Identity, recognition and work in post-Fordist society: a path of indepth critical analysis

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Identity, recognition and work in post-Fordist society: a path of in-depth critical analysis

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Abstract

From an approach to questions and theories of identity and recognition and through authors that have dealt with them over the last few decades using different political-philosophical perspectives, I have addressed the concept of recognition by focusing on the issue of work from the starting point of Axel Honneth. Self-realization at work and capitalist paradox are combined in a debate with Fraser's perspectival dualism, continuing the dialogue between the two scholars on recognition and redistribution.
Keywords: social justice, self-realization, work.

> *… the contrasts want to run together and must not be allowed to. They're what you see with.*
> *William Meredith*

Issues of recognition

Our age is characterised by a deep-rooted change in scale that is challenging concepts of identity and recognition through a long series of philosophical-political, anthropological and sociological reflections.
Academics that have dealt with this issue over the last few years include those whose starting point is the realisation that the change is above all connected to identity pluralism and the coexistence of different cultures interacting and defining the possibility of being recognised publicly for one's own value and existence. Other scholars are still tied to a redistributive need, linked to the universality of rights, to defend an order based on an ideal of social justice, while a third group see it as a socio-cultural device through which every conflict of identity (including redistribution) must be symbolically recognised in order to be taken into consideration.
The stances that have met with most favour in recent years are those that give voice to social conflicts connected to cultural difference. It is undeniable that the spread of globalisation has been accompanied by movements characterised by struggle and claims for recognition of the identity of different cultures and civilisations. "Whether we call the current movements «struggles for recognition» (Charles Taylor, Nancy Fracer and Axel Honneth), «identity/difference movements» (Iris Young, William Connolly), or «movements for cultural rights and multicultural citizenship» (Will Kymlicka), they signal a new political imaginary that propels cultural identity issues in the broadest sense to the forefront of political discourse" (Benhabib, 2002, Italian translation 2005:8). This is a form of revolt against the processes of economic, social and cultural standardisation that can be seen in forms of resistance or protest by those who aim to safeguard the autonomy of their choices, lifestyles and value systems.
The term "politics of recognition" was introduced into the debate by Charles Taylor in his essay of the same name *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Taylor, 1992, Italian translation 1999). The work considers different contemporary movements that, according to the author, want

specific claims of identity to be recognised. In creating this effective expression, Taylor borrows the episode of the struggle between two forms of self-consciousness in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Starting from Taylor

Taylor opens the debate on questions of identity by starting from the collective critique of the liberal theory of understanding the self, according to which society and common values inherited from tradition play a vital role in comprehending the self and personal identity. Although he maintains that each identity is original, he also asserts that the human mind is not monological or self-sufficient but dialogical. It is through language[1] that we become fully developed human agents that are capable of understanding each other and defining our identity; the other plays a role of fundamental importance, especially what George Herbert Mead called "the significant other" (1934, Italian translation 1966), as identity is not constructed in isolation but is a form of negotiation through internal and external dialogue with other people (Taylor, op. cit.: 17-19).
Taylor reassesses Hegel in an extremely positive light, identifying him as the founder of communitarianism, and in order to offer a more realistic consideration of understanding the self he conducts analysis of the "cultural horizons" in which human beings live their lives (1991, Italian translation 1994). This analysis leads him to tackle multiculturalism as a problem of recognition, highlighting the need to reconstruct the genealogy of the birth of this concept in the thinking of the European elite in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which became the main programme of multiculturalism in the twentieth century: "The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Italian translation 1999:9).

The reconstruction process is useful to understand how the discourse of recognition and identity has become so familiar: for Taylor, Hegel and his master-slave dialectic are a point of arrival. Before him there were two changes which combined to make "the modern preoccupation with identity and recognition inevitable": on one hand there was the collapse of the social hierarchies that were once considered to be the basis for honour[2]; on the other hand there was the appearance, in tandem with the development of democratic societies, of the concept of dignity, which made forms of equal recognition essential for democratic culture (ivi: 11-12). The advent of modernity therefore involves a move from the typically aristocratic code of honour to the middle-class notion of the dignity of human beings (or citizen dignity); a move that carries with it the emergence of the politics of universalism and equal dignity.

