in the present does not represent a contradiction, nor does it invalidate the methodological assumptions at work in *FR,* nor the proposed interpretation, insofar as the relation between workers' movements and emancipatory transformations was non-contingent, yet conditional.

At this point we can return to Honneth's argument in *TIS*. Assuming for the sake of the argument that given the lack of organised resistance, the most promising strategy for justifying the immanent character of social freedom consists in dissociating the condition of immanence from the emergence of critical movements within the market sphere: what other instance can be identified as the in-worldly bearer of developmental potentials? Honneth's answer in *TIS* is unequivocal

[87] In Honneth's poignant phrase: "Whereas over forty years ago the dominant opinion was that workers had to watch out for each other and support each other in dealing with the adversities of the labour market, thus collectively ensuring the social restriction of the market, today each person is viewed as responsible for his or her own survival and success on the labour market" (*FR* 248), also Honneth and Hartmann ("Paradoxes of Capitalism").

> we should search for the real expression of the future wherever trace elements of desired progress in the expansion of social freedoms can already be found within existing institutions, in altered legal structures and shifts in mentality that can no longer be rolled back. (*TIS* 73)

As can be anticipated, in Honneth's view those institutional reforms and legal measures that in the first part of the 20th and especially the post-WWII period brought the market sphere closer to the ideal of social freedom would represent 'trace elements of desired progress' within the market sphere. The shift from social movements towards institutional reforms as bearers of progress not only witness the continuity between the argumentative strategy underpinning *FR* and *TIS*, but it is also an astute move because it uses one of the few resources left within the theoretical framework of *FR* to answer the challenges posed by the changes in the normative grammar of market-mediated social labour in the past decades. The move makes sense because, as shown in the previous sections, social freedom became anchored in the market sphere not in one but in two ways: as the ideal-orienting workers' struggles for justice and as an institutionalised norm. Given the assessment that evidence speaks against the thesis that tendencies towards organised resistance can be identified today within the market sphere, it makes sense that the institutional achievements represent the only palpable sign, so to speak, that the present form of the market is not the only possibility, at least because the market was to a certain point on a different path. Past institutional achievements would be the only remnants of social freedom as a moral force within the market.

On the other hand, even if institutional achievements represent more reliable indicators of progress they cannot represent the whole answer. Only if social actors can decode past institutional reforms as worthy visions of progress can such achievements acquire the role of indicators of progress for further actions. Honneth acknowledges this condition and goes as far as claiming that although progressive transformations can be reverted, the closest they come to being 'irreducible' is when they change our moral consciousness in such a way that even if social or institutional reforms are dismantled, we cannot but regard their dismantling as a regressive process (*TIS* 73; "The Irreducibility of Progress"). Applied to the case in hand, it would entail that the conception of the market as a sphere of social freedom represents such a normative breakthrough and that it 'cannot be

rolled back' without the resulting process appearing to *we*- who grasp their normative and historical significance- as a regress.

In short, the answer to the question of what would be the in-worldly bearer of developmental potentials within the market today is twofold. The bearer would be the past institutional achievements that could engender transformations in the right direction once their normative significance is adequately grasped by 'us', the social participants. The answer does not convince, however, unless further questions are addressed. The immediate one would be who is the 'we', the agents called to recognise the achievements of the post-WWII era as signs of the desired path towards progress? Honneth's answer is unequivocal: 'we' cannot be one particular social group, whatever it might be, e.g. workers' movements; the 'we' refers to all citizens (*TIS* 74). However, the premise that citizens will decode the past reforms as achievements as worthy ideals that need to be revived and develop the political will to act on them depends on the further assumption that they have developed the consciousness that "their individual freedom can only be realised through cooperation in solidarity in significant spheres of social life" (*TIS* 74) or at least the assumption that the social preconditions engendering this learning process are already in place.

To summarise, following Honneth's methodological self-restrictions a critique of the contemporary market mediated sphere of social labour needs to take guidance from norms and possibilities of critical action rooted in the social sphere in question. Correspondingly, a critique based on the ideal of social freedom is vulnerable to the objection of external critique given that social freedom seems to have lost its twofold anchorage in the market sphere today, as Honneth's assessment implies. To solve this conundrum he proposes to shift the weight of the argument from the question regarding the action potential of participants within the market sphere to the action potential of citizens in democratic societies that could in principle engender the required reforms- that would put the market on the path of social freedom- by using the steering capacity of the state. Such a move would be justified insofar the political will of citizens is shaped by the normative advancements represented by the institutional transformations of the market in the post-WWII period and the idea that the freedom of each of them "can only be realised through cooperation in solidarity in significant spheres of social life".

There are several reasons why I find Honneth's shift of focus problematic; some of them are offered here, while others will be introduced in the next chapters when an alternative answer to the challenges posed by the recent transformations is defended. His

argument would be plausible on the assumption that norms of social freedom and conditions engendering collective will oriented by the ideal of social freedom are more robustly rooted in the democratic public sphere. This premise is, however, far from self-evident under current social-political conditions. It is doubtful that the 'de-socialising' tendencies of the past decades have been confined to the sphere of the economy; such tendencies seem to have emerged in or at least impacted negatively also the other zones of social life, including the public sphere, eroding the social preconditions for a cooperative ethos to take roots in the democratic public sphere.[88] Because of this, the attempt to solve the challenges posed by the current 'de-socialised' form of the economy by shifting the weight towards the democratic public sphere is not necessarily convincing.

Secondly, as Igor Shoikhedbrod argues, in *TIS,* Honneth seems to concede that social freedom is not, or not anymore, an ideal rooted in the market sphere in the sense of a socio-historically efficient one, representing, at best, a mere regulative ideal from which market transformations would be evaluated externally (345-6). However, this concession is problematic when measured against the methodological self-restriction endorsed by Honneth according to which social freedom is internal to the market sphere in the sense of norm retaining some degree of efficiency, at least as the standpoint engendering critical action.

Therefore, there are at least two reasons why Honneth's argument in *TIS* is not better placed to ground a critique of the market based on the idea of social freedom than the previous attempt, i.e. tracing social freedom to norms and action potentials within the sphere of market mediated social labour. Beyond this, I hold that the shift of focus proposed by his argument is neither desirable. Honneth's argument starts from the assumption that critical impulses in the direction of social freedom are lacking today within the market-mediated sphere of social labour. However, as argued in the next chapters, the assumption might be unwarranted. The hypothesis is that Honneth's normative reconstruction fails to register emancipatory potentials within the labour market today not because they are lacking, but because his frame is not best placed to identify them. If this is the case, then the attempt to

[88] In "Paradoxes of Capitalism", Hartmann and Honneth offer indirect support for this claim when showing that the "de-socialising" transformations of the past decades have not been confined to the sphere of the economy but also impacted other social spheres such as the sphere of law, the sphere of "intimate relationships". Gregory Smulewicz seeks to establish an even more strict relationship between the "anti-democratic" tendencies of the market and the democratic public sphere by arguing that the first has the power to hijack the democratic process ("Losing Sight of Power"). Further support for the claim regarding the de-socialising effects of 'neoliberal' transformations on the democratic process is offered by, among others, Whitehead and Crawshaw ("A Tale of Two Economies"). The authors draw on a substantial body of literature suggesting a relation between "the decline of social democracy in Europe" and the rise of neoliberalism.

identify critical potentials within the market's current 'de-socialised' form would remain the more promising path.[89]

[89] Axel Honneth published *Der Arbeitende Souverän*, his most recent contribution to a critical theory of work, in March 2023. Because the book has been published shortly before the submission of my thesis I could not offer it here the space it deserves. Nevertheless, I would like to at least make some observations regarding the mentioned work. The normative standpoint of his critical account is not informed anymore by the ideal of the market as a sphere of social freedom. It is the value of democracy and the fair division of labour approached as a social precondition of democratic participation that now represents the normative standpoint of his critical account. Fair division of labour is now defined in regard to those traits of work and division of labour that can be identified as necessary preconditions for democratic participation. In this way, the interpretation proposed in this chapter identifying the shift away from the condition of worker towards that of citizen as bearer of emancipatory potential as the path Honneth might follow receives further support in his most recent contribution. As I see it, in the mentioned work Honneth further develops the line of argumentation sketched in TIS and considered in this chapter based on the conviction that a critical conception of work cannot be engendered anymore by the norms and dynamics immanent to the world of work but needs to rely on the value of democracy in order to ground a critique of work. My contention is that this is not the only way to go because it risks covering up the sense of emancipatory potential specific to work. Beyond this I hold that the social freedom approach retains some vitality as argued in the next two chapters.

Part III. Demanding Emancipation

Chapter 5: Alternative Paths of Critique

5.1 Introduction

Axel Honneth's reconstructive argument for the conception of the market as a sphere of social freedom fails to be fully convincing. As shown in the previous chapter in the past decades, social freedom seems to have lost its institutional anchorage and to have lost its relation to critique, as witnessed by the lack of organised resistance to the 'de-socialising' transformations of the market. However, these transformations do not represent processes by which the norms are expelled from the market and the capitalist dynamics more generally, but entail reconfigurations of the norms and discourses seeking to legitimise new demands facing workers in contemporary capitalist societies (Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit*). As Honneth himself points out in an article co-authored with Hartmann, we are not faced today with 'norm-free' capitalism but an 'ethicized'[90] one, relying on norms and moral principles meant to legitimise it in the participants' eyes (55). New managerial techniques and work organisation reward self-centred attitudes conducting workers to see themselves as 'entreployees' that is as 'entrepreneurs' fully responsible for constantly reconfiguring their skills in ways that ensure they remain relevant for the market and the company, autonomously employing their skills and working under self-supervision within short term projects rather long term commitments.[91] The individualising normative grammar dominant today makes it exceedingly difficult for workers to employ the grammar of cooperation and mutual dependence and to provide proof that their work outputs entail socially valid achievements, being forced instead to rely on nexuses of validation as proxy grounds for

[90] Honneth uses the term 'ethicized capitalism' when referring to its contemporary form in an article co-authored with Martin Hartmann ("Paradoxes of Capitalism*"* 48.)

[91] I follow Pongratz and Voß according to which 'entreployees' exhibit three central characteristics: self-control (the individual is expected to plan, control and monitor one's work), self-commercialisation (the individual is expected to constantly 'produce' and 'commercialise' one's capacities on the market and within the company), and self-rationalisation (the individual is expected accepts that the company is an important part of one's life and organise one's life accordingly), *see* "From Employee to 'Entreployee.'"

social recognition (Hartmann and Honneth 53-5). Thus, a significant challenge posed by the recent transformations to the conception of the labour market as a sphere of social freedom consists in the emergence of a new normative grammar replacing the moral grammar of social freedom.

Nevertheless, the normative grammar embedded in the contemporary world of work resignifies rather than stifles demands for recognition and increased autonomy, i.e. the two norms of Honneth's normative account of the market. On the one hand, workers are encouraged to assume greater autonomy in the execution of their work tasks and organisation of their work activity; on the other hand, they are also expected to assume a higher degree of responsibility when they fail to reach loosely defined targets.[92] These expectations are mediated by a new grammar of recognition in place today that has replaced the grammar of appreciation, e.g. for workers' long-term commitment to the company, with admiration for short-term results. Workers are encouraged to see themselves as 'labour-power entrepreneurs' that must promote themselves by constantly advertising their success within the company and on the job market. While recognition in the form of appreciation can be distributed among many, given the similarity of their contributions, admiration is inherently individualising and positional since it can be secured only at the expense of others. In contrast to appreciation, admiration can be secured only on the background of 'lesser', average contributions. Thus, employees must constantly exert themselves beyond the average work rate as the only level of performance bearing any worth.[93] Additionally, as Honneth argues, employees are expected to regard their work not only as a means to make a living in exchange for socially useful work but also or especially as a means of individual self-exploration. They are expected to approach their tasks with enthusiasm and regard work projects as opportunities for individualistic self-development requiring a high level of self-commitment, having as effects increased rates of exertion and depression ("Organised Self-Realization"). In short, demands for recognition or increased autonomy seem to have been integrated within the current form of capitalism as institutionalised demands in the service of increased production alongside the 'de-socialising' tendencies engendered by the new moral grammar. The ambivalent role of recognition and autonomy coupled with the displacement of the

[92] As Boltanski and Chiapello show, the transition from organised capitalism specific to the post-WWII period to the current flexible, network-like capitalism entails for employees that work security has to be exchanged for increased autonomy and self-responsibility (*The New Spirit*, esp. Chapter 3).

[93] I rely on the insightful analyses offered by Voswinkel and Wagner tracing the relation emerging within the contemporary capitalist world of work between the 'entreployee' agency, the replacement of appreciation by admiration as the form of recognition work can command, and the individualisation of responsibility, *see* Voswinkel, "Admiration without Appreciation?"; Wagner, "Marketisation as a Principle of Organisation".

cooperative moral grammar by an individualising one, all characteristics of the contemporary 'ethicized' capitalism, dent the critical potential of Honneth's recognition-based theory of social freedom.

The problems raised to Honneth's normative frame by ambivalent forms of recognition surpass the question regarding the market's transformations; they draw attention to a more general set of problems regarding Honneth's theoretical framework. For the most part in this thesis the discussion has been framed by what seems to be the main challenge to any attempt to recover the theme of social labour for critical theory, that is, the challenges posed by the seemingly dis-embedded, 'norm-free' character of the organisation of labour in societies of late capitalism. Because of this, the debate focused on Honneth's various attempts to show that his theory has, in fact, identified a set of norms, e.g. recognition, and autonomy, that play a central role in the integration of the sphere of economy. In turn, the transformations in the grammar of the labour market seem to bring to the foreground another set of problems, ones that Honneth's theory has faced from its beginning. This set of problems is based on the assumption that, as Honneth holds, the identified norms play an important role in the integration and reproduction of contemporary societies. Thus, recognition is central to and relations of recognition are immanent in contemporary societies. However, this assumption can be used as a springboard for challenging the decidedly positive valences that Honneth assigns to recognition dynamics. Not in all cases, the objection goes, expectations and expansion of recognition play a positive, critical role; at least in some cases, they might play a central role in supporting relations of subordination acquiring, in such cases, a decidedly negative valence. *Pace* Honneth, recognition would represent an *ambivalent* phenomenon.[94] From this standpoint, the challenges posed by the contemporary transformations in normative grammar represent an example of the more general problems posed to Honneth's frame by ambivalent forms of recognition. Accordingly, a central question is if Honneth's model is suited to tackle the phenomenon of ambivalent recognition, not only in the sense of providing criteria for distinguishing between 'ambivalent' and 'genuine' forms but, more importantly, to identify the dynamics and instances within the contemporary world of work critical of the very ambivalence of these phenomena.

The proposed hypothesis is that Honneth faces genuine difficulties in providing a convincing solution to the problem posted by the market transformations because his basic

[94] For an overview of the debate on the topic of ambivalent recognition, *see* Ikäheimo, Heikki, et al. *Recognition and Ambivalence.*

recognition model is problematic. In this regard, I agree with those of his critics who consider ambivalent recognition a genuine challenge to his model. However, against the critique, I suggest that not the recognition paradigm *per se* is problematic; rather, Honneth's standard model of recognition encompasses some built-in limitations. In this regard, the current chapter discloses his model as decidedly *dyadic,* provides a critique of it, and argues that the basic premises of the recognition theory make conceptual space for other, more resolute, models than the dyadic one.

The following section (5.2) introduces an alternative *triadic* model that remains within the frame articulated by the basic premises of the recognition theory and compares it with Honneth's dyadic model. The distinction between the dyadic and the triadic models is relevant for the problem of ambivalence because at least some forms of ambivalent recognition are engendered by non-dyadic, more specifically, triadic relations. The triadic model may fare better in providing adequate analyses of these relations. The final section of this chapter (5.3) argues that the triadic model might fare better than the dyadic model in clarifying the ground on which those faced with ambivalent forms of recognition would develop a critical attitude towards it. Although I would not go as far as arguing that all forms of ambivalent recognition are based on triadic relations, in the next chapter, I defend the (less demanding) thesis that the ambivalent role of recognition and autonomy in the contemporary world of work can be traced to the dispersion of dyadic relations into triadic ones. More specifically, the next chapter puts the triadic model at work in articulating a critique of 'ethicized' capitalism from the novel critical standpoint disclosed in this chapter. The thesis is that the critique based on the triadic model might prove more resolute than the one allowed by the dyadic model because it can recover the ideal of social freedom as the standpoint of critique in such a way that it is not easily absorbed or dismantled by the normative grammar dominant today in the market sphere.

