



Treatise

Democracy as a Social Construction for the Reaching of Recognition and Dignity

Carolina D. Esser S.

PhD candidate in Philosophy of Law at Paris-Lodron Universität Salzburg in Austria, Carolina Esser has been an invited researcher in Morocco, at the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University. In Morocco, she also carried out an extension project at the Center Batha, a UNESCO support center for women victims of violence. In Shanghai, China, Carolina Esser has resided and worked as a researcher on women's rights and interculturalism, having presented several works at the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing. She was a member of the research group Begriff und normative Konzeptionen und Praktiken der Freundschaft at the University of Bergen, Norway. Her research focuses on the theory of recognition, especially in Axel Honneth, and women's rights. Carolina Esser currently resides in Germany.

Abstract

Axel Honneth understands that a human being is recognized when she is respected within three patterns: love, law, and solidarity. The reaching of recognition presupposes a new methodology called “normative reconstruction”. Through this methodology, law is interpreted from the perspective of social freedom, whereas the individual, in the pattern of law, enjoys freedom, autonomy, civil cooperation, and responsibility. Normative reconstruction requires democracy. Nevertheless, for Honneth democracy is seen not as a political regime, but more than that as *an attitude and ideal*. Our research question is: is this comprehension of democracy a necessary social construction to the reaching of recognition? We hypothesize that *Democracy as an ideal and attitude* would make possible the reaching of recognition and dignity, especially for societies where *democracy as a political regime* does not exist at all.

Keywords: normative reconstruction, recognition, democracy, social construction, dignity, Axel Honneth

Introduction

Axel Honneth begins his studies on the theory of recognition through the book “*The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*” (1992 “*Kampf um Anerkennung*”, in the following mentioned as “*Struggle for recognition*”). There, he introduces the three patterns of recognition (*Muster intersubjektiven Anerkennung*): love, rights (law), and solidarity. During his further studies, Honneth avoided emphasizing one of the patterns. A close analysis of one of his most recent and relevant books, “*Freedom’s Right: the social foundations of democratic life*” (2011 “*Das Recht der Freiheit*”, in the following mentioned as “*Freedom’s Right*”), shows that Honneth highlights two patterns for achieving recognition: the pattern of law and the pattern of solidarity. The book cherishes the pattern of law, considering it the key element for protecting and maintaining the dynamics of recognition. Additionally, it values the pattern of solidarity, as it is responsible for implementing struggles to recover recognition.

We intend to clarify the role of law for recognition and discuss how Honneth’s proposed methodology called “normative reconstruction” happens. This will lead us to discussions on the elements of social freedom, solidarity, and democracy, which relate to achieving justice. It will also be relevant to study how the normative reconstruction and the recognition may be affected by offenses. In this context, we will explain what Honneth understands as injustice. Finally, after analyzing how recognition may be denied, we will then study the struggles for the recovery of recognition, bringing the examples that Honneth has proposed in *Freedom’s Right*, namely the struggle for voluntary practices; the struggle for the democracy as an attitude, and an ideal; and the struggle for the emancipation of the family member.

We will highlight the understanding of democracy, as our research question rests on: is Honneth’s comprehension of democracy a necessary social construction to the reaching of recognition? We hypothesize that the Honnethian understanding of *democracy as an ideal and attitude* is a social construction, which makes possible the reaching of recognition and dignity.

1. Law and recognition

Axel Honneth understands that the private relations of recognition expand as soon as they get protection against offenses – for instance, physical violence –. The protection of recognition occurs through the law. “*Today, the intersubjective conditions that enable personal integrity include not only the experience of love but also legal protection against the injuries that can be causally connected with love.*”¹ Law is essential in protecting not just the pattern of love but all the patterns of recognition.

For Honneth, in the pattern of law, the individuals have moral accountability; they are all equally accountable for their actions and consequences. This moral accountability results in the achievement of “self-respect” (*Selbstachtung, Selbstrespekt*) conceptualized by Dillon.²

¹ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 177.

² HONNETH, Alex. *Disrespect: the Normative Foundation of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 136.

According to Dillon, self-respect is a complex entity that holds different emotions. The core of self-respect is a deep appreciation of one's morally significant *worth*.³

The sphere of law, whereas protecting recognition, contributes to the preservation of love and solidarity.⁴ If individuals were not legally responsible for their acts, then it would be hard to reach the elements of recognition in private – the pattern of love – and in public life – the pattern of solidarity –.

Additionally, the law has a relevant role in the processes of struggles for recognition. It was already highlighted in the works of Hegel and Mead:

*Like Hegel, Mead considers the motor of these directed changes to be a struggle in which subjects continually strive to expand the range of their intersubjectively guaranteed rights and, in so doing, to raise the level of their personal autonomy. For both thinkers, the historical liberation of individuality occurs in the form of a long-term struggle for recognition.*⁵

Individuals struggle to expand their rights and, consequently, their personal autonomy. The pattern of law allows a long-term struggle to recover each pattern of recognition, guaranteeing the individuals the achievement of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem.

2. The normative reconstruction

In *Freedom's Right*, Honneth proposes a normative reconstruction to better clarify the role of law in recognition and to comprehend the current societies, their struggles for recognition, and reaching of justice from a dual perspective.

On the one hand, subjects are addressees of rights, and they can enjoy their lives with the certainty that the law assures them freedom and autonomy. On the other hand, they are also authors of rights, being respectful with other subjects in the public space, cooperative, and responsible for the social requirements.⁶ *"In this second, active and cooperative sense, the institution of modern law demands more than purposive-rational rule-following; it also relies on democratic attitudes, practices and convictions, without which the collective impulse to recognize each other's rights would be extinguished."*⁷

³ DILLON, Robin S. Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political. *Ethics*, 1997, vol. 107, no. 2, p. 228.

