Marx, Honneth and the Tasks of a Contemporary Critical Theory

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Abstract In this paper, I consider succinctly the main Marxist objections to Honneth's model of critical social theory, and Honneth's key objections to Marx-inspired models. I then seek to outline a rapprochement between the two positions, by showing how Honneth's normative concept of recognition is not antithetical to functionalist arguments, but in fact contains a social-theoretical dimension, the idea that social reproduction and social evolution revolve around struggles around the interpretation of core societal norms. By highlighting the social theoretical side of recognition, one can outline a model of critical social theory that in fact corresponds to the descriptive and normative features outlined by Marx himself. However, the price of this rapprochement for Honnethian critical theory is a greater emphasis on the division of labour as the central mechanism of social reproduction.

Keywords Marx · Honneth · Critical theory · Recognition · Functionalism · Social labour · Division of labour

There are a number of projects underway in contemporary social and political thought, which, as one of their most interesting results, associate positive references to Marxian arguments with a positive use of the recognition concept. In these projects, recognition is interpreted as a structural condition of freedom defined in a Hegelian way: that is, as a collective achievement in which individuals can recognise themselves in the actions of others and in the institutions of the social world. This Hegelian concept of recognition is related to Marx mainly through two references: first to his early concept of "species-being", as one particularly vivid way of articulating mutuality, interdependency and universality as key features of freedom; and second to his early concept of work in which concern for the other is a determining feature.

This paper explores the relationship between Marx and recognition from a different perspective, namely that of the Critical Theory tradition. In this paper recognition is understood in the sense Axel Honneth has given it in his rich body of work, as the concept

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around which some version of the classical program of a critical social theory can be continued. There are many overlaps between this perspective and the projects just mentioned, if only because of the shared core references. But the critical theory angle means that, rather than dealing with the ontological and ethical questions attached to the concept of recognition in a general philosophical sense, my paper approaches similar issues through the lens of the specific requirements and difficulties entailed in the project of a critique of modern society. The "critical theory" project, as is well known, seeks to characterise the "pathologies" caused by extant social structures, and to define the avenues of possible emancipation. As a result, the discussion of possible links between Marx and (Honnethian) recognition will focus mainly on descriptive and normative issues in social theory.

At first glance, Honneth's social theory seems to be rather distant from critical projects leaning on Marxian arguments. Indeed, Honneth's theory of recognition is itself founded upon, and arose from, an explicit rejection of some of Marx' premises (Honneth 1995a, b, c, 2007b). By contrast with the projects just mentioned, in which Marx and recognition are discussed together unproblematically, it would seem at first that the links between Marx and recognition understood in its Honnethian sense, are merely historical and indirect, due only to the place of the Marx reference in first generation Critical Theory and the links that Honneth's theory of recognition has maintained to his predecessors.

Things, however, are more complicated than appears at first. There have been, as a matter of fact, several important proposals of social and political philosophy, which aim to pursue the program of critical theory and for that purpose, have combined in different ways simultaneous positive references to Honneth and to Marx.[1]

In order to explore the plausibility and the potential shape of an integration of Marxian and Honnethian arguments for the purpose of a contemporary critical theory, I begin by briefly establishing the points at stake that appear to make such an integration impossible. I look at Marxian arguments against Honneth's recognition theory in the first section; and at Honneth's rejection of the classical Marxian line in the second section.

The third section begins by summarising the way in which the new critical theory projects just mentioned bring together the two references. In these projects, recognition theory is entrusted with providing conceptual tools, notably a normative grammar, to supplement functionalist analyses and systemic explanations with the consideration of the subjective dimensions of contemporary social life. These subjective dimensions are deemed necessary for a full critical analysis of the social order. I try to show, however, that recognition theory's contribution goes beyond the grammar to describe the subjective impact of social disorders or the motivation for social struggle. Recognition theory can also offer a fresh perspective for the analysis of economic and social developments, if we highlight the functional role that Honneth's "struggle for recognition" plays in these developments. A marriage of Marxian and Honnethian arguments thus becomes possible, if it can be shown that recognition theory, far from reducing critical social theory to moral or psychological considerations, in fact can fit within a Marxian framework broadly construed, and indeed can advantageously enrich that framework.

1 Marxist Objections to Honneth's Recognition Model

Two recent articles have expressed objections to Honneth's recognition model from an explicit Marxian perspective (Dufour and Pineault 2009; Borman 2009). Dufour and

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[1] See footnote 27.

Pineault in particular articulate a series of substantive critical points, in the spirit of Moishe Postone's seminal critique of first generation and Habermassian Critical Theory (Postone 1993), and provides a useful thread to identify some of the main concerns a Marx-inspired critical social theory might raise against Honneth's model.