The notion of dignity underwent further specification in the modern age when it assumed the meaning of a singular identity, which originated from the interiority of the subject that is self-determined in total autonomy, in accordance with a principle of originality. For Taylor, this original process that leads to the constitution of personal identity, which is unique and unrepeatable, cannot occur in the limited circle of the personal self; as stated previously, it is a dialogical process that requires the other to define itself, so that our identity is "partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. (…) Within these perspectives, misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (ivi: 9-10).
The terms identity and recognition were not used in the pre-modern age, not because men and women did not have identities or because they did not depend on recognition, but because there was no need for them to be thematized at the time; in previous societies what we now call identity was largely established by social position. It is with the modern age that identity and relative

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1 Here Taylor uses the word "*language* in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the «languages» of art, of gesture, of love, and the like".

2 Here Taylor uses "the term *honor* in *the ancient régime* sense in which it is intrinsically linked to inequalities. For some to have honour in this sense, it is essential that not everyone have it".

recognition become important because it has created "the conditions in which the attempt to be recognised can fail" (ivi: 16-20).

Taylor sees the problem of lack of recognition as a fundamentally important issue for politics conceived as universalist that runs the risk of not seeing differences and generating misrecognition and social injustice. As universalist politics, it would justify every normative action by making reference to the universal principle of equal dignity.

The risk that Taylor sees in this political scenario is that individual differences or minorities can disappear, standardised by the neutrality of liberal-democratic state structures, which he describes as no more than the universalist mask of the hegemonic culture. This assumption is the starting point for the issue of the struggles for recognition of minority cultures in America and Europe.

The debate with Habermas

While Taylor was responsible for opening the debate in America, Jürgen Habermas played the same role in Europe by picking up on the issue of individual and collective recognition and responding to his colleague from across the Atlantic in an essay entitled *Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State (*1996, Italian translation 1999).

For Habermas, by attributing special importance to the collective dimension, Taylor's communitarianism contradicts the tutelage of the difference that he poses as his main objective. Habermas identifies a kind of paradox in Taylor's reasoning: granting privileges to cultural minorities so that they do not disappear in the homologation put in place by the hegemonic culture can generate other cultural minorities that are discriminated against, as although they share the same space occupied by the privileged minorities, they might not identify themselves with their cultural paradigms. In Habermas's view, this is why the communitarian solution put forward by Taylor moves the problem without solving it. Furthermore, and this is Habermas's main theory, the tutelage of weak cultural minorities is already envisaged by the full accomplishment of the liberal project. "To this end there is no need to create «countermodels» that start from a different normative perspective to correct the individualist slant of the system of rights. It is enough to implement this system to the full" (Habermas, op. cit., Italian translation: 70). If you take this point of view the question will no longer be a matter of defending individual cultures but one of creating the conditions that allow individuals to be able to choose to preserve or modify their sense of identity and belonging, and this can only happen through a comparison with a range of cultural models.

Benhabib: hybrids and communities of interdependence

Habermas's idea of the necessary "impartiality" of politics and its related public structures is shared by Seyla Benhabib, a researcher who has interpreted the philosophical-political debate on multiculturalism and difference. In particular, in her *The claims of culture: equality and diversity in the global era* (2002, Italian translation 2005), Benhabib compares the most important positions in the western philosophical tradition. This allows her to highlight the theoretical premises of her conclusions on citizenship practices: Benhabib fundamentally distances herself from those who start from hypotheses connected to the purity of cultures or those who think they can identify "meaningfully discreet wholes". For her, culture is no more than an aspect of the totality of circumstances. She reasserts this point, strongly criticising sociological constructivism for being guilty of being "frequently misidentified with the view that anything goes", a view according to which "symbols and representations can be shuffled like cards in a deck". For Benhabib, culture does not consist of pieces of a mosaic that maintain their absolute recognisability regardless of circumstances. For this reason, and it is here that Benhabib symbolically shifts the debate, it is wrong to safeguard cultural difference among groups of people in the name of "an elusive preservation of cultures"; instead cultural difference should be protected both in empirical and normative terms in the name of justice and liberty. In her view, this is the fundamental mistake made by contemporary political and legal theory, which interprets cultures as organic wholes, closed and complete in themselves; cultures that, instead, in the new globalised civilisation interact only through the framework of "mosaic multiculturalism" (Italian translation 26-27).