⁴ "Modern legal relations have a different influence, however, on conditions of solidarity. Here, they establish normative limitations to which the formation of community-generating value-horizons must generally be subject. The question, therefore, as to whether solidarity is to be included as a further element among the conditions for post-traditional ethical life cannot be settled without some reference to legal principles". (HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 177)

⁵ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 84.

⁶ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, Chapter 4 "Legal Freedom", para. 3.

⁷ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, Chapter 4 "Legal Freedom", para. 3.

Honneth criticizes a theory of socialization that does not attach to the pattern of law other aspects of an individual's identity.⁸ Honneth assumes that the law should guarantee freedom to individuals and let them build their lives from a more authentic approach. He affirms that:

*The institution of legal freedom should give individuals the chance, regulated by the rule of law, to suspend ethical decisions for a certain period of time in order to assess what it is they desire; the institution of moral freedom grants them the opportunity to reject certain demands on the basis of justifiable reasons. What has also become clear is that both types of freedom feed off a social life-praxis that not only precedes them, but provides the basis for their right to exist in the first place: Only because we have already entered into everyday obligations and have already developed social attachments or find ourselves in particular communities do we need the legal or moral freedom to detach from the associated demands or to examine them reflexively.*⁹

The normative reconstruction must guarantee private autonomy and, as a consequence, collective autonomy as well.

The normative reconstruction must be related not just to the patterns of recognition but also include the categories of freedom discussed in *Freedom's Right*. Honneth affirms that in the pattern of love, people experience individual and moral freedom.¹⁰

In the dimension of law, they experience legal freedom. Whereas legal freedom gives individuals the chance to assess what they desire, moral freedom grants them the opportunity to reject specific demands based on their justifiable reasons.¹¹

Moreover, in the pattern of solidarity, individuals experience social freedom. The pattern of solidarity gains an essential role in the theory of recognition. Honneth affirms that social freedom, located in the pattern of solidarity, is the one to be amplified to all the dimensions of recognition.

Social freedom makes law and love relational, as collaborative practices of people inside their community endorse self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. Solidarity has intentionality, emotional attachment, and a genuine appreciation of the other.

When discussing his concept of solidarity, Honneth is influenced by Dewey's practical involvement, Lukács's engaged praxis, and Heidegger's care.

From Dewey, "practical involvement" should occur when individuals experience interaction with the world. Instead of a self-centered practice, the practical involvement by human

⁸ "The further we proceed in our normative reconstruction, the further we will move away from the merely negative sphere of freedom, and the more we will rely on concepts that stem from social theory and sociology rather than modern law. I am explicitly opposed to the tendency to develop the foundations of a theory of justice solely on the basis of juridical concepts." (HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "Part I: Historical Background: The Right to Freedom", "Transition: The Idea of Democratic Ethical Life", para. 6)

⁹ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "Part II: The Possibility of Freedom", "5: Moral Freedom", "5.2. Limitations of Moral Freedom", para. 1.

¹⁰ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "Part I: Historical Background: The Right to Freedom", "Transition: The Idea of Democratic Ethical Life", para. 6.

¹¹ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "Part III: The Reality of Freedom", para. 1.

beings involves them with the world and its various elements, for instance, emotional, cognitive, and volitional aspects.¹²

Lukàcs affirms that “engaged praxis” is necessary for human beings, as a manner to make individuals free of the mere relation subject-object. An individual should experience reality from an existential point of view, giving it a qualitative significance, more than just an objective vision of a subject-object schema.¹³

Heidegger affirms that individuals should adopt a position of a participant, and not just of a mere observer, in experiencing his shared life. Caring for each other means that an individual will look to the other, trying to understand her position, necessities, and feelings, with an empathetic attitude.¹⁴

When employing solidarity, the individual interacts with his world, giving to it a qualitative significance, and actively engaging in the practices of solidarity as a participant, more than just as a mere observer. There, social freedom may be achieved, as a “we” of personal relationships, of the market economy, and of democratic will-formation.¹⁵

2.1. Critics of the Honnethian conception of social freedom and solidarity

Freedom's Right considers that social freedom has a crucial role in all the patterns of recognition, and then the solidarity pattern seems to be highlighted by Honneth.

It is relevant, then, to criticize the Honnethian interpretation of solidarity and to endorse that the pattern of law is the most pertinent for recognition.

Max Pensky criticizes Honneth, affirming that he does not confront situations of offenses to solidarity and that the liberalization of different forms of life, permitting individuals to appreciate themselves and their cultures indiscriminately, could imply a potent offense of solidarity.¹⁶

For Pensky, if solidarity can vary according to different societal values, then we cannot consider a permanent notion of solidarity, but on the contrary, a continuous struggle for recognition, called solidarity:

¹² HONNETH, Alex. Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View. In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Delivered at University of California, Berkeley. 2005, p. 110.

¹³ HONNETH, Alex. Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View. In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Delivered at University of California, Berkeley. 2005, p. 105

¹⁴ HONNETH, Alex. Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View. In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Delivered at University of California, Berkeley. 2005, p. 107.

¹⁵ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “Part III: The Reality of Freedom”.

¹⁶ “It is not entirely clear in *The Struggle for Recognition* what Honneth would suggest as a remedy to a situation of widespread denigration of ways of life, the psychological pathologies of low self-esteem arising from it, and the crisis of recognition that seem to be generated, in turn, by such pathologies. [...] And would such a *success* in the liberalisation of cultural models of self-realisation projects not then precisely undermine the possibility of solidarity by making *any* form of life valuable, simply by definition?” (PENSKEY, Max. *Social Solidarity and Intersubjective Recognition: on Axel Honneth's Struggle for Recognition*. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 148)

Given a hazy and insubstantial set of ethical values, an agonistic field of civil society in which the practical meaning of those values is constantly contested, and persons whose projects of individual self-realisation depend in large measure on winning the esteem of others, then, solidarity is indeed a struggle, with constantly shifting goalposts, rules, players and umpires. The only thing that remains constant - and here in fact Honneth hits on something very close to the disheartening heart of the matter - is the feeling of low self-esteem, of being denigrated or invisible, marginalised and worthless, in cases where one's project of self-realisation, however modest, or conventional, or odd, or grandiose, fails to win the recognition one needs and expects it to.¹⁷