5.2 Models of recognition: dyadic versus triadic

In more than one way, the dyadic character of Honneth's model has already been implied by the discussion of the various elements of his theory in the previous chapters without being thematized. By 'dyadic', I have in view a model of social interaction in general and of recognition relations in particular according to which participants in practices or

spheres of recognition can assume one of only *two* complementary roles, even if individuals can interchange their roles: either as the party conferring/withholding recognition, or the party towards which the act is aimed at as its addressee. Based on this notion, Honneth's conception of recognition relations is dyadic. The claim holds not only concerning the roles assumed within recognition dynamics but also his account of struggles for recognition. These, too, are posited as emerging within recognition orders dividing social actors between parties or groups that are advantaged at the expense of others, even if struggles within different spheres might bring forth different protagonists, e.g. those enjoying certain legal or political rights at the expense of those that are denied the status of persons endowed with rights, those whose social contributions are valorized at the expense of the contributions made by other groups. At the same time, by labelling Honneth's model 'dyadic', I do not mean that he depicts social interaction as merely intersubjective. As shown in the previous chapter, in *FR*, he supplements the notion of intersubjective freedom as a specific *praxis* with a conception of institution incorporating the idea of social roles and interaction mediated by institutionalised norms of behaviour. Even so, his conception of social institutions is underpinned by the dyadic model. For example, as shown in Chapter 4, not only is market interaction mediated by two complementary roles, e.g. workers as employees, owners of capital as employers, but the operation of normative reconstruction relies on the conflict between the two parties to unearth the 'deep moral grammar' of the labour market. Although the dyadic character of Honneth's model is an open secret, addressing the problem posed by ambivalent recognition requires making explicit the dyadic structure of his theory.

5.2.1 Non-dyadic recognition

The first claim of this section is that at the level of social reality relations of recognition have been dispersed, at least in certain instances, into non-dyadic relations and that the dyadic model risks offering inadequate analyses of such situations. An example might offer some preliminary clarifications. On the assumption that soldiers fulfil a positive social role, at least within the community they are called to defend, the 'soldier' role embodies specific promises of social recognition. Soldiers can claim recognition insofar as they prove themselves worthy of it through their deeds. They might prove themselves worthy by executing battle plans and the orders of their commanders swiftly and skillfully. Some

shared conceptions of the good soldier, e.g. brave, skilful, loyal, would mediate the expectations for and the granting of recognition. The dynamics of recognition seem to unfold between the soldier as the addressee of recognition and the community in general, or commanders and their soldier fellows in particular. Thus, the dynamics in which soldiers participate appear dyadic. There would be a relation of mutual recognition in light of which emerge two parties: the party expecting/demanding recognition and the one conferring it.

Let us now assume an instance in which the soldier refuses to execute an order received from her commander because she is worried that by following it through she would injure a third party in an inadmissible way, e.g. radical dehumanisation. While initially the situation seemed to present a dyadic relation, i.e. soldier-commander, now the soldier's refusal seems to disclose not two but three parties: the soldier, the officer/commander, and a third party invoked by the soldier's refusal. What would an analysis of the relations obtaining between the parties look like from the standpoint of the dyadic model? First, the recognition relation between the soldier and her commander would be disclosed. Then would be disclosed the relation of recognition between the individual demanded to execute the order and a third party, presumably mediated by a moral principle other than the one embedded in the relation between the soldier and her commander. From this standpoint, the soldier's refusal to execute the order would appear as a resolution to a personal moral conflict. Faced with the conflict between the moral duty she has towards her commander *as* a soldier, and the one towards the third party, she resolves the conflict by giving precedence, at least in this case, to her relation with the third party over her relation with her commander, that is a relation impling that soldiers should follow the orders of their superiors.[95]

The interpretation based on the dyadic model is problematic because it fails to disclose the complexity of the situation presented by our example. Firstly, the analysis leaves out the fact that the situation does not present two separated dyadic relations intersecting only because the individual is caught in more than one recognition relation. On the contrary, the situation itself is triadic from the beginning. The soldier role is from the beginning embedded in a triadic situation insofar as being a soldier inherently implies a relation of authority with one's commander and acting towards a third party; the very idea of executing an order implies acting towards someone or in such a way that a third party is affected in a predetermined way. Suppose we regard the relation as merely dyadic. In that

[95] Honneth acknowledges the possibility of such moral conflicts and concludes that the task of resolving them pertains to the individual in his/hers quality of moral actor ("Recognition and Moral Obligation" 32-3).

case, we fail to see the relation that obtains at the level of social reality between the first two parties, i.e. soldier and commander, and the third party, e.g. enemy, potential victim. As a soldier, the individual's relation with the third party is mediated, we could say refracted, by her relation with the commander. Having the authority to command the soldier and the soldier's duty to follow the orders implies that the officer decides what form of recognition the soldier is due to the third party, if any. Regardless if the soldier has good reasons to refuse the order or not, regardless if the commander abuses his authority or not, in other words, regardless of the question of who is wrong in this situation, the point remains that the situation presents a case in which the relation of a party with a third party is mediated and refracted by another party. The situation embodies a triadic relation that might or might not be picked up by the actors as a moral dilemma. Even if the soldier did not find the situation morally problematic, the situation would still be triadic, except that typically, when everything goes well, the triadic structure recedes into the background.

More generally, the example illustrates a more complex nexus of recognition relations than disclosable within the dyadic model, one in which the following conditions obtain: a) a relation of mutual recognition between a party A and another party C is mediated by a second party B; b) the relation between A, B, and C is such that B is by default the mediator between A and C. It is via B that the recognition A and C might bestow on each other is refracted; c) the self-relation A develops by taking part in the relation of recognition with B reinforces the status of B as the instance refracting and, in a sense ensuring A's standing in relation with C. The officer would play the role of the B party, meditating and refracting the relationship of A, i.e. the soldier, with C, i.e. the third party. Situations such as these do not fit easily within the dyadic model because the role of the *mediating party* complicating the otherwise dyadic relation does not find a place within the said model. In turn, the alternative, the just sketched *triadic* model, presumed on the idea that at least in some instances relations of recognition have been dispersed into triadic ones, is alert to the possibility that a party assumes the role of mediator between two other parties and to the more complex relations emerging in these cases. In short, in situations such as the one just considered, the dyadic model would risk offering a *truncated* analysis of the dynamics of recognition because the triadic structure of the recognition relations, the third role illustrated by the mediating party and already embedded in the social situations, are rendered invisible. Thus, the dyadic model is unsuitable for analysing non-dyadic relations of recognition. In contrast, the triadic model seems to fare

better in disclosing the complexity of the relations embedded in situations like the one discussed so far, in which dyadic relations have already been dispersed into triadic ones.

The existence of mediating roles is not a novelty, especially in sociological literature. However, the changes that such roles bring into the dynamics of recognition, especially the non-dyadic character of the relations on which they rely, is not always acknowledged within the recognition account of social interaction, even when the question regarding the relationship between individuals and institutions, entailing the question of authority, is discussed. Consider, for example, the debate between Honneth and the French philosopher Emmanuel Renault over whether institutions only express or produce forms of recognition. According to Renault, there are two answers to the question concerning the relationship between recognition and institutions. The first one would be that institutions embody relations of recognition insofar as they *express* them in such a way that institutionalised norms, rules, and patterns of behaviour govern the interaction by which participants act in recognitive manners towards each other. In this case, institutions would be the medium through which dyadic relations of recognition unfold. In Renault's view this is the account defended by Honneth.

Unconvinced by the expressive model, Renault proposes a second one according to which institutions have a more active role; they would *produce* recognition effects rather than merely representing the vehicle of such relations. In this regard, he identifies three "types of institutional effects": the first would be the effects that institutionalised rules of interaction have on the interaction between partners assuming one of two roles. Such rules would determine what entails that an agent has a social role, "a qualification of the action and a context of action in which others intervene" ("The Theory of Recognition" 224). The second type of effect would refer to the possibility that norms' mobilise the subjectivities' of agents in the sense that by following norms, agents are encouraged, so to speak, to develop subjectivities along norms favoured by the institution. The third type of effect results from institutions' role in socialisation, providing the context and guidelines along which individuals develop their identities and expectations for recognition. Renault's point would be that institutions constitute rather than express forms of recognition in each of these instances. On this background, he concludes that a critical theory of recognition would fare better to renounce the expressive model in favour of the constructive one if it is to offer an adequate account of the recognition expectations individuals develop, of the dynamics of social struggles and the role they play in social evolution (228).

In his rejoinder, Honneth argues that neither the 'expressive' nor the 'constitutive' approaches offer an adequate description of his take on the relation between recognition and institutions, suggesting, in turn, the possibility of a third 'dialectical' approach that on the one hand holds fast on the Hegelian idea that institutions would represent "a preexisting mean between two interacting subjects – not as an "expression" but as an element of the process of mutual recognition" ("Rejoinder" *Critical Essays* 403); while on the other hand, does not assume that institutions always fulfil this standard. On the contrary, orders of recognition would be historical outcomes and individuals need to draw on them in assigning each other normative statutes. However, while acknowledging this point, thus conceding that "institutions exercise a certain kind of power over subjects", he stops short of assigning them a "constitutive role" (403). The reason is that the institutionalised terms of recognition do not fix individuals' self-understanding and interaction because the actors preserve the capacity to question the available norms and statuses, engaging in critical assessment of their validity. Even these short remarks allow us to recognise in Honneth's rejoinder the 'dialectical' relation underpinning *FR* and discussed in the previous two chapters between the role institutions have in influencing the subjectivity of participants and the critical movements that in turn can leave their marks on institutions and their normative infrastructure.

Most relevant for our discussion is that the dyadic logic underpins both accounts discussed here: in Honneth's case, the relation between participants would be inherently dyadic while unfolding within the institutional medium; in the model proposed by Renault, the relation between an institution in its various exercises and the individual is brought to the fore. In contrast, the triadic model proposed in this section would draw attention to the presence of a mediating party, not in the sense of institutions seen as agents, but in the sense that interaction within institutional contexts might demand the existence of parties mediating or refracting the interaction between social actors. This approach sticks to the decidedly action-theoretical account defended by Honneth, just that it seeks to complicate it by raising the question if the relations implicit in the dynamics of recognition do indeed point only towards two parties or if the situation also points towards a third party whose presence changes the dynamics of the situation. For example, closer to the triadic approach proposed in this chapter, the French sociologist Luc Boltanski reconstructs the significance of institutions from the fact that social interaction can give rise to endemic conflicts between social actors because they have divergent points of view regarding how their situation is. Institutions, as "bodiless beings", would emerge as intervening bodies in social interaction having the

function, among others, to mitigate the risks posed by conflicts to social life by fixating references transcending the perspectivism of social actors into objective denotations. For our discussion, the most relevant point made by Boltanski is that because institutions lack bodies but need to acquire a corporeal being to 'act' within the social world, they rely on corporeal beings in order to do so. These actors representing the 'bodies' of the institution would acquire *the role of mediators*, e.g. judges *(On Critique* Chapter 3).

5.2.2 Non-dyadic ambivalent recognition

I have distinguished two models of recognition, the dyadic and the triadic one, and argued that the triadic model would find its reason to be in situations in which dyadic relations have been dispersed into triadic ones. Further, I introduce the second central claim of this section: at least some forms of ambivalent recognition find their origin in dynamics engendered by triadic relations. If this is the case, then the dyadic model would not be ideally placed to identify and make sense of the dynamics in question and the ambivalent forms of recognition they might engender. In order to make this point, I suggest taking a short detour through the debate between Honneth and critics regarding ambivalent recognition. The question of whether Honneth's model can provide convincing criteria- that must also be accessible to social actors- for distinguishing between 'genuine' and 'ambivalent' forms of recognition frames the debate. Genuine recognition would enhance autonomy without inserting the agent into a relation of domination or subordination. Ambivalent recognition would warrant (limited) autonomy while inserting the agent into orders of subordination. Types of ambivalent recognition can be differentiated based on the relations of subordination it engenders. It would either ground relations of self-subordination or ground relations of subordination of others. Thus, within the frame underpinning the debate on ambivalent recognition, orders of recognition can be ambivalent when securing self-recognition comes at the cost of accepting as unproblematic the subordination of others or at the cost of accepting as unproblematic the status of the subordinated party, in this case, self-recognition would lead to self-subordination. Either way, the main point is that within the frame considered so far, the phenomenon of ambivalent recognition is approached from the standpoint of the question regarding the

criteria for distinguishing between 'genuine' and 'ambivalent' forms with the further condition that such criteria must be accessible to the social actors in question.[96]

The contention is that the debate takes the dyadic depiction of cases involving ambivalent recognition for granted or, at least, fails to question it. In this case, the debate renders invisible the structure of relations conducive to ambivalent recognition; more specifically, it does not consider the possibility that triadic relations might engender some forms of ambivalent recognition. The point I would make is that although the debate raises important questions, the focus on the criteria for identifying ambivalent recognition as 'ideological' or irrational diverts attention from the more fundamental question regarding the analysis of the relations underpinning dynamics of ambivalent recognition. More specifically, I contend that the frame within which the debate between Honneth and critics unfolds regarding ambivalent recognition fails to problematise how the dyadic approach might analyse cases of ambivalent recognition and the potential inadequacy of the resulting analyses.

What contribution could the triadic model make to clarifying the dynamics conducive to ambivalent recognition, at least in situations such as the one in which dyadic relations have been dispersed into triadic ones? The most important contribution would be disclosing a non-contingent relation between the dispersion of recognition relations into triadic ones and at least certain forms of ambivalent recognition. The triadic model makes conceptual space for a situation in which B, i.e. the mediating party, assumes the role of establishing if A is worthy of recognition in relation to C and if A acts adequately towards C. Once B refracts A's relation with C, the possibility arises that the ground on which A can enjoy recognition becomes dissociated from the condition that A's actions towards C are adequate. The *refracting* effect of B's mediation can turn into *distortion* if A's adequate recognition of C comes to be replaced by A's valorisation of B. In this way, the possibility emerges that A gets caught in *trade-off* dynamics in which A can enjoy recognition from B as a substitute for being recognised by C even if A's actions towards C are, in fact, disrespectful. When this happens, recognition acquires an *ambivalent* character: on the one hand, A preserves the possibility of enjoying recognition; on the other hand, achieving

[96] For the relation between ambivalent recognition and self-subordination, see Amy Allen (*Recognizing Domination)*; for the less common but astute observation that recognition can be ambivalent insofar as it provides grounds for accepting and even desiring the subordination of others for the sake of self-recognition, *see* Patchen Markell (*Bound by Recognitio*n 23). For Honneth's attempt to respond to objections that his frame fails to account for ambivalent forms of recognition by disclosing further, more stringent conditions that relations of recognition must fulfil to be non-ideological, *see* his "Recognition as Ideology".

recognition implies giving up the condition of acting adequately towards C by letting her relationship with C be resolved by B.

More generally, trade-off dynamics would be rooted in triadic structures that have taken the following configuration: a) a party secures recognition while at the same time contributes to acts or practices by which other parties are misrecognised, b) the relation between being recognised and contributing to the misrecognition of others is non-contingent, and c) the condition of the 'accomplice' would represent a peculiar form of autonomy limitation hence subordination. In this case, we would have at least three types of roles: those being disrespected, the position acknowledged in the classical model, those enjoying recognition and contributing to the misrecognition of others without necessarily having to assume a subordinated position, the second position in the classical model; and the muddy status of those enjoying recognition, contributing to misrecognition and yet overall having the status of the subordinated party. It is unclear how this third position fits in the dyadic model because the notion of a third role does not make sense within the dyadic logic. Should a third party enter the *praxis* of recognition, it must assume either the role of conferring or receiving recognition; there is no conceptual space for a third role. In turn, the dynamics engendered by the dispersion of dyadic in triadic relations clarify the structure of relations underpinning at least some ambivalent forms of recognition by disclosing them as the effect of trade-off dynamics.

To sum up, the dyadic model risks providing inadequate descriptions of situations as the ones considered in this section because, in addition to failing to disclose triadic relations embedded in such situations, it also fails to disclose specific dynamics that triadic relations might engender. As a result, the capacity of the dyadic model to provide an adequate analysis and diagnosis of recognition relations is limited when recognition relations have taken a non-dyadic form at the level of social reality engendering in the process trade-off dynamics leading to ambivalent forms of recognition. Recognition might play a role in the reproduction of systems of subordination when such systems are not merely repressive but rely on *trade-off* relations ensuring that the same system of norms legitimising practices by which the autonomy of the disadvantaged is severely limited or by which the disadvantaged are made accomplices to the subordination of others also warrant them a minimum of self-recognition in other respects. In turn, a triadic model might fare better in overcoming the identified limitations of the dyadic one.

5.3 Ambivalent recognition: sources of critique

In the previous section, I argued that the standard dyadic model risks providing inadequate analyses of non-dyadic relations of recognition and clarifying the relations embedded in non-dyadic ambivalent forms of recognition. In turn, an alternative, the triadic model, might fare better. In this section, I argue that the third component of the dyadic model, the account of struggles for recognition as types of action embodying critical potential, exhibits similar limitations and that the triadic model might contribute to overcoming them. This being said, the critique proposed in the above and this section does not negate the adequacy of Honneth's model in many other cases. As argued in the previous chapters, his account has proven robust and resolute. More than this, the triadic model does not depart from the basic premises of his theory of recognition, e.g. the role of recognition in self-development, representing instead an alternative model grounded on them. The decidedly dyadic character, rather than the recognition theory, is the focus of the objections raised so far. Indeed, the dependence of the triadic model on Honneth's theory of recognition will become even more explicit in this final section, where the critical standpoint disclosed by the triadic model is obtained via an analysis of recognition dynamics that, although implicit, remain undertheorized in Honneth's account.