Against Taylor's defence of culture through legislative particularisms, Benhabib draws on her gender studies to offer "radical hybridity and polyvocality of all cultures; cultures themselves, as well as societies, are not holistic but polyvocal, multilayered, decentered, and fractured systems of action and signification. Politically, the right to cultural self-expression needs to be grounded upon, rather than considered an alternative to, universally recognized citizenship rights" (ivi: 48). Benhabib strongly opposes John Rawls's idea, according to which people "enter their societies at birth and exit them at death"; she feels that it is necessary to reject a limited multicultural vision and promote a broader view in its place developed with the three normative principles of egalitarian reciprocity, voluntary self-ascription to groups and freedom of exit and association with regard to the same groups (ivi: 40-41). In this way Benhabib moves the previously drawn approach from those who interpreted the struggle for recognition as a fight to defend minority cultural identities to a new direction that opens the scope of recognition to dimensions that are no longer ethnocentric: "The lines between us and them do not necessarily correspond to the lines between members of our culture and those of another. The community with which one solidarizes is not ethnically or ethnocentrically defined; communities of solidarity may or may not be ethnically established" (ivi: 56).

But how does this transition come about? In her 1999 article *Sexual difference and collective identities: the new global constellation* Benhabib addressed the question of interlocution, asserting that "To be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocution; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed; in turn, it is learning how to address others". The author later takes her thinking a step further, referring to "communities of conversation" and "communities of interdependence" and no longer to ethnically formed communities. Ecological disasters are used as an example, where, she says, "the real confrontation between different cultures is producing not only a *community of conversation*, but also a *community of interdependence*.[3] Not only what we say and think but also what we eat, burn, produce and waste has consequences for others about whom we may know nothing, but whose lives are affected by our actions" (Italian translation 2005: 60-61).

Honneth and the ethics of the struggle for recognition

Another important contribution to thinking on the issue of the struggle for recognition is made by Axel Honneth, a pupil of Habermas, who published *Kampf um Anerkennung. Grammatick sozialer Konflikte* (Italian translation 2002) in 1992. In this text he presents his research on the critique of power and builds the foundations of a normative social theory starting from the Hegelian conceptual model of a "struggle for recognition".

Like Taylor, Honneth takes his cue from Hegel, but moves beyond in-depth analysis of the master-slave dynamic in *Phenomonology of the Spirit*, supporting his approach with the *Jenese lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*. Not content with working on a metaphysical plane, Honneth builds his theory by attempting to give empirical value to the Hegelian idea: in this sense, the three forms of recognition – love, rights and solidarity – are countered by three corresponding forms of misrecognition – violence, deprivation of rights and humiliation.

In support of this, Honneth finds a way to provide empirical validation of Hegel's idea in Mead's social psychology (op. cit). He feels that "What the term «disrespect» (*Mißachtung)* refers to is the specific vulnerability of humans resulting from the internal interdependence of individualization and recognition, which both Hegel and Mead helped to illuminate. Because the normative self-image of each and every individual human being – his or her «me», as Mead put it – is dependent on the possibility of being continually backed up by others, the experience of being disrespected carries with it the danger of an injury that can bring the identity of the person as a whole to the point of collapse" (op. cit, Italian translation: 158). This is the danger that leads Honneth to suggest that conflict should be read as the basis of the struggle for recognition. Therefore, while the three models of recognition of love, rights and solidarity demarcate the formal conditions of the interactive relationships in which subjects are guaranteed dignity and integrity, it is in the three forms of misrecognition, or "disrespect" as Honneth calls it, that "the negative emotional reactions

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3 Italics author's own.

accompanying the experience of disrespect could represent precisely the affective motivational basis in which the struggled-for recognition is anchored" (ivi: 163).

Honneth and Fraser: Redistribution or Recognition

In the book *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange,* a debate with North-American feminist theorist Nancy Fraser (2003, Italian translation 2007), Honneth once again refers to recognition as the interpretative key to issues related to social justice and the multiple claims that capitalism generates everywhere through its globalised forms.
As the title suggests, the exchange between the two centres around a matter of emphasis: Fraser places more stress, and therefore also meaning, on the first term, *redistribution*, while Honneth follows his 1992 text by stressing that issues of *recognition* come into play in social justice and the normativity of the political order. For him, the concept of recognition has replaced the idea of redistribution, a term that "was central to both the moral philosophies and the social struggles of the Fordist era" (ivi: 9). In the post-war era of industrial development and up to one or at most two decades ago, it was the paradigm of distributive justice that seemed most suitable for analysing the claims of the poor and workers; indeed, in democratic welfare states conflicts mainly revolved around resources and were debated in terms of distribution and on a universalist basis. It was not yet deemed necessary to examine the relationship between redistribution and recognition. According to Fraser and Honneth, 11 September marked the turning point and "struggles over religion, nationality, and gender are now interimbricated in ways that make the question of recognition impossible to ignore" and "with crosscutting axes of difference so intensely politicized, this question will continue to command center stage for the foreseeable future" (ivi: 10).
In order to examine the relationship between the two terms we need to establish as a fundamental premise for both writers that an appropriate interpretation of justice must include at least two questions: "those cast in the Fordist era as struggles over distribution and those often cast today as struggles for recognition" (ivi: 11). Hereinafter, however, two different paths are followed: Honneth stays in the conceptual position that sees recognition as a fundamental, unique and higher-order moral category (ivi: 301), while Fraser questions whether distribution can be subsumed in recognition, and offers analysis in terms of perspectival dualism, placing the two categories as equally founding and reciprocally immovable dimensions of justice. She feels that only a two-dimensional concept of justice can pick up on the connections between class inequality and status hierarchy in today's society.
Honneth claims that justice in society is not directly related to the distribution of goods, as Rawls and others suggested, or the procedures of a deliberative democracy, as Habermas thought. Instead, he feels that it is connected to relationship structures. Honneth shares Hegel and Marx's idea that individuality takes shape in relations of reciprocity and that the free development of others is a condition for one's own free development. However, he adds, it is not poor distribution that is at the root of social injustice but experience of injustice (ivi: 139), which is no more than the experience of failed restrictive or inferiorizing recognition. While Honneth has a one-dimensional idea of social justice as the consequence of affirmed or failed recognition expressed through the three previously outlined positive or negative models (containing distribution), Fraser starts from a two-dimensional concept of justice whose founding nucleus is participatory parity.[4] Two conditions are necessary to make this possible: the objective condition of equal economic distribution in order to guarantee participants "independence and «voice»" and the intersubjective condition that establishes recognition through models of institutionalised cultural value to guarantee equal respect (ivi: 51-52). Fraser underlines that neither aspect is sufficient in itself; they need to be approached together in the perspectival dualism that allows us to assess whether redistribution creates misrecognition and whether recognition creates maldistribution. It is therefore necessary to treat "*every* practice as simultaneously economic and cultural, albeit not necessarily in equal proportions, it must assess each of them from two different perspectives. It must assume both the

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4 Fraser points out (ivi: 127) that her position on this term is different from that of French feminists, who used it after its coinage in 1990 to refer to participative quotas, while she has always used it to refer to an equal position that leaves free choice and the opportunity to participate.

standpoint of distribution and the standpoint of recognition, without reducing either one of these perspectives to the other" (ivi: 84).

Recognition and work

After having examined a number of authors who have dealt with the issue of identity and recognition, it is interesting to attempt to apply it to work, individuals and groups at work. This is not because it is a new question but because, as the problem of work and the change in production processes is becoming increasingly heightened and conflicting, it is important to seek help from recent interpretations of the struggle for recognition.

Axel Honneth is the only author among those taken into consideration that explicitly addressed movements of protest or transformation of work as struggles for recognition; there are frequent examples in his writings, especially in the publication *Capitalismo e riconoscimento* (2010)[5] which includes a chapter entitled "Work and recognition: A redefinition". "Never in the last two hundred years have there been so few efforts to defend an emancipatory and humane notion of work as there are today. (…) A growing portion of the population is struggling just to gain access to job opportunities that can secure a livelihood; others work under radically deregulated conditions that hardly enjoy any legal protection anymore; still others are currently seeing their previously secure careers become deprofessionalized and moved outside the workplace" (ivi: 19).

Honneth provides a brief overview of the issues underlying the current crisis of work and its consequences on individuals at work, highlighting a transformation in the organisation of the market aimed at a return to unprotected social work; he is also critical of the lack of attention by intellectuals and sociologists, who in tandem with the process of change have "turned their backs on the world of work" and dedicated themselves to other issues unrelated to the world of production: "In the face of these new circumstances, – he claims – the critical theory of society appears to have occupied itself with issues of political integration and citizens' rights, without dwelling even for a moment on the threats to what has been achieved in the sphere of production" (*ibidem*).

However, despite the increased interest in other aspects of social conflict, theories that speculate on the end or total transformation of work[6] and the collapse of utopias that wanted work to be free from the processes of capitalist production, work has no less importance in the world of social life. Indeed, for Honneth "The majority of the population continues to attach their own social identity primarily to their role in the organized labor process – and this majority has in all likelihood even greatly increased since the labor market has been opened to women as never before" (ivi: 20).

Although it is increasingly vulnerable, work plays a fundamental role in the dimension of self-realization, which Honneth sees as closely related to recognition. Being recognised by the other, as Taylor also claimed, is therefore essential for achieving complete subjectivity, while on the other hand losing one's identity as a worker and being disrespected means being deprived of an essential requirement for human development.

For Honneth, recognition is therefore related to self-realization, but while social identity and self-realization are still connected to the role played by work, the fact that the work market increasingly excludes and humiliates means that people have to live their lives with symbolic misrecognition and maldistribution. Whether the reasoning then follows the paths suggested by Honneth or Fraser, it is clear that redistribution and recognition cannot be ignored as terms of the question. The two authors agree on this when they state that both must be contained in an adequate interpretation of social justice.

"As a result of a form of unemployment that is no longer short-term but truly structural, more and more people are completely deprived of the opportunity to find recognition (..:.) in terms of social esteem in the field of their socially acquired skills" (ivi: 18) and in addition, they become victims of misrecognition in the form of rights and/or solidarity.

Therefore, because of the current economic-organisational model it is and will continue to be increasingly difficult for people to interpret themselves through work as cooperating subjects in a

5 This Italian publication was edited and translated by Marco Solinas. It is a collection of 5 essays by Honneth published in different journals and volumes.

6 I am thinking of authors such as Jeremy Rifkin, Dominique Mèda, Luciano Gallino, Robert Castel.

democratic community, because this condition is closely related to the opportunity of being socially recognised for making a personal contribution to social production.[7] The effort that individuals make to be recognised, the attachment to the role of the worker despite everything, discussed by Honneth, remains a fundamental part of the purpose of recognition: the need is implemented through self-realization as a result of two movements: one is negative and is a form of misrecognition of those who lack the status of workers, while the other is positive, although it will be shown to have a paradoxical character, and is recognition of the dimension of self-realization represented by the self-made man, a figure that makes the self-realising aspect – the benefit of complete subjectivity – functional to the capitalist system.

Honneth asserts "that the claims to individual self-realization which have rapidly multiplied, beginning with the historically unique concatenation of entirely disparate processes of individualization in the Western societies of thirty or forty years ago, have so definitely become a feature of the institutionalized expectations inherent in social reproduction that the particular goals of such claims are lost and they are transmuted into a support of the system's legitimacy" (ivi: 44).

Capitalism and the paradox of hyper-responsibilizing self-realization

"The structure of contemporary capitalism produces paradoxical contradictions to a significant extent" (ivi: 65). This is how Honneth summarises his theory on the limits of contemporary capitalism.
Starting from Boltanski and Chiappello's reconstruction (1999) of the "new spirit of capitalism" with reference to Max Weber, Honneth highlights some results of "new" or "flexible" capitalism. The starting point for this close examination is the assumption that capitalist practices need justification as soon as they are unable to mobilise sufficient motivation among people by themselves. According to the two French authors, capitalism has been experiencing a period of crisis since the end of the sixties, which is also expressed by the fact that business has lost its ability to attract young managers. Social and artistic critiques offered horizons of realization which made business life seem dull and devoid of stimulation by comparison. It is by listening to youth movements, the bearers of subjective libertarian requests, that capitalism thinks again and renews the moral justifications of its new spirit.

The spirit of contemporary capitalism is seen as "project-oriented" (ivi: 154-204). In the "project-oriented «order of justification» (*cité par projets*)" people are valued to the extent to which they involve themselves with great personal dedication and flexibility, use good networking skills and act both independently and faithfully at the same time. "In this way, the worker becomes an «entreployee» or himself an entrepreneur; no longer induced to participate in capitalist practices by external compulsion or incentives, he is in a sense self-motivated" (Honneth, op cit.: 61). Capitalism therefore makes ambiguous use of autonomy and the horizon of realization, historically earned in an emancipatory context, and generates one of its main paradoxes. In this case Honneth refers to capitalism as "disorganized" and "shareholder value-oriented", generating dynamics that lead to the partial overturning of institutionalised normative achievements.

His theory "is that the neoliberal restructuring of the capitalist economic system exerts a pressure to adapt that does not undo the previously enumerated progressive processes, but durably transforms them in their function or significance. Within the framework of the new organizational form of capitalism, what could previously be analyzed as an unambiguous rise in the sphere of individual autonomy assumes the shape of unreasonable demands, discipline, or insecurity, which, taken together, have the effect of social desolidarization" (ivi: 65). The individual civil rights that were won and brought awareness of individuality and romantic individualism are used to overturn rights, changing them into an improper excessive form of personal responsibility. It is through this process that justification can be made for dismantling workers' rights and dissolving collective legal and status guarantees with the incessant demand for an increasing willingness for flexibility and personal investment.

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7 In his essay "Work identity in crisis? Rethinking the problem of attachment and loss at work" the English sociologist Tim Strangleman also speaks of loss of identity for workers and a feeling of nostalgia for a time in which they were recognised socially. The text takes account of research carried out on railway workers in the United Kingdom using the autobiographical method.

As Honneth asserts, following Boltanski and Chiappello, "«Entreployees» are expected not only to dutifully fulfill externally given production quotas, but also to bring communicative and emotional skills and resources to bear in order to meet project goals they are more or less responsible for setting. This debordering of work-related efforts entails softening the separation of private and professional spheres of action" (ivi: 66-67). In this way self-realization is transformed into the hyper-reponsibilization of subjects by eroding the boundary between interiority and work.

The consequences of what Honneth calls "softening" highlight the closure of the paradoxical circle of self-realization: a dimension that is as necessary as it is dangerous, as individuals' struggles for recognition enter the maze of capitalist instrumentalization, managing to change ideals into constraints and claims into demands, transforming the nature of the experience of being recognised and opening the way to mass unhappiness that has now taken on previously unseen pathological dimensions.[8]

Fraser: self-realization and justice

As we have already seen, Axel Honneth's theoretical reflections have been closely connected to those of Nancy Fraser over the years. Although Fraser does not specifically deal with work-related questions, she uses working conditions, as well as other social conditions of individuals, as material to support her theoretical development.

It is precisely in the concept of self-realization that she finds a weakness in her interlocutor's position, accusing him of seeing misrecognition as damage in ethnic terms, a negative condition that prevents the subject from leading a "good life" as self-realization is an impossibility. She asserts that "For both Taylor and Honneth, being recognized by another subject is a necessary condition for attaining full, undistorted subjectivity. To deny someone recognition is to deprive her or him of a basic prerequisite for human flourishing. (…) both these theorists construe misrecognition in terms of impaired subjectivity and damaged self-identity. (…) For Taylor and Honneth, therefore, recognition concerns self-realization" (Fraser, Honneth, op. cit.: 42).

Fraser's understanding of misrecognition is instead based on terms of justice: "Thus, one should not answer the question «what's wrong with misrecognition?» by saying that it impedes self-realization by distorting the subject's «practical relation-to-self» (Honneth 1992a). One should say, rather, that it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them" (*ibidem*). This statement suggests that recognition should be considered as a matter of justice, treated as a problem of *social status*; a change that makes it possible to read misrecognition not as an obstacle to self-realization (that only concerns the subject) but as something inherent in the culturally institutionalised stratification of society that makes parity of participation possible or not. Therefore, for Fraser, being misrecognised does not mean experiencing a change in one's subjectivity but being subjected to a devaluation, an injustice, by institutionalized models of cultural value. This devaluation obstructs the achievement of the status of full member of society. This moves the search for causes and possible solutions from intersubjectivity (Taylor, Honneth) to institutionalised models of value that cause a status of subordination. This model, which Fraser defines as 'status of recognition', makes it possible to read misrecognition not as driven by attitudes but through social institutions when they regulate social interaction through cultural norms that obstruct parity of participation. There is therefore reciprocal recognition and a "status of equality" when such models recognise actors as equal and able to participate on a par, while there is misrecognition and a status of subordination when the institutionalized model of cultural value depicts some actors as inferior or excluded, or simply does not take them into consideration, making them invisible.

Therefore, for Fraser misrecognition is not an obstacle to self-realization but "an institutionalized

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8 As a demonstration of this Honneth (2010: 54) refers to studies by Alain Herenberg (1998; Italian translation 1999), in particular his work *The fatigue of being oneself*, in which he explains his theory according to which the increasingly pressing demand to be oneself has subjected individuals to excessive psychic pressure. Taking constant inspiration from one's inner life for material for self-realization creates a form of continuous introspection that leads to emptiness. This, according to Herenberg, marks the beginning of the depression.

relation of *subordination* and a violation of justice" (ivi: 43), or a form of discrimination not resolved by society and indeed allowed by it (institutionalised). And overcoming misrecognition "means to overcome subordination. This in turn means changing institutions and social practices – once again, by (...) deinstitutionalizing patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and replacing them with patterns that foster it" (ivi: 46).

To return to the paradox of self-realization we can ask ourselves how the model of the state of recognition can help us to see a way out of the vicious circle between emancipatory self-realization and hyper-responsibilized self-realization. We are aided in this by the question at the heart of the long debate between Honneth and Fraser: redistribution and/or recognition?

The status model separates the politics of recognition from the politics of identity and defines misrecognition as a violation of justice, thereby facilitating the integration of claims for the redistribution of wealth and resources; in this way it is assigned to the universally binding domain of deontological morality. Fraser claims that by appealing to the moral idea of justice rather than the ethical concept of self-realization, the status model can justify claims for recognition as normatively binding by abstaining from connecting them to psychological assumptions that would weaken their normative strength. Treating recognition as a matter of justice makes it possible to place redistribution and recognition in a single two-dimensional perspective without losing its distinctive features. Taking account of the redistributive dimension without associating it with recognition enables us to ask "whether economic mechanisms that are relatively decoupled from structures of prestige and that operate in a relatively autonomous way impede parity of participation in social life" (ivi: 50).

This two-dimensional nature of questions of social justice, this perspectival dualism as Fraser calls it, enables us to understand definitively the relations between maldistribution and misrecognition in contemporary society, which leads to the development of a theory on the relationship between class structure and status hierarchy in late-modern global capitalism.

For Fraser, an adequate approach must take account of the complexity of these relations: it "must account *both for the differentiation of class from status and for the casual interactions between them*. It must accommodate, as well, *both the mutual irreducibility of maldistribution and misrecognition and their practical entwinement with each other*" (ivi: 66).

For Fraser, unlike the theory of stratification used in post-war American sociology, status is not a quotient of prestige that can be ascribed to an individual and is composed of quantitatively measurable factors, including economic indices such as income; instead, it is a level of intersubjective subordination derived from institutionalized models of cultural value that consider certain members of society as something less than full interaction partners.

Equally, Fraser does not consider class as a relationship with the means of production as in Marxist theory; for her, class is a level of objective subordination deriving from economic assets that deny certain actors the means and resources that they need for participatory parity.

Status and class cannot be clearly recognised in the traditional classifications of current social movements. The struggles against sexism and racism, for example, do not only aim to transform the status hierarchy, because the concepts of gender and race also imply a class structure.

Furthermore, struggles for work should also not be limited exclusively to economic questions of class, given that they are also related to status hierarchies.

"Status corresponds to the recognition dimension, which concerns the effects of institutionalized meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors. Class, in contrast, corresponds to the distributive dimension, which concerns the allocation of economic resources and wealth. In general, then, the paradigmatic status injustice is misrecognition, which *may*, however, be accompanied by maldistribution, whereas the quintessential class injustice is maldistribution, which *may* in turn be accompanied by misrecognition" (ivi: 68-69). In this way, Nancy Fraser's reasoning leads us to focus on a central question regarding the relationship between justice and social order, as "each of the two dimensions of justice is associated with an analytically distinct aspect of social order. The recognition dimension corresponds to the *status order* of society, hence to the constitution, by socially entrenched patterns of cultural value, of culturally defined categories of social actors – statuses – each distinguished by the relative respect, prestige, and esteem it

enjoys vis-à-vis the others. The distributive dimension, in contrast, corresponds to the *economic structure* of society, hence to the constitution, by property regimes and labor markets, of economically defined categories of actors, or classes, distinguished by their differential endowments of resources" (ivi: 69). Each dimension thus corresponds to an analytically distinct form of subordination: for the dimension of recognition there is a corresponding subordination of status rooted in the institutionalized models of cultural value, while for the redistributive dimension there is a corresponding economic subordination of class rooted in the structural characteristics of the economic system.

Following this reasoning, our society cannot be understood if only one dimension of social life is considered, because the economic dimension of subordination cannot derive directly from the cultural dimension and the latter cannot derive directly from the economic dimension: theories such as culturalism, economicism, post-structuralist anti-dualism (which sees a systemic interconnection between economics and culture) or independent dualism (which suggests that the two different spheres of justice belong to two distinct non-penetrating domains of society) are unable to conceptualise the complex relations that exist between the cultural and economic orders, between subordination of class and subordination of status, and between misrecognition and maldistribution.

Perspectival dualism: leaving behind the paradox of hyper-responsibilizing self-realization?

By examining the positions of the two authors we have defined, albeit in limited space, their starting theoretical perspectives with regard to "struggles for recognition". Honneth considers recognition in symbolic-cultural terms as something that concerns the structure of relations and asserts (with others) that individuality is constituted in relations of reciprocity and that the free development of the other is a condition for one's own free development. While maintaining the need for a redistributive material order[9] in questions of social justice, he sees it as deriving from a symbolic order of recognition that essentially depends on positive interaction among subjects and the opportunities they have for self-realization. The struggle for recognition brings with it elements that come into play in the dimension of work and have opened the way to mass capitalist instrumentalization that has overturned and overpowered their premises for emancipation and subjective and intersubjective growth. On the other hand, Fraser distances herself from Honneth's position and identifies the struggles for recognition not as an opportunity for self-realization but rather as a question of justice granted or denied by social status, or the institutionalized cultural model that permits or denies recognition. However, Fraser starts from a two-dimensional perspective that keeps the cultural dimension (recognition) and the economic dimension (redistribution) together, reducing the importance of the relational and psychic dimension of subjects as a factor of recognition.

"Perspectival dualism" involves "Treating *every* practice as simultaneously economic and cultural, albeit not necessarily in equal proportions, it must assess each of them from two different perspectives. It must assume both the standpoint of distribution and the standpoint of recognition, without reducing either one of these perspectives to the other" (ivi: 84). Through perspectival dualism it is possible to "assess the justice of any social practice, regardless of where it is institutionally located, from two analytically distinct normative vantage points, asking: does the practice in question work to ensure both the objective and the intersubjective conditions of participatory parity? Or does it, rather, undermine them?" (ivi: 85).

The opportunity to think in an integrated way, as Fraser suggests, can help us to understand the relationship between the economic dimension and the cultural dimension connected to the condition of "entreployee"; the emancipatory need for self-realization in work cannot be reduced purely to the cultural field, just as when it is instrumentalized by capitalism, leading to excess and hyper-responsibilization, it cannot be read purely in economic terms.

Fraser has not addressed the distinction between class and status, maldistribution and misrecognition, and economics and culture as ontological specifications, associating – like some post-structuralist critics – distribution with the material dimension and recognition with the

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9 I shall only allude to the fact that Honneth criticises the failed satisfaction, structural incapacity, of the material premises typical of social justice as "ideological recognition" (see the chapter "Recognition as ideology", op. cit. 2010).

symbolic dimension. For her, injustices of status and class can both be material.

Fraser wanted to view this distinction from a historical perspective, following the historical developments in social organisation and finding: the difference between the cultural and economic orders in the historical diversification between markets and social institutions based on value, the distinction between status and class in the historical separation of the specialised mechanisms of economic distribution from the culturally defined structures of prestige, and the distinction between maldistribution and misrecognition in the historical differentiation of economic obstacles from cultural obstacles of participatory parity. Fraser found all three of these distinctions in the birth of capitalism, "arguably the first social formation in history that systematically elaborates two distinct orders of subordination, premised on two distinct dimensions of injustice" (ivi: 89-90).

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