Anderson disagrees with Pensky and affirms that the openness of solidarity is necessary, transforming solidarity into an environment where persons can reach social esteem:

If, for example, homemaking is considered an insignificant contribution to the common good, then homemakers will lack the evaluative resources in terms of which they can acquire a sense of personal accomplishment. In this sense, the social conditions for esteem are determined by the prevailing sense of what is to count as a worthwhile contribution to society. By situating esteem not in the division of labour but in the horizon of values of a particular culture, Honneth opens up the possibility of conceiving of the conditions of self-esteem as a field of contestation and cultural struggle for the recognition of previously denigrated contributors to the common good. 'Solidarity' is the term Honneth uses for the cultural climate in which the acquisition of self-esteem has become broadly possible.¹⁸

For Anderson, then, Honneth makes his point when he understands solidarity as a tool for allowing different practices inside a culture or between different cultures and the possibility of transformations.

If Honneth affirms that solidarity represents whatever each community wants to adopt as social values, then it could incur situations of misrecognition. Solidarity, in some cases, would allow practices of disrespect and offenses of recognition - for instance, societies that practice female genital mutilation. If a community has this practice inside their shared values of respect for the tradition, then people would participate in the ritual of female genital mutilation. They feel they are being solidary in contributing to the maintenance of a traditional value and having worth from the other ones. However, in the end, they are all incurring disrespect. It is relevant, then, to propose some limits to the element of solidarity, to make it coherent with the recognition itself.

Nancy Fraser affirms that recognition should be related to justice and not necessarily to solidarity. She does not interpret recognition in the same way as Honneth does. For Fraser, recognition always relates to a view of the subjects inserted in their community, considering

¹⁷ PENSKEY, Max. Social Solidarity and Intersubjective Recognition: on Axel Honneth's Struggle for Recognition. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 145.

¹⁸ ANDERSON, Joel. Translator's introduction. In HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. XVII.

their cultural values.¹⁹ Nevertheless, she does not believe that recognition has a variety of dimensions, such as economic, moral, and legal ones.

According to her, recognition must include the parity of participation.²⁰ Parity of participation has two conditions. Firstly, the “objective condition” means that the participants should be economically equal and have an equitable distribution of material resources. Societies cannot hold institutions which significant differences in incomes and wealth conditions.²¹

The second condition of parity of participation is the “intersubjective condition,” meaning that all people should have equal opportunities to reach their social esteem without denigration of recognition.²² The institutions should not promote the depreciation of some categories of persons.

Fraser criticizes communitarianism, affirming that it advocates that groups of individuals should stay within their community, adoring and venerating their own culture. Communities would be isolated groups of people, without inclusion and without valorizing the individual's autonomy.

Honneth, in his turn, defends that recognition is not just a question of justice but also a way of self-realization and development of identity, in a way that “*terms of recognition must represent the unified framework for such a project [of justice]*”.²³

For Honneth, social justice should consider integrity and not just equity.²⁴ For him, the tendency nowadays to comprehend social justice from a social-economical perspective should be reviewed. Enough material resources are necessary, but they should be accompanied by immaterial goods, such as education and social esteem. It signifies conditions of equal opportunity. Nevertheless, more than equity, the integrity of social life is also a necessity:

*In view of the growing tendencies towards social exclusion, it will become once again increasingly important to remind ourselves of the original intentions behind this concept of justice. But strangely enough, this way of defining social justice has always remained blind to forms of disadvantage and harm that are not directly linked to the socio-economic class position or to the reality of working class life. For these types of deprivation only come into view, once the criterion for social justice is not defined as equal opportunity in the narrow sense, but as the integrity of the social life form as a whole.*²⁵

¹⁹ Fraser mistakes, as she is not allowed that, for Honneth, solidarity and culture are closely related. Then, it is mistaken to think about culture appreciation without touching solidarity.

²⁰ HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 36.

²¹ HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 36.

²² HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 36.

²³ HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 111.

²⁴ HONNETH, Alex. *The Political Identity of the Green Movement in Germany: Social- Philosophical Reflections. Critical Horizons*. 2010, Vol. 11, Issue 1.

²⁵ HONNETH, Alex. *The Political Identity of the Green Movement in Germany: Social- Philosophical Reflections. Critical Horizons*. 2010, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 14.

Furthermore, Honneth understands that the conception of social justice nowadays should include cultural pluralism and the importance of concern about future generations.²⁶ As a result, social justice means not just positive rights, “*but also in the shape of appropriate attitudes, modes of comportment and behavioural routines.*”²⁷

Recognition promotes the autonomy and self-determination of the individual, and these represent the bond between the individual and her social community, “*The enormous gravitational force exerted by the notion of autonomy derives from the fact that it manages to form a systematic link between the individual subject and the social order.*”²⁸ It is precisely the notion of individual self-determination that Honneth puts in the center of modern conceptions of justice: “*That which is ‘just’ is that which protects, fosters or realizes the autonomy of all members of society.*”²⁹

It is possible to conclude that *Freedom’s Right* connects the theory of recognition and the Honnethian theory of justice.³⁰

We endorse that recognition relates to justice, as justice is more than a compliment of legal norms, living standards, or well-being. Justice also encompasses the certainty of participating in an equal society, having worth inside one’s community, and being free to live with self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-respect. Forst goes straight to the point affirming that “*Justice, according to this view, is not primarily about what you have (or do not have), rather, it is about how you are treated.*”³¹

Another point of discussion between Fraser and Honneth is concerning the capitalist economic order and cultural values. Honneth and Fraser question how capitalism should relate to recognition. Firstly, capitalism could be a social system that differentiates itself from other social systems, disregarding cultural values. On the other hand, capitalism could be a consequence of cultural values, connected to many forms of recognition.³²

Honneth correctly sees capitalism from the second point of view, affirming that capitalism has not just an economic dimension, but also cultural, legal, and moral aspects. Because of that, for Honneth, the experiences of disrespect inside the capitalist system affect not only

²⁶ HONNETH, Alex. The Political Identity of the Green Movement in Germany: Social- Philosophical Reflections. *Critical Horizons*. 2010, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 16.