5.3.1 The problem of critique

Further limitations of the dyadic model become visible once the question regarding the sources of critique targeting ambivalent forms of recognition is addressed. As Honneth's critics have pointed out, in contrast to blatant cases of misrecognition, recognition orders embody ambivalent forms ensuring that even the disadvantaged can secure minimal conditions of self-recognition, even if their overall position is one of subordination. In this case, in developing a critical attitude towards their condition, the disadvantaged would also need to take a critical attitude towards forms of recognition that are already available to them; they would need to engage in acts of self-critique in order to take distance, so speak, from the positive identities they have developed within the system of norms, given the above assumption that taking part in social life they too can secure (ambivalent) forms of

recognition. The conclusion would be that Honneth's recognition model seems to leave no conceptual room for the moment of de-identification preceding or accompanying acts of critique targeting ambivalent recognition (e.g. McQueen; Allen "Recognizing Domination").

The objection is not without grounds. Honneth's conception of critical action is based on a twofold idea. The first one is that self-recognition represents an essential precondition for autonomous self-development. More specifically, he emphasises the experiences of being recognised by others as the path towards self-recognition. The second premise is that social orders embody orders of recognition such that participants in various social spheres learn to decode the promises of recognition and develop recognition expectations in the process. His conception of struggles for recognition as types of social action embodying critical potentials builds on these premises. Given the significance of recognition for self-development and the socially embedded basic promises of recognition, those condemned to a state of disrespect have good reasons to develop a critical attitude towards this state of affairs. Although Honneth distinguishes more than one type of such struggles depending on the form of recognition that is withheld, they all share the assumption that failing to receive recognition, the denial of one's status as a rightful addressee of recognition- experiences conducive to disrespect- represent, under favourable conditions, the ground on which critical action can coagulate. In this model, critique targets the second party that disrespects the first party by withholding recognition. This way, Honneth's model makes no conceptual room for the moment of self-critique or critical de-identification presupposed by actions targeting ambivalent forms of recognition. This limitation is, in turn, taken as evidence by critics that his model fails to take seriously the possibility that recognition might not only take an ambivalent character at the level of social reality, but individuals might become attached to their ambivalent identities, a phenomenon that in turn would stifle the emergence of critique.[97]

In the remainder of this section, I argue that while the objection might hold concerning the dyadic model, it does not cancel out the recognition theory. More precisely, the triadic model may fare better in meeting the objection once it is complemented by a more

[97] Honneth sought to answer these objections in several articles. Although not without merits, his rejoinders bypass rather than answer the relation between critique and de-identification; this seems to be the crux of Butler's objection in her exchange with Honneth when she distinguishes between her notion of 'socially embedded' individuals and Honneth's. *See* Butler, *"*Recognition and Mediation*"*. For Honneth's attempts to meet the objections, *see* "Recognition as Ideology"; "Intelligibility and Authority in Recognition". For further discussion of the problem, see Lepold's "How Should We Understand the Ambivalence of Recognition?". For a reply to Lepold and an attempt at a qualified defence based on a revision of the Hegelian conception of recognition and critique, *see* Stahl, "Recognition, Constitutive Domination, and Emancipation".

encompassing conception of self-recognition than articulated by Honneth. I do so by showing that and how the triadic model might accommodate the two main points of the objection.

5.3.2 Making sense of de-identification

The objection's first point is that Honneth's notion of struggles for recognition fails to account for cases in which the emergence of critique depends on critical de-identification aimed at forms of recognition available to social actors. The triadic model offers a relatively straightforward answer to this first part of the objection. Consider the example of the soldier presented in the previous section. Adding some more details to it, let us assume that the soldier was asked to carry out a military operation endangering some civilians and that she refuses to execute the order because, in her view, civilians command moral respect while the action in question would be synonymous with total disregarding of their moral worth. By refusing to execute the order, the soldier challenges the authority of her commander, where it is her commander that represents the mediating instance. By refusing the order, the soldier acts as if it is up to her to decide how far the moral worth of civilians can constrain military operations, thus bypassing the role and challenging the commander's status as the mediating instance. In doing so, the soldier risks proving herself a *bad* soldier, unworthy of appreciation. From within the normative logic established between her and her commander, more generally between a soldier and his commander, refusing to execute the order might represent evidence that the soldier is a bad one, not only unworthy of recognition but also deserving of punishment. Accordingly, because the soldier is already embedded in a relation of recognition, in order to recover the relationship with the third party, she needs to be able to bracket the given relation, to put it on pause in order to *not* grasp the situation from the standpoint of the self-relation emerging from the dynamics between soldiers and their commanders; in short, the solder must *not* see the situation as a soldier because from within this standpoint disregarding the orders of a superior is an act of disrespect. The bottom point is that a moment of *de-identification* is required if the situation in which a relationship with a third party is recovered and a critical attitude towards the mediating agency is to emerge.

While within the dyadic model, the self-recognition is achieved via a relationship with another party, the triadic model shows that at least the *A* party is confronted with *two* sources of self-identity that can come into conflict. On the one hand, there is the established relation with the mediating party; on the other hand, there is the possibility of recovering a moral

relation with the third party by suspending the mediating role of the *B* party. In this case, de-identification is necessary to recover a relation with the third party independently of *B* because the established relation between *A* and *B* already comprises a relation of *A* with *C*, albeit a refracted and potentially distorted one. Thus, the triadic model not only considers but also clarifies the necessity of de-identification by pointing towards multiple sources of self-recognition presupposed by triadic relations.

5.3.3 Struggles against ambivalent recognition

The objection that the theory of recognition fails to offer a credible notion of critical action targeting ambivalent forms of recognition also relies on a second premise according to which the theory of recognition- built on the premise that recognition is fundamental for self-development- cannot explain the grounds on which individuals would be incentivised to develop a critical attitude towards the order of recognition in which they partake since by doing so they would risk losing the available grounds of self-recognition. This second part of the objection also seems justified. Assuming or developing a critical attitude towards their practical identity in order to develop a critical attitude towards the dominant party, indeed, towards the system of norms legitimising their position, cannot be taken for granted since the disadvantaged risk losing in the process the grounds on which they can already secure a minimum of recognition. The inhibiting effect of ambivalent recognition should not be understood only as the effect of a variable within a strategic calculation, i.e. that critique might be unprofitable because it threatens the grounds of one's identity, but also as increasing the psychological cost of assuming a critical attitude. Because individuals become psychologically attached even to their ambivalent practical identities, the moment of self-negation implicit in self-critique cannot be taken for granted (Allen, "Recognising Domination").

The objection is most forceful against the dyadic model. Instead, from the standpoint of the triadic model, it represents nothing but the question- internal to it- of how critical action is possible. Let us recall the situation in which A's relation with C is mediated by B such that while acting towards C, directly or mediately, A ends up relying on her relation with B for self-recognition, even concerning her actions towards C. As a result, this constellation of relations might give rise to trade-off dynamics: the same grounds that mediate and

potentially distort A's relation with C also offer her opportunities to prove herself worthy of recognition. Because of A's dependence on the mediating party, developing a critical stance towards B would presuppose a critique of the forms of recognition to which one already has access. Since taking a critical stance towards B for the sake of her relationship with C risks disturbing the current grounds of self-recognition, it cannot be taken for granted that A inherently develops a critical attitude towards B. Engaging in de-identification to free herself from the relation with B and recover the relation with C is more difficult since rejecting the sedimented identity one also renounces the ground on which it could demand recognition for those attributes valorised within the dominant scheme of valuation. Can the triadic model identify, within the boundaries of the recognition frame articulated by Honneth, the grounds on which A would be incentivised, based on justifiable reasons, to take a critical stance towards B and the normative order legitimising its status?

I argue not only that the recognition theory can offer a positive answer, but the answer is already implicit in the basic premises of Honneth's theory of recognition. However, it remains unexplored within the dyadic model. To anticipate *A* would have good reasons to feel disrespected and engage in a 'struggle for recognition' against *B* out of moral worry for *C*. To see why this might be the case, let us recall that practices of recognition incorporate two types of acts, those by which one is recognised and those by which one recognises others. The second type of act can acquire the attribute of moral actions. Honneth sought to clarify the relation between recognition and morality in several texts published after *The Struggle* (e.g. "Integrity and Disrespect"; "Recognition and Moral Obligation"; "Grounding Recognition"). He concludes that acting in a recognitive manner represents a moral act when the worthy attributes of the other person represent the ground on which one acts towards the other. In this model, recognitive actions are moral because they adequately respond to the other person's worthiness ("Invisibility" 120-2). In turn, what response is morally due depends on the type of the recognition relation underpinning the interaction because different contexts of action might embed different relations of recognition disclosing different attributes of persons as morally relevant, thus demanding different moral responses. As a result, moral obligations are plural since they are grounded in different relations of mutual recognition underpinning various forms of interaction ("Recognition and Moral Obligation"). For example, recognition in the form of respect is the proper moral response to the autonomy

of the other person, while a caring attitude is what we would expect from the loved one.[98] Although Honneth takes essential steps in clarifying the relation between recognition and morality, he does not thematise nor does he investigate the ethical relevance of the moral relations grounded in the dynamics of recognition, even if they are implicit in his recognition model. Because of this, a second path towards self-recognition remains undisclosed. It is this second path, I contend, that holds the key to explaining from within the recognition paradigm the possibility of self-critique implicit in moments of de-identification.

The second path towards self-recognition becomes visible once we realise that not only being recognised but also fulfilling one's moral intentions represents an intersubjective achievement and a distinct source of self-recognition. I can be assured of the accomplishment of my moral intention when my actions reassure the other party of his/her worth. The other's positive reaction to my recognitive attitude, the positive 'effect' my moral action has on the other, reassures me of the moral character of my act and that I am worthy of a distinct form of recognition. For example, in friendship one can be loved for who one is as an individual and become reassured of one's lovely nature;[99] being loved would support self-recognition in the position of being the addressee of recognitive attitudes. Beyond this, friendship also allows one to become and prove oneself a *good* friend precisely by offering the other the kind of friendly consideration allowing him/her to be assured of his/hers lovely nature. In this way, being a good friend opens up the possibility of enjoying a second type of recognition from my friend, not only as an individual worthy of friendship but also as a *good* friend: the recognition that my comportment towards him/her confirms me as a good friend. This second type of consideration differs from the first one, e.g., my friend's loving care towards me. Being a good friend is not identical to being loved by one's friends, even if friendship requires both conditions to thrive. Lacking better words, we could name it *moral self-realisation* because the second type of concern allows one to become reassured of one's moral character, manifested in our comportment towards the other. Thus, *moral self-realisation* represents, in its own right, a (second) path towards self-recognition.

Although analytically distinct, the two forms of self-recognition are strongly interrelated. Moral self-realisation represents a precondition for mutual recognition to thrive, while such practices represent a precondition for self-recognition along the first path. I need

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[98] In "Love and Morality", Honneth argues that love can ground specific moral demands in light of the relation of mutual recognition it embodies.

[99] On the relation between love and the disclosure of persons as unique individuals *see* Honneth, "Love and Morality" 170.

to recognise the other as the kind of agent called to confer recognition to achieve self-recognition via being recognised by the other. I need to recognise the other as a being capable of moral comportment, a being capable of moral self-realisation, in order for his/her acts, when adequate, to contribute to my self-recognition. Again, what this entails more concretely depends on the relation of recognition in question. For example, one can experience the affective recognition of the other as fulfilling one's expectations to have one's needs and desires deemed worthy only if one grants the other the status of a being called not only to witness but also contribute to the realisation of one's needs, and desires. Without practices of moral self-realisation, self-realisation via being recognised by the other cannot be achieved. Friendship cannot survive even less thrive between bad friends, and without friendship, the participants cannot be reassured of their lovely nature. Mutual respect cannot exist between parties disrespecting each other, and without mutual respect, one cannot achieve self-respect via being respected by others.

Additionally, moral self-realisation represents a precondition for achieving self-recognition along the first path, i.e., being recognised by others as a person endowed with worthy attributes, in an even more strict sense than as a precondition for practices of recognition to thrive. Consider the case in which an individual does not achieve moral self-realisation because the individual either fails to grasp the worthy attributes of the other adequately or fails to respond adequately. Nevertheless, he is lucky enough to enjoy recognition from others. An example would be the bad friend lucky enough to have devoted friends. Another example would be someone who although he disrespects others is respected by them. At first, such situations show that the two paths towards self-recognition are disconnected since one can enjoy recognition from others without reciprocating adequately. However, this possibility is only apparent. Can one achieve a genuine sense of self-respect by being respected by those one disrespects and considers incapable of the kind of autonomy that commands respect? Similarly, does the sense of self-worth one can acquire by being loved by someone not loved in turn have the same value as the one received from someone one sees as genuinely lovely? In both cases, the answer must be negative. In the first case, one's sense of self-respect is enhanced and reinforced *if* one is assured that the other is not merely faking the attitude of respect and that the other has the kind of autonomy presupposed by acts of respect. Ultimately, being 'respected' by my dog is not quite the same thing as being respected by another autonomous human being. Similarly, being loved by someone I do not love might fuel my vanity, but it cannot replace the feeling of self-worth that comes from

experiencing reciprocity from someone I love. Thus, we could say that without moral self-realisation (implying recognising the other as morally worthy), self-recognition in the first sense must remain imperfect at best and turn into self-deceit at worst. Thus, *to achieve self-recognition in the fullest sense we must travel both paths: enjoying recognition from others by virtue of our worthy attributes and conferring due recognition to others.*

Finally, if self-recognition can take not one but two forms and if self-recognition in its fullest sense requires both forms, then the two paths will be mirrored by a twofold path towards self-deprecation, understood as the self-relation opposite to self-recognition. Again, the first path towards self-deprecation is known from Honneth's standard model. Because individuals rely on various forms of recognition from others to develop a positive self-relation, experiences of disrespect understood as withheld recognition can have the opposite effect, i.e., they can lower one's sense of self-worth and even cripple one's sense of the self ("Integrity and Disrespect"). Once the second complementary path towards self-recognition is taken into account, a second way to develop a negative self-relation becomes visible. We might experience shame, guilt or remorse when the consciousness of having committed a moral injury follows the act of treating someone poorly or immorally. Indeed, the recognition model of self-development makes conceptual space for moral suffering to arise not only when we are the victims of disrespect but also when we disrespect others. Because participants in relations of mutual recognition can be (re-)assured of their moral character by conferring due recognition, it makes sense that failure to respond adequately can negatively impact their sense of self-worth. For example, harming our friends will lead us, as a consequence of our poor attitude towards them, to grasp ourselves as *bad friends*, unworthy of their friendship. Continuing to enjoy their friendship without having fulfilled acts of redemption can become itself a source of suffering insofar as their friendly comportment cannot touch us in the same reassuring way as they used to but become reminders of our unworthy acts; we might even feel unworthy of their friendship, lowering our sense of self-worth. Consequently, *negative self-relations in the form of self-deprecation can result from acting in an immoral way*.

The detour through the two distinct paths towards self-recognition was necessary because the second path towards self-recognition, i.e. moral self-realisation, provides the key to answering the above question regarding the grounds on which *A* might have good reasons to feel disrespected by *B* insofar *A* might have contributed to disrespecting *C*. However, it might provide the key only when the triadic recognition model supplements it. In this regard,

a final short detour will be required through Honneth's account of critical actions based on disrespect because, interestingly, he comes close to disclosing the possibility of critical reactions motivated by moral self-critique. However, he fails to take the decisive step. Telling in this regard is a passage from *The Struggle* where his analysis of feelings of shame opens up conceptual space for struggles based on moral suffering. There he introduces the notion of 'shame' understood in the generic sense of "a kind of lowering of one's own feeling of self-worth" and explains that

> [t]his type of shame - which is only experienced in the presence of a real or imaginary interaction partner, playing as it were the role of witness to the injured ego-ideals - can be caused by oneself or by others. In the first case, one experiences oneself as inferior because one has violated a moral norm, adherence to which had constituted a principle of one's ego-ideals. In the second case, however, one is oppressed by a feeling of low self esteem because one's interaction partners violate moral norms that, when they were adhered to, allowed one to count as the person that, in terms of one's ego-ideals, one wants to be. (*The Struggle* 139)

In the same paragraph, Honneth identifies the experience of shame as the motivational link between the negative impact of misrecognition or disrespect on self-relation and a type of response that can engender protests. In a very schematic way, the explanation would be that individuals cannot be indifferent to what disrespect does to them, e.g. lower sense of self-worth; secondly, the feeling of shame triggered by experiences of being disrespected can be accompanied by the consciousness of having suffered an injustice insofar the injuring party has violated shared moral norms. Finally, overcoming the condition of self-deprecation would require recovering the lost sense of self-worth. Struggles manifest this motivation when they denounce the disrespecting party and strive for reparations. In Honneth's words, "[i]n the context of the emotional responses associated with shame, the experience of being disrespected can become the motivational impetus for a struggle for recognition" (*The Struggle* 139). Feelings of 'shame' can provide the motivational ground for critical action orienting the denunciation towards the party that has committed the moral injury. However, as Honneth cautions just a few lines below, we can

only speak of action *potential* that experiences of disrespect have, without any guarantee that protests follow such experiences in any situation.[100]

In the passage quoted above, Honneth distinguishes two forms of shame, i.e. one emerging as a result of violating shared norms and the other emerging when one's interaction partners violate shared norms. However, he seems to attribute critical potential only to the second type. In Honneth's view, only the second type of 'shame', the one associated with being disrespected, can motivate critique in the form of struggles for recognition. However, his theory of recognition opens up conceptual space for the possibility that the consciousness of guilt or remorse corresponding to the first type of 'shame', i.e. originating from violating a moral norm, can become the motivational ground for actions seeking to repair the committed form of disrespect. This path remains unexplored in Honneth's model; he does not thematize the critical potential experiences of remorse or guilt might have.[101]

To speculate, one reason why Honneth does not further explore the possibility of struggles based on moral self-reproach- although his account makes conceptual space for it- might be the dyadic character of his model. From the standpoint of the dyadic model in which one is either the victim or the perpetrator of misrecognition, it would make no sense to hold that shame as a self-reproach, that is, a reaction to *one's own* actions can turn into a social struggle since in this case the culprit is oneself not the others. If anything, it is the others whom one has disrespected that have reasons to denunciate one's act of misrecognition. From the perspective of the dyadic model, moral self-reproach cannot be relevant to the question

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[100] For a detailed discussion of Honneth's concept of struggles for recognition *see* Chapter 1 of this thesis. For Honneth's more recent attempt to clarify the role of recognition dynamics in emancipatory struggles *see* "Is There an Emancipatory Interest?".

