Axel Honneth's Critical Response to Habermas's Critique of Marx

Habermas'ın Marx Eleştirisine Axel Honneth'in Eleştirel Yanıtı

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Abstract

Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth have each criticized Marx's emphasis on human labor as the most fundamental concept in any critical theory of society whose goal is human emancipation. Habermas's critique resulted in the development of Discourse Ethics, a Neo-Kantian approach to normative criticism and social justice. Discourse Ethics obtains its universal basis by marginalizing the non-rational, such as reactive emotions and various forms of desire for recognition that often underlie and motivate the social criticisms whose aim is human emancipation. I argue that Honneth's Neo-Hegelian theory of recognition is a productive response to two problems in Habermas's overly cognitivist and rationalist approach. These are the problem of the role of emotions in moral motivation, on the one hand, and the problem of locating acceptable boundaries between public issues of moral right or justice and private issues of ethical life or well-being. The strengths of Honneth's approach are clarified through two brief exegeses of classic works in political theory, Peter Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment* and Joel Feinberg's "The Nature and Value of Rights*."*

Keywords: Honneth, Habermas, Marx, Hegel, Recognition, Discourse Ethics, Moral Emotions.

Öz

Jurgen Habermas ve Axel Honneth, Karl Marx'ın insan emeğinin insanı özgür kılmayı hedefleyen toplum kuramlarının temeli olduğu yönündeki görüşünü eleştirmiştir. Habermas'ın eleştirisi ile normatif eleştiri ve toplumsal adaleti Neo-Kantçı bakış açısıyla ele alan Söylem Etiği ortaya çıktı. Söylem Etiği evrensel temelini akılcı olmayanı aykırı kabul ederek oluşturur. Bu bağlamda insanı özgür kılmayı hedefleyen birçok toplumsal eleştirinin altında yatan duygusal tepki ve tanınma isteği akılcı olmayandır. Bu çalışmada, Honneth'in Neo-Hegelci tanınma kuramının Habermas'ın aşırı bilişselci ve akılcı yaklaşımındaki iki soruna yaratıcı bir yanıt verdiği savunulmaktadır. Bu sorunlardan ilki duyguların ahlak motivasyonuna etkisi, diğeri ise toplumda ahlaki doğruluk veya adalet anlayışı ile kişilerin yaşam veya yaşam kalitesi etiği arasına çizilecek sınırın nerede konumlandırılacağıdır. Honneth'in yaklaşımının güçlü yönleri, siyasi kuram alanındaki iki klasik eser; Peter Strawson'un "*Freedom and Resentment*" ve Joel Feinberg'in "*The Nature and Value of Rights*" isimli eserleri üzerinden açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Honneth, Habermas, Marx, Tanınma, Söylem Etiği, Ahlaki Duygular.

> *"The proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride, and its sense of independence more than its bread."*
>
> Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy.*

Both Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth have criticized Karl Marx's emphasis on human labor as the most fundamental concept in any critical theory of society whose goal is human emancipation. Habermas's critique resulted in the development of Discourse Ethics, a Neo-Kantian approach to normative criticism and social justice. However, Discourse Ethics obtains its universal basis by marginalizing non-rational forms of expression as well as the human desire for intersubjective recognition which is a primary motivating force in discourses about norms and justice. Habermas also draws a sharp distinction between norms that ground political rights or public justice and norms that relate more directly to private issues of ethical life or well-being. Axel Honneth's Neo-Hegelian theory of recognition is a productive response to two problems in Habermas's overly cognitivist and rationalist approach. These are the problem of the role of emotions and desire in moral motivation, on the one hand, and the problem of locating acceptable boundaries between public issues of moral right or justice and private issues of ethical life or well-being. The strengths of Honneth's approach will be demonstrated through two brief exegeses of classic works in political theory, Peter Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment* and Joel Feinberg's "The Nature and Value of Rights".

Habermas and Honneth have each taken issue with Marx's interpretation of the emancipatory potential of human labor. Both philosophers are skeptical about the reduction involved in defining labor as the most fundamental concept in critical theory. Habermas moved away from Marx in a Kantian direction while Honneth has developed a Hegelian theory. Before explaining and evaluating their criticisms of Marx, and the subsequent paths they have taken in their own work, we should briefly revisit the claims that Marx made about labor.

Marx understood labor in terms of the distinctly human self-actualization made possible through the externalization of our rational and creative powers. Labor and its products are tangible expressions of human ability which enable us to develop a sense of who we are as we contemplate ourselves in a world we have created. By expressing our rational and creative potentials freely as equals in cooperative ventures, we discover our capacities, and we become empowered as human beings. We also become conscious of our needs through labor, and of the way our needs are distorted under capitalism, which is a system that expropriates our creative, world-building activity and commodifies it. Because our potential for creative-expressive activity and self-realization is distorted under capitalism, Marx assumed that the path to the fulfilment of truly human needs would be gradually discovered as workers first came to realize, through the experience of alienation, the ways that their human potential was being distorted. Capitalism and the alienation of labor that it creates initiate a learning process which forces workers to understand the real basis of their humanity or species-being. Marx

conceived of the factory not only as a miserable place but also as a school for the education of the revolutionary class:

> [In the factory] the mass of misery, degradation, and exploitation grows; but with this there also grows the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production. (Marx and Engels 929)

The concept of labor was Marx's key to a critical theory of society as well as the source of his revolutionary optimism. He appropriated Hegel's understanding of labor as an externalization of human capacities and combined it with its own interpretation of Feuerbach's materialism. In this manner, he transformed the ancient philosophical concept of praxis into labor. Labor was seen as the principal source for the expression of human knowledge, skills, and abilities, distorted under capitalism. Labor was also the key to human emancipation and social transformation, as long as the exploited could become conscious of their alienation and learn that the system that creates it must be overcome. Marx also saw labor as the primary means of existence and the source of human consciousness, thought, belief, and action. Labor was the central category in Marx's theory of social change and social emancipation.

Habermas's Critique of Marx in the *Labor and Interaction* Essay

From the beginning of his intellectual career, Jürgen Habermas perceived the weaknesses of Marx's 'productivist' or labor-based theory. Much of his early work can be seen as a sustained effort to formulate a critical theory of society based on an ideal of communicative interaction and rational reflection in a free and open context which he called an "ideal speech situation" (*Communication and the Evolution of Society*). He was particularly critical of Marx's reduction of the complexity of social interaction to one essential form of labor, which Habermas called, "the reduction of praxis to techne" (17).

In an essay titled "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Mind" Habermas located three analytically distinct, but practically interrelated, dimensions of self and societal constitution in Hegel's early thought. These dimensions are language, labor, and moral relations. The development of self and society occurs in each of these three dimensions of interaction. These three domains of interaction were conflated in Marx's appropriation of Hegel because Marx's basic assumption was that labor is the primary means of self and societal development as well as the basis of any social learning process. Thus, Marx saw self and societal constitution in only one of its forms, labor. At the level of basic theoretical concepts, Marx did not address the irreducible nature of moral demands, nor did he theorize the relative autonomy of language and its role in the process of mediation between self and world.

In this critique, Habermas was gradually shifting the normative center of critical theory away from a Hegelian-Marxist theory of self-objectification and self-fulfilment through labor and interaction toward a Kantian moral theory stressing the formal and procedural aspects of language and social interaction. He represented the emancipated society in terms of an idealized picture of the

intersubjectively recognized system of public norms that are the outcome of an inclusive discourse that followed rational rules which he derived from the procedural aspects of language. Habermas argued that labor does not adequately represent the full range of human self-expression and self-development because it follows the logic of only one type of rationality and one form of human possibility. Invoking a distinction made by Max Weber, Habermas claimed that labor is a form of instrumental rationality (*Zwekrationalitat*) the value-free application of techniques of human mastery in the quest for control of the external world, society, and human beings when they are conceived of as objects or resources. However, Weber had identified a different form of rationality *(Wertrationalitat)* that was structured by human values, and that could help express, clarify, and reflect on the meaning of these values. The moral relationship follows a different logic than labor because it is governed by a different set of rules. It was this form of rationality that Habermas began to promote and develop as he moved away from his Hegelian-Marxist roots in a Kantian direction. Habermas claimed that Marx's emphasis on the mode of production as the source of social change produced a one-dimensional understanding of progress based on the technocratic management of problems rather than rational reflection and public debate. The institutionalization of technical-rational problem solving has colonized the lifeworld, marginalizing a more democratic form of moral-practical reflection that can only be achieved through public deliberation and debate. Social interaction ceases to be regulated democratically by means of free, rational, discussion over the validity of norms. Instead, social interaction is systematically distorted because it is motivated by the pursuit of economic interests and technocratic management. The results are commodification and bureaucratization, the reduction of people and things to exchange values, and the transformation of citizens into clients as civil society succumbs to greater administrative control.

To make matters worse, the process of colonization is institutionalized and naturalized in the functioning of the economy and state. This precludes the possibility of addressing a wide range of problems from a moral-practical standpoint. This is both a theoretical and practical problem. Solving the practical problem requires revitalizing civil society through public participation in voluntary organizations and grassroots social movements. Solving the theoretical problem requires reconceptualizing human potential and social emancipation in a less one-dimensional fashion than Marx had done. For Habermas, morally-motivated communication replaces labor as the privileged medium of individual and social development, and rational argument assumes the status of a normative ideal. His later work on 'Discourse Ethics' (*Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*) is a more formal and rigorous reconstruction of the practical rules and presuppositions inherent in ordinary language use that makes it possible for participants in a dialogue to arrive at a valid, binding, rational consensus on social norms. Habermas claims that when the social acceptability of any norm is questioned, people affected by that norm can do one of three things: (1) they can refuse to argue further; (2) they can engage in strategic manipulations of one another; or, (3) they can continue to interact, entering into a critical discourse about the validity of the norm called into question. When individuals agree to enter into a discourse, it is structured according to rules that are designed to facilitate a fair and binding outcome.

Discourse Ethics is a means of responding to and processing substantive issues, but the theory itself is simply a formal procedure, grounded in the universals of practical language use rather than one particular set of values. Any assertion made by a sincere speaker forms the substance of deliberation. The procedure for arguing is grounded in what Habermas claims are unavoidable steps that any honest or sincere speaker must adhere to. The rules of discourse are:

> (1.1) No speaker may contradict himself.
> (1.2) Every speaker who applies predicate F to object A must be prepared to apply F to all other objects resembling A in all relevant aspects.
> (1.3) Different speakers may not use the same expression with different meanings.
> (2.1) Every speaker may assert only what he really believes.
> (2.2) A person who disputes a proposition or norm not under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so.
> (3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
> (3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
>   b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into discourse.
>   c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.
> (3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 87-90)

For Habermas, moral judgment is deontological. Ideally, moral questions should be extracted from their particular contexts so they can be argued about rationally and impartially. He has also made a distinction between discourses of justification and discourses of application. Once deliberation has taken place and a consensus has been reached, it must be re-contextualized in accordance with the values of the specific culture it emerged from. For example, the question of whether a recently justified law against inheritance will affect a culture's long-standing tradition of support for family members has to be bracketed from a discourse on the justness and fairness of inheritance. That issue must be addressed in a subsequent process of application, which requires another discourse (*Justification and Application*).

Habermas's theory relies on a number of background values that form the core of his ideal of social solidarity. For example, empathy for others is a necessary condition for fairly hearing and justly interpreting their rational claims: "Without the empathetic sensitivity by each person to everyone else, no solution deserving universal consent will result from the deliberation" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 202). We can listen to the protest of others with great attentiveness to the facts at hand, but until we give others the benefit of the doubt, until we learn to see the ways that their problems, while different from ours, might be worth responding to, we will make little progress toward social justice. In Habermas's own terms then, the validity of a claim, demand, or protestation, is not to be decided by rational argument alone. Even the most rational argument relies on a prior moment of empathy on the part of the listener. Solidarity is one of

the necessary conditions for the speech situation in a discourse to be ideal, that is, fair and effective. It is important to restate that solidarity is not a formal aspect of the theory of Discourse Ethics. It is a set of values and presuppositions that lie outside its scope and make an ideal speech situation possible, including the willingness to be truthful and to give others the benefit of a fair hearing.

Although Habermas's work is a powerful synthesis of ideas that has transformed contemporary philosophy, his theory of communicative action retains a number of the problematic elements of the philosophy of consciousness; including a strong and overly formal cognitivist bias. Communication oriented toward understanding has two levels. One is the "interactive use of language" (*Communication and the Evolution of Society* 63)*.* We attend to others at this level. This is the level of promising, requesting, warning, and expressing solidarity. The other level of language use is the *"cognitive use of language"*. In this latter usage, speakers, "thematize the content of the utterance as a proposition about something that is happening in the world". Language, properly used, separates the world into three primary spheres: the objective, social, and subjective worlds. To put it in another way, pragmatic speech necessarily constructs different types of world relations. They are schematized below:

Type of Speech Act	Validity Claim	Relation to World/Reality
Constative	Truth	Objective/Facts
Regulative	Rightness	Social/Norms, Laws
Expressive	Sincerity	Subjective/Feeling/Opinion

Speech-Acts, Validity Claims, and World Relations, Habermas, Jurgen. *Theory of Communicative Action.* 1984.

When 'A' makes an assertion, she puts into play a process of demarcation that is necessary if her statement is to be comprehensible. Consider three sentences about the 'same' thing, pollution:

> (1) The lake contains sulfuric acid.
> (2) The pollution in the lake should be reduced.
> (3) I do not like pollution.

The first sentence is regulated according to 'constative' speech-acts because it is an objective claim about a state of affairs in the world. When we respond to this, we should accept, reject, or otherwise dispute the factual assertion that the lake contains sulfuric acid. The second sentence is not factual but normative. It makes a claim about what ought to be, rather than what is. When discussing and defending normative claims, we employ 'regulative' speech-acts, utterances that defend normative positions in light of factual evidence and realistic human ideals. The third sentence is a statement of personal preference. When we claim that we do not like pollution, we are expressing something personal, similar to a taste or a preference. As such, this type of claim cannot lead to a conclusive argument. We may give reasons why we do not like pollution, but ultimately, it will remain a matter of individual preference. If we are to argue to a consensus about what we

ought to do, we must follow the logic of regulative utterances and debate about the rightness rather than the truth or sincerity of an issue like a polluted lake.

This strictly demarcated approach to interaction purchases formal rigor at the expense of diminished significance and meaning. This is not to say that Habermas assumes individuals are or must be completely cut off from others and the world around them in order to function as responsible moral subjects. However, his approach to morality presupposes a high degree of cognitive ability and a deeply internalized commitment to fair play and a dutiful adherence to the rules of rational argument. One envisions machines playing chess rather than living, breathing, humans engaged in crucial conversations about life and how to live it.

Habermas also glosses over some motivational problems regarding the willingness of listeners to give fair and equal consideration to the speech of others. He claims that participants in a process of argumentation have always-already accepted the propositions and rules of argument. This tacit acceptance obligates them to participate fairly, as if entering into the game is tantamount to playing it fairly. The participant who lacks the motivation to follow the rules is caught up in a performative contradiction. By refusing to argue or defend her claims, she is contradicting the assumptions behind the pragmatic use of language that she has tacitly accepted by making the claim in the first place. For example, if she asserts that, "I never tell the truth," she presupposes that people will believe her. She is, in effect, requesting that her interlocutor believes her and could agree with her. However, the content of her statement demands that she should not be believed. The form of her statement contradicts its contents. Or, to give a more general example, if I enter into what we both understand to be a rational argument and then refuse to respond to you rationally, I have contradicted the meaning and definition of a rational argument.

However, it is not possible to justify the principles of discourse such as reciprocity and symmetry with a logical or formal argument. Discourse Ethics is grounded in Habermas's claim that there are no alternatives to these rules of argumentation. But it is an intellectualist fallacy to suppose that by pointing out the existence of rules of discourse inherent in the structure of language, people would acknowledge the normatively binding character of these rules.

Charles Taylor has weighed in on this issue. Taylor, who is ever concerned with the relationship between identity, culture, motivation, and moral commitment, asks what it is that pushes us to adopt the goal of mutual understanding in the first place:

> I nevertheless also have other aims, other interests. Why then should I prefer rational mutual understanding? Why should precisely this aim occupy a special position? One must show why it is I attach a value to rational understanding so great that it should be preferred to other purposes? ("Language and Society" 31)

Indeed, one must show why it is that participants in a discourse would feel obligated to follow the rules committing them to fairness as well as empathy for strangers. Considered in this light, the view of moral motivation that follows from Habermas's interaction model is strangely counter-intuitive. It appears that the primary obligation is to safeguard the public use of reason and the logic and

language of rational argumentation, while the secondary obligation is to ensure that social norms are valid. But neither one of these goals appear in the forefront of most people seeking justice or making moral demands.

In summary, Habermas could do two things to provide a more convincing case for what motivates participants to engage in discourse in a fair and open manner. He could provide a deeper argument for the motivational function of values that create social solidarity, or he could place greater emphasis on the human desire for recognition and its importance in processes of identity formation, self-determination, and self-actualization. But resources for theorizing emotional connections to others are not part of Habermas's theory, which requires us to distance ourselves from the people, places, and things we are concerned with. Habermas uses a Hegelian theory of recognition only when it leads to Kantian conclusions. He understands intersubjective recognition as a means to a rational argument, rather than an end in itself. Once the individual has achieved moral autonomy through intersubjective recognition, that process has only peripheral relevance for Habermas's theory of discourse.

If we consider the claims and assertions of people involved in a struggle for recognition, we see that it is usually not the integrity of reason and rational speech or the validity of norms that are at stake so much as the demand for recognition of some aspect of individual or group identity.

The Revival of Philosophical Anthropology: Honneth's Critique of Habermas

A theory of recognition allows us to pursue a much broader normative critique of everyday life than Habermas's Discourse Ethics. Honneth claims:

> The only anthropological propositions Habermas would maintain nowadays are those describing mechanisms of understanding in human beings via language. Going back to a philosophical anthropology is a necessary step if you want to have a stronger foundation, a broader foundation, for the normative critique of our present society. ("An Interview with Axel Honneth" 32)

Honneth's dissatisfaction with the cognitivist bent of Discourse Ethics has three aspects. First, he claims that the focus of Habermas's analysis is directed away from social injustice as it is lived in everyday experience. Second, Habermas's existentially thin, rationalistic theory suffers from a lack of a plausible source of moral motivation. Third, Habermas's claim to an emphasis on strict value neutrality in the construction of his theory of discourse is untenable because he has to rely on a constellation of values such as openness, fairness, and empathy.

Much has been said and written about the way Habermas's separation of justice from everyday experience reproduces the Kantian distinction between private freedoms and public duties. The gendered nature of this rigorous separation has also been noted and critiqued. So has the hegemony that whites have established over the logic of public discourse, as well as the literal and symbolic exclusion of the working class from participation in the public sphere (Fraser: Benhabib: Taylor *Multiculturalism*).

Honneth's primary concern is more general than these equally important criticisms. He clearly states his intent in the introduction to *The Fragmented World of the Social.* He claims that Habermas's theory of discourse requires people to abstract from their life experiences in such a way that the full depth and significance of it, and its relation to social justice, get lost. In Habermas's model, a person must first experience injustice, then recognize it as such, then articulate it in such a way that it becomes relevant for public debate as an issue of justice rather than an issue of the good life. The problem is that a lot gets lost when feelings are excluded from rational debate. In order to grasp the perceptions of unjust treatment as they are more directly experienced before translation into a discussion of social norms. It is necessary to deploy a theoretical language whose concepts are grounded in everyday interaction and are therefore closer to experience than Habermas's theory allows.

This is because people experience moral injury as violence to identities and beliefs, or as obstacles to their self-determination and self-actualization rather than as a crisis of normative legitimacy. Moreover, the demands we place on others in our everyday action context are typically not initially articulated as demands for a revision of social norms, but instead as demands for basic respect and dignified treatment. Honneth argues that we should understand dignified treatment and respect, as well as their opposites, mistreatment and disrespect, as instances of recognition or denial of recognition. We must acknowledge this feeling first, and then we can debate the fairness or justness of the structures and processes that contribute to the denial of recognition. Many instances of everyday injustice would not be discussed or criticized if people had to do the work of translating their experiences into a set of statements amenable to rational discourse. A wide range of insults and threats to personal integrity are not initially seen as issues of justice until they are interpreted and translated, often by social justice advocates and activists, into broader reflections on social norms, structures, and processes. But before moving to this level of abstraction, we should view social experiences in terms of whether or not they allow for or impede a positive relation to our self-identity. We will still invariably be involved in a discussion of justice because it is a condition of interpersonal experience that must be met before human flourishing is possible. Justice includes the expectation of decent treatment as well as the recognition of basic rights which are necessary for self-development and self-realization.

I will now expand upon the problems of moral motivation in Habermas's theory, and Honneth's solution to them. Consider again the moral skeptic who simply refuses to take normative claims seriously, saying something like, "I have no obligation to be decent to others, I only care about myself and I won't argue the validity of any of this." Habermas claims that anyone who makes a statement has tacitly accepted that it is valid and in this sense has already agreed to argue the point further if challenged. If the skeptic refuses to defend her statements she is either not making sensible claims or has fallen into a "performative contradiction" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 80-82). She is performing an argument while denying the validity of argument as a mode of communication. Her actions affirm what her words deny, and that is a contradiction. However, a skeptic could say, "I do not accept your logic, and I couldn't care less about a so-

called performative contradiction." According to Habermas, this places her completely outside rational social life, and she will simply remain *in* but not *of* society until she agrees to argue rationally. By leaving it at this, Habermas suggests that eventually the skeptic will come in from her cold, isolated world because it is in her interest to belong. Yet, Habermas seems to overestimate the degree to which not belonging would matter to people living in a post-traditional world where liminality is the norm and most people are already *in* but not *of* society.

If we are to begin to convince people to extend empathy, reciprocity, and equal treatment to those outside their circle of moral concern, they must be shown why they should care, in stronger terms than arguments about their membership in a shared socio-cultural web. The skeptic must be shown how self-identity is dependent upon intersubjective recognition as well as how her moral obligation to others is related to her own interest in maintaining a secure and fulfilled self-identity. The central concept involved in this type of argument is what Honneth calls the "practical- relation-to-self" which depends upon distinct forms of recognition. The first form is the recognition of basic emotional needs such as care, love, and friendship. This type of recognition is particular and subjective. It depends on affective bonds with significant others, rather than principled relations between citizens and strangers. Care, love, and friendship are the most fundamental forms of recognition, occurring earliest in life. The practical-relation-to-self created through this form of recognition is called "basic-self-confidence" (*Selbstvertrauen*). Basic-self-confidence is similar to that state of being which the psychoanalytic theorist D. W. Winnicott called "basic trust." When we possess basic-self-confidence, we are better equipped to interact with strangers or new acquaintances without experiencing fear and insecurity. Our capacity for this type of trust is a prerequisite for self-development and self--realization in post-traditional societies. Basic-self-confidence is the foundation of the other practical-relations-to-self, which are self-respect and self-esteem.

The second form of recognition described by Honneth is the recognition of one's rights as a person and a citizen, which makes it possible to develop self-respect (*Selbstachtung*). Self-respect is a practical-relation-to-self that is developed and strengthened through political participation. By exercising political autonomy, asserting rights, making political demands, and holding leaders accountable, a person can see herself as morally responsible and capable of making autonomous decisions about her own future and the future of the collectivity she identifies with. When exercising rights or demanding political accountability, she makes the implicit claim that she should be recognized as an equal, with the same rights, and the same responsibilities, as others. Honneth's normative argument, in a nutshell, is that the state and other political and legal institutions are obligated to support and enforce the recognition of civil rights because our identities require self-respect, the development of which is only possible by participating in key decisions as a political equals. It could be argued that this does not constitute an obligation but only describes a desirable state of affairs. That is, it would be nice if we all had rights, so that we could develop self-respect. However, we must keep in mind Honneth's underlying Hegelian assumption that the slave's forced recognition of the master is less valuable to him than the recognition he earns

from his peers. Rights can only be a legitimate basis for the development of self-respect if they are recognized and respected by equals with the same rights.

To see the significance of Honneth's claims, consider Feinberg's discussion of *Nowheresville*, in his classic article, "The Nature and Value of Rights"*.* Nowheresville is a society where life is fundamentally secure, people are decent, and goodness prevails over evil; but nobody has any rights. Feinberg argues that the ability that people have to make "rights claims" is an indispensable part of being human. What is most relevant is the route Feinberg takes to arrive at his main point.

In Nowheresville, nobody has any individual rights. To make a claim that one person has violated another person's rights is unthinkable in Nowheresville. However, things are not so bad in this society. Feinberg adds a communitarian sense of decency to Nowheresville. He claims that all of the virtues of moral sensibility such as benevolence, compassion, and sympathy are alive and well in Nowheresville to a much greater degree than in any other society. However, compassion and sympathy alone are not enough for the smooth functioning of a well-ordered society. Feinberg also claims that moral, social, and economic duties, as well as a variety of personal obligations will always prevail over other greedy or selfish attitudes and behaviors in Nowheresville. In order to make this argument, Feinberg introduces duties into the social milieu without a correlative sense of rights. He does so by arguing against the "doctrine of the logical correlatively of rights and duties" (244). This doctrine assumes that rights and duties are necessarily reciprocal; the presence of one guarantees the existence of the other. Feinberg argues that this is only one way to understand duties. It is true that etymologically, duties refer to that which is due, or owed to, someone else. However, there are several ways to understand what this means. We could understand dues in the sense of a debt owed to another, quid pro quo. Alternatively, we could understand dues in terms of what we are required to do, regardless of any debt or lack of debt we may have to others and regardless of how they have treated us. This is the sense of the word that Feinberg argues for: "Thus, in this widespread but derivative usage, 'duty' tends to be used for any action we feel we must (for whatever reason) do. It comes, in short, to be a term of moral modality" (244). In this interpretation, duties to others can be introduced into Nowheresville without any correlative sense of rights. These duties can even be backed up by the rule of law. If I wrong someone, I can be arrested for breach of duty. However, the law will not allow the person I wronged to sue me for violating her rights. Feinberg uses a traffic analogy to explain this.

> In our own actual world, of course, we sometimes owe it to our fellow motorists to stop; but that kind of right-correlated duty does not exist in Nowheresville. There, motorists owe obedience to the law, but they owe nothing to one another. (244)

It should be clear that in Nowheresville, there would be a great deal of social order. There will also be a coherent sense of obligation to others that comes from empathetic feelings and sensibilities combined with a deeply internalized and thoroughly institutionalized notion of duty. However, there will be no blaming, no grievances, no "right to complain" (244).

Feinberg addresses one remaining problem. If we are to have this degree of social order and personal obligation without having individual rights, then what is the ultimate source of this wellspring of decency? That is, what ultimately backs up or grounds this constellation of sentiments, duties, and laws? The Hobbesian answer is a "sovereign right-monopoly" (246). A sovereign right-monopoly is a situation in which the governing body has rights against all of the subjects. The subjects have no rights and can make no legal claims against each other. Everybody owes their allegiance to the sovereign, the source of social order, and the sovereign commands, as a matter of right, that each does her duty to everyone else. Feinberg also points out that when children wrong each other, they often apologize to their parents, rather than to the sibling they harmed. This is because they see the parents as possessors of the sovereign right-monopoly, but they do not see the other sibling as a person with rights. To repair the damage done to the other sibling, it is not necessary to apologize to the person they wronged - this would be to acknowledge their sibling's rights - but instead to apologize to the parents, to whom they owe a duty to be good.

A society such as the one Feinberg has created certainly meets the criteria of a well ordered, smoothly functioning society. However, unless we wish to remain childlike, something is missing. What is missing is precisely what would humanize the citizens of Nowheresville, the resources for developing self-respect. These resources are individual rights. Feinberg claims:

> Having rights enables us to stand up like men, to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone. To think of oneself as a holder of rights is not to be unduly proud but properly proud, to have that minimal self-respect that is necessary to be worthy of the love and esteem of others. (251)

Rights make demands for recognition feasible. If I am going to demand something of the other, I can do it under the aegis of my right to be heard or my right to be recognized. Rights also compel people to take the other person's assertion of autonomy seriously, which is one condition for the cultivation of human dignity. Feinberg claims: "What is called human dignity may simply be the recognizable capacity to assert claims. To respect a person; then, or to think of him as possessed of human dignity, simply is to think of him as a potential maker of claims" (251). Feinberg distinguishes between two types of rights-claims, "performative claims" and "propositional claims" (248-50). Performative claims are claims for recognition of an already-existing right. For example, claims based on the "right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" are already guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. All full-fledged citizens of the United States have this right; it is only necessary to exercise it. On the other hand, propositional claims are claims that people ought to have a certain type of right, even if they do not have it at the time. Propositional claims are important because they allow people to exercise autonomy and self-determination as they create a world in their own image.

There are several senses in which Feinberg's argument strengthens Honneth's normative claims about self-respect and the recognition of rights. What Feinberg demonstrates is that a society like Nowheresville would probably create overgrown children, heteronomous subjects without a sense of autonomy or a full

understanding of the significance of the rules they are dutifully obeying. Feinberg's discussion of 'propositional claiming' is an analysis of the transformation of the status of rights in a given society. This type of claim opens up a new domain of problems or a limiting condition in the social or political structure which has not been examined. Propositional claiming empowers people to question and transform the world they live in, which then expands the potential scope and structure of rights and freedom. This questioning also invigorates the moral consciousness, perhaps by opening up a new terrain of possibilities for self-determination and self-actualization, or, conversely, by provoking a reaction and a series of counter-claims. Propositional claiming generates a dialectic between the moral consciousness and the ethical substance of a society, which provides people with the empowering awareness that they live in a world that they have created, that they can understand, and that they can change, rather than simply submit to. This is the essence of what Feinberg means when he says that a person 'in need' is in a position to address that need even if there is no one who can do anything about it. By envisioning a set of conditions or a process that would satisfy the need, and by asserting the right to those conditions, people are able to create and maintain the ongoing possibility of rights:

> A person in need, then, is always 'in a position' to make a claim, even when there is no one in the corresponding position to do anything about it. Such claims, based on need alone, are 'permanent possibilities of rights,' the natural seed from which rights grow. (255)

Honneth understands the struggle for recognition similarly. The struggle for recognition enables the transformation and revaluation of existing rights and opens up opportunities for the development of self-respect.

The third and final form of recognition is cultural recognition. Cultural recognition makes self-esteem (*Selbstschatzung*) possible. Developing self-esteem involves being recognized as a person who has a valuable skill, has made a social contribution, or whose culture or ancestors have done so. This might include accomplishments such as playing the guitar, repairing electrical systems, being a member of a group that has something of interest or value to contribute to the larger society, or belonging to a group that has a rich and valuable heritage. Each person or group must be given the opportunity to make their cultural contribution in the absence of collective denigration. Social capital, educational resources, occupational opportunities, and income should also be structured and allocated fairly, with the goal of fostering human flourishing.

Honneth describes a number of ways that rejection and misrecognition can damage our practical-relations-to-self. A damaged self is one that is created in contexts that deny appropriate recognition. This may take the form of political disenfranchisement, denial of rights, abuse or lack of care in the family or in intimate relationships, or cultural denigration or discrimination against those whose identities, occupations, or lifestyles differ from the mainstream. These forms of misrecognition may be explicit, involving intentional discrimination, abuse, intolerance, or exclusion, or they may be implicit, as in the case of marginalization based on a lack of sensitivity and empathetic understanding of others.

If we return to the position of the skeptic and begin with the claim that we should alleviate social inequalities because insult, injury, and injustice undermines our self--confidence, damages our self-esteem, and erodes our self-respect. She would immediately ask, "Why does that matter?" If we point out that a damaged practical-relation-to-self reduces our ability to exercise our individual capacities, feel secure in our culture or subculture, or stand on our own two feet as dignified adults, she might say, "Those are matters for each individual to deal with on their own." We must then show her why taking our claims seriously is in the best interest of everyone involved. To illustrate this point, I turn to an exegesis of Peter Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment* with the goal of demonstrating the ways that reactive attitudes such as resentment and indignation force others to give serious regard to a person's claims to self-esteem.

In *Freedom and Resentment*, Strawson attempted to refute the thesis of determinism as it applies to moral motivation. This is the idea that it is possible to view human action as fully determined, and hence responsibility to others as irrelevant to moral theory. In arguing against this position, Strawson claims that the interpersonal demands placed on each one of us in everyday social interaction are so compelling that we cannot view others in an entirely determined or objective fashion. If we are to sustain the webs of social interaction that give meaning and purpose to our lives, we must treat others as autonomous subjects at least some of the time. Based on this observation, Strawson argues that a wholly deterministic account of social life is unsustainable, and therefore, strict determinism in moral theory is untenable. What is most relevant to my argument is the emphasis Strawson places on the relationship between reactive feelings and sentiments and the possibility of moral accountability to others. What I want to bring out in this analysis of Strawson's argument is the connection between feelings such as indignation, and resentment, which result from being wronged or harmed or denied recognition, and the sense of personal autonomy and self-respect that emerges from expressing these feelings. I will also show how Strawson's argument highlights the importance of possessing rights, which, for Honneth, are the grounds of self-respect.

Strawson's point of departure is really a theory of interpersonal recognition. He begins by saying:

> The central commonplace I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions toward us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, beliefs about these attitudes and intentions... We might speak, in another jargon, of the need for love, and the loss of security which results from its withdrawal; or in another, of human self-respect and its connection with the recognition of the individual's identity. (62)

Strawson argues that it is practically impossible to sustain an 'objective' relationship toward others for long. The attitudes of involvement and participation in human relationships cannot be entirely replaced by an objective attitude to other human beings. We require deeper forms of recognition from others, as they require it from us.

The objective attitude Strawson refers to is exemplified in the way we treat small children or people considered mentally ill. These people are not held responsible for their actions because we assume their actions are determined by other factors, such as immaturity or illness. This objectifying, depersonalizing, perspective is also taken toward clients of the welfare state and other social service agencies. Strawson claims

> To adopt the objective attitude to another human being is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in the wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained; perhaps simply to be avoided. (66)

The important point is that certain "reactive attitudes," such as resentment and indignation wouldn't have any meaningful effect on those we view with an objective attitude. Strawson also points out that an objectifying attitude toward others can be used as a resource when the strain of involvement with people and their genuine concerns becomes too great. However, this "refuge from the strain of involvement" cannot be sustained for long if we are to maintain a human relationship with others and with ourselves (Strawson 67). "A sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude, and the human isolation which that would entail, does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable" (Strawson 68).

Once the objective attitude is ruled out as a realistic mode of interaction, the significance of "personal reactive attitudes" comes into relief. Reactive attitudes are frustrated responses to the desire for recognition. The reactive attitudes serve to steer and repair human interactions, leading to greater equality, care, and concern among people. Personal reactive attitudes also play a central role in humanizing interpersonal relationships. The person who is able to respond to objectifying treatment with some sense of indignation or resentment is able to assert herself as a person, rather than an object.

Habermas has argued that what is morally significant about Strawson's discussion of resentment is that the reaction to objectifying treatment points most directly to the violation of norms of solidarity and mutual respect:

> Emotional responses directed against individual persons in specific situations would be devoid of moral character were they not connected with an impersonal kind of indignation over some breach of a generalized norm or behavioral expectation. It is only their claim to general validity that gives an interest, a volition, or a norm the dignity of moral authority. (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 48-9)

Indignation and resentment result from a feeling that a social norm has been violated. The reaction demands a revision of the norm in question and an accompanying change in social relations. Habermas is correct to point out that resentment and indignation will eventually point to a more impersonal state of affairs, such as the denial of the rights of an entire group or class of people. However, it is not the norm that people are immediately concerned with but their sense of personal and group dignity. However, in this Kantian interpretation,

Habermas stresses that the move from personal indignation to an evaluation of social norms is what is morally significant about the reactive attitudes (47-50).

While I agree with Habermas that emotional responses have to refer to shared normative criteria in order to be morally significant, I contend, contra Habermas, that reactive attitudes owe their significance to the fact that they are responses to a violation of a person's self-confidence, self-esteem, or self-respect. These are the primary moral goods and the fundamental source of motivation for morally significant action. I can demonstrate this point by asking what it is that gives legitimacy to reactive attitudes. Are reactive attitudes justified in the eyes of those who express them because of a background of general norms that speak against ill-treatment? It is not difficult to picture an ancient society in which slavery is both legal and normatively acceptable to most people. When slaves are freed in this society, they often become slave owners themselves. When a slave in this society responds to his condition with resentment and indignation, he is frustrated that something is being denied him. However, it cannot be the case that the slave's resentment points most immediately and directly to the injustice of the society's dominant norms because slavery is socially acceptable. It is not social norms that are in question, but something much more fundamental, the slave's sense of autonomy and self-respect, experienced as feelings of resentment and indignation.

It is true, as Habermas's argument suggests, that the norms of slavery themselves can and will eventually be criticized for providing the justification for violations of the slave's sense of self. However, it is not a feeling that impersonal social norms have been violated that makes the slave indignant and resentful. The slave *feels* violated, unfree, and unfulfilled. The expectation of receiving recognition from others, and of developing a sense of self from that recognition, is what gives the slave's indignation and resentment moral significance. Because it is a basic need, this expectation exists even when there are no norms that could support a slave's claim to fair and equal treatment. Moreover, as Hegel pointed out in his discussion of "Lordship and Bondage" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a moment in history will emerge when slaves desire freedom but have not yet understood that for one to be free, all must be free, and they will enslave others as soon as they receive their freedom. They will not engage in reflection on social norms until it is in their interest to do so. This will only happen when they realize that the partial and unsatisfactory feeling of their own freedom and dignity is a byproduct of their position in a social structure that compels the unfree to recognize their social role but not their self-identity.

Honneth's relocation of the normative basis of critical theory in a theory of recognition and self-identity brings the existential dimension of injustice to the foreground. The personal, subjective, experiential, dimension brought out in Honneth's work is balanced by his theorization of the intersubjective character of all experience. Just as a purely private language has no meaning if there are no other speakers who can comprehend it, so too the practical-relations-to-self have no meaning outside of a socio-political context that recognizes them. The struggle for recognition is always a simultaneous struggle for the validation of something important about identity and the transformation of the socio-political context that makes this validation possible.

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