The major sticking point obviously relates to the place of the economic dimension in the critical theoretical model. In this respect, the "political-philosophical" debate between Honneth and Fraser had already touched upon what would be the main Marxist concern towards Honneth's recognition model (Fraser and Honneth 2003). Given the defining role played by the relations of production and the organisation of production in Marx's critical diagnoses, the perception that Honneth performs a "culturalist reduction" of the economic factor and appears to make it dependent upon the normative order definitively condemns his model in Marxist eyes. This basic problem is at the heart of all other criticisms.

From a classical Marxist perspective, the key to understanding modern (capitalistic) society as a pathological formation begins with the analysis of the fundamental structure at the core of that society: capital as an inegalitarian social relation through which the labour power of the majority is wrested from them and exploited by a minority for the sake of valorisation. All social-theoretical descriptions, critical diagnoses and explorations of possible emancipation have to be articulated in reference to this fundamental hypothesis. The wage relation, as a relation that is inherently unequal and unjust, a relation of exploitation and domination, has to be the shibboleth of a contemporary critical theory of society. In the words of Dufour and Pineault (2009, 89):

> "critical theory can derive from this theory a general model of social polarisation that contrasts with analyses in terms of social contempt and denial of recognition. This model understands relations of domination as forms of subjectivation linked to capitalistic accumulation. These relations are not at the margins of the modern world, but constitute its very matrix".

The concept of "subjectivation" is key here as it replaces the concept of recognition. It points to the idea that capital, as a total social formation, structures the social context in such way that it predetermines the subjective positions that can be taken by individuals. On that model, therefore, it is correct to speak of relations of recognition as constitutive of modern society, but only if one adds that these relations are based on unequal relations of domination, on an "inegalitarian dialectic". Accordingly, as Dufour and Pineault argue, the apt Hegelian reference is not the irenic depiction of recognition in the Jena texts that would have been unknown to Marx, in which love basically forms the paradigmatic example, and which ushers in a scheme of recognition as fundamentally egalitarian and reciprocal. Rather, the key Hegelian reference is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a text Marx commented at length and which informed his thinking right through to *Capital*. In the latter model of recognition, as is only too well-known, Hegel had already shown that it is through labour that "servile consciousness" is able to educate itself and overthrow the master's domination (Dufour and Pineault 2009, 86–93). Honneth's anthropological, essentially mutualistic and egalitarian concept of recognition fails to connect meaningfully to the historical context of modern society in which forms of recognition are always already predetermined by the asymmetrical, polarised social structures in which they are instantiated.

Failure to see capitalistic society as a social formation premised on the domination of labour, and failure to see recognitive relations in modern society as intrinsically unequal *because* they are determined by that domination, are two aspects of the same theoretical blindness. This social-theoretical blindness produces descriptions and criticisms that only

capture surface phenomena, are unable to reach to the real causes of crises and pathologies, misidentify their most serious effects and overlook realistic political solutions.

At the categorical level, the problem of economic injustice is reduced to the problem of redistribution, as appears clearly in the debate between Fraser and Honneth. Inequalities of redistribution should be seen to be premised upon inequalities of appropriation (of social labour) and asymmetries in the organisation of production. Analyses of injustice that overlook the real organisation of production, and focus instead on power imbalances between status groups, simply reflect in theory the real movement of capitalistic expansion, which saw material production exported to the margins of the West.

Secondly, at the intersection of social theory and history, Honneth's reads modernity as ushering in new normative principles gradually enlarged in their scope and enriched in their content through struggles for recognition, thus leading to a form of "moral progress" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 182–189). Such optimistic vision of modernity overlooks the tensions and contradictions built into capitalistic logic. The analysis of modern evolutions should focus on crisis moments and interpret them as adaptations to capitalistic imperatives, which only avert one form of systemic imbalance to create another one. Normative potentials ought to be acknowledged. But in many cases, new rights and liberties are insufficient to make a full normative assessment. These rights have consistently been tied to property relations, that is, asymmetrically distributed.

Thirdly, Honneth's focus on struggles for recognition as the engines of historical progress appears superficial against analyses focusing on the organisation of the economic framework. The historical transformations of modern societies are only appropriately described in terms of conflicts between groups if the latter are shown to be the product of the social polarisation produced by the capitalistic structure. A Marx inspired sociology can show that this polarisation is in fact at once the product and one of the engines of capitalistic accumulation. One cannot properly understand the new constellation appearing after the demise of the Fordist compromise without considering it as the response to a crisis in the accumulation regime, and thus as a new stage in the relation between capital and labour, where the former, in the shape of the shareholder and the corporate manager, takes the upper hand once more. Honneth implicitly relies on this interpretation of neoliberalism in recent analyses of social pathologies, but the diagnostic and the explanatory dimensions do not appear to be internally connected (Honneth 2004; Hartmann and Honneth 2006).