[101] To my knowledge, the critical potential of guilt or remorse has remained unnoticed in the literature on recognition with very few exceptions, a noticeable one being Gianluca Cavallo' "Injustice, Shame, and the Moral Grammar of Social Struggles". Relying on the theory of recognition articulated by Honneth in *The Struggle*, Cavallo distinguishes between social and moral shame. Both forms of shame affect one's self-regard, albeit in different ways and for different reasons. While social shame emerges when others judge the individual as having failed to uphold social standards of value, moral shame emerges when the individual feels that s/he has failed to uphold personal standards of value derived from one's ego ideals. Further on, while social shame can be a vehicle of domination when it works by pressuring individuals to follow standards that unjustifiably denigrate one's or others' identity, actions, or contributions, moral shame can offer a counterweight to the pressure to follow, contribute or observe social standards insofar doing so would entail failing to uphold one's moral standards. On this background, Cavallo recognises the possibility that moral shame can be a source of struggles for recognition.

In contrast, the argument proposed in this chapter recognises the critical potential of moral worry for another, summoned both by one's moral standards and the moral worth of the other- *both rooted in relations of mutual recognition*. Additionally, the proposed argument seeks to clarify the social preconditions that would engender moral risks along the mentioned lines where such situations would not be merely contingent but typical, i.e. they would be rooted into social dynamics resulting from the dispersion of dyadic relations of recognition into triadic ones. Finally, struggles for moral responsibility would presuppose the recovery of the relation of recognition with the other and the difficult task of de-identification. They would aim at the social preconditions that have engendered moral risk.

regarding the grounds of *social* critique because in this case the origin of disrespect and the agent suffering moral self-deprecation is the same.

Although the possibility of self-reproach is implicit in the basic premises of Honneth's theory of recognition, only the triadic, not the dyadic model, allows us to grasp the significance of moral worry for critical theory. The possibility that A can simultaneously feel guilty and remorseful towards C and, on the same grounds, denounce B as responsible and guilty makes sense when relations of recognition have taken a triadic form. A would have reasons to see B as guilty on the assumption that as the necessary mediator between A and C, s/he distorted the terms of the relationship in such a way that the endpoint was an act of disrespect towards C or, even worse, a situation in which C is condemned to disrespect. *A* might regard herself as morally at fault precisely by letting B, so to speak, acquire the position of the mediating instance, making her relationship with C dependent on it. In this way, we can make sense that by recovering her relation with C, A can develop a critical attitude towards B. Insofar the risk of committing moral injuries is not contingent on individual acts but socially enhanced, i.e. by *trade-off* relations in which one form of recognition is secured at the expense of another, those caught in trade-off dynamics could develop feelings of guilt or remorse awakened by the consciousness of having contributed to practices of disrespect towards the third party.

We should not assume that shifting towards a more critical attitude comes easily. As mentioned above, the situation might entail *trade-off* dynamics such that the same grounds mediating and potentially distorting A's relation with C also offer her opportunities to prove herself worthy of recognition within the nexus of relations between A and B. The *A* party would need to take distance from the nexus of relations binding her to B and recover the relation with C. The operation of de-identification is the more difficult since by rejecting one's sedimented identity; one also renounces the ground on which s/he could demand recognition for those attributes valorised within the dominant scheme of valuation. Nevertheless, the role of moral self-realisation in developing a positive identity does provide some minimal grounds for explaining the possibility that should A come to realise that her actions validated by B have disrespected or injured C, she might experience guilt or remorse especially if she assumes not only that her intention was not to disrespect C, even if this is precisely what her actions did, but also that C commanded respect. In short, the second path towards self-recognition, i.e. moral self-realisation, can explain why A would have good reasons to develop a critical attitude towards participating in trade-off dynamics, the norms

underpinning them and her role in them, given the risk of *trading off* one form of self-recognition, i.e. being recognised by B, for another one attainable by acting adequately towards C, e.g. moral self-realisation. The reason would be that taking part in trade-off dynamics closes down A's possibility for moral self-realisation; it closes down for her one of the twofold complementary paths of self-development. Indeed, ambivalent relations of recognition deny self-recognition in the fullest sense. Thus, the triadic model, coupled with the notion of a twofold path towards recognition, promises an answer to the objection that the recognition theory fails to explain why individuals would engage in the self-critique presumed by acts of de-identification that, in turn, would be required for making sense of critical actions against ambivalent recognition.

Finally, when moral risk characterises an entire group such that the consciousness of moral self-reproach becomes a shared experience, the possibility of a peculiar form of struggle for recognition emerges. One motivated by the guilt-stricken consciousness that one might or already has contributed to the perpetuation of disrespect. It would be a struggle by which the A party seeks to regain or gain for the first time the status until then reserved to the B party: of the party having a say in how one should act towards the C party. Rather than expecting confirmation from B of being worthy of recognition, A would seek to gain a voice in generating the conditions on which recognition is granted. As a struggle born out of moral worry for the third party, seeking to reduce the risk of disrespecting the other by gaining a voice in the process by which decisions regarding C are made, we can label such struggles as being for *moral responsibility*. Their prize would be the possibility of moral self-realisation.[102]

It would be unfair to accuse Honneth that he failed to articulate the moral dimension of self-realisation given his repeated attempts to clarify the moral dimension of recognition dynamics and that the conception of struggles for moral responsibility is traceable to the basic premises of his recognition theory. Nevertheless, to disclose the critical potential of moral self-realisation and articulate the concept of struggles for moral responsibility, the dyadic model needs to be surpassed. The reason is that the critical potential of moral suffering, i.e. guilt, remorse, and shame caused by acting in disrespectful ways, makes sense when the dynamics of recognition/disrespect have been dispersed into triadic relations. Because within

[102] Patchen Markell has objected that Honneth's decidedly positive account of recognition fails to account for the contribution recognition might have in incentivising individuals to assume the role of accomplices in the subordination of others in exchange for self-recognition (*Bound by Recognition*, Chapter One). I contend that the relation between self-recognition and moral worry for the other disclosed in this chapter goes some way in meeting Markell's justified worry.

the dyadic model one is either the perpetrator or the victim of disrespect, the situation in which one protests against another party for being made an accomplice to practices of disrespect does not make much sense. The dyadic model fails to make sense of the mediating third party. Additionally, if the recognition theory is not limited to proposing norms of social critique but also seeks to provide basic concepts of social analysis capable of supporting the operation of critique, in other words, if recognition theory is to be rooted in social analysis, as Honneth considers it should be, then it is paramount to offer a credible depiction of the dynamics of recognition at the level of social reality. In some instances, relations of recognition have already been dispersed into triadic relations, engendering ambivalent forms of recognition. Making sense of them might require surpassing the dyadic model in the direction of the triadic one because the latter seems better suited to offer a more adequate analysis of recognition relations, especially when relations of recognition are refracted and potentially distorted by an intervening party.

One might object to the triadic model that even if the dyadic one needs to be surpassed, it remains unclear why the only or preferable alternative is a triadic one. If the point is to articulate an account capable of analysing non-dyadic relations of recognition, why should we stop at triadic ones and not, say, quadruple models? The shift from the dyadic to the triadic model is not a matter of choice. The triadic one relies on the basic premises of Honneth's theory of recognition. In addition to making sense of ambivalent relations of recognition emerging out of triadic relations, the triadic model also aims to recover a critical standpoint already implicit in Honneth's recognition theory. As shown, the fuller sense of self-recognition along both axes is already implicit in the recognition theory. Their differentiation is not essential as long as they are regarded as complementary moments of the same relation, as in the case of the dyadic model. It becomes necessary to make them explicit and articulate the fuller sense of self-development once the two axes separate from one another such that self-recognition along one axis can be achieved in isolation from self-recognition along the second axis. This might happen when dyadic relations become mediated by an intervening party taking the *de facto* form of triadic relations. Insofar a B party assumes the role of mediating the moral responsibility that A would have acquired from her relation with C, the possibility emerges that A can enjoy the status of the receiver of recognition- within a relation that would incorporate the moral demand to grant C due recognition- while lacking the status of a morally autonomous actor in her relation with C; in a sense, the mediating B party would disburden A of the task to ensure that her acts are

adequate responses to C. Meant to disclose a novel, more encompassing critical standpoint based on the premises of Honneth's theory of recognition, i.e. the fuller sense of self-recognition discussed above, the model cannot be but triadic because it finds its reason to be in those situations in which the twofold conditions of self-recognition have been disconnected from one another due to the intervention of a mediating party.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that Honneth's standard recognition model does not articulate recognition's full critical potential. Not one but two complementary paths towards self-recognition should be distinguished. The distinction becomes most relevant when social arrangements lead to their dissociation such that one path is opened at the cost of closing down the other. The triadic model proposed in this chapter aims to make sense of those situations in which one form of recognition is secured at the expense of the other. I argued that this might happen when relations of recognition have been dispersed into triadic ones engendering trade-off relations. Non-dyadic relations might be behind ambivalent forms of recognition.

Further theoretical clarification and empirical evidence are required to offer a minimum plausibility to the triadic model and the concept of the struggle for moral responsibility proposed in this chapter. So far, it has been offered little more than conceptual clarifications illuminated here and there by some examples. At this point, the triadic model is barely more than the contours of a project, so providing the required evidence and clarifications is beyond the limits of this study. On the other hand, the proposed model does not aim to provide renewed foundations for the theory of recognition; instead, it relies on the basic premises and the achievements of Honneth's theoretical framework seeking to explore and thematise aspects of the recognition dynamics that have remained so far under-theorised. To reiterate, the dyadic model is not the only one compatible with the findings regarding the role of recognition in self-development and the emancipatory potential of struggles for recognition. The idea that moral worry for others embeds critical potential can be traced to the basic premises of the recognition theory, e.g. the role of recognition in autonomous self-development, the intersubjective character of personhood. In short, the triadic model is rooted in the basic premises of Honneth's theory of recognition.

Additionally, the distinctions introduced in this chapter are not meant to produce a fully developed alternative model but are limited to preparing the context within which the difficulties encountered by Honneth's normative reconstruction of the labour market can be approached from a novel, hopefully, more secure standpoint. The proposed hypothesis is that the triadic model and the conception of moral self-realisation, capable of tackling ambivalent forms of recognition, might fare better than the dyadic model in meeting the challenges posed by the current 'ethicized' form of capitalism because, as shown in the introduction to this chapter, ambivalent forms of recognition seem to play a role in its reproduction. To anticipate, I argue in the next chapter that a critique of the contemporary world of work from the standpoint of social freedom can be grounded on the fuller sense of self-recognition articulated in this chapter, disclosing the dispersion of relations of mutuality into triadic ones and the trade-off dynamics raising barriers to the endeavours of social actors to achieve self-recognition in the fuller sense.

Chapter 6: Towards a Critique of 'Ethicized' Capitalism

6.1 The Standpoint of Critique

This section argues that the distinction between the two paths towards self-recognition introduced in the previous chapter discloses a vantage point from which the contemporary 'ethicized' form of capitalism can be assessed. The remaining sections of the chapter further clarify the premises of the proposed critique and test them against objections, some of which reiterate points raised against Honneth's account of the reconstruction of the labour market, and others target more specific attributes of the proposed argument.

Because social freedom relies on mutual recognition, the twofold condition of self-recognition introduced in the previous chapter- the distinction between self-recognition via being recognised by others and adequately recognising others- infuses the phenomenon of social freedom with new valances. As shown in Chapter 4, social freedom arises when *de facto* mutual dependence translates into norm-governed practices of cooperation through which participants can realise their aims while also contributing to the realisation of the complementary aims of the others. A further condition that practises and institutions must fulfil to be for the sake of social freedom is that participants can reflexively endorse the complementary institutionalised aims. By participating in practices of social freedom, individuals would contribute to the realisation of worthy interests in a twofold condition: they would contribute to the realisation of their worthy intentions and contribute to the realisation of the worthy intentions of others. The second contribution loses its instrumental character and becomes the very aim of one's free intention when one recognises the expectation of contributing to realising the other's intentions as one's free intention. For example, following Honneth's account of social labour as source of freedom, engaging in work activity in cooperation with others, i.e. social labour as a medium of social freedom, holds the promise of securing economic autonomy for oneself while contributing to the economic autonomy of the other participants. In this case, the first path towards freedom is clear enough; engaging in cooperative labour can increase economic autonomy. Beyond this, contributing to the

realisation of others' aims might appear at first only as a demand of reciprocity, a condition one needs to fulfil in order to secure the willingness of others to help one realise one's intentions. Things change, however, if the demand to contribute to others' freedom is reflexively endorsable- in this scenario, the demand becomes an intention one can freely endorse; it turns into one's free intention. Following this line of analysis, we arrive at a second axis of autonomy characterising social freedom. One's freedom acquires a fuller sense once it incorporates the second type of intention addressing not oneself, e.g. the aim of securing economic autonomy for oneself, but the others, i.e. their intentions that appear to me as worthy for good reasons. The satisfaction of this second type of intention would consist of contributing to the realisation of the others' worthy interests. As in the case of practices of mutual recognition, taking part in practices of social freedom implies the possibility of realising freedom in cooperation with others along two axes: by fulfilling in cooperation with others those of one's intentions that have oneself as their addressee, and those free intentions bearing moral weight that have the other as their addressee.

The reinterpretation of social freedom along both axes makes conceptual space for an additional 'generalisable interest' that workers would have in their work, in addition to those recovered by Honneth's reconstruction of the labour market and discussed in Chapter 4. To see this it helps to point out that the 'generalisable interests' attached to work identified by Honneth, i.e. economic autonomy and social recognition, pertain to the first axis of freedom. They refer to presumed worthy interests that have oneself or those sharing one's situation as their addressee: securing economic autonomy, and expectations of social recognition. In turn, the second path towards social freedom discloses an additional interest in contributing to the realisation of the worthy interests of others. For workers, confirming themselves as contributors to the bettering of the lives of others can be a source of self-recognition in its own right in addition to being recognised as worthy addresses of the others' beneficial actions. As moral agents, workers would have an interest in moral self-realisation. In this case, they would welcome those conditions and measures ensuring that their contributions satisfy the worthy intentions or expectations of the others involved in the cooperative activity rather than injuring or limiting the freedom of others through one's work. In short, the disclosure not of one but of two paths towards social freedom makes conceptual space for a fourth 'generalisable interest' rooted in the significance of work as a contribution: the expectation that work is a medium of *moral* self-realisation. Workers would acquire a fuller

sense of freedom by enjoying, in addition to self-recognition along the first axis, the possibility of moral self-realisation.

The relation between work and moral self-realisation[103] allows us, in turn, to grasp a more fundamental significance of co-determination than the one emerging in Honneth's interpretation. As shown in Chapter 4, Honneth interprets workers' struggles for co-determination as a highly significant step towards the socialisation of the market, e.g. its transformation into a sphere of social freedom. The institutionalisation of co-determination mechanisms would lead to the mutual socialisation of the workforce and the owners of capital by forcing them, so to speak, to engage in negotiation, and consensus building, recognising thus their mutual dependency. However, this interpretation of co-determination does not exhaust the significance it has for social freedom. Co-determination in the sense of taking part in the decision-making process also represents a necessary precondition for assuming the moral responsibility implicit in the condition of the producer as a social contributor. The rationale is that work outputs have morally relevant attributes entailing that producers as social contributors find themselves in a relation of moral responsibility towards those impacted by their products.

The idea that the status of social contributor engaged in labour mediated cooperation entails moral responsibility is not as eccentric as it might seem at first. It is already presupposed by the achievement principle that, as Honneth shows, has been employed by market participants, including the workers, to justify their demands for justice.[104] Workers could employ the achievement principle in justifying their demands only on the assumption that they contribute to the production of things that serve others and that are good in a socially visible way; it is in light of the moral quality of their contributions that workers can, in turn, demand recognition for their contribution to the bettering of the lives of others. Further on, the fact that work outputs have morally relevant attributes in light of which, when everything goes well, workers *as* contributors can demand recognition also represents the ground for a relation of moral responsibility between workers and those impacted by their

[103] The relation between work, morality, and self-realisation is not lost in the literature on work, at least in those approaches raising the question of work's ethical relevance. For example, Andrea Veltman argues that only if work is morally acceptable can it become a source of ethical goods for workers, e.g. meaningfulness. Of course, moral validity is not sufficient for meaningful work, but it is a precondition and an enhancing factor (*Meaningful Work* 124). David Graeber shows that employees that know themselves to be doing 'bullshit jobs', understood as pointless forms of work that make no real contribution to the company or society, have their sense of the self affected, i.e. low self-esteem, depression. (*Bullshit Jobs*).

[104] For the conception of workers as 'social contributors' and Honneth's interpretation of the 'achievement principle', see, in addition to Chapter 4 of this thesis, Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition".

work, a relationship that emerges in an acute form when things go badly. The moral responsibility implicit in the status of social contributor entails that producers are vulnerable to moral reproach. In this regard, co-determination would allow workers to assume moral responsibility for their work by taking part in the decision-making process establishing what is to be produced, for whom, under what conditions and so forth. Co-determination represents a precondition for assuming the responsibility that one's work *really* makes a valuable social contribution rather than harm. Thus, co-determination also represents a precondition for realising social freedom along the second path, i.e. moral self-realisation. Because Honneth does not give due attention to the twofold condition of self-recognition and correlatively of freedom, the primary significance of co-determination, i.e. as a precondition of moral self-realisation, is lost in his account.

The constellation constituted by the fuller sense of social freedom incorporating the 'interest' in moral self-realisation, the relation between work and moral self-realisation, and the moral significance of co-determination- disclose an alternative standpoint than the one emerging from Honneth's reconstruction, from which recent changes in the work organisation, i.e. dismantling of co-determination mechanisms, can be criticised. The distinction between the twofold path towards freedom reveals moral self-realisation as a condition of autonomous self-development; insofar as an interest in freedom expansion is attributable to individuals *qua* workers, they might also have an interest in realising possibilities of moral self-realisation embodied in the work as activity producing goods for others. These possibilities of self-realisation could be actualised when the output of one's work is genuinely good for others. Further on, how work is organised can either engender or stifle their actualisation. Organisations of work denying workers a say in what to produce not only increase the risk of committing moral injury but represent fundamental obstacles to the actualisation of the possibility of moral self-realisation embedded in work. It is inconsequential for the argument if the degree to which workers ought to assume responsibility for their work in each situation can be quantified. Assuming that one cannot establish the exact degree in each situation, the case remains that through work one makes a contribution to a process impacting the lives of others and that how work is organised can either make this moral relation transparent, supporting the realisation of moral responsibility or erect obstacles towards its actualisation. More specifically, the case remains that co-determination mechanisms represent an essential precondition for the realisation of moral responsibility, while the lack of it represents a significant obstacle. Thus, from the standpoint

of work-mediated moral self-realisation, from the standpoint of workers *qua* moral agents that understand themselves as social contributors, the dismantling of co-determination instruments in the past decades must appear as a regressive process because it increases the risk of taking part in practices of moral injury, thus severely limiting the possibility of work mediated moral self-realisation.

The discussion in this section has been limited to showing that the twofold path towards self-recognition identified in the previous chapter allows us to distinguish a twofold path towards social freedom and correlatively identify the significance of co-determination for moral self-realisation. As a result, a novel standpoint emerges from which the dismantling of co-determination mechanisms in the past decades can be assessed. This being said, the tone so far has been expository. In order to be convincing, the basic premises of the argument need to be defended against criticism. Fulfilling this task is the aim of the remaining sections of this chapter.

6.2 Absorbing the Critique

At a minimum, the proposed critique is that the transformations in work organisation of the past decades, especially the dismantling of the co-determination mechanisms, along with the discourses and reasons justifying them *appear* regressive from the standpoint of the idea of work-mediated moral self-realisation. Against this minimal claim, it can be objected that recent transformations in the normative logic of the market do not close down the possibility of moral self-realisation, as in the case of self-esteem and workplace autonomy, it only 'resignifies it'. In support of this claim is the thesis that the new form of work organisation relies on and encourages workers' autonomy and responsibility, or at least does so to a greater degree than in the 'Fordist' period. Workers' autonomy and responsibility would represent defining attributes of the current 'Post-Fordist', 'ethicized' or 'flexible' form of capitalist organisation.[105]

[105] The term 'Post-Fordism', used to denote a distinctive stage in the transformations of capitalist societies, is far from uncontested. Nevertheless, here I use it only as a placeholder for several transformations in the work organisation and producers' attitudes that seem to represent novel phenomena when contrasted with the post-WWII period. In the same vein I use 'ethicized' and 'flexible' capitalism to refer to specific aspects of the recent transformations, i.e. the increased 'flexibility' of work organisation, the centrality of workers' initiative, creativity and even self-exploration in the new forms of production characterising 'Post-Fordism'. Amin, Ash (ed.). *Post-Fordism: A Reader* offers a helpful overview of the 'Post-Fordist' debate regarding the impulses, tendencies, and anticipations of the socio-economic transformations grouped under the 'Post-Fordism' label.

The objection relies on several pieces of evidence. In the past decades, new ways of organising work and managerial techniques have emerged geared towards extending workers' control over their work activity. As Meric Gertler shows, the essential expression here is 'flexible systems'.[106] In order to remain competitive, companies seek to anticipate and produce goods that are not only more diverse but also short-lived corresponding to a more personalised fleeting demand rather than producing generic goods. Correlatively, production has also changed requiring 'flexible' machines that can be reconfigured to fulfil diverse tasks depending on the changing demand. Finally, the management and organisation of the workforce are geared today towards' 'functional flexibility' "which involves using the same worker to perform a wider variety of tasks" ("The Limits of Flexibility" 421). Regarding the latter point, the rationale behind the changes in the work organisation has been that productivity can be increased through innovation and that the knowledge, skills and information workers develop in the workplace is an essential source of innovation, increasing production efficiency. As a result, flexible work systems emerge geared towards making use of this innovation source by privileging workers' "knowledge above that of supervisors and managers by engaging them in design, planning, and identifying and solving problems" (Vicki Smith, "New Forms" 318).[107] More specifically, one of the most telling changes in the organisation of labour, instantiating the rationale and characteristics of flexible production, is represented by the organisation of work in *(self-)managed teams and work groups*. This form has been increasingly implemented across industrial divides in the past decades.[108] As Vicky Smith points out, self-managed teams comprise small groups that "produce together, make decisions, rotate their positions, maintain machinery, and direct and pace their progress". By participating in self-managed teams, workers can acquire multiple skills and increase control over their work activity without strict hierarchical supervision ("New Forms" 324).

[106] Stephen Wood has coined the term 'functional flexibility' as a defining characteristic of the 'Post-Fordist' mode of production and organisation of work (*The Transformation of Work?*).

[107] Piore MJ and Sabel CF are some of the early defenders of the flexible specialisation thesis entailing that efficient productivity can be sustained by making use of the craft knowledge workers develop at the shop level and that tapping into this source of innovation requires a form of work organisation conferring workers increased opportunities to participate in their work organisation, as well as access to continuous training programs, in addition to engaging them in a variety of work tasks (*The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity*).

[108] Although multiplying, (self-)managed teams are less numerous than *quality groups*. The latter also represents a characteristic of flexible productivity, e.g. emphasis on workers' initiative and flattening hierarchies. However, they are instead *ad hoc* occurrences instigated by management initiatives having the task of identifying innovative and cost-efficient solutions to specific problems emerging in production. In contrast, (self-managed)teams are more permanent forms of work groups (Smith, Vicky 324).

Increased control over the work schedule and the organisation of work activity, as well as a more active engagement in the decision-making process within the work group geared towards finding more efficient solutions to work problems, all of these factors speak in favour of an increase in workers' autonomy and responsibility under the new managerial system characterising 'flexible' systems. Of course, both 'autonomy' and 'responsibility' refer here to elements subsumed to the overall goal of more efficient production in both the quantitative and qualitative sense of the word. As Gagné and Bhave point out, the proponents of the flexible model of work defended it on the ground that "job autonomy is what makes employees feel responsible and accountable for work outcomes" ("Autonomy in the Workplace" 166). This qualification granted, the overall assessment is that, among other factors, changes in the organisational structures and employment practices favour incorporating autonomy (and increased responsibility) into organisational practices (Gagné and Bhave 178).

In light of the evidence discussed so far, it seems that indeed workers' autonomy and responsibility represent central features of the new 'Post-Fordist' or 'ethicized' form of capitalism. Increased autonomy and responsibility, in turn, seem to speak against the proposed critique that the organisation of work characterising 'flexible' capitalism stifles workers' possibilities of moral self-realisation. Even more problematic for the proposed critique is that the increase in workers' autonomy and opportunities to exercise responsibility have occurred in the absence of co-determination mechanisms. The implication is that the close relationship between responsibility and co-determination on which the proposed critique relies seems invalidated by the dynamics and normative logic of 'ethicized' capitalism. One can experience progress along the axis of autonomy and responsibility without co-determination. Some support in this direction emerges from Randy Hodson's sociological analysis of types of work organisations carried out from the standpoint of the level and form of participation they allow. Work organisations based on (self-)managed teams, emerging in 'flexible capitalism', would represent one of five varieties. Co-determination has a more central place in the work organisation based on joint union-management programs. In this setup, the issues discussed between workers' representatives and management are not limited to "management-defined agendas", as Hodson points out, entailing that the agenda is open to negotiation and dispute. The bottom point is that "increased communication and direct consultations" are "hallmarks of joint union—management programs"(499).

In contrast, (self-)managed or "management-mandated" teams "are developed under the guidance of organisational managers, sometimes with the assistance of paid consultants" (Hodson "Worker Participation and Team" 501) and are focused on the organisation of work tasks. As Hodson points out, the aim is to achieve goals that "are typically set by management and focus on increased productivity and improved product quality" (494). In this regard, the autonomy and responsibility of team participants are predefined by the goals set by management. The autonomy and responsibility of the management-mandated teams do not extend over the decision-making process setting the production goals and their further aims. In short, co-determination would be a condition of autonomy and responsibility in the case of joint union-management programmes since, in this case, the agenda of discussion between workers and management is open; in the case of (self-)managed teams, co-determination does not represent an essential precondition for the exercise of autonomy and responsibility since the management sets up in advance the basis of goals and targets delineating the space within which team members can exercise their autonomy and responsibility.

Overall, 'flexible' production moves away from organisations based on joint union-management programs in favour of (self-)managed teams to ensure efficient organisation of production. This transformation would be problematic from the standpoint of autonomy and responsibility *only* on the assumption that (self-)managed teams fail to offer workers genuine opportunities for autonomy, participation and responsibility. However, the evidence seems to *not* speak decidedly in favour of this assumption. On the one hand, it seems that workers' motivation to take part in participatory programmes is not always engendered by the 'carrot' of increased autonomy but by the 'stick' of needing to adapt to the new organisational reality for the sake of preserving their jobs and to adapt to the rationale of 'flexible' systems aiming to tap into the autonomy, creativity, and decision-making capacity of workers in order to increase production efficiency (Hodson 495). On the other hand, there is evidence that employee involvement, including the one presumed by (self-)managed teams, "results in increased skills and autonomy, reduced supervisory abuse, and greater pride and satisfaction in work," especially when compared with the lower levels of worker satisfaction characterising non-participatory organisations of work (Hodson 520).

Thus, should we conclude that the proposed critique does not apply to 'ethicized' capitalism- granted the premises that autonomy and responsibility are defining features of it (cf. Tomaney, "A New Paradigm") and that workers can enjoy them in the absence of

co-determination? Even if the mentioned premises are granted, they are insufficient to support the conclusion decisively. It should be noted that the increased autonomy made possible by the new organisation of work has as its primary addressee the company. As the activity through which production targets are to be met, work has the employer as the addressee of the workers' responsibility. This point is not only conceptual. By participating in (self-)managed teams, workers seem to enjoy greater autonomy and responsibility, but the same organisation of work gears the aim of their autonomy and responsibility towards goals and aims that are set independently of them. Fulfilling production targets, in the general sense of producing physical commodities or providing an X number of services in a Y amount of time, is what *employers* expect from their *employees*. Because of this, the new form of the capitalist organisation of work and its normative logic could absorb the critique of 'ethicized' capitalism only *on* the assumption that the 'for-the-sake-of' work can be reduced to 'fulfilling production targets'. Only if we assume that the *telos* of work is reducible to contributing to the company's and one's well-being, e.g. enjoying autonomy in executing work tasks and fulfilling goals set by management, can the current organisation of labour be regarded as an improvement over a situation in which one needs to work under strict supervision having to execute highly fragmentary tasks allowing almost no space for autonomy and personal input.

In contrast, the proposed critique points towards a conception of responsibility emerging between workers and those social actors potentially impacted by their work, for good or for worse. In addition to being the activity through which production targets are fulfilled, work also represents a social activity. By incorporating the moral dimension of *what* is produced and sold, work transcends the *telos* of efficient production. The point is not to deny that working to fulfil production goals while enjoying some degree of autonomy and recognition captures an irreducible sense of what working in 'flexible' systems entails. Instead, the point is that it cannot mean *only* this insofar as the products of one's work have a finality in the social world and that this feature of work, the autonomy and responsibility entailed in working within this normative horizon, transcends the horizon of the autonomy and responsibility made possible by fulfilling work tasks within the company even when the work organisation takes the form of (self-)managed team.

Avoiding any facile reductionism, the twofold character of work should be acknowledged: activity geared towards fulfilling production targets and social activity. Correlatively, producers taking part in 'flexible' systems, as those before them, also take part

in a twofold order of recognition comprising distinct relations of responsibility[109]: within the recognition order proper to companies, producers have the responsibility to fulfil their work tasks while expecting that work organisation makes room for autonomy, creativity or initiative in tasks execution; within the recognition order based on the social dimension of work, producers have the responsibility of ensuring that the contribution they make through work is morally and socially acceptable. In the second instance, a relation of mutuality obtains between workers and those affected in various ways by work outputs, either positively or negatively; as a result, work is not without moral risks. As suggested in the previous section, the relation in question is indeed one of mutuality because doing good work implies that the output of one's work is of help to others which in turn becomes the ground for commanding *social* recognition for one's contribution.

The two relations of mutuality in which producers taking part in market-mediated labour find themselves, correlatively, the distinction between the two orders of recognition and the meaning of work characterising each can be distinguished only analytically; they are, in fact, intermeshed. The same activity workers must do in order to fulfil their work targets is part of the process by which things are produced in the broadest sense of the term, things that are destined to be used, consumed, employed within the social world, impacting, for the best or worse, the other social actors. Although intermeshed, the relation between the two recognition orders depends on work organisation. Insofar today workers lack the right and organisational means to co-determine what they are called to produce, under what conditions, and for whom; conversely, insofar these decisions are reserved to only a few within the company, e.g. the executive board or the higher management setting in advance the goals that work teams must achieve, then under such an organisation of work the workers' relation with the third party, i.e. the other social actors impacted by the outputs of their work, is mediated and refracted by the relation and dynamics of power between workers *qua* employees and their employers. Because workers take part in an organisation of labour denying them the right and instruments of co-determination, the relations of mutuality underpinning social

[109] The linchpin between the two orders is not readily disclosed because the literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), researching the set of values or norms orienting corporate decisions and their alignment with societal values, is usually dissociated from research on the relationship between workers and their employers. However, there is evidence showing that the commitment of companies to socially responsible behaviours does have a positive impact on the "organizational image, and this, in turn, will lead to greater employee satisfaction" (Barakat et al., "The Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility" 13). Thus workers seem not to be indifferent towards the social dimension of their work. One might speculate that they are aware of the twofold order of recognition in which they partake and that advances in one order do not always entail advances in the second. This point is further developed in the next section.

labour, i.e. between producers and the addressees of their work, have been dispersed into triadic relations.

As argued in Chapter 5, the dispersion of relations of mutual recognition into triadic ones increases the risk of *trade-off* dynamics. The same nexus of relations and status dynamics in place today, promising workers increased autonomy and chances to acquire recognition, also exposes them to the risk of taking part, knowingly or not, in practices or processes affecting the dignity of the third party. Not only is the organisation of work into (self-)managed teams that simultaneously enhances and limits autonomy and responsibility problematic here, but also the self-image that workers are encouraged to develop in the process, either as truthful self-identity or as an adaptation strategy. Since, as mentioned, in 'flexible' capitalism, an essential source of innovation is the autonomy, creativity, initiative and know-how of workers, it is not unreasonable to assume that it would be beneficial for production if workers came to regard their employment as a means of self-development, as a means to develop skills, abilities, and talents and measure their value by the standards of market demand, while exhibiting flexibility by continually re-adapting their skills and re-inventing themselves; insofar workers are absorbed in these dynamics, either enthusiastically or as an adaptation strategy, the question of what the application of those abilities will end up doing, the moral-social vision, falls into the background. As Richard Sennett has pointed out, there seems to be a tension between the demands facing workers within the contemporary 'flexible' organisation of work and the preconditions for workers to develop a robust moral sense of the self where the latter would require less 'flexibility' in the sense of more durable forms of work and the possibility of anchoring one's identity into a social-moral vision of work (*The Corrosion of Character*). In short, the *de facto* intermeshing of the two orders of recognition in which work inserts workers, or rather the risk that one of them, i.e. the recognition order of 'flexible' capitalism, risks cannibalising the other coupled with an organisation of labour denying workers any right to co-determination- entailing the dispersion of mutuality into triadic relations- all these cannot but increase the risk of contributing to moral injury and to remaining into the dark regarding one's complicity.