²⁷ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “Transition: The Idea of Democratic Ethical Life”, para.6.

²⁸ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “Part I: Historical Background: The Right to Freedom”, para. 2.

²⁹ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “Part I: Historical Background: The Right to Freedom”, para. 4.

³⁰ For G. Markle, Honneth derives a theory of justice from social theory, following a Hegelian methodology and going beyond, as Honneth recognizes “the potential for transforming and transcending existing social roles within contemporary society.” (MARKLE, Gwynn. Interview with Axel Honneth: From Struggles for Recognition to a Plural Concept of Justice. *Acta Sociologica*, 2004, Vol. 47, No. 4, p. 383. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699304048674>)

³¹ FORST, Rainer. First things first: redistribution, recognition and justification. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 308.

³² HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 248.

cultural and economic dimensions but also legal and moral perspectives. It also justifies that recognition relates not only to justice but also to moral and legal dimensions.

Nevertheless, Fraser has a separation between the capitalist system and culture. Cultural aspects involve recognition; conversely, economic and capitalist issues involve redistribution claims. In other words, the denial of recognition inside the capitalist system is not necessarily a denial of justice. Situations related to economic affairs, which need to be solved through redistribution, do not involve recognition claims. A condition requiring recognition does not necessarily require redistribution and vice versa.³³

Honneth, on the other hand, affirms that each situation of injustice represents a social disrespect.³⁴ In addition, all social disrespect motivates struggles for recognition. Because of that, if we try to think about a situation exclusively related to a redistribution solution, we are simultaneously dealing with injustice, a social disrespect.

We agree with Honneth and disagree with Fraser. For us, if someone has redistribution's necessities, she is simultaneously experiencing offenses to patterns of recognition. A person in need does not have her pattern of law and solidarity preserved, as she is not inserted in the dynamic of her community; she does not have self-respect and self and social esteem.

It is relevant, then, to inquire what "injustice" means for the theory of recognition.

2.2. The injustice

Honneth affirms that the opposite of recognition is *moral injustice*, defined by "*feelings of social disrespect*."³⁵

Deranty calls "hermeneutics of injustice" all the experiences of suffering, disrespect, and misrecognition in the theory of recognition.³⁶

In the same direction, Petherbridge correctly remembers that, in the theory of recognition, the opposition between justice and injustice, recognition and misrecognition, are necessary tools for the understanding of them:

³³ HONNETH, Alex. FRASER, Nancy. *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso, 2003, p. 217.

³⁴ In this direction, see Forst: 'Approaches like Fraser's thus are doomed to remain bound to conventional paradigms of thinking about justice, especially to "goals that have already been publicly articulated" thereby neglecting "everyday, still unthematized, but no less pressing embryonic forms of social misery and moral injustice".' (FORST, Rainer. First things first: redistribution, recognition and justification. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 306)

³⁵ HONNETH, Alex. *Disrespect: the Normative Foundation of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 71. See also: "What the term 'disrespect' [Mißachtung] refers to is the specific vulnerability of humans resulting from the internal interdependency of individualization and recognition, which both Hegel and Mead helped to illuminate." (HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 131)

³⁶ DERANTY, Jean P. Reflective Critical Theory: a Systematic Reconstruction of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 72.

As Rainer Forst enumerates in his discussion of the debate between Honneth and Fraser, contexts of justice are always primarily contexts of injustice, even though for Forst, they also presume a specific context of justification. For Honneth, social domination can only be adequately critiqued if we begin from the experience of injustice, that is, normativity can only be derived negatively, not on the basis of ideality.³⁷

For Petherbridge, recognition presupposes an undamaged intersubjectivity. The subject-formation during ethical life should be successful, and he calls this phenomenon a “*normative foundation of recognition*.”³⁸

More than paying attention to the damage to the individual, Brincat highlights the importance of considering the harm to individual autonomy, affecting the human vulnerabilities:

Yet whereas the notion of harm has been typically restricted to the protection of negative liberties for the individual's exercise of will, recognition theory shows that we also need to account for the various threats to individual autonomy that occur through damage, distortions or pathologies in the social relations that support individual autonomy.³⁹

In a case of moral injustice and misrecognition, the pattern of law must, then, be recovered through struggles for recognition.

3. The recovery of law: the struggles for recognition

Struggles are necessary when the recognition is affected. In the pattern of law, individuals can achieve self-respect. It is relevant, then, as a first step, to inquire how self-respect can be denied.

Actually, in Honneth's theory, the meaning of self-respect comes from its denials:

The reason why it is so difficult, in the case of self-respect, to demonstrate the reality of the phenomenon is because, to a certain extent, it acquires a perceptible mass only in a negative form - specifically, only when subjects visibly suffer from a lack of it. The actual presence of self-respect can therefore be inferred only indirectly each time, by making

³⁷ PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 18. In the same direction, see: “According to Honneth (and this is perhaps the point of closest affinity with fellow Hegelian Charles Taylor), it is with our inchoate feelings, and at the margins of traditions, and more generally in the encounter with the conflicted and the unresolved that the needed innovative resources for Critical Theory are to be found”. (Anderson, Joel. Situating Axel Honneth in the Frankfurt School Tradition. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 50)

³⁸ PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 13.