A similar criticism can be expressed regarding the interpretation of the welfare state (Hartmann and Honneth 2006), as Honneth overlooks the contradictions that plagued the capitalistic formation in that period. He does acknowledge ambiguities in the implementation of core normative principles, but overall the welfare state period is viewed as a typical example of expansion of recognition. But the analysis of structural tensions within capitalistic accumulation processes in that period is not exhausted by the idea of an incomplete or ideological application of the achievement principle (Hartmann and Honneth 2006).

Finally, only an analysis premised on the logic of capitalistic accumulation can do justice to the global reach and the international dimensions of injustice and social pathologies (Harvey 2007). It is essential to raise the gaze above the borders of developed nations to find the most serious forms of contemporary injustice and suffering. In developed nations, the focus on the reality of economic organisation returns the critical gaze onto phenomena such as poverty and exclusion as a result of unemployment, or pathologies of work for the employed. These forms of socially caused suffering are well documented in most developed countries, and yet are often overlooked by critical social analysis. Typically, in his two recent

texts studying "paradoxes of capitalism", Honneth mentions them only in passing, to focus on other, psychological forms of ill-being.

In summary, for those who want to pursue the project of critical theory in direct reference to Marx's framework, Honneth's model based on the conceptuality of recognition suffers from non redeemable weakness at the descriptive level, a weakness rooted in his choice to abandon the political-economic focus. For Marx inspired critical theorists, only such a focus provides conceptual tools sufficiently robust and opening onto differentiated analysis, that can do justice to the complexity and the full scope of the social phenomena caused by capitalistic transformations.

However, just as Honneth's mode of conducting critical theory immediately appears to Marxists as weak and disconnected from the central aspects of capitalistic modernity, so does the Marxist mode appear full of conceptual and normative flaws to Honneth. Let us see what are the most serious of these flaws from Honneth's perspective, before asking if any realistic mediation can be achieved between the two perspectives.

2 Honnethian Objections to a Marxian Approach in Critical Theory

From a Honnethian perspective the most immediate issue with any approach that maintains an unmediated reference to Marx is equally its lack of descriptive plausibility. This is because such approach tends to overlook the increase in complexity in modern societies, as the relatively autonomous developments of separate institutional spheres tend to be hypostasised under the singular logic of abstract labour. In particular, the market tends to be discussed in unrealistic terms, as though modern societies could somehow coordinate economic actions without using market mechanisms.

In what is for him a particularly telling example, Honneth (2008) shows how Lukacs' application of his concept of reification to all areas of modern society suffers from a lack of critical acumen and from the implausibility of the thesis that underlies it, namely the idea that all aspects of social experience and all social spheres are under the sway of a reifying logic stemming from the abstraction of capitalistic labour. This tendency to overshoot in the sociological description and sacrifice critical acumen is for Honneth typical of the first generation of critical theory, precisely because of its unquestioned reliance upon a classical Marxist analytical scheme (Honneth 1993, 1995d).

Linked to this is the inability of many Marx-inspired social criticisms to seriously acknowledge the normative advances of modernity. From Honneth's point of view, however critical one might have to be in relation to specific social and political trends, it is impossible to deny that new normative advances are made in modern history, which forces of domination can only circumvent through ideological justifications that cannot avoid contestation. Much of the criticism of "moral progress" relies on a confusion of the levels of analysis, between the normative and the empirical. The idea of "moral progress" is to be understood in a Hegelian way, not as a blanket description of all modern history, but as pointing to normative potentials that are gradually unlocked and become available for groups seeking justice.

These differences in the vision of modern society hide other serious worries about the categorical and normative ambiguities entailed in many references to Marx. These ambiguities have to be corrected if one wants to seriously attempt to maintain the classical critical theory programme (Schmidt and Busch 2009).