To sum up, even if we accept that recent transformations in the normative grammar of work and the changes in work organisation corresponding to them give workers space to exercise their autonomy, initiative and responsibility, it does not follow that the transformations can be assessed positively from the standpoint of moral self-realisation. On the contrary, if we accept that employers cannot be the sole addressee of workers' moral

responsibility because moral responsibility for one's work extends to the social actors impacted by it, then the dismantling of co-determination mechanisms, or their lack in the first place, and the changes in the moral grammar of work appear less favourable. The dismantling of co-determination mechanisms entails that workers lack preconditions for influencing what their work ends up producing and what the products of their work might do to others. In this situation, their relationship with the third party, i.e. those affected by their work, is necessarily mediated by the few who within the company have the power to decide what is to be produced, under what conditions, and for whom. Because they lack co-determination instruments, workers have little to no influence over *this* decision-making process. Consequently, workers lack the organisational prerequisites to assume moral responsibility for what their work might do to others. From the standpoint of the moral risk engendered by trade-off dynamics emerging when relations of mutuality have been dispersed into triadic relations, the recent transformations in the moral grammar underpinning the contemporary world of work cannot be evaluated as a positive development; instead, they appear regressive. Thus, the rejoinder that current transformations preserve the possibility of moral self-realisation does not convince; the proposed critique is not easily absorbed.

6.3 Dismantling the Critique

While the first objection sought to neutralise the proposed critique of 'ethicised' capitalism by absorbing it, the second battery of objections considered in this section tries to dismantle it. To recall, the critique is that a form of work organisation denying workers the status of co-determining parties and the organisational precondition to actualise it, as the one prevailing in 'flexible' capitalism, raises barriers to workers' moral self-realisation. The critique relies on the assumption that labour- as an activity impacting the lives of others- faces workers with the *moral demand* that one's work is *good*- that it benefits others. Against this assumption, it can be objected that the idea that workers are morally responsible for the social impact of their work, is *external* to the contemporary world of work. It is not enough to establish a relation between work, moral responsibility and social contribution via an analysis of the significance of work as a contribution to the betterment of the lives of others in order to justify the standpoint of critique as immanent. More specifically, the objection would be that the assumption that workers *as* employees are responsible for what they produce and what

their work does in the social world is *external* to the conception of worker, employer, and work-based moral responsibility circulating in the social world. Neither the workers nor other social actors hold them responsible in this way. Neither the workers nor other social actors interact based on this conception of work and moral responsibility. Thus, the proposed critical standpoint lacks anchorage within the social world. In this case, the proposed critique is faced with the same challenges as Honneth's assessment. The objection cannot be dismissed as misplaced since the proposed standpoint aims to provide a more convincing answer to the challenges posed by recent transformations to Honneth's standard model, i.e. social freedom has lost its status of ideal immanent to the world of work.

The objection of external critique has bite give the methodological self-restrictions of the reconstructive approach assumed by Honneth and the proposed critique. Consequently, a convincing rejoinder would require a normative reconstruction analogous to the one proposed by Honneth, focused this time on unearthing the second path towards social freedom, i.e. moral responsibility towards the other based on mutual dependence, as socially and historically embedded. Unfortunately, at this point in research, even a minimal attempt to realise this task would not be feasible. Instead, a proxy for it might be obtained by returning to a point already introduced in the previous sections. The idea of moral responsibility for what one's work does within the social world is the flip side of the conception of work as a social contribution. Insofar as the conception of work as a social contribution gains traction within the social world, then the idea of work-based moral responsibility is already embedded, at least implicitly, within the social world. One might be justified to demand due recognition for one's contribution *only* on the assumption that one did, in fact, contribute to the bettering of the life of others. Correlatively, one's work must be good and not lead to moral injury to represent a genuine contribution to bettering the lives of others. Thus, if we accept the results of Honneth's normative reconstruction of the labour market, if we accept that he provides robust evidence for the claim that the conception of work as a social contribution and workers as social contributors did gain traction in the past two centuries, and in Chapter 4 of this study I offered some reasons for why the evidence he provides is not easily dismissable, then it is not farfetched to assume that moral responsibility for the other social actors pertains to the moral grammar of the market. More clearly, since passing the test of moral responsibility is a precondition for justifying one's demands for social recognition in light of one's contribution, and since the conception of work as a social contribution emerged as a norm within the social world, then the conception of work as specific source of moral

responsibility and, conversely, as a medium of moral self-realisation is not alien to the modern world of work.

Even if accepted, however, the argument does not answer the objection. Prevalent within the world of work *today* seems to be an individualistic conception of work and an individualistic self-understanding of workers. The relation of work as a social contribution and of the market as a cooperative sphere for the sake of realising societal goals, in short, the conception of the market sphere as a sphere of social freedom, does *not* seem to be embedded anymore. In this case, the standpoint of critique must appear external because it depends on a conception of work, the market sphere, and interpretation of workers' role, i.e. social contributors engaged in cooperation, that at best held in the past but which has been uprooted in the recent decades. Thus, the proposed rejoinder faces the same problem as Honneth's normative reconstruction: it lacks anchorage within the contemporary world of work.

The objection would lose some of its force if it can be shown that the conception of moral self-realisation through work grounded on the social dimension of work can be recovered from the conception of work and of work agency prevalent today within the world of work. In this and the following subsections, I explain why the conception of work as a social contribution and workers as social contributors might be internal to 'ethicized' capitalism. The argument states that even today, producers cannot disburden themselves of social obligations and are morally responsible for the impact production has on the social world (6.3.1). Even if workers are denied the status of producers today, the norms and demands confronting them within 'ethicized' capitalism provide them grounds to struggle for the status of producers (6.3.2).

6.3.1 Producers and responsibility

Even in market-based economies, being a *producer* entails moral responsibility towards those impacted by one's products. The reason is that producers must decide what to produce, under what conditions, and for whom; thus, they are, in principle, morally responsible for their products. At the same time, producers cannot disburden themselves of the responsibility deriving from the fact that they are making such decisions on the presumption the market predetermines their decisions. More specifically, the claim that as producers, companies are bound to seek satisfying market demands and adapt to market

conditions and their decisions are, in a sense, predetermined by market dynamics is not enough to disburden themselves of moral and social responsibility. As Lisa Herzog argues, "there are no social contexts that are outside of the scope of morality, or in which moral norms have no force". The argument would be that since human action, in general, is vulnerable to moral questioning, so are organisations or complex systems of action coordination because they, too, are constituted and depend on individuals acting and making decisions (*Reclaiming the System* 48-51). This principle, I contend, also applies to economic enterprises. In the end, companies produce commodities that cannot but have an impact within the social world, and their impact is open to moral questioning by the other social actors. In this regard, it is irrelevant if companies have intrinsic reasons to act morally or not; it is the risk of moral denunciation grounded in the fact that their products impact the social world that brings them into the purview of moral judgements.[110]

The fact that companies are not outside the scope of morality resurfaces time and again precisely in crises in which the negative impact of their products gains a magnitude that is not easy to ignore. When production negatively impacts the social world, social actors, especially those affected by them, might engage in acts of protest. Situations of crises caused by immoral outputs give rise to the problem of establishing who is morally responsible for what work outputs do within the social world. Honneth's normative reconstruction further supports the idea that the market rationale does not insulate production from moral critique. Relevant evidence is offered not by his normative reconstruction of the labour market, which has been the focus of the discussion so far, but by his reconstruction of the second sphere of the market, the consumer market. Without entering into too many details, his historical account of the consumer market shows that morally motivated struggles also emerge in this sphere, especially when the consumers find the products or their princess morally unacceptable. As the addressee of the product's usefulness, the consumers engaged time and again in practices of moral denunciation, raising the question of who is morally responsible for injurious products (Honneth, *FR* Chapter 6). Not only consumers but other categories of social actors, e.g. NGOs, might engage in practices of protest against producers or providers of services when their practices are considered immoral. Protests might emerge when a

[110] It is inconsequential for the argument proposed here if there is social consensus regarding the grounds and significance of 'good work' and 'good work outputs'. For the sake of argument, it can be accepted that different standards of 'good work' are used within the social world and are not necessarily convergent. Even if this point is conceded, the case remains that 'good work' is not reducible to 'productive work' in the economic sense, i.e. activity fulfilling production quotas; more than this, the impact and consequences work outputs have within the social world must be factored in the concept of 'good work' because work and its outputs have finalities within the social world, they impact social actors in one way or another.

careless company produces an ecological disaster, or their way of doing business threatens the lives of entire communities and so forth. Situations in which social actors protest against the impact that production has within the social world represent break-point situations revealing that producers must do more than merely satisfy market demand; they also have responsibility for the social impact of their activity regardless of whether they seek to assume or disburden themselves of it.

Additionally, the claim that economic actors have moral responsibilities towards social stakeholders is not only an external imputation based on the social impact that production and business practices have. There are signs that economic actors will find it increasingly difficult to resist assuming the status imputed to them, that of agents bearing moral responsibility. One reason is that failing to acknowledge one's status as an agent bearing social responsibility is bad business, especially when this failure is accompanied by irresponsible conduct harming society. The rationale would be that such conduct can provoke critical reactions and engender collective actions such as protests or boycotts that affect the company's reputation and endanger its business interests.[111] Correlatively, enlightened self-interest might dictate that companies assume some form of corporate social responsibility agenda insofar as doing so might increase the company's profitability.[112] Although strategic adaptation should not be confused with moral enlightenment, the fact that there is pressure for producers to adapt to moral demands and that they are not indifferent to it (e.g. Dillard and Layzell) suggests that economic actors cannot easily disburden themselves of the status of actors bearing social responsibility.

In short, even in market-based economies, producers are morally responsible towards the other social actors for the impact of their economic activity; they cannot fully disburden themselves of the expectation to be *social contributors*. The imputation of moral responsibility underpinning the condition of producing for others is either a burden when producers seek to run away from it or a possibility of moral self-realisation when producers assume the status of agents responsible for their doings, a status rooted in the power they

[111] "product boycott announcements are associated with significant negative stock market reactions" (Craig Smith, "Corporate Social Responsibility" 61).

[112] Philip Cochran finds that "firms that successfully pursue a strategy of seeking profits while solving social needs may well earn better reputations with their employees, customers, governments, media, et cetera. This can, in turn, lead to higher profits for the firms' shareholders" ("The Evolution" 453). For an overview of the business case argument(s) stating that it is good business for companies to assume a social responsibility agenda *see* Carroll, Archie B., and Jill A. Brown, "Corporate Social Responsibility".

have in impacting the social world, the necessary entanglement between economic actions and social consequences, and the moral value of those affected by this power.[113]

6.3.2 Workers as producers

Assuming that producers bear moral responsibility because production entails responsibility towards those impacted by the production outputs, it does not follow that within the contemporary form of capitalism workers enjoy the status of producers called to make a social contribution. Indeed, this premise of the proposed critique is far more contentious than the first one because workers as employees are *not* producers in the sense of 'producers' considered so far. As employees, they might enjoy a higher degree of autonomy and responsibility in executing and organising their work activity, especially in the case of 'management-mandated' teams. However, as shown in the previous section, this constellation of autonomy, responsibility and work organisation characterising 'flexible' capitalism places the decision-making process regarding corporate agenda beyond the purview of the employees' autonomy. In other words, if producers would have the autonomy to decide what to produce, under what conditions and for whom, and if they are morally responsible towards the other social stakeholders in light of their autonomy and power to impact the social world, then as employees in the system of 'flexible' capitalism, workers do not qualify as producers because they lack the means to co-determine the 'corporate vision'.

On the other hand, the fact that workers lack the status of producers as social contributors does not settle the dispute, given that the proposed critique is that the labour organisation characterising 'ethicizied' capitalism unjustifiably denies workers their status as producers, i.e. social contributors bearing moral responsibility. The fact that workers are denied the said status would be illustrated by their lack of co-determination rights and mechanisms allowing them to actualise the possibility of moral self-realisation embedded by social labour. Thus, the viability of the proposed critique depends on showing that the producer status of workers-employees represents a presupposition of the contemporary world of work.

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[113] As Henry Mintzberg argues, "[t]he neat distinction between private economic goals and public social goals—the one to be pursued by businessmen, the other by elected leaders—which sounds so good in theory, simply does not hold up in reality. Every time a large corporation makes an important decision—to introduce a new product line, to locate a plant, to close down a division—it generates all kinds of social consequences. Size alone makes economic decisions social" ("The Case" 12).

Further on, I argue that the normative presuppositions of 'flexible' capitalism, i.e. autonomy and responsibility, singles workers out as *producers*. Against following this path, it could be objected that increased autonomy and responsibilisation represent ideological instruments 'helping' workers to develop the type of motivation and reasoning beneficial for the increase in the productivity rate while closing down the possibility of more radical forms of autonomy and responsibility, e.g. co-determination. This point granted, I contend that the ambivalence of the increased demands for autonomy and responsibility confronting employees today might hold the key towards transcending their ambivalent form towards fuller forms of autonomy. This form would incorporate the possibility of moral self-realisation. As the social philosopher André Gorz argues, the possibility of (self-)critique in the direction of increased autonomy and responsibility is already rooted in the demands prevailing in the contemporary world of work. According to him, the case is not that workers today "cannot or ought not to identify with what they do", instead "they must identify with *everything* they do, that they must make their work their own and assume responsibility for it as subjects, not excluding from this the consequences it produces in the social field" (*Reclaiming Work* 46). The managed form of autonomy available to workers denies this more radical identification today.

Taking a cue from André Gorz, the critique of 'ethicized' capitalism proposed in this chapter would represent such an internal-transcending critique mediated by the radicalisation of norms,[114] with the added qualification that in the proposed critique, radicalisation entails recovering a relation of recognition with the third party, i.e. those suffering the consequences of one's work. To reiterate, the "individualisation of responsibility" in the sense that workers are encouraged to assume a higher degree of responsibility for their work conduct and occupational destiny is one central characteristic of 'ethicized' capitalism (e.g. Honneth, "Paradoxes"). In this regard, workers are encouraged to transcend their condition as employees and assume the status of 'entreployees'. Among other attributes, 'entreployees' are expected to act like "producers" and "salesmen" of "their own work capacity against the background of an intra-organizational and extra-organizational labor market (self-commercialization)" (Höge, Thomas, "Perceived Flexibility" 4). If workers are expected to see themselves not only as employees but as entrepreneurs employing their skills and

[114] Only the form of the proposed critique overlaps with Gorz's; beyond this, the conclusions drawn here differ from his. While the idea of critique based on the radicalisation of norms leads here to co-determination demands, in Gorz's argument, it leads to demands for the abolition of wage-based societies, e.g. societies in which the distribution of wealth is based on the involvement in work, *see* Gorz, A. *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-Based Society.* For an overview of Gorz's argument, *see* Bowring, Finn. "Post-Fordism".

abilities most profitably, then, as *employers* of their workforce they are faced with the question regarding the responsibility they have for how and on what terms they employ their workforce. If workers would take 'seriously' the idea of individual responsibility and the status of 'entreployees' confronting them today and seek to radicalise them by taking them to their final consequences, they will have to come to a resolution regarding how far assuming responsibility for one's work should go. A step further, they might ponder the possibility that increased responsibility should also entail responsibility for the overall impact of their work, for what their doing does. The critical reflection reconstructed here, engendered by the idea of increased moral responsibility prevailing today, might lead them to recover the relation with the third party, i.e. those impacted by their work, only to discover that they lack organisational preconditions for, in fact, taking up their responsibility.

Picking up the line of critical reflection articulated above, workers might discover the contradiction between the demands they are confronted with today and the organisation of work they partake in. First, producers cannot completely disavow their social-moral obligations, even in market-based societies. Secondly, workers are encouraged today to transcend their status of 'mere' employees towards the status of producers, where 'entreployee' would represent such a hybrid or ambivalent category, having an intermediary and unstable place between 'employee' and 'producer'. Pointing in this direction is the demand embedded in the current work organisation that workers assume greater responsibility for increasing dimensions of their work activity, the context in which they work, and their occupational destiny. Fourthly, negating the tendency embedded in 'ethicized' capitalism towards increased workers' autonomy and responsibility, they lack *de facto* the organisational pre-conditions for doing so insofar as co-determination mechanisms have been dismantled. In other words, workers could arrive at the demand for co-determination by *radicalising* the promise of autonomy and responsibilisation embedded within the contemporary world of work. They would rely on the twofold norms of autonomy and responsibility characterising 'flexible' capitalism in their co-determination struggles, understood as struggles for moral autonomy.

Critique via radicalisation of norms would be immanent because it seeks to further develop the norms at the core of 'ethicized' capitalism; but also because its normative standpoint emerges as the resolution to tensions internal to the current form of capitalism between self-norms characterising the subjectivity that workers are encouraged to develop today and the organisation preconditions for realising the status imputed to them. As

'entreployees' expected to expand their responsibility but lacking co-determination rights workers are faced with a crushing dilemma: either shy away from the implication that- intentionally or not- they do contribute to such a production process impacting others, thus falling back on the alienating self-understanding as passive contributors, or develop a critical attitude towards this condition out of moral worry for the others. In the first case, one must make peace with a more limited form of autonomy than otherwise possible and cope with the risk of taking part in trade-off dynamics stifling one's possibilities of moral self-realisation while being faced with increased demands for responsibility and autonomy. In the second case, moral worry for the other and the prize of moral self-realisation can become the motivational ground for engaging in a radicalisation of norms facing them and in acts of de-identification through which workers disengage themselves from the ambivalent identity of 'entreployee' striving for the fuller status of producer as social contributor thus bringing to a resolution the tensions underpinning their status of 'entreployees' lacking organisational preconditions to exercise their moral autonomy. Striving for this status would entail engaging in critical action aiming at the non-contingent characteristics of 'ethicised' capitalism: managed moral responsibility, lack of co-determination mechanisms and the normative logic legitimising them.[115] Nevertheless, should such struggles emerge or not, the main point remains: the radicalisation of individual responsibility and the self-understanding of workers as 'entreployee' coupled with the recurrences of socially disruptive situations caused by socially problematic work outputs,[116] revealing that producers bear moral responsibility, would offer workers good reasons- *rooted* in the normative grammar of 'ethicized' capitalism- to take a critical attitude towards the desirability and legitimacy of contemporary

[115] The type of critical action engendered by moral worry considered here is only one possibility. As Albert Hirschman argues, activists within organisations can react to sources of discontent by employing one of two main strategies: the exit strategy consisting in exiting the organisation or the voice strategy consisting of attempts to gain a voice within the organisation for the sake of engendering desired changes (*Exit, Voice, and Loyalty)*. The type of action underpinning the argument proposed here would correspond to Hirschman's notion of the 'voice' strategy.

[116] As Florida and Kenney argue, a new form of production takes shape today, an "innovation-mediated production" in which innovation and production, manual and intellectual labour are integrated and interconnected so much so that even factories acquire the attributes of laboratories in which new products and technologies emerge, are tested and integrated into production; in the current form of capitalism plus value is obtained in increasing degrees from innovation ("The New Age of Capitalism"). On this background, it is not entirely unreasonable to presume that "innovation-mediated production" might increase the number of new products and technologies that are socially disruptive not only in the positive but also negative sense of "disruption," i.e. producing socially undesirable effects (on the notion of "socially disruptive technology" see Hopster, Jeroen, "What are [...]?"). Additionally, since employees are called today to make an active contribution, through their work, to "innovation-mediated production" and are expected to do so today not only by employing their labour power but also their initiative and creativity in (self-)managed teams (Florida and Kenney 642), they could represent an important voice in articulating, anticipating and preventing socially problematic consequences, should they be granted a voice.

transformations. They would assume the standpoint of the 'interest' in moral self-realisation from which the current constellation of transformations in the world of work appears ambivalent because it engenders trade-off dynamics.

6.4 From Responsibility to Critique

6.4.1 Responsibility without autonomy?

The rejoinder proposed above to the objection of external critique is that moral self-realisation represents a normative presupposition of 'ethicized' capitalism at which one can arrive via a radicalisation of its norms. In this case, the absence of co-determination mechanisms would violate the normative presuppositions of the contemporary world of work because it would hamper the *actualisation* of workers' moral responsibility. Against the assumption that lack of co-determination stifles workers' moral self-realisation, it can be further objected that their status of parties co-determining the 'corporate vision' would make them responsible towards the third party. Since they lack this status, they are not, in fact, responsible, so they do not have any good reasons to recover any relation with the third party because, as things stand, there is no such relation. Making workers responsible for what they do not control only adds insult to injury since while they suffer the injury of being excluded from the decision-making process, they would also be held morally accountable for lacking the autonomy in light of which they would be responsible. More generally, the assumption that the current labour organisation denies workers the preconditions to actualise their responsibility would mistake the ground with the grounding: one is morally responsible only insofar as one is autonomous, not the other way around. If workers did have a say, they could be held morally responsible by themselves or others; insofar they do not have a say, they are not morally responsible because they lack the relevant form of autonomy. Since the recent transformations are evaluated as regressive because they stifle the workers' moral self-realisation by making their relation with the third party dependent on the relation between their subjectivity *qua* employees with their employers, and since the assumption that workers still retain a relation of moral responsibility towards the third party is unconvincing, then the critical assessment of current transformations seems unwarranted.

I agree that because workers' autonomy is limited, they should not be held morally responsible on a par with those with decision-making power. However, the emphasis on

moral responsibility does not seek to establish that given their lack of power to influence the doings of their work, they should nevertheless be held accountable as if they had this power. Instead, the proposed argument calls attention to the critical potential of moral responsibility as an answer to the question regarding the potential for emancipation within the contemporary world of work. As an answer to the question regarding the possibility of emancipation, the assumption that workers preserve a moral relationship with the third party while lacking the autonomy presumed by moral responsibility is not, in fact, inconsistent, or at least, it is not more inconsistent than any other type of emancipatory action. For example, the Suffragette movement demanding equal political rights for women expressed a political *praxis* that was denied to women. Lacking the right and institutional preconditions to engage in political actions, they did nevertheless engage in such actions. Their protests, collective actions, and public demands represented the actualisation of autonomy that was denied them. Insofar the Suffragettes engaged in such activities, they assumed political autonomy before enjoying it *de facto* and acted on it to secure the institutional and social preconditions for exercising the autonomy in question on a par with the others, i.e. securing political rights. As Emmeline Pankhurst, a leading figure of The Suffragette movement, states in her *Freedom or Death* discourse*,* "[w]hen women asked questions in political meetings and failed to get answers, they did nothing militant" since "it is a tradition, a time-honoured one, to ask questions of candidates for parliament and ask questions of members of the government" (*The Suffragettes* 23). Nevertheless, they were thrown in jail because, by doing so, they exercised precisely the form of political autonomy that was denied to them. In doing so, their actions were critical and emancipatory: an exercise in the form of autonomy denied to them and a critique of the recognition order failing to recognise their autonomy. The more general point is that any critical action or struggle of the disadvantaged occurs within a context of drastically limited autonomy. Any such action represents a practical advent of a form of autonomy denied to them. Any struggle for self- or co-determination rejecting the established system of norms, or their interpretation, thus rejecting the status order legitimised by them, while resignifying or reconstructing the norms in question, represents an attempt to co-determine shared norms even if the established order of recognition might deny them the status of the rightful co-determining party. In this regard, any such struggle has the structure of an action by which a form of autonomy is exercised, i.e. co-determination, to secure the social and institutional preconditions for its actualisation, e.g. status of party co-determining the shared norms.

What the idea of action based on moral worry for another adds to the above action structure of emancipatory struggles is precisely the assumption that moral autonomy embedded in the worry for another, and implicitly a moral relation that for the time being lacks the preconditions for its *de facto* actualisation, can become the ground for struggles seeking to secure the social and institutional preconditions for actualising it.[117] Further clarifications of the action structure considered here can be offered if we recall the conception of moral struggle sketched in the previous chapter. As shown, such struggles make sense when relations of mutuality have been dispersed into triadic relations. Insofar as a mediating party B assumes the role of establishing if A is worthy of recognition in light of A's actions towards C, the risk that B distorts rather than refracts the relation between A and C becomes real. Under an organisation of work where employees lack co-determination rights, the role of B is played by the few retaining the decision-making power within the company. What impact A's, i.e. the employees, doing has on C, i.e. the other social actors or even other fellow workers, depends on the decisions made by B. Any protest of employees against their employers out of moral worry that their doing ends up hurting others converges with the notion of struggle for moral responsibility as an attempt to secure a voice in how one's work is used by voicing one's moral concerns. Such phenomena are neither contradictory nor impossible. Furthermore, the notion that collective actions can have the intentional structure disclosed here is not necessarily contradictory because the lack of autonomy in question is socially constructed, so to speak, it is due to a lack of organisational preconditions raising barriers to actualise one's moral autonomy; it has nothing to do with some intrinsic debility of the actors that would lack the capacity for autonomy. If anything, the seemingly 'contradictory' structure of such actions in which moral responsibility comes before autonomy bears witness to their noble character.

To sum up, the objection is that since moral responsibility presumes autonomy, and since workers lack co-determination rights and the organisational preconditions for exercising their autonomy, then they lack the kind of autonomy in virtue of which they would be morally responsible, thus their relation with the third party as the ground of responsibility

[117] Struggles for co-determination based on moral worry would come close to what Lisa Herzog names "transformational agency" in organisational contexts, defined as "the process in which individuals put the results of their [moral] reflection into action, taking moral responsibility for what they do in their jobs" (*Reclaiming the System* 193). The distinction between Herzog's notion and the conception of emancipatory struggle proposed here is that her 'transformational agency' is broader, incorporating not only 'radical' forms of critique but also those exposing demands that can be accommodated within the established structure. Struggles for co-determination out of moral worry would represent a more 'radical' subspecies of 'transformational agency' because they take issue with the structural lack of co-determination mechanisms.

does not obtain. Against the objection, I argued that the assumption of moral autonomy in the absence of co-determination is not an inconsistent notion; on the contrary, emancipatory struggles have the structure of actions by which a socially denied form of autonomy is exercised for the sake of securing the institutional and social preconditions for its realisation.

6.4.2 Pre-theoretical critique

If it can be shown that workers' struggles born out of moral worry for others do emerge at the level of social reality, then they would support the claim that struggles for co-determination can be engendered by moral worry for others. They would represent the pre-theoretical ground for the standpoint from which the critique of 'ethicized' capitalism has been articulated in this chapter. At this point, it would be necessary to show that 'workers' struggles for moral responsibility' seeking to secure a voice in the decision-making process establishing what their work does is not a mere theoretical construct but denotes empirical phenomena. Unfortunately, I am unaware of any empirical study that could verify the hypothesis proposed here.[118] Thus, the proposed argument is vulnerable on empirical grounds. Nevertheless, without claiming to provide decisive evidence, it is possible to offer some examples of workers' protests that do appear as a struggle for moral responsibility.[119] In the following, I discuss one such case.

In 2018 Microsoft employees protested the company's decision to start producing 'warfare technology'. They expressed their point of view in an open letter. The following paragraph of the letter gives us an idea of what is at stake

> "In November, Microsoft was awarded the $479 million Integrated Visual Augmented System (IVAS) contract with the United States Department of the Army. [...] While the company has previously licensed tech to the US Military, it has never crossed the

[118] At a minimum, there is evidence for at least individual struggles for moral responsibility in organisational contexts. For example, Lisa Herzog presents several study cases, some of which point towards the existence of such individual struggles (*Reclaiming the System*).

[119] In addition to the case discussed in the body of this section, one can also refer to the General Electric (GE) employees' protests. During the COVID-19 pandemic, GE employees demanded, not without success, that the company start producing much-needed medical equipment, especially ventilators (Jones, Charisse, "GE Workers"). Although the company specialises in producing aviation equipment, it also has the technology to produce ventilators to help save the lives of patients with severe forms of COVID-19. This equipment is essential for helping breathe those who have lost the capacity to do so. The employees' rationale seems to be that since the company can produce this equipment, it also has the moral obligation to do so in the context of a global pandemic.

> line into weapons development. With this contract, it does. The application of HoloLens within the IVAS system is designed to help people kill. It will be deployed on the battlefield, and works by turning warfare into a simulated "video game", further distancing soldiers from the grim stakes of war and the reality of bloodshed" (Microsoft Workers 4 Good).

In Microsoft employees' view, employing HoloLens technology[120] for the sake of military gain will radicalise the dehumanisation brought by war because it makes soldiers experience war as a 'video game'. They do not deny the profitability of the contract nor the existence of market demand for it; their view seems to be that the technology's moral implications supersede these economic reasons. The employees articulate their moral critique from the perspective of what this new technology will do to a third party, one that is neither themselves as employees nor their employer. We are told that applying this new technology will 'further distance' soldiers from 'the grim stakes of war'. So, not Microsoft employees will be dehumanised, but the soldiers and their victims. Thus, the workers' protest seems motivated by moral worry about a third party.

A second catalyst for protesting seems to have been the workers' exclusion from decision-making. The workers say:

> Although a review process exists for ethics in AI, AETHER, it is opaque to Microsoft workers, and clearly not robust enough to prevent weapons development, as the IVAS contract demonstrates. [...] There are many engineers who contributed to HoloLens before this contract even existed, believing it would be used to help architects and engineers build buildings and cars [...] These engineers have now lost the ability to make decisions about what they work on, instead *finding themselves implicated as war profiteers*. (Microsoft Workers 4 Good, *italics added*)

Microsoft workers are excluded from decision-making regarding the moral implications of their work; they lack any leverage in influencing what is to be produced, under what conditions and for whom. We are also informed that the 'review process' is

[120] For a presentation of the Hololens Technology see, e.g., Park, Sebeom, et al. "Review of Microsoft HoloLens".

‘opaque to Microsoft workers’. So much so that ‘many engineers’ developed the technology under the impression that it would have a certain usability, e.g. help architects build buildings, and only after the fact was it revealed to them what they were actually doing. The workers’ lack of access to the ‘review process’ is not merely contingent but a consequence of the division of labour sanctioned by the company’s organogram. As company employees, they are contractually bound to respect and follow the division of labour, tasks, responsibilities, privileges, accesses, and restrictions codified in the company’s organogram and enforced via hierarchical relations of power. This situation is certainly not specific to Microsoft corporation, in general, the lack of co-determination rights and mechanisms makes employees vulnerable to becoming accomplices to moral injury.

Even so, their reaction to discovering that they have been made to contribute to developing a technology that, in their view, is morally problematic translates into a sense of self-reproach, fueling their moral outrage. The workers do not shy away from recognising themselves as those who contributed to the development of HoloLens, even if they did not know its finality. One could hardly find a more suited expression for this condition than the remorse suggested by ‘*finding ourselves implicated as war profiteers’*. The notion of ‘war profiteers’ implies recognition that those directly contributing to the development of the technology in question, e.g., engineers, among others, might benefit economically from this deal. The assumption that they will do so is not far-fetched since, as highly skilled workers, they will probably enjoy the recognition of their particular contribution in terms of esteem status within the company and economic benefits, e.g. bonuses. Nevertheless, by seeing themselves as ‘*war* profiteers’, even if they ‘found’ themselves in this situation rather than foreseeing it, the workers refuse the trade-off. They refuse to let their employee and economic agencies absorb their moral responsibility towards the third party.

What starts as the shock of powerlessness in influencing what one’s work will do to others turns into critical action. In this regard, they say in the same letter: ‘we did not sign up to develop weapons, and we demand a say in how our work is used’ (Microsoft Workers 4 Good). The protesters’ claim suggests that the expropriation of moral autonomy implicit in ‘signing up’ cannot be absolute. The fact remains that through work activity, one remains connected to the outcome of work by being the productive agent contributing to its making. ‘We demand a say in how our work is used’ points out that moral responsibility- implicit in producing outputs impacting the lives of others- cannot be fully absorbed into the normative order to which the employee agency belongs. Responsibility for fulfilling one’s work tasks

cannot replace the responsibility for the third party. Although, under organisational conditions in which workers lack co-determination mechanisms, their responsibility towards the third party is necessarily refracted and even distorted by the mediating party. From this standpoint, their protest, aiming to secure the organisational preconditions necessary for exercising their moral autonomy, makes sense; they demand 'a say in how our work is used'.

The protest presented here does not seem to fit the traditional typology of workers' struggles for redistribution, improved work conditions, or social protection. The protesters do not demand better wages, working conditions, or more stimulating forms of work. Not even Honneth's rich typology of morally motivated struggles seems to make conceptual space for the protest considered here. In Honneth's dyadic frame, morally motivated struggles share, beyond their differences, the characteristic of being grounded in experiences of being disrespected. In his typology, struggles for recognition arise from the shared experience of being misrecognised. However, in the case considered here, the workers do not react because their contribution is ignored or minimised; it is not esteem that they demand. Instead, they engage in a critique of the company's decision, a protest fuelled by moral worry and, indeed, a sense of guilt in 'finding themselves as war profiteers', once the company's decision to produce "warfare technology" awakeness them to the moral risks implicit in producing without having a say in what is to be produced, for whom and under what conditions. The protest seems to arise out of moral worry for another party, out of worry that one has been made complicit to a process that will lead one to commit moral injuries. In the language used in this chapter, the protest appears as a struggle for moral responsibility within the world of work, that is, for having recognised one's status as a morally responsible agent contributing through one's work to the well-being of others in such a way that the moral worth of the others is respected.

The notion of 'workers' struggle for moral responsibility' is not necessarily eccentric or aberrant, especially when compared with more recent, nuanced, and heterodox sociological typologies of struggles. Randy Hodson's typology of workers' forms of resistance might provide some support in this regard. According to Hodson, workers' resistance is a significant feature of life in the workplace and they would deserve more attention from sociologists than they currently receive. However, he points out, a well-developed typology of workers' forms of resistance is lacking. To correct this limitation, he proposes a model of workers' resistance distinguishing four types: those seeking to deflect abuse, to regulate the amount and time of work, to defend workers' autonomy and to expand workers' control

through worker participation schemes ("Worker Resistance"). The most relevant for our discussion would be the fourth one, regarding attempts to expand control through participation schemes. Alert to the newly emerging organisations of work in 'flexible' capitalism, Hodson draws attention to the fact that increased demands for workers' participation and initiative characterising the new managerial techniques can give rise to novel forms of resistance, especially when workers' have reasons to see the demands not as invitations towards genuine cooperation but as attempts to "elicit more input and greater effort from workers to compensate for a downsizing of the workforce" (98). One form of resistance in these contexts consists of restrained participation and "role distancing" rituals, including "informal interaction and office cartoons characterised by irony and cynicism about participation" (100). On the other hand, because in such contexts, production does depend on conferring workers more space to participate in organising their activity, even if the underlying intentions might be adverse to workers, they can use the contexts to further their agenda. In this regard, Hodson points out that several studies have shown that participatory or "work democratisation schemes" might "increase worker political efficacy and involvement in the workplace as well as in community organisations" (100).

Hodson's conception of resistance discussed here, defined by attempts to expand control through participation, makes conceptual space for types of struggles considered in this chapter and illustrated by Microsoft employees' protest: struggles aiming to secure a voice and increase the workers' degree of control over the workspace. Even if the specificity of the struggles considered here- the fact that they are grounded on moral worry for the other- would require further differentiation of Hodson's typology by distinguishing those forms of resistance seeking to increase workers' control for the sake of improving their bargaining stance and those that have the others, the third party as the addressee. Finally, Hodson's hypothesis that different types of workers' agenda (of resistance) *reflect* "a given form of control of the labor process", while building on "the achievements of preceding forms of resistance" (81) would imply a correlation between types of struggles and forms of work organisation; applied to our case, it might entail that the proposed conception of struggle for moral responsibility might not only be a non-aberrant one, but it might actually represent one form of workers' resistance *relevant* in the context of 'ethicized' capitalism reliant as it seems to be on forms of work organisation conferring workers' increased autonomy and demanding increased responsibilisation.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to redouble Honneth's attempt to provide a reconstructive argument for the thesis that social freedom represents a legitimate standpoint from which the contemporary world of work can be evaluated and critiqued. As Honneth's, the proposed argument focuses on the significance and fate of co-determination mechanisms. Honneth focuses on the significance of co-determination as a precondition to ensuring that workers can articulate and make visible their demands for adequate recognition in light of their contribution to bettering the lives of others and the well-being of the companies employing them. In this reading, the focus is on the ground on which market participants can articulate and justify those of their interests that have themselves as their addressee. In contrast, the fuller sense of social freedom incorporating the idea of moral self-realisation allows us to disclose an additional significance of co-determination as a precondition ensuring that workers are in the position to realise their moral autonomy, that is, those of their interests having the others in their condition of being worthy of moral consideration as their addresses. The moral significance of co-determination disclosed in the process provides a novel standpoint from which the cluster of institutional reforms, changes in the work organisation and the normative logic of capitalist markets in the past decades can be assessed. Among other changes, the dismantling of co-determination mechanisms and the pressure on the self-centred understanding of workers illustrated by the notion of 'entreployees' speak against a positive assessment of the current transformations since they necessarily raise barriers to the possibility of moral self-realisation through work. At a minimum, the assessment is meant to show that the triadic model of social freedom can provide a novel standpoint from which some contemporary transformations of the market-mediated sphere of social labour can be analysed and criticised.

True, the proposed assessment has a bite only on the assumption that moral self-realisation, understood as an essential condition of social freedom, represents a promise embedded within the labour market. However, it was necessary to articulate the critical standpoint before even attempting its justification to see if it points beyond the current form of the market, given that 'ethicized' capitalism seems surprisingly resilient in integrating past criticism (while 'resignifying' it in the process). Because of this, the second section opens with the objection that current arrangements should receive a positive assessment even from

the standpoint of moral self-realisation since they increase workers' autonomy and expand the span of their moral responsibility. I argued that workers' moral responsibility could not be reduced to their obligations towards their employer; it should extend towards the third party represented by those social actors impacted by the work outputs. From this standpoint, dismantling co-determination mechanisms represents a regressive measure because it denies workers an essential precondition for assuming their moral responsibility towards the third party. As it became apparent in the following sections, this answer raises even more incisive objections. A first objection would be that only on the assumption that moral self-realisation represents a promise embedded within the labour market, where 'moral' is understood in the broad sense of relation obtaining between work and non-market participants that are impacted by the doings of work, is the assessment justified; or, it is far from self-evident that such a conception of moral self-realisation is immanent to the labour market. Honneth's reconstruction might indirectly support the immanent character of work based on moral self-realisation. The moral grammar of social achievement in light of which workers' movements sought to justify demands for social recognition functions on the assumption that one makes a genuine contribution and that one's work is good for others. Because of this, a normative reconstruction analogous to the one proposed by Honneth, this time set up to register the conceptions of moral responsibility of market participants, might provide evidence that in the past two hundred years, participants in the labour market have not always been indifferent towards the moral implications of their activities.

Nevertheless, one might object that the ideal of moral self-realisation through work lacks immanence *today.* However, this objection cannot mean that producers must ignore their moral responsibility since they indeed cannot and ought not to do so. Even in market societies, producers are not exempt from moral obligations, and this trivial fact becomes conspicuous when protests emerge against companies acting irresponsibly. If a relation of moral responsibility between producers and the other social actors survives even in market-based societies, then market-based production preserves the possibility of moral self-realisation. On this background, the objection becomes more focused: *qua* employees, workers are not *producers* in the sense of the term considered in this chapter because they do not have a say in what they produce, under what conditions and for whom, nor is this right acknowledged within the contemporary world of work. Against this objection, I argued that the status of 'entreployee' that workers are encouraged to assume today represents a median position between 'mere' employee and producer such that the norms underpinning the

organisation of work in 'ethicized' capitalism would reveal the immanent character of workers' demands to be recognised as producers, e.g. gain the status of the co-determining party. In other words, the ambivalence of norms underpinning 'ethicized' capitalism- embodying the promise and demands for increased autonomy and responsibility- places workers in an unstable position between 'mere' employees and producers. Should these norms be radicalised in the direction of greater responsibility, the ambivalence of the 'entreployee' status would be resolved in the direction of recognising workers as producers, as social contributors responsible for the impact that the production process, to which they necessarily contribute, has in the social world. The realisation of this status would entail co-determination.

The push for the radicalisation of norms might depend on the emergence of struggles for moral responsibility. Against this possibility, it can be objected that the radicalisation of demands for moral autonomy is an inconsistent notion since it assumes that a relation of recognition between workers and the third party, grounding the social responsibility of workers, obtains even in the absence of the autonomy promised by co-determination. Against this objection, I argued that the notion is not inconsistent because the idea that workers could anticipate their responsibility for the third party and act on it for the sake of securing the organisational preconditions guaranteeing their moral autonomy shares the action structure of any other form of emancipatory action through which actors act based on a form of autonomy that is denied within a social or organisational context in order to bring about the preconditions that would ensure its realisation. Signs that we are not speaking here of empty notions but real phenomena are offered by those situations in which workers called to assume responsibility for their activity sought to push it to its ultimate consequences demanding and exercising in the process the autonomy to assume moral responsibility beyond the 'duty' to execute their work tasks. The workers' struggles for moral responsibility reveal moral self-realisation as an ideal immanent to the world of work, at least as an ideal pointing towards a more emancipated form of freedom.

Conclusion

7.1 Aims and Findings

This thesis aimed to show that although the critical account of market-mediated social labour developed by Axel Honneth based on his theory of recognition is resilient (1), it also needs to be improved (2). Finally, the thesis aimed to contribute towards its improvement (3).

The aim of showing that Honneth's account is resilient (1) translated into providing a qualified defence of his conception of the sphere of the economy in general, and the market-mediated sphere of social labour in particular, as normatively constrained spheres. The first four chapters were dedicated to fulfilling this objective. I argued that Honneth's notion of the economy as a normatively constrained sphere is best understood not as a merely factual one regarding the form of the economy at a given time but as a socio-historical one pointing towards a conflict-ridden process by which promises of freedom underpinning the market sphere have been thematised and brought to bear on it. As shown in Chapter 4, Honneth's normative reconstruction of the labour market in *Freedom's Right* offers support for the above claim. The struggles between market participants regarding the norms in light of which the sphere could secure legitimacy, and the reforms placing the market on the track towards social freedom, reveal social freedom as a credible answer to the question regarding the normative conditions that the market should fulfil in order to secure legitimacy. Further, I sought to defend the normative notion of the market proposed by Honneth by tackling recurrent objections raised against the method by which he attempts to provide evidence supporting his thesis: the operation of normative reconstruction. Contrary to the objection that the operation predetermines its results, I showed that there are internal tests of validation underpinning it and that its results can be made accountable in light of it.

The finding is that, at the minimum, Honneth's normative conception of the market-mediated social labour sphere dents the self-evident character of the notion that the labour market is a norm-free sphere by showing that analyses of the market sphere through the lenses of the 'norm-free' conception risk covering up the normative dimension of the market's reality and the role that norms have played in shaping its institutional outlook. The

point would be that the market has taken more than one form and that some forms are more welcoming to normative restrictions than others. In contrast, the question regarding what of its forms is preferable would be a normative one, whose answer depends, at least in a certain measure, on the outcome of struggles.

The aim of showing that Honneth's account needs improvement (2) translated into the task of providing an internal critique of his framework. Internal critique incorporated two central moments. Firstly, it traced the revisions Honneth made to his critical conception of work, illuminating in the process the limitations of his frame he sought to overcome. For example, as shown in Chapter 2, he backtracks from the claim that the empirical intermeshing of the economy and culture reveals the governing role of recognition norms in the market sphere, turning away from questions of explanation to questions of legitimacy. His normative reconstruction of the market in *Freedom's Right* is an attempt to demonstrate that recognition and freedom represent normative presuppositions of the market sphere. Thus, internal critique traces some of the weak links of Honneth's argument as they emerge in his debates with critics and his efforts to improve his theoretical framework.

Secondly, internal critique sought to identify further links in Honneth's arguments that require improvement in light of his conception of critical theory and the methodological self-restrictions he assumes. In Chapter 4, I showed that Honneth's attempt to disclose social freedom as a legitimate standpoint from which *current* transformations of the capitalist world of work could be evaluated and paths of further progress identified is problematic because social freedom seems to have lost its status of ideal immanent to the market sphere in the past decades: as the standpoint from which the relation between institutional reforms and pre-theoretical critique can be comprehended. Overall, the internal critique does not target Honneth's normative conception of the market, nor his thesis that social freedom emerged from struggles over the norms governing the market as a credible candidate to the status of ideal in light of which it can secure legitimacy. Instead, the critique points out that the recent market transformations pose problems to Honneth's account because they seem to show that social freedom has lost its immanent character. Equally important, the thesis showed that Honneth's dyadic model raises barriers to solving the mentioned problem.

Further, the thesis aimed to improve the case for a critique of the contemporary market-mediated sphere of social labour based on the ideal of social freedom (3). Chapters 5 and 6 were dedicated to this aim. The hypothesis was that within the context of 'ethicized' capitalism, recognition and autonomy represent core albeit ambivalent norms of work, the

task being to disclose the normative horizon within which their ambivalence can be comprehended and criticised. I showed that the recognition theory could contribute in this regard should renovations be made to Honneth's standard recognition model. A first intervention consisted in complementing the dyadic model with a triadic one, a move justified insofar dyadic relations of recognition have already been dispersed into triadic ones, where triadic nexuses might give rise to ambivalent dynamics of recognition and warrant limitations of freedom. A second intervention consisted in expanding the normative standpoint of the recognition theory by disclosing two ways in which recognition can contribute to the development of autonomous personhood instead of one as in the standard model: not only receiving recognition but also practising recognition are essential for self-development in the fuller sense of moral self-realisation. The second intervention also made it possible to expand the notion of social freedom by disclosing moral self-realisation as one of its preconditions. The result of the proposed renovations was a critical model of recognition aiming at triadic relations that dissociate the status of the receiver of recognition from that of the moral agent conferring due recognition. In turn, the dissociation can engender trade-off dynamics through which actors might secure recognition at the cost of severely limiting their moral autonomy. The trade-off dynamics are ethically and morally undesirable because they *de facto* close down the possibility of self-development and freedom in their fuller sense while generating the risk of becoming accomplices to practices of disrespect.

The first finding is that the triadic model is better placed to disclose the critical potential of moral worry and to provide an adequate analysis of at least some struggles for recognition- specifically, those grounded on the consciousness of moral shame or remorse- which I labelled *struggles for moral responsibility*. Another finding is that the triadic model is better suited than Honneth's standard dyadic model in making sense of the ambivalent character that recognition and autonomy acquire in the context of 'ethicized' capitalism and in grounding an immanent critique of it. The proposed critique of 'ethicized' capitalism based on the fuller notion of social freedom, which discloses moral self-realisation rooted in relations of mutual recognition as a precondition of social freedom, finds pre-theoretical anchorage in the increased demands for responsibility facing workers today and in workers' struggles for moral responsibility. In this sense, the triadic model offers renewed grounds to tackle the problem faced by Honneth's account, namely the uprootedness of social freedom, by further developing the basic concepts and premises of his theory.

7.2 Significance of Findings

1. The triadic model expands the capacity of the recognition paradigm to analyse the dynamics of recognition at the level of social reality by drawing attention to situations in which such relations have been dispersed into triadic ones. It contributes to the analysis of ambivalent recognition by disclosing the structure of relations and status orders that might engender them, e.g. triadic relations in which dynamics of recognition are refracted and even distorted by a mediating party.
2. By recovering the critical potential of moral responsibility rooted in relations of recognition, the triadic model also opens up the possibility of expanding the normative standpoint of the recognition paradigm by incorporating moral self-realisation as a precondition of autonomous personhood development. It also promises to enrich the typology of struggles for recognition by complementing Honneth's accounts of struggles based on experiences of being disrespected with the peculiar phenomenon represented by struggles based on moral worry for another.
3. The triadic model is relevant for making sense from within the recognition paradigm of at least some of the recent economic transformations characterising the contemporary form of 'ethicized' capitalism. As in Honneth's case, co-determination emerges as one of the most relevant conditions that the sphere of market-mediated labour would need to satisfy to follow the path towards social freedom. However, beyond Honneth's argument regarding the significance of co-determination, the triadic model points towards its moral significance as an essential precondition of moral self-realisation.

7.3 Limitations and Further Research

At this point, the triadic model is a proposal rather than a fully articulated framework. There are some dimensions of the triadic model that require further development, including the following. Firstly, further elaboration on the notions introduced- triadic relations of recognition, trade-off dynamics, and struggles for moral responsibility- is necessary to enhance their conceptual clarity. The triadic model relies on the basic premises of Honneth's theory of recognition, i.e. the role of recognition in self-development, the relation between

recognition and social freedom, and the notion of social orders as orders of recognition. A more systematic comparison with the standard dyadic model would be welcomed to clarify points of convergence and divergence and to sharpen the triadic model's notions in the process. Secondly, as stated in Chapter 6, the notion of struggles for moral responsibility requires further empirical support to gain plausibility.

In turn, the critique of 'ethicized' capitalism, based on the triadic model that discloses the contemporary constellation of work organisation and the emphasis on individualistic self-development as barriers to moral self-realisation, points towards lines of further research. The proposed critique could be significant in the context of the ecological catastrophe facing us today. Ultimately, the ecological perils facing the natural and the social world are the outcome of human intervention in nature; they are the result of *working* enhanced by technological development and social dynamics that promote heightened consumption and production. It can be argued that all of us engaged in work and consumption contributed to the current predicament. In this regard, several questions emerge. One of which is whether the current organisation of work encourages us to reflect on the moral implications of our work, including its implications on the environment, or if it raises barriers preventing the development of practices of reflection. Similarly, the question arises if an organisation of work hindering practices of moral reflection by denying the possibility of co-determination contributes in any way to alienating us, the workers, from our moral responsibility hindering the constitution of common conscience, i.e. the awareness that we are the ones contributing to the ecological catastrophe, by raising opaque walls between what we are doing and what our doing does in the world. Additionally it is worth exploring whether the presumed alienating effect contributes to or hinders the constitution of the political will ready to assume responsibility for the consequences of the ecological catastrophe and to take the necessary measures. These would be some of the paths of further research disclosed by the triadic model. Although it represents only a project for the time being, I would suggest that it is one worthy of further consideration.

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