

## Honneth and the drive: On the reasons and consequences for social critique of Honneth's rejection of Freudian death drive

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**Abstract:** Axel Honneth associates his reading of Hegel with Winnicott's maturational development theory, in order to defend theses on intersubjectivity and recognition. That connection between philosophy and psychoanalysis is a target of criticism from two Hegelians: Joel Whitebook, a reader of Freud, and Judith Butler, a critical reader of Freud and Lacan. At the core of the controversy is Honneth's rejection of the work of the negative that is performed by Freud's death drive. We intend on following in the wake of that debate, and thus investigate the reasons and consequences for social criticism of Honneth's rejection of Freud's death drive.

**Keywords:** recognition, intersubjectivity, Frankfurt School, drive, identity.

Axel Honneth, the current director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, was an assistant of Jürgen Habermas between 1984 and 1990, and is a key figure in the third generation of Critical Theory. Honneth seeks to perform a critical reconstruction of Habermas' theory, which, according to him, supposedly neglected the psychic lives, corporeality, and expectations of subjects who engage in social conflicts. Such objective leads him to face problems connected to the constitution of the subject *p*, which is dealt with through an articulation between his intersubjective reading of Hegel and Donald Winnicott's maturational development theory. Through such course of action, our author proposes to think about how subjects' experiences of disrespect and expectations of self-realization may lead to the struggles for recognition, carrying within themselves a potential to increase freedom.

Honneth's defense of such connection between Hegel and Winnicott has been, however, a target for critique from Freudians and Lacanians. Honneth (2010d) clearly states his position in the debate, on an interview that was published in 2010. According to him, such controversy is due to misunderstandings. Both our author and his opponents believe there are destructive forces in the human being which have the potential of unsettling the established order. The divergences refer to where those energies are located. Freudians and Lacanians defend they derive from the death drive. Honneth, rejects that concept and argues that such antisocial forces arise in the separation process between mothers and their babies. The Frankfurtian (2010d) concludes (referring to Freudians and Lacanians): "we all try to explain the same kind of negative energies with different explanations" (p. 9). For that reason, he says, "the differences are smaller than they appear to the outside" (p. 9).

We seek to defend the counterargument in this article. Our hypothesis is that the divergences between

Honneth and his opponents do not arise from simple misunderstandings, but rather from deep theoretical differences, whose consequences are highly relevant for social critique. At the core of the controversy is Honneth's rejection to the work of the negative that is performed by Freud's death drive. We will investigate the reasons and the consequences of such refusal. In order to do that, we will closely follow debates between Honneth and two Hegelians: Joel Whitebook, a reader of Freud, and Judith Butler, a critical reader of Freud and Lacan<sup>1</sup>. How does the Frankfurtian philosopher reads Freud? The insistence on defending an intersubjective reading of Hegel would have prevented him from noticing productive aspects for social critique in death drive-related experiences? Would the rejection of the work of the negative (as performed by the drive) have led Honneth to build a theory that cannot completely escape from identity fixations?

In his works from the 1980 Honneth outlines the first version of his critical project. Honneth (1990) writes, in this context, on the first generation of Frankfurt School, and compares an inner circle comprising Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse to an outer circle which includes authors such as Walter Benjamin, Franz Neumann, and Erich Fromm. According to our author, the members of the inner circle, who dominated the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in its early years, remained stuck to functionalism; that is, they only saw social action, performed in several social spheres (such as in the family or in Law), for their role of imposing domination. The members of the outer circle were, however, more sensitive to the potential of social action to produce significant transformations on several spheres. Because of that, according to Honneth, if they had been taken more seriously, the first generation would have found more interesting answers for their dilemmas.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite being a critical reader of psychoanalysis, in this work we will emphasize the ideas that Butler shares with Freud and Lacan.

We may already point out the first clue to understand psychoanalysis under a Honnethian standpoint. Critique to Adorno and Marcuse's functionalism (they were Freud supporters), walks hand in hand with the suspicion regarding a structure-oriented psychoanalysis: according to our author, there supposedly is a psychoanalytical excess and a sociological deficit in the work of these authors from the first generation. Honneth prefers psychoanalysis perspectives which are closer to empiricism. He thus associates his theory with Fromm's interactionism, as well as Winnicott's maturational development theory and, more recently, with the developmental psychology of North American authors, such as Daniel Stern (cf. Honneth, 1989; 1990; 2003b; 2010c).