The core categorical issue concerns the central explanatory role granted to social labour (Honneth 1995b, c, 2007b). For Honneth Marx's very own methodological principle, to

identify the possibility of emancipation in the presuppositions of social life, casts doubt over the adequacy of the concept of social labour, as it fails to provide the required conceptual bridge between social description and theory of emancipation. A number of difficulties well-known in Marx scholarship relate to this. First, there is the classical problem of bringing together two theories of social transformation: one explaining it as resulting from the systemic contradictions inherent in capitalistic formations; the other focusing on class struggle (Holloway 2002). Second, is the problem of the apparent multiplicity of meanings of the work concept throughout Marx's writings, and how differing concepts of work are supposed to tie together the social-theoretical description with the social criticism and the account of emancipation. One cannot simply paper over the discrepancies between these models (Honneth 1995c; Renault 2011). Honneth's mature theory of recognition resulted to a large extent from the attempt to pursue the form of social and political theory exemplified by Marx, but with other conceptual tools (Honneth 1995b).[2] Recognition makes it possible, following Hegel, to characterise the structure of the social bond and to describe society as the outcome of social action, and, simultaneously, to describe the normative "surplus" that is required for immanent criticism and an immanent theory of emancipation.

The role played by social labour within classical Marxist thought can lead to a reductive or confusing stance in relation to social struggles that are not directly struggles about work. Struggles against race or gender discrimination, or claims for democratic rights, might well connect in one way or another to aspects of the organisation of labour (Honneth 2007b). But it is obviously a category mistake to interpret them as arising *directly* from the capitalistic organisation of production. From a Honnethian point of view it is astonishing to still see Marxists content to use vague or metaphorical phrases when they attempt simultaneously to acknowledge forms of domination not originating in the economic structure, yet maintain the primacy of capitalistic logic as ultimate ground, and not just as context, of injustice (Dufour and Pineault, 88–89).

Honneth by contrast developed the conceptuality of recognition with the aim of providing a more consistent account of struggles aiming for emancipation. For Honneth as for many other scholars E.P. Thompson's seminal study of the struggles of the English working showed vividly the experiential, cultural and moral preconditions of proletarian struggles (Honneth 1995a, 166–167; 2007b). The analysis of material conditions is not sufficient to understand the modes in which injustice is experienced, and the ways in which groups suffering from injustice strive, on the basis of that experience, to denounce and reject it. Honneth's work can be seen as the attempt to provide a consistent theoretical model to extend the crucial point made by Thompson's seminal study. The three spheres of recognition propose an ideal-typical, normative reading of modernity. The main motivation behind such delineation is arguably to distinguish and characterise the different types of claims underlying social struggles, given the specific moral structures of modern societies. The formal nature of the spheres of recognition renders them available for any kind of social struggles.

Honneth's focus on the normative "grammar" mobilised by social struggles has an intrinsic historical dimension. It is based on the premise that modernity is synonymous with the unlocking of new normative dimensions as a result of the momentous shift which sees

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[2] This article is particularly relevant because in it Honneth makes it clear that he rejects the notion of "social labour" precisely because it is not adequate to the theoretical programme Marx had set himself: to "connect the claims of a theory of emancipation to the goal of an analysis of society". The conceptuality of recognition is developed as a better way to realise precisely that programme: "a paradigm of recognition … could, in my view, be a worthy successor, on a more abstract level to be sure, of Marx's paradigm of labour. In it the theory of emancipation and the analysis of society can be connected once more in a theory of action".

the progressive liberation of individuals from their traditional ties (Honneth 2007e). The spheres of recognition translate in the language of social theory the basic idea that modern society corresponds to the emergence of new rights (civic, political, social) and freedoms (negative and positive), which gradually pervade lifeworlds, become enshrined in legal codes, institutions and political processes, and furnish the fundamental vocabulary of modern struggles against injustice and domination. This vision leads to a thorough normative questioning of classical Marxist positions. Because of their focus on productive relations as the cradle of all social relations, the latter tend to view the emphasis on gains in legal and political freedoms with suspicion. Formal, "bourgeois" liberties are seen as abstractions, as not addressing the real causes of injustice, or indeed as drawing attention away from them and of justifying an unjust order. On the other hand, though, the historical reality of social movements which struggled to be granted such rights and freedoms is so overwhelming and the emancipatory gains involved so obvious, that traditional Marxists cannot but acknowledge their normative validity. A strategic vagueness often appears at that precise moment, to conceal the difficulty of holding these two positions simultaneously.

Honneth's model retains some of the fundamental Marxian suspicion towards abstract legal and political norms. Honneth consistently argues that it is wrong methodologically and practically detrimental, to devise legal or political norms in abstraction from the social reality in which they are to apply (Honneth 2007d, 2011). Democracy, for instance, remains a largely void concept if it refers only to a set of formal procedures or points only to a set of a priori deducted moral principles (Honneth 2007d). In retaining this fundamental insight, however, Honneth is not confronted with the same dilemma that plagues classical Marxist accounts. This is because the model of recognition also has social-theoretical import: identifying key normative dimensions in the structure of modern social relations also helps to describe those relations. As a result, the link between legal and political norms and social reality is more easily demonstrable than when one views society primarily as an order of production and tries, *on that basis*, to say what justice and injustice consist of. By maintaining a key Marxian insight towards norms, Honneth is also in a position to develop critical accounts of political measures that fail to address real social injustices. But because his criticism is formulated in terms of false forms of recognition that are promised yet not socially fulfilled, his own style of ideology critique does not encounter the dilemma between the plurality of demands of justice and the univocity of the abstract labour reference.