³⁹ BRINCAT, Shannon. The Harm Principle and Recognition Theory: On the Complementarity between Linklater, Honneth and the Project of Emancipation. *Critical horizons*, 2013, Vol. 14, Issue 2, p. 245. See also Salonia: “This negative experience of the individual indicates, consequently, a normative dimension: the individual perceives its own suffering as a social injustice; it feels the injustice of a society that cannot fulfill its normative expectations of recognition. With respect to this Honneth remarks: If the adjective ‘social’ is to mean anything more than ‘typically found in society’, social suffering and discontent possess a normative core. It is a matter of the disappointment or violation of normative expectations of society considered justified by those concerned. [...]” (SALONIA, Michele. Suffering from Exclusion: On the critical impulse of the theory of recognition. *Civitas Porto Alegre*, 2008, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 125-136)

*empirical comparisons involving groups of people, from whose general behaviour one can draw conclusions about the forms in which the experience of disrespect is symbolically represented.*⁴⁰

Van den Brink holds that law's disrespect has two sides in Honnethian's theory: "First, it consists in the legal restriction of one's personal autonomy and moral responsibility. Second, and perhaps even more fundamentally, it consists in comparative inequality with other citizens who do not have their personal autonomy restricted."⁴¹

Honneth affirms that self-respect is denied in cases of deceit, fraud, and legal discrimination against whole groups of people.⁴² Although he does not mention the offenses in the pattern of law from an isolated individual perspective (for instance, a case of domestic violence against a woman), we understand that self-respect may be offended by violations not just against whole groups of people but also against isolated individuals. Self-respect may germinate from situations of disrespect and breaches of the pattern of law, being recovered through struggles for recognition.

Honneth clarifies that, during the time, the pattern of law is getting wider, as the individuals, in each community, expand their capacities as human beings. Nowadays, legal recognition encompasses a social standard of living that guarantees a minimum of cultural education and economic security.⁴³

⁴⁰ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 120.

⁴¹ VAN DEN BRINK, Bert. Recognition, pluralism and the expectation of harmony: against the ideal of an ethical life 'free from pain'. In PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 167.

⁴² "We have initially construed the term 'rights', only roughly, as referring to those individual claims that a person can legitimately expect to have socially met because he or she participates, with equal rights, in the institutional order as a full-fledged member of a community. Should that person now be systematically denied certain rights of this kind, this would imply that he or she is not being accorded the same degree of moral responsibility as other members of society. What is specific to such a form of disrespect, as exemplified by the denial of rights or by ostracism, thus lies not just in the forcible restriction of personal autonomy but also in the combination with the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction, equally endowed with moral rights." (HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 133)

⁴³ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 117. See also: "In being legally recognized, one is now respected with regard not only to the abstract capacity to orient oneself vis-à-vis moral norms, but also to the concrete human feature that one deserves the social standard of living necessary for this." (HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 117)

For Honneth: “*It became clear from this that, on its own, legal recognition holds a moral potential, one which can be developed via social struggles in the direction of an increase on both generality and context-sensitivity.*”⁴⁴

Honneth endorses the necessity of changing from the Kantian tradition of an individual’s autonomy to a new conception of autonomy related to an individual’s moral sensitivity to contexts.

In the Kantian tradition, the autonomous individual is capable of obeying the categorical imperative and, in this way, guided by practical, rational principles. Instead of just considering rational principles, the autonomy subject should also be moral sensible to contexts.⁴⁵

Following this, Honneth, in *Struggle for recognition*, affirms that the pattern of law should consider the particularity of each community, as legal recognition presupposes a moral knowledge of the legal obligations, as well as an empirical interpretation of the situation.⁴⁶

In *Freedom’s Right*, Honneth affirms that the current claims of justice must be analyzed from the perspective of struggles to recognize individuals. The analysis of struggles for recognition is fundamental to the study of social justice, to identify what kinds of claims the future generations and societies are going to demand:

*We will only be able to get a clear sense of the future requirements of social justice if we recall, by addressing the struggles that have been fought on the normative foundation of modernity, the claims that have not yet been redeemed in the historical process filled with social demands for the realization of institutional promises of freedom.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 176. See also: “Unlike modern legal recognition, social esteem is directed, as we have seen, at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference. Thus, whereas modern law represents a medium of recognition that expresses the universal features of human subjects, this form of recognition demands a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences among human subjects in a universal and, more specifically, intersubjectively obligatory way. [...] The cultural self-understanding of a society provides the criteria that orient the social esteem of persons, because their abilities and achievements are judged intersubjectively according to the degree to which they can help to realize culturally defined values. [...] This form of mutual recognition is thus also tied to the presupposition of a context of social life, whose members, through their orientation towards shared conceptions of their goals, form a community of value.” (HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 122)

⁴⁵ See Honneth: “Kant therefore assumes, just like Hegel, a teleology concerning directed progress; but he does not deliver it over to the anonymous process of an unfolding of spirit. Instead, he takes this teleology as a construction that the subjects acting in the sense of enlightenment must achieve, in order to gain a clear consciousness of the historical place of their own projects. The combination of these two system-bursting elements leads therefore to the consequence that the thought of a learning process spanning generations must be understood as a construction that necessarily shapes the historical self-understanding of the supporters of the Enlightenment: all those who actively side with the moral achievements of the Enlightenment are thus forced to see the history preceding them as a conflict-ridden learning process, which, as heirs of this process, they have to continue in their own time. Such a hermeneutic reduction of the idea of progress, in all probability, represents the only possibility for making Kant’s philosophy of history fruitful again for the present.” (HONNETH, Alex. *The Irreducibility of Progress: Kant’s Account of the Relationship between Morality and History*. *Critical Horizons*, 2007, Vol. 8, Issue 1, p. 16)

⁴⁶ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 113.

⁴⁷ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “Preface”, para. 4.

He endorses that an ethical relation to the idea of freedom requires an analysis of social reality. The institutions that make individuals experience recognition in the interaction with others have relevance for reaching freedom,⁴⁸ such as the law. Honneth asserts that freedom shall be interpreted as the individual's strive for autonomy, whereby justice will be recognized in modern society.⁴⁹

Recognition, from Honneth, does not exist separately from the struggles. He affirms that the concept of struggles should come mainly from the theories of Hegel and Mead. He assumes there are vast discussions on the concept of struggle from Marx to Sorel, and Sartre.⁵⁰ Nevertheless:

*None of the three authors was able to contribute to the further systematic development of the conception founded by Hegel and deepened by Mead. Although, in empirical contexts, they often made virtuoso use of the model of recognition, its normative implication remained too opaque, too alien even, for them to be able to move it to a new level of explication.*⁵¹

Honneth follows the Hegelian tradition of historicism, considering that ethical life is formed from conflicts and struggles for the recovery of human being's recognition: "*In this way the history of an ethical sphere can be thought of as a conflictual process whereby a certain validity surplus initially inherent in every ethical norm is gradually stripped away.*"⁵²

Honneth introduces some elements in *Freedom's Right* to make recognition possible and practical. In our view, he is proposing forms of struggling for recognition. To clarify it, we will then explain each of Honneth's proposals.

3.1. Struggles for Honnethian voluntary practices

In *Freedom's Right*, Honneth endorses the necessity of voluntary practices in the public sphere:

*Therefore, in order to be able to share the freedom of democratic self-legislation at all, citizens must do more than merely switch back and forth between speaker and listener, author and reader. It is crucial that they also be willing to resist the dissolution of the public sphere by dividing up the necessary voluntary services needed for the material preparation and execution of actual events.*⁵³

⁴⁸ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "Part I: Historical Background: The Right to Freedom", "Transition: The Idea of Democratic Ethical Life", para. 4.

⁴⁹ PETHERBRIDGE, Danielle (ed.). *Axel Honneth: critical essays: with a reply by Axel Honneth*. Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 34.

⁵⁰ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 146.

⁵¹ HONNETH, Alex. *The struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. 159.

⁵² HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, p. 824.

⁵³ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "6. Social Freedom", "6.3. The 'We' of Democratic Will-Formation", "6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere", para. 51.

Honneth also recognizes the role of non-governmental organizations and the internet as tools to increase recognition. For us, they all represent acts of solidarity and struggles for recognition.⁵⁴

These Honnethian proposals relate to a social space, which stimulates people's participation. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that not all societies have public spaces that endorse solidarity, debate, and freedom. Democracy and public debate, for instance, are not formally instituted in several non-democratic countries. Honneth tries to solve this issue by considering democracy not just as a political regime, as we will further see below.

3.2. Democracy as an attitude and ideal

Now we come to our research question: is the comprehension of Honneth's democracy a necessary social construction for the reaching of recognition? Coming from all the discussions above, democracy plays a very relevant role for the Honnethian theory, and it embraces an innovative comprehension of this institute by Honneth.

Axel Honneth understands that democracy should be seen beyond a political regime but primarily as a social ideal.⁵⁵

He recognizes the importance of public manifestations, such as vote and general discussions, but he advocates that more than that, democracy should be exercised in the everyday habits of individuals through democratic principles. The democratic principles are moral, preserving respect and equality between individuals.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, Honneth highlights that, nowadays, these practices of democracy are undermined by many factors. Firstly, the economic system compromises social freedom. In this system, people do not exercise role obligations from a mutual and relational perspective but instead as isolated subjects competing with each other.

Furthermore, Honneth affirms that individuals are not focused on the sphere of democratic will-formation because, usually, people do not believe in the freedom guaranteed by institutions. Dewey calls it "apathy" - similar definitions are "privatization" and

⁵⁴ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, "6. Social Freedom", "6.3. The 'We' of Democratic Will-Formation", "6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere", para. 59.

⁵⁵ HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 780.

⁵⁶ See the interview of Honneth in 2012: "RW: A leading concept in your new book is democratic ethical life (*demokratische Sittlichkeit*). Can you explain what you mean by this concept? AH: This concept, which after all is the subtitle of the book, is one of the theoretical tools I use to try and revitalize Hegel's thought. As is well known, Hegel believed that the social integration of modern societies requires more than legal rules and procedural mechanisms; it needs the development of everyday habits in which the moral principles of modern constitutions are anchored. If we apply this concept to the present, we face the necessity of making the stability and vitality of our democracy dependent on whether the moral attitudes of equality and respect have also taken hold in our everyday practices. My book represents an attempt to examine how far along Western democracies are in this process of anchoring democratic principles in the everyday habits and customs of its citizens." (WILLING, Rasmus. *Grammatology of modern recognition orders: an interview with Axel Honneth*. *Distinktion*, 2012, Vol. 13, Issue 1, p. 146)

“depoliticization.”⁵⁷ People do not trust the institutions and do not believe in public support for increasing democracy.

Honneth has affirmed that the public patterns of politics and law should not be considered as the ones to guarantee social freedom. Such a paradigm nowadays does not work anymore, and the institutional spheres turn to have a secondary role:

*The motor and the medium of the historical process of realizing institutionalized principles of freedom is not the law, at least not in the first instance, but social struggles over the appropriate understanding of these principles and the resulting changes of behaviour. Therefore, the fact that contemporary theories of justice are guided almost exclusively by the legal paradigm is a theoretical folly. We must instead take account of sociology and historiography, as these disciplines are inherently more sensitive to changes in everyday moral behaviour.*⁵⁸

For Honneth, the spheres of personal relationships (love) and the economic market are the ones to include processes that are more democratic.⁵⁹

Besides interpreting democracy as an ideal and attitude, Honneth also endorses it as a political regime. For him and many other scholars of political philosophy, democracy is a premise for the reaching justice.

In the article “*Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation*” (1998), he endorses Dewey’s model of democracy as a good alternative between republican and proceduralist models.

He affirms that, in republicanism, people are seen as citizens who intersubjective negotiate everyday affairs.⁶⁰ Here, the law expresses the solidary citizenry.⁶¹

⁵⁷ According to Honneth: “Whereas we always seek involvement in the other two spheres of social freedom, because our ‘natural’ desires or objective constraints of survival compel us to, we must first resolve to engage in the sphere of democratic will-formation. Therefore, it is only in this last step of our normative reconstruction that a problem arises that we could not have been faced with before: the sheer disinterest in institutionally promised freedoms. The concept Dewey used to describe this threat is ‘apathy’; other terms depicting similar phenomena include ‘privatization’ or ‘depoliticization’. We will repeatedly encounter these concepts in our account of the development of the democratic public up into the present.” (HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “6. Social Freedom”, “6.3. The ‘We’ of Democratic Will-Formation”, “6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere”, para. 31)

⁵⁸ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “6. Social Freedom”, “6.3. The ‘We’ of Democratic Will-Formation”, “6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere”, para. 1. See also: “First of all, our historical review has shown how little the state can influence conditions in the other institutional spheres. Neither in personal relationships nor in the economic system, both of which are founded on their own self-referential norms in turn linked to independent forms of social freedom, have political and legal interventions aided in the realization of these underlying principles.” (HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “6. Social Freedom”, “6.3. The ‘We’ of Democratic Will-Formation”, “6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere”, para. 1)

⁵⁹ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom’s right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “6. Social Freedom”, “6.3. The ‘We’ of Democratic Will-Formation”, “6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere”, para. 3.

⁶⁰ HONNETH, Alex. *Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today*. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 736.

⁶¹ HONNETH, Alex. *Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today*. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 764.

In proceduralism, on the other hand, citizens are not the essential element of democracy – a self-governing political community -. Instead, the most important for democracy is the morally justified procedure.⁶² Here, the law is a state-sanctioned tool which has the function of protecting the democratic procedure.⁶³

The proceduralist model of democracy comes from Jürgen Habermas. He proposes this model in the substitution of republican and liberal models of democracy.

Whereas republican democracy has political rights, on the other hand, citizens' negative rights characterize liberal democracy, as they are protected from the government and free to enjoy their private life.⁶⁴ Citizens are free and equal to reach an understanding.

Coming from these two perspectives, Habermas proposes a proceduralist model of democracy. He defends deliberative politics, in which the discourse is no more political but pragmatic, ethical, and moral. The discourse, now, is represented in different communicative procedures.⁶⁵

In proceduralist democracy, the state is no more the center of society but rather the formation of the public understanding by individuals: "*Discourse theory has the success of deliberative politics depend not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication.*"⁶⁶

Habermas affirms that proceduralist democracy brings solidarity with money and administrative power – the three elements of society's integration.⁶⁷ The difference between proceduralism, republicanism, and liberalism is that politics has other subsystems which exist together and promote the opportunity for individuals to exercise their communication.⁶⁸

Dewey does not adopt republican, liberal, or proceduralist models of democracy. For him, the institute of *social cooperation* is the key to the development of democracy.⁶⁹

Dewey believes in democracy as a social organism in which people exercise their activities and functions, contributing to the maintenance of their society.⁷⁰ Coming from this model,

⁶² HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 763.

⁶³ HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 764

⁶⁴ HABERMAS, Jürgen. Three normative models of democracy. *Democratic and Constitutional Theory Today*, 1994, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 1.

⁶⁵ HABERMAS, Jürgen. Three normative models of democracy. *Democratic and Constitutional Theory Today*, 1994, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 5.

⁶⁶ HABERMAS, Jürgen. Three normative models of democracy. *Democratic and Constitutional Theory Today*, 1994, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 7.

⁶⁷ HABERMAS, Jürgen. Three normative models of democracy. *Democratic and Constitutional Theory Today*, 1994, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 8.

⁶⁸ HABERMAS, Jürgen. Three normative models of democracy. *Democratic and Constitutional Theory Today*, 1994, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 10.

⁶⁹ HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 764.

⁷⁰ HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 767.

Honneth proposes a review of it, considering that the capitalist labor market has been changing the *work society* and, therefore, the way people work and cooperate.⁷¹

As a political regime, Honneth seems more attached to Dewey's model of democracy, as he understands that cooperation is a crucial element for recognition, for the individual's identity's development, coming from private to the public life. In any case, what is critical for Honneth is the element of solidarity, which has been present in the three democratic models – republican, liberal, and proceduralist, in different forms. For us, struggling for a minimum of democratic ideals is a way to struggle for recognition in the pattern of law.

Honneth, in *“The Political Identity of the Green Movement in Germany: Social-Philosophical Reflections,”* has recognized that civic engagement presupposes certain political conditions:

The exclusive emphasis on the civil sphere, in which the citizens' engagement takes place, makes them overlook the fact that a range of social and economic enabling preconditions are required for individuals to participate freely and without shame in active public engagement. The idea of “civil society” tends to overlook the importance of these pre-political conditions of civic activities because they can only be granted through social and political rights guaranteed by a state whose bureaucratic power is precisely to be curbed. On this point again, it is not the place to go into the political-conceptual background that would explain how such a blind spot could have arisen in the conception of “civil society”. For me, what is decisive here is that due to the neglect of social-economic claims this leading concept refers only one-sidedly to the civil sphere of citizens' engagement and consequently cannot provide a bridge that would link up with the two other key themes.

⁷²

The “pre-political” situation makes it possible for the individual to comprehend democratic attitudes and necessities. Nevertheless, as already discussed, some countries do not have enough democratic conditions, instances, or arenas for debate, discussion, and formation of democratic claims.

For Honneth, voluntary practices endorsed by the current use of social media, the internet, and non-profit organizations⁷³ are all useful for reaching recognition and through the participation of people in all instances of recognition. If people understand democracy as an ideal and a set of attitudes, also seeing solidarity as a necessary moral obligation, the struggles for recognition are possible.

⁷¹ HONNETH, Alex. Democracy as reflexive cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today. *Political Theory*, 1998, Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 780.

⁷² HONNETH, Alex. The Political Identity of the Green Movement in Germany: Social- Philosophical Reflections. *Critical Horizons*. 2010, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 11.

⁷³ HONNETH, Alex. *Freedom's right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014, “6. Social Freedom”, “6.3. The ‘We’ of Democratic Will-Formation”, “6.3.1. The Democratic Public Sphere”, para. 59.

Authors such as Okin⁷⁴ and Walzer⁷⁵ recognize the relevance of education for the emancipation of democratic principles. Kymlicka and Raz also foster the role of education.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Walzer highlights the relevance of associational ties as well.⁷⁷

3.3. The emancipation of the family member

In *Freedom's Right*, Honneth affirms that it is essential for a theory of recognition to have emancipated family members. For us, if a family practices recognition inside the home, respecting and allowing the person to make her own decisions and life projects, the tendency is to emancipate their members, forming a deliberative space for discussions, debate, and toleration of differences inside the familiar contexts.

We understand that Honneth's emancipated family member relates to Kymlicka's conception of the open revisability of a culture. Will Kymlicka affirms that individual freedom presupposes the feeling of belonging to a national group, but what is more important is the possibility for the person to question her own societal culture.⁷⁸ Kymlicka's definition of autonomy clarifies it: the individual has autonomy when he can rationally revise her own identity and role in her cultural community.

*The defining feature of liberalism is it that ascribes certain fundamental freedoms to each individual. In particular, it grants people a very wide freedom of choice in terms of how they lead their lives. It allows people to choose a conception of the good life, and then allows them to reconsider that decision, and adopt a new and hopefully better plan of life.*⁷⁹

His definition of rational revisability encompasses an essential interest in identifying and revising one's current beliefs about mistaken values.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ OKIN, Susan M. et al. *Is Multiculturalism bad for women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 122.

⁷⁵ WALZER, Michael. *On Toleration. The Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics*. London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 109.

⁷⁶ "Among typical general measures we could mention providing schooling enabling members of cultural communities to learn their own cultures, languages, or religions, supporting cultural institutions, requiring employers to allow employees time off if this is needed for religious or other cultural purposes, and, most important, enhancing an understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity in the population at large, replacing the attitude of a majority that agrees to tolerate minorities with one of coexistence of various groups within the general framework of one civic and political culture." (RAZ, Joseph. *How Perfect Should One Be? And Whose Culture Is?* In OKIN, Susan M. et al. *Is Multiculturalism bad for women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 89)

⁷⁷ WALZER, Michael. *On Toleration. The Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics*. London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 105.

⁷⁸ "The sort of culture that I will focus on, however, is a societal culture – that is, a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language." (KYMICKA, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 76)

⁷⁹ KYMLICKA, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 80.

⁸⁰ KYMLICKA, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 213.

The revisability of a culture must be a premise for the emancipated family member. Struggling in the pattern of love for the emancipation of individual inside a family requires struggles for the revisability of her culture.

In the pattern of love, it is necessary to struggle in the contexts of family and friendship, requiring the emancipation of the family member and the open revisability of one's culture.

Conclusion

In 1992, Axel Honneth proposed for the first time his theory of recognition, through the book *"The Struggle For Recognition: The Moral Grammar Of Social Conflicts"*. Almost 20 years after, Honneth has proposed a new methodology to comprehend the role of law to recognition. In *"Freedom's Right: the social foundations of democratic life"* (2011), he proposes a normative reconstruction.

Recognition, for Honneth, occurs when an individual experience self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence through three modes of existence: love, law, and solidarity. Experiences collected by the individual during her life within love, law, and solidarity's patterns build her self-relation and morality. In other words, recognition guarantees human dignity.

Normative reconstruction, on the other hand, is the comprehension of modern law as not being as dogmatic as in the past, but actually coming from a sociological and social theoretical approach of law. That means, instead of interpreting the law as a formal condition of reaching recognition, we should consider two spheres of freedom-guaranteeing, for the reaching of self-respect and self-worth.

Firstly, individuals should have freedom and autonomy to make choices in their lives. Secondly, they should have civil cooperation and responsibility, adopting democratic attitudes in public spaces. Just if the law is interpreted from this dual perspective, then the pattern of law will work.

The Honnethian normative reconstruction endorses a form of freedom more appropriate to the recognition: the social freedom. Social freedom is reachable only through claims for *democratic attitudes*. The pattern of law guarantees not just democracy as a political regime, but also *democracy as an ideal and attitude*, as a practice in an individual's private and social life. Democracy, then, is a social construction necessary for the reaching of recognition in the three patterns of love, rights, and solidarity.

Coming from this, we understand that the theory of recognition presupposes some social constructions in order to make possible the enjoyment of recognition by the individuals, for instance the democracy as an ideal and attitude. If we take in consideration the societies where democracy is far from being a political regime, for instance authoritarian regimes such as China, *democracy as an ideal and attitude* plays a role for the reaching of recognition.

In these contexts, individuals are not fully addressees of rights yet, they are not able yet to fully enjoy their lives with the certainty that law assures them freedom and autonomy (for instance, through enjoying human rights either is their legal or moral forms). On the other hand, they may be authors of rights, being respectful with other subjects in the public space, being cooperative, having responsibility on the social requirements, and exercising

democracy as an ideal and attitude. It would be a first step for an expansion of democracy to the public instances, being then achievable as a political regime.

Freedom's Right represents the reunion of Honneth's studies on recognition with a theory of justice. The role of law for recognition is clarified. In contrast, through the normative reconstruction, individuals are not just addressees and authors of rights. Still, they are also important agents of recognition, as the law itself, mainly represented through institutions, is not capable of assuring recognition. Honneth calls the individuals for different kinds of struggles, mostly related to solidarity practices. The pattern of solidarity, then, reaches a very relevant role in his theory.

In *Freedom's Right*, he proposes struggles for voluntary practices, for the democracy as an attitude and ideal, and for the emancipation of the family member. Each of these struggles may be better explained and adapted to contexts that are not part of a liberal democratic political regime. Honneth has not done it yet, in a way that his theory still claims for an understanding of law and solidarity within non-democratic contexts.