According to Honneth (1990), Jürgen Habermas incorporated the anti-functional impulses of the members in the outer circle, and this allowed him to posit a theory that was able to restore emancipationist aspects of social action. The base for such recovery lies in the Habermasian ideas on linguistic intersubjectivity: instead of solely focusing on their instrumental role (that is, on its role of reproducing domination), Habermas stresses the potential of language to connect subjects and to enable communication.

Our author intend to resume the Habermasian project of immanent critique (that is, critique which seeks to mobilize the transformational aspect of rules that exist in our life style), which follows the path of intersubjectivity<sup>2</sup>. In order to achieve that, nonetheless, he insists that a sociological deficit - one that he also detects in the Habermasian theory - must be overcome (cf. Honneth, 1989).

The deficiencies from the second generation of the Frankfurt School are not, however, the same as the ones from the inner circle of the first generation. Habermas intends on rebuilding the conditions for enabling understanding practices. Based on such idea, he establishes the counterfactual hypothesis of an ideal discourse situation (one in which there could be universal access, symmetry among participants, sincerity, and search for mutual understanding), which must act as a parameter for undistorted communication. That would be a formal criterion with universalistic goals intending on neutrality regarding contexts (cf. Habermas, 1992). To Honneth, precisely because of such a quest for lack of context contamination, Habermas formulated a theory that was unable to account for the psychism, corporeality, values and expectations of subjects who engage in social struggles (cf. Honneth, 1989, 2003b; Petherbridge, 2011).

The impulse to overcome such deficit is what leads Honneth to deal with the problem with the constitution of the subject, and to associate Hegel and Winnicott. Our author then intends on providing an original sense to ideas about intersubjectivity that were already present in Habermas' work.

Honneth endeavors to maintain a dialectic game between transcendence and immanence: among philosophical assumptions and empiric material, from clinical and social psychology (cf. Honneth 2003a; Petherbridge, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> In his debate with Nancy Fraser, Honneth (2003a) makes it clear that his theory can be understood as further development of Habermas' theoretical project

The connection between philosophy, social critique, and psychoanalysis, according to the Frankfurtian philosopher, is required, as social processes can only be properly explained if "besides the linguistic articulation of subjects, they are also conceptualized as a result from actions in which the movement from unconscious drives or attachment energies of a subject is crystallized" (2010b, p. 254). Honneth thus states the importance of both intersubjective lineages (emphasizing the connection between babies and their mothers) and Freudian lineages (based on drives) of psychoanalysis; he does not fail from pointing out, however, his being inclined to the first perspective.

Even though he constantly makes references to Freud, as we said, Honneth rejects key Freudian theses, especially the drive theory. We also said that the reasons for such rejection are connected to the way the Frankfurtian reads Hegel. His reading method is marked by the intersubjective legacy our author received from his Kantian teacher, Jürgen Habermas. How, then, does Honneth read Hegel? For what reason does Honneth's appropriation of Hegel leads the Frankfurtian to get closer to Winnicott and to reject Freud's drive theory?

In his early works, Honneth focuses his reading on young Hegel's texts. More recently, however, he starts focusing on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Law*.

In the article *From Desire to Recognition: In Hegelian Fundamentals of Self-Consciousness (HegelsBegründung von Selbstbewusstsein- 2010e)*, which was originally published in 2008, Honneth exposes his highly particular interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which proposes to follow the course from desire towards love.

Honneth writes that, according to Hegel, the subject, who is conceived as a natural being, seeks to confirm his certainty of being able to destroy the remaining nature through the consumption of his objects, in a movement to satisfy his desire (*Begierde*). The existence of independent objects is proved by the fact that, despite the destruction acts, the process of life remains. Honneth sees, at that point, similarities between Hegel and Winnicott: both would support that, through impulses to consume the environment, the subject seeks to be certain that the reality is not only a product from his mental activity.

The ideas from the Frankfurtian are, above all, focused on his interpretation of the following paragraph of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Due to the independence of the object, self-consciousness can only achieve satisfaction when this object carries out its negation - in the former; and it must carry out such a negation in itself, as it is the negative in itself, and it must be what it is to the Other. (Hegel, 2004, p. 124)

Honneth refuses Alexandre Kojève's interpretation (which is welcomed by French thinkers such as Jacques Lacan), who writes about a desire for recognition, and he also refuses Hans-Georg Gadamer's reading (taken

by Whitebook), which reminds that the German word *Begierde* - which is used by Hegel to refer to desire - has a strong carnal connotation (it could be therefore translated as appetite).