3 Honneth with Marx

Two sets of issues have emerged as sticking points: a set of descriptive issues and a set of normative issues, with the categorical issue bridging the two. The weakness of Honneth's recognition model appears to be descriptive, as he seems to lose sight of the power of the capitalistic logic to shape the social world, in its objective and subjective dimensions. The weakness of Marxist accounts, by contrast, is their normative underdevelopment, linked to the monothematic reference to abstract labour as exclusive explanatory referent. Mediation between the two positions would thus seem to demand that one explores whether it is possible to marry the descriptive power of Marxist social theory with the normative detail of Honneth's recognition model. There are significant theoretical programmes currently underway that seek to do just that, and aim to combine positive reference to Honneth's work within a broadly Marxian paradigm.

In his recent writings, for example, Stéphane Haber (2007, 2009) attempts to develop a critical phenomenology that would make social criticism adequate to the reality of

contemporary social pathologies both in empirical, descriptive and in conceptual terms. Haber develops a revised and expanded notion of alienation as the central category of contemporary social criticism. In this project, despite its descriptive shortcomings, Honneth's concept of recognition, and more recently of reification as its critical opposite, are seen as valuable conceptual developments in contemporary social theory, underlying the constitutive role of the human being's different modes of attachment (to the world, to others and to oneself). Here, Honneth's writings are referenced positively as enabling critical theory to clarify and expand the implicit anthropological basis of Marxist criticism, in particular in relation to social pathologies.

In an recent manifesto, Franck Fischbach (2009a, b) seeks to defend and extend the programme of "social philosophy" as defined by Honneth 20 years ago (Honneth 2007a), showing how recognition takes place within an illustrious line of critical concepts that have made their impact not only in philosophy, but equally in the social and indeed public discourse.[3] Here, Honneth's writings are upheld as an exemplary attempt to continue the ambitious and difficult programme of "social philosophy", as interdisciplinary endeavour between philosophy and the social sciences.

Emmanuel Renault, in two important books and numerous articles (2004, 2007, 2008a, 2009) has sought to integrate arguments from recognition theory into a broader, critical analysis of capitalism. For Renault, Honneth's theory of recognition is an indispensable addition to structuralist and functionalist accounts of recent capitalistic development. It provides analytical and normative tools that are wanting in these accounts, yet are necessary to include the subjective aspects of social injustice and of the politics attempting to rectify it, such as the experience of socially caused injustice and the motivations for social struggle. One key premise in this argument is that the inclusion of the subjective dimension is an essential part of any successful critique of contemporary capitalism. Indeed, the integration of Marxian and Honnethian arguments goes both ways according to Renault, and benefits both sides: Marx' subjectivistic concepts (alienation, reification, the struggle against proletarian debasement) were fully included in his critiques of political economy (all the way to *Capital*) and can help to revise and expand Honnethian recognition (Deranty and Renault 2007); on the other hand, Honnethian recognition is not just a concept of moral philosophy or a psychological concept, describing subjective experiences or giving normative accounts of the motivations for revolt; it can be used as an important conceptual resource to specify the content of politics of emancipation, an area where Marx writings provide insufficient information.

My own proposal for mediation between Marxian and Honnethian critical theory is situated in the field opened up by these projects (Deranty 2005, 2009a, b). However, rather than limiting the contribution of Honnethian recognition to the subjective dimensions of social criticism, I would argue that the integration can be achieved on the objective side also. In other words, Honnethian recognition can help to complement a contemporary critical social theory of Marxian spirit including on the social-theoretical side. This entails adding, or making explicit, a functionalist dimension in the recognition model without forgetting Honneth's strong objection against any naïve rehearsal of the social labour paradigm.

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[3] See Fischbach's own attempt to rejuvenate the category of alienation (2007, 2009b). The French commentators propose an interpretation of the famous manuscripts that is markedly original, insisting particularly on the influence of Feuerbach and Hess, rather than Hegel, on the young Marx (Renault 2008b). Other recent work on the young Marx (Chitty 2009; Brudney 2010; Ikäheimo 2011; Quante 2011) by contrast focus more specifically on the Hegel-Marx relation. See in particular Chitty's and Renault's contributions in this issue.

To see how this is possible, it is important to return to the remark made earlier about the origin and scope of Honneth's recognition theory. Despite appearances to the contrary, the recognition model is not limited to the task of normative clarification or psychological diagnosis. Even though Honneth has not attempted to develop a social theory or a theory of modernity comparable in scope to those of Marx or Habermas, his emphasis on recognition stems from substantive intuitions in social theory, and impacts on it in return significantly (Deranty 2009a). Recognition in Honneth names not just the blanket concept covering different normative principles applying to different institutions. Recognition is also and indeed primordially the main feature of the social bond. It designates the social conditions of individuation and socialisation. Indeed, the more famous normative use of recognition, through the delineation of the three spheres of recognition, is premised upon this "social-ontological" sense of the concept. Honneth's argument is of a transcendental kind: it is *because* individuation occurs through socialisation, and socialisation involves a number of affirmative attitudes by the social environment (forms of recognition), that we can delineate a number of normative axes which are all encompassed by the one term recognition.[4]

This fundamental social-ontological sense of recognition is itself part of a more general social-ontological picture, which can be summarised in two key theses. These theses are at the heart of Honneth's criticisms of Marxist politics, of Habermas's theory of the colonisation of lifeworlds, or of structuralist social theories (Honneth 1994). The first thesis is that social reproduction relies on an implicit normative order negotiated between groups in the form of a more or less latent antagonism, revolving not just around material self-interest but also and indeed primarily around the interpretation of key principles, values and norms. This normative negotiation is inherently antagonistic: it involves social groups wielding unequal social power and positioned asymmetrically in the social field. The basic image is close to Bourdieu's theory of the social fields, except that Honneth insists on the fact that the stakes of social struggles are not limited to the distribution of social capital, but occur crucially around the interpretation of societal norms and involve moral standings (Honneth 2007c). This is what the struggle for recognition amounts to in social-theoretical terms (Honneth 1995e). What is crucial to emphasise here is the role of social integration devolved to normative antagonism, what we could term antagonism of recognition.

This first insight, entails a second intuition, namely that social evolution is not *just* the product of evolutions in the material conditions and institutional logics, but *also* and just as importantly, of changes in the power relations between groups and classes, a change which is expressed in shifts in the interpretations of the key structuring norms, principles and values. Honneth refuses to see social evolutions as resulting only from the autonomous logics of functional auto-poietic systems. Social groups play a role in influencing these developments through their part in the balance of power between social groups.

These social-theoretical dimensions of Honneth's recognition model show that it is possible to accommodate functionalist explanations and systemic considerations, which are necessary to uphold the descriptive acumen of Marxian accounts, with Honneth's normative intuitions. This is possible if one highlights the functional role that normatively mediated class antagonism can play in social reproduction and social evolution. From this point on, only one extra step of categorical clarification is required to show how Honneth's recognition theory can be integrated within a broader social-theoretical framework of Marxian spirit.

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[4] Failure to see Honneth's transcendental use of the ontology of recognition leads to the misguided criticism that his "monism" is reductive, both in descriptive terms (social theory) and in terms of the concepts for social criticism (Bader 2007).

Let us show firstly how the struggle for recognition, as antagonism over the interpretation of key societal principles, can play a functional role and impacts on systemic effects. From a Marxian perspective, renouncing the analytical scope and detail afforded by Marx's critiques of political economy comes at too great a cost. Critical theory surely wants to continue to be in a position where it has an insight into the causes and factors of major crisis tendencies; where it is able to grasp the full scope of interrelated social transformations, in particular maintain a global dimension in social criticism; show how separate pathologies are interconnected, in particular how the environmental crisis is directly linked to the mode of production. Having a clear view of the scope of social pathologies and of the interconnections linking disparate phenomena is indispensable even just for "normative" considerations, to measure and understand precisely the reality of extant injustice, and to see what is realistic and possible, but also what is required, for struggles against injustice in any given context. And it seems impossible to provide such descriptive fullness without resorting to functionalist and systemic arguments. But in order to satisfy the prerequisites of Honneth's social theory, what is required is not to reject all functionalist or systemic arguments in the descriptive part of the critical-theoretical endeavour. Rather, two things have to be done. The first is to reject exclusively functionalist or exclusively system-theoretical accounts, in particular, accounts which personify the category of capital as though it were a transcendent power with its own intentionality. And secondly, one has to show how explanations and descriptions of social evolutions must also include the element of social struggle as decisive, co-constitutive, explanatory factor.

Accordingly, the point of disagreement does not concern the reference to systemic or functionalist constraints to explain features of social evolution. The disagreement concerns the way in which these constraints are interpreted. The Honnethian perspective simply insists that functionalist arguments are not treated merely in system-theoretical terms and that their normative components and the group antagonisms that flare around the interpretations of these components are included in the critical description. What we want to avoid is a description of social evolutions as being caused by the logic of valorisation in terms that would make of the latter some quasi-divine force, acting from afar, unrelated to the intentions and experiences of the actors, accessible only to the chosen few (those in particular who follow the letter of a sacred text). The alternative view sees capitalistic evolutions as indeed following lines of development determined and constrained by the underlying material conditions and the extant organisation of production: access to resources, structure of the labour market, modalities of class relations, modes of consumption, geopolitical relations, state of technological instruments and scientific knowledge available, and so on. But the very core of the mode of production, the way in which the division of labour is organised, in the material, social and economic senses of the term (who works for whom, for what exact purpose, and how), this key element cannot be exhaustively explained by the underlying conditions. Rather, it needs to be seen as the product of fragile, open-ended compromises between groups and classes, compromises based on asymmetrical relations of power that can always be contested and transformed. The decisive consequence of this view is the following: given that the socially negotiated definition of the division of labour forms the heart of the mode of production, since it provides the basic parameters of the economic structure, it impacts in turn on the structural conditions to some extent. These structural conditions do not constrain in an absolute deterministic way. They are themselves open to social interpretation and negotiation. There are many ways to socially organise scarcity, lack or abundance of employment opportunity, the employment of technologies and scientific knowledge for productive purposes, and so on. The mistake of classical Marxist accounts is to take literally Marx's language in *Capital*, which makes it sound as though the

capitalistic imperative acted like Hegel's world spirit, behind the backs of the actors. These accounts forget that Marx himself wanted to propose a critique of the capitalistic economy understood as *political* economy. There is an inherently political element at the heart of the economy, in its very functioning: this is the Honnethian insight that allows us to acknowledge the necessity to include functionalist and systemic elements, without renouncing normative and action-theoretical ones.

As a result, a given period in modern history can be seen as an order of domination (the negative side of Honneth's social-theoretical coin, the positive side of which is recognition), such that social domination channels a multiplicity of parallel institutional and material evolutions and forces them to operate in the one direction, the direction namely that tends to entrench domination by some classes over others and in particular the domination by some over the work of others. Unintended consequences, systemic effects, functional constraints, separate, autonomous institutional logics, are not denied in this view. But it seems realistic to argue that dominating groups, in a number of different ways, can influence, utilise, and in some cases, directly shape, or at least attempt to shape, these developments to their own advantage, in particular, once again, the structure of the division of labour. There are many ways in which feedback loops between the functional, the systemic and the institutional on one side, and the action-theoretic on the other, can occur: some policy decisions directly favour some classes over others (for instance tax or welfare policies), independent of systemic considerations; expert knowledge, which studies systemic effects and unintended consequences can be mobilised to achieve certain effects; reflective knowledge, drawing consequences after a systemic effect has occurred, can be acquired and used to one's own advantage, for instance to further accelerate or remedy a systemic effect; functional constraints can always be dealt with in more or less equitable ways, and so on.

Armed with this semi-functionalist model, it becomes possible to study disparate phenomena, occurring at different points in the social world, and show that they combine to produce a certain kind of economic structure benefitting some: for example, changes in the legal framing of industrial relations, in the state regulations of the labour market, in taxation, but also in the normative language used to account for the principles guiding these legal and institutional changes, all end up creating a world in which labour can organise less easily, work is intensified, and shareholder profits dominate the logic of production. One could relate to this picture institutional and philosophical changes in the educational sector, and even cultural changes in the intimate sphere or in the content of cultural productions, as relating also to the overall trend. The action-theoretic lens would make one interpret these changes and their interrelation as restoring, as the *overall end-effect* of a multiplicity of institutional transformations and systemic unfoldings, the power of the ruling classes in the use of labour and of its products.[5] This picture of course would also include all the institutional areas where this overall effect was delayed or rejected, or intended feedback mechanisms backfired.

This model of critical social analysis suggests that it is possible to integrate the kind of functional and systemic arguments that are the hallmark of Marxian accounts, with the normative and action-theoretic requirements of Honnethian social theory. Basically, it shows that, at the descriptive level at least, one does not necessarily have to choose between Marx and Honneth, or least between Marxian arguments and some version of Honnethian social theory.

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[5] An influential Marxian interpretation of post-Fordism like the one propounded by Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy (2004), which David Harvey has endorsed, is thus compatible with the Honneth-inspired approach to capitalistic evolutions suggested here (Harvey 2005).

But descriptive compatibility is only one step to make to establish the compatibility of Marxian and Honnethian arguments. More importantly, we must check whether what appeared as an intractable contradiction at the fundamental level of the core categories and the conceptual language employed remains insurmountable. Clearly, the confrontation between the two positions requires some shifting in both. The question is whether those shifts are compatible with these theories' respective basic premises. I would argue that they are, and indeed that those shifts should be welcome.

On the Marxian side, the semi-functionalist model just sketched reassures us that the organisation of production retains a central role in analysis and critique. The introduction of normativity as a social-theoretical element in its own rights means that class struggle becomes once again a key explanatory factor, against a whole school of Marxist exegesis, notably Postone's seminal attempt to redirect critical theory onto classical Marxist rails. But this means taking sides within Marxist debates, not excluding oneself from the field. The benefit of this shift is that the introduction of the grammar of recognition gives access to a sophisticated conceptual tool box that makes it possible to discuss in differentiated ways and on a sophisticated philosophical foundation, the various forms of social struggles, as well as the impact (psychological and social) of capitalistic evolutions.

On the Honnethian side, the thorny issue concerns the relationship between recognition and the organisation of labour. As we saw, the recognition conceptuality was developed by Honneth to correct what he considered to be the ambiguities of the "social labour" paradigm. It might look as though the "semi-functionalist" analysis sketched above is returning to that old paradigm since it places the struggle over the norms underpinning the division of labour at the heart of social reproduction. But the move suggested here is quite different from the way in which Honneth described the adoption of social labour as the core category of social theory in the classical Marxian model. It is true that to make Honneth's normative social theory compatible with a Marxian framework, more emphasis needs to be put on the organisation of labour and the experience of work, although in some of his earlier texts, Honneth himself had also emphasized the importance of the latter for social philosophy (Honneth 1995a, b, 2007b). But the model sketched above showed that this can be done without renouncing the main premises of Honneth's social theory, that is, the normative core of social integration and the institutional complexity of modern society. All that is required to adequately emphasise the functional importance of labour is to highlight the strong interconnections between different forms of social domination and the organisation of labour, without reducing the former to the latter. The thesis resulting from this shift could be summed up as follows: social domination (the negative counterpart to recognition) is expressed and entrenched most eminently in the division of labour and the organisation of production. Or: social domination is usually related in some way to domination *in* work and domination *through* work (through the necessity to work and, in capitalism, the necessity to work for the benefit and under the command of others).[6] For example, the general domination of men over women, which is of course refracted in all the institutions of society, in the law, the education system, but also in cultural representations, that domination expresses itself and is entrenched more particularly in the sexual division of labour. Work is both an expression and a key stake of male domination over women. On that model then, work becomes central again, not at the cost of overlooking other institutions and their specific (functional and normative) logics, but because it is usually in the experience of work and the way work is socially organised that domination and struggles against domination have their

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[6] This model can in fact be found in sketches in Honneth's retrieval of Horkheimer's concept of "cultural action" (Honneth 1991).

greatest impact (Deranty 2008; Dejours and Deranty 2010). Of course, democratic rights, cultural rights, social rights, and so on, also apply and can be fought for, outside the work sphere. But in the grand scheme of social life, experiences of misrecognition and struggles for recognition tend to have some relationship to the experience of work and the organisation of production. The fight for the extension of political rights was a fight against property-based franchise; the fight for female equality is largely a fight for equal pay and the full recognition of activities usually performed by women, that lay outside the existing representations of gainful employment; the struggles of immigrants and refugees is largely the struggle of those who have come somewhere to work but have no voice there.

Many Marxists will probably think that the model for an integration of Marx and Honneth suggested here continues to paper over core categorical differences. I think that it delivers in fact a fair enough approximation, if a summary one, of the critical project of both Marx and Honneth. The discrepancy remains only for as long as one reads only a few chapters of *The Struggle for Recognition* and one takes a dogmatic, unilateral view of Marx's social theory, and in particular of *Capital*. If on the other hand one takes into account the whole of Marx's and Honneth's writings, if one accepts the idea that Marx can be complemented on the normative side, and Honneth on the descriptive side, then I would suggest that in its fundamental intentions and intuitions, Honnethian social theory in fact rearticulates most of Marx's key intuitions: the core anthropological intuition at the heart of Honneth's model, intersubjective dependency, is also Marx's; the normative grammars that Honneth delineates on that basis, social justice and full individual autonomy, are also Marx's; and the kind of political theory that derives from this, a non-proceduralist, socially based politics grounded in the struggles against injustice, was also pretty much Marx's vision of politics.

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