Recognition, for Honneth's Hegel (2010e), regards the social means that allow the subject to satisfy his desire and to experience his activity of changing reality. This desire can only be fulfilled if the subject finds something in reality that performs an act of negation on him (that is, another subject) and if the very subject performs the same negation on himself. These are the fundamentals of the Honnethian intersubjectivity paradigm: when two subjects meet, they react (this act of reaction is not, as in Kant, a rational decision) to each other and, through the restriction of their domination desires they can meet without the consumption purpose.

Honneth (2010e) concludes that a trace of morality lies in that process:

The possibility for self-consciousness requires a certain kind of proto-morality, as only through the moral self-limitation of the other can we recognize the activity in which our own self instantly makes a permanent change in the world, and even produces reality. (p. 89)

This idea is fundamental in the construction of the concept of intersubjective freedom (or social freedom), which is key in Honneth's most recent book, *Freedom's Right* (2011). Our author defends that, upon investigating love relationships, Hegel developed the core factor of recognition: "the idea that mutual recognition is a kind of reciprocal self-limitation, in which not only you remain free, but can become even freer than if you had not been through this experience (Honneth, 2013a, p.247).

We must insist that the ideas of intersubjectivity and reciprocal self-limitation, which are the cornerstones of Honneth's theory, determine the way through which our author reads psychoanalysis. In order to better understand this question we must reintroduce his works from the 1990s. In *Struggle for Recognition* (2003b), Honneth already defended that his empirical complementation of Hegel's reading (here, specifically the texts from his youth) should come from Winnicott. The Frankfurtian author wrote, in his work, that, for the English psychoanalyst, immediately after birth, a baby and its mother (or another significant figure) constitute a dynamic of absolute dependence (or, in the philosopher's words, symbiosis); they depend entirely on each other in order to fulfill their needs<sup>3</sup>. With time, however, the mother then again focuses her attention on her social life, and does not immediately respond to her baby's requests. From then on, the relative independence

3 Winnicott writes about "absolute dependence" to refer to the baby's position and about "primary motherly concern" concerning the mother. The latter refers to a stage of motherly dependence or to a form of concern from the mother, in which her baby "initially seems to be part of her" (1963/1990, p. 85).

stage is started. Human aggressiveness arises, according to our author, in this intersubjective relationship: "from the gradual perception of a reality that resists domination, the baby quickly develops an inclination towards aggressive acts that are primarily directed towards its mother, who is now perceived as an independent being" (2003b, p. 162). Honneth believes that, such as his reading of Hegel, destruction acts are, to Winnicott, the way through which a baby tests whether it is before a world which does not submit itself to its control. If its mother sufficiently frustrates such acts, her baby will learn there are independent human beings beside it. It will be capable of loving other autonomous beings.

It is crucial for us to understand the Frankfurtian author defends there is intersubjectivity from the start. Honneth (2010c) used, in 2001, Daniel Stern's experimental research (which, according to Honneth, may complement Winnicott's theory) in order to support that idea<sup>4</sup>. Stern supposedly demonstrated that fusion states (that is, union between the self and the world) are always intermittent, as the baby has an elementary ability to distinguish its self and the other still in its first few weeks. Fusion experiences are supposedly interrupted by a trace of reciprocal self-limitation already in that period.

Whitebook's criticism focus precisely on the Honnethian defense of such innate sociability and in the resulting thesis for the intersubjective origin of a subject's negativity. The psychoanalyst connects Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel - which, as said, emphasizes the carnal connotation of the German word *Begierde* - to the Freudian notion of death drive - which implies the re-conduction of a living organism to an inorganic state (Freud, 1920/2010) - and defends there is a primary negativity power of the subject, with a biological origin, which precedes intersubjective relationships (cf. Whitebook 2001, 2003, 2008; Busch, 2003; Bedorf, 2004). Whitebook concludes: "initially, self-consciousness does not head towards another self-consciousness due to intersubjectivity or innate sociability, but rather because it is compelled by the internal logic of its narcissistic program" (Whitebook, 2001, p. 269). Judith Butler, despite not sharing the same comprehension of biology, makes a similar objection to Honneth: "It does not seem correct to demand that an infant is completely responsive to alterity. It also does not seem correct to find a structure of morality in an infant's effort to ensure the fulfillment of its primary needs" (Butler, 2008, p. 114).

Whitebook (2001) states the Freudian theory of drives is fundamentally important for social critique, as such primary energies, not only are destructive forces regarding established institutions, they also carry a potential for creation.

4 Butler (2008) strongly criticizes the methodological premises that determine Stern's Honnethian approximation and, generally speaking, the ones from the North American developmental psychology. According to that philosopher, the Frankfurtian author simply chooses to associate with psychology perspectives that confirm his theory's premises, without conducting a sufficiently careful work of comparing the various views.

In reply to Whitebook, Honneth performs adjustments (I emphasize they are only adjustments, as the Frankfurtian author does not review the intersubjective core of his theory) on the arguments presented in *Struggle for Recognition*. Our author insists that defending there is intersubjectivity from the start does not imply putting aside aggressiveness and the struggles as established ways for recognition. The work of the negative is important for both Freudians and intersubjective authors. However, according to the Frankfurtian author, there seems to be a fragile premise in Freud's theory: Freud believes that negativity forces originate from a biological drive rather than from an intersubjective (or social) one. Such assumption seems to have established a strong metaphysical burden to the Freudian psychoanalysis. Due to that, to Honneth, a way out has to be found in psychoanalysis versions that are aligned to intersubjectivity.

In recent works, the Frankfurtian author has broadened his initial reading of Winnicott in order to formulate the concept of antisocial affect. Such affect seems to originate from the (never finished) attempts to overcome the symbiosis stage, and it constitutes a force which drives the subject to rebel against situations in which the other is not at his disposal. That seems to be the root for the rebellion impulse against established recognition forms (rather than in the death drive): "the permanence of struggles for recognition does not arise from an unsociabilizable drive, but rather from a quest for independence that leads each subject to repeatedly deny the other's difference" (Honneth, 2003b, p. 315). The concept of antisocial affection could, then, perform a role that is analogous to the one from death drive, without the metaphysical burden the philosopher believes the Freudian concept carries (cf. Honneth, 2003b, 2003c, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d).

In order to account for the subject's creative potential without resorting to the drive theory, Honneth (2003c) recruits psychoanalyst Hans Loewald. The latter supports that the ever-incomplete movement to overcome the symbiosis stage generates ways of contact with alternatives that were excluded from the control of the ego, which notwithstanding are kept alive and may drive creative transformations in the identity. A mature subject is supposedly capable of accessing previously refused possibilities through a rationally controlled regression, and thus, bring them to the dialog<sup>5</sup>. On that process, Honneth comments: "under ideal circumstances, the human psyche should be understood as an interaction context which is shifted inwards, and it relates with the world of life in a complementary way" (*ibid.* p. 159).

Our author thus seems to seek to transpose Habermas' communicative model from the social life to the psychic life. Rather than only in his reading of Loewald, the same objective can be detected in his interpretation of the Freudian theory. In the text *Appropriation of Freedom: Freud's Conception of the Individual Self-Relation* (2007a),

Honneth, in a controversial way, states: "Freud seems to want to suggest the hermeneutic process of opening assumes a shape which carries in itself traces of an internal dialog" (2007a, p. 174).

Referring to Freud, the Frankfurtian also writes:

He frequently uses metaphors of the political world to structure the idea that the psychic instances should, if possible, keep a relationship of exchange and trade with each other. In this communicative process, the superego takes over by placing the "ethical and aesthetic" voice of critique in "inhibitions, symptoms, and angst", whereas the task of thematizing the need for adjustments with reality is up to the ego. Regarding integrability, all cravings and beliefs that are approved through the dialogic test procedure between those two instances are rational. (2007a, p. 174)

Honneth points towards a communicative potential between the ego, the superego, and the id. Such idea is seldom accepted by Freudians. Whitebook, for example, states that talking about a dialog between psychic instances is misguided, as this way to explain highlights "moderation, non-violence, and symmetry" (2001, p. 280). The word "controversy" could provide, according to that psychoanalyst, a more accurate description.

The association with Loewald also has other advantages for Honneth's critical project. According to our author, the ideas Loewald defends regarding a potential for creation of new identities based on a dialog between the ego and what has already been excluded from it may be associated with normative conditions that are currently in force concerning plural identities - that is, the current broadly disseminated belief that we do not need to follow the path past generations have determined - we are free to discover what we want to be by experiencing different identities. Such connection can, according to Honneth, provide a base for defending the post-modern normative ideal of multiple identities.

As we said, our author supports that the action from the forces that intend to destroy the order is important for Freudians, Lacanians, and intersubjective authors. For that reason, the disagreements between those two psychoanalysis perspectives, after all, do not seem to have greatly relevant consequences. We should, however, insist on our questioning. Would the differences between Freudians and intersubjective authors actually be of little relevance? By rejecting the death drive, wouldn't Honneth have put aside the dimension of the psychoanalytic theory that carries the most deeply critical potential?

The objections to metaphysics are certainly constant behind the Freudian argument (1920/2010) that the death drive consists of a biological force which drives the return to an inorganic state. Paying attention to this point should not, however, lead to a quick rejection of the drive theory.

5 Loewald writes: "new development leaps of the self may be closely related to regressive rediscoveries of the subject" (1960/2000, p. 225). Please also refer to Whitebook (2004).

The Freudian emphasis on biology can be withdrawn if we remember, as Jean Laplanche (1985), that the drive theory was confronted with the clinical experience, and, based on that, it was reformulated many times throughout Freud's life (cf. Freud, 1905/1999, 1915/1999, 1914/2010, 1919/2010b, 1920/2010, 1924/2011). Death drive is manifested in the compulsion to repetition, that is: "cases in which the individual seems to passively experience something that is out of his influence, when he actually just experiences repetition" (Freud, 1920/2010, p. 134). Freud (1920/2010) provides the example of a woman who got married for three times in a row to men who quickly became sick and required that she take care of them before dying. In the clinic, the compulsion to repetition is manifested, above all, in the transference: the patient reproduces the repressed in his relationship with the psychoanalyst. The clinical recurrence of transference phenomena (rather than the Freudian ideas on biology) is, according to Laplanche (1985), the biggest proof of how strong death drive is.

Accepting the death drive does not therefore imply being caught in a biologicist or metaphysic trap. Besides that, we must investigate the possibility that rejection to this concept has provoked losses that were not sufficiently considered by Honneth. To that end, it is important to be aware of the fact that, whenever he refers to the death drive, Honneth associates it with aggressiveness and destruction, and it is due to his taking that function into account that he seeks to replace it with antisocial affection. Could we say the same about Freud? Would we find, in that psychoanalyst works, indications that the death drive generates something that is not merely aggression? Would there be a productive aspect in the work of the negative performed by the drive which could have been neglected by Honneth?<sup>6</sup>

There is always something beyond what is possible to say. Furthermore, to Freud, there is something that can unintentionally drive the speech and the actions of a subject, without his realizing it. In that sense, Freud connects the death drive to that in the compulsion of repetition that is uncanny: "the previous considerations lead us to believe that something which can remind us of that compulsion of previous repetition will be perceived as uncanny" (1919/2010a, p. 356).

Freud investigates estrangement experiences, above all, in the text *The Uncanny* (1919/2010a), which is the English translation for *Das Unheimlich*. The German word allows associating it with ideas such as familiar-hidden or strange-familiar. That is an uncanny sensation regarding something that is very close, something that may both refer to the subject and to something that can be assimilated in the object. On that sensation, Freud writes: "they are observed in two ways: either a fraction of reality or a fraction of the ego itself seems strange to us. In the last case, depersonalization is mentioned; uncanny and depersonalizations are closely related to each other" (1937/2010, p.258).

6 On Honneth's negligence to the productivity of the work of the negative, please also refer to the article "*Abaixo de Zero*" (Below Zero) by Vladimir Safatle (2013).

Freud (1919/2010a) tells that once, while he was walking in a small Italian town, he ended up in a house full of brothels. He immediately tried to get away from there. Surprisingly, his effort to move away, without his realizing it, led him to get back to that very street. It is as if something alien to his consciousness had led his steps and taken him back to the place he wanted to escape from. Uncanny and depersonalization refer to experiences such as this one, in which the subject perceives himself as another.

Honneth (2010a), in turn, strives to investigate possible outcomes from Winnicott's ideas, and argues that intersubjectivity in groups is capable of dissolving the borders between internal and external realities. He then writes about moments of fusion and temporary abandonment of the ego in "cooperative ecstatic experiences" (p.274), such as being part of a celebrating crowd in soccer stadiums or rock concerts.

It is necessary, however, to understand the difference between those experiences and the challenging Freudian uncanny. The examples of intersubjective fusion evoke a kind of collective climax, rather than estrangement. We should also remember that the Frankfurtian author, who was a reader of Loewald, writes about a rationally controlled regression to fusion states. The divergence gets clear if we observe that what is excluded from the ego, to Freud, is not something the subject can get back to in a controlled way, but rather something that imposes itself: it acts without the subject being able to control it, and precisely because of that, it is capable of producing uncanny sensations. Upon emphasizing the existence of a rationally controlled regression process, Honneth seems not to consider the productive potential of experiences that are indeterminate, as taught by Freudians such as Jacques Lacan, involve risks and hinder dominance attempts.

We must remember that Lacan connects the Freudian uncanny to angst. Angst, for that psychoanalyst, is that which appears to replace the lack (understood, under a Kojévian standpoint, as the negativity of desire<sup>7</sup>), as "there is no image of lack"<sup>8</sup> (Lacan, 2005, p. 51). Angst is that which causes what is fixed to vacillate, it causes the world's images to dissolve. Such tearing to pieces is an effect from the work of the negative, and it may make room for deep transformations in the subject.

Butler, whose ideas are aligned at that point with the Lacanian theses and to the French reception of Hegel, writes: "the recognition becomes possible at a moment

7 Unlike Honneth, Kojève reads Hegel in a way to connect desire (rather than love) to the negativity of the subject: "This ego, which feeds on desires, will be desire itself in its own Being, which was created in and by the fulfillment of its desire. And since the desire is fulfilled as a denying action of what is given, the very Being of that Ego will be action. That Ego will not be, as the animal Ego, identity or equality to itself, but rather a denying negativity" (2002, p. 12). The desire, to Kojève, is "anthropogenic" (2002, p. 13), and it is through it that the socialization process takes place.

8 Lacan writes about angst and the Freudian uncanny: "but if, suddenly, each and every regulation is missing - that is, both what constitutes the anomaly and what constitutes the absence, if that is suddenly not missing, angst will start at that moment" (2005, p. 52).

of fundamental vulnerability” (2004, p. 149). The North American philosopher insists that openness to alterity takes place through a refusal to identity. Uncanny experiences show that the subject is other from the image he has of himself; for that reason, those experiences may drive him to enter a risky, radical, and irreversible relationship with the alterity.

Honneth knows the modern, western societies do not only produce normative principles that are connected to the extension of intersubjective freedom, but they also generate exclusions. He is also aware that there is a productive potential in what is excluded. For that reason, he insists that suffering may be the driving force of new demands, and thus cause social changes. The Frankfurtian author’s theory seems, nonetheless, not to take into account the productivity of a specific kind of exclusion: the effects from what is expelled (or foreclosed) from a symbolic order.

The Freudian investigations on death drive reveal that what cannot be assimilated by the symbolic generates compulsion to repetition and uncanny experiences. They thus lead the subject to face emptiness. This deeply destabilizing confrontation is tied to a work of the negative, which is capable of making room for something new<sup>9</sup>.

The death drive carries a potential for producing a rupture with relationships that are established from identities that are constituted based on a “structural starting point” (in Lacanian language, from a fantasmatic structure) that determines the way through which the subject provides values and meaning to the objects in the world. Uncanny experiences allow the subject to realize he is beyond which represents him inside a symbolic order (in Lacanian language, which means the subject is not reduced to the order of the signifier, there is something from the Real in it).

Aware of the political potential of these experiences<sup>10</sup>, Butler writes about the importance of keeping oneself “unintelligible”. For the philosopher, it regards to refusing

identities which are determined by social rules. A critique perspective then has the task of suspending the norms or dismiss recognition under the terms established by those norms. That is why Butler (1999) emphasizes the importance of unthinkable, monstrous experiences, which evoke dissolving images. She is interested in what she calls abject; that is, through the presence of what has been excluded (or foreclosed) from the symbolic field.

Honneth highlights the role of the subjects’ self-realization expectations and images they have of a good life for social critique. Under that tone, he uses Loewald’s psychoanalysis to defend a multiplicity of identities. Butler, such as Honneth, takes into account the relevance of social struggles, and likewise does not fail to consider the role of the identities for their articulation. Unlike the Frankfurtian author, nevertheless, the North American author emphasizes the fact that those identity demands may also end up becoming exclusion factors. Due to that, she insists in the political relevance of an act of refusal to identity. To her, it regards to undoing something that we believe we are and expect to be, so that we can take risks and maybe achieve recognition under different terms.

The philosopher writes:

Although the political speeches that mobilized identity categories tend to cultivate identifications in defense of a political objective, the persistence of dis-identifications may be equally crucial to the re-articulation of democratic debates. (Butler, 1993, p. 4)

We may not neglect the role of Honneth’s recognition theory: the Frankfurtian author takes a fundamental step when he places the subject and the psychoanalytic theory in the core of the critique. However, it seems to us he does not advance sufficiently. Butler writes that for not taking into account the “alterity in the subject’s heart” (2008, p. 113), the intersubjective and empiricist version of psychoanalysis that is supported by Honneth is incapable of sufficiently clearly distinguishing images that were donated to another human being by the ego and ways for a relationship with the other in a radical sense.

9 On that topic, please also refer to Safatle (2007, 2008).

10 In her text *Longing for Recognition*, Butler (2004) carefully examines this topic and shows the difference between an accommodating point of view that defends that the self must include alterity, and Hegel reading that defend the subject is always another regarding himself. He thus insists the subject is not a container that is capable of including another one, he is this relationship with the other.

## **Honneth e a pulsão: sobre as razões e as consequências para a crítica social da rejeição honnethiana à pulsão de morte freudiana**

**Resumo:** Axel Honneth associa sua leitura de Hegel à psicologia da maturação de Winnicott de modo a defender teses sobre intersubjetividade e reconhecimento. Esta articulação entre filosofia e psicanálise é objeto da crítica de dois hegelianos: Joel Whitebook, leitor de Freud, e Judith Butler, leitora crítica de Freud e Lacan. No centro da polêmica está a rejeição honnethiana ao trabalho do negativo realizado pela pulsão de morte freudiana. Pretendemos seguir o rastro deste debate e investigar as razões e consequências para a crítica social da recusa do frankfurtiano à pulsão.

**Palavras-chave:** reconhecimento, intersubjetividade, Escola de Frankfurt, pulsão, identidade.

## Honneth et la pulsion: sur les raisons et conséquences pour la critique sociale du refus de honnethienne à la pulsión de mort freudienne

**Résumé:** Axel Honneth associe sa lecture de Hegel à la psychologie de la maturation de Winnicott afin de défendre ses thèses sur l'intersubjectivité et la reconnaissance. Cette articulation entre la philosophie et la psychanalyse est l'objet des critiques de deux hégéliens, Joel Whitebook, lecteur de Freud, et Judith Butler, lectrice critique de Freud et Lacan. Au centre de la polémique on trouve le rejet honnethien au travail du négatif accompli par la pulsion de mort freudienne. Nous avons l'intention, à la suite de ce débat, d'investiguer les raisons et conséquences pour la critique sociale du refus frankfurtien à la pulsion.

**Mots-clés:** reconnaissance, intersubjectivité, École de Francfort, pulsion, identité.

## Honneth y la pulsión: sobre las razones y las consecuencias para la crítica social del rechazo honnethiano a la pulsión de muerte freudiana

**Resumen:** Axel Honneth asocia su lectura de Hegel con la psicología de maduración de Winnicott para defender tesis sobre la intersubjetividad y el reconocimiento. Este vínculo entre la filosofía y el psicoanálisis es el objeto de crítica de dos autores hegelianos: Joel Whitebook, lector de Freud, y Judith Butler, lectora crítica de Freud y Lacan. En el centro de la polémica se encuentra el rechazo de Honneth al trabajo del negativo de la pulsión de muerte freudiana. En este artículo se pretende dar lugar a este debate e investigar las razones y las consecuencias para la crítica social del rechazo honnethiano a la pulsión.

**Palabras clave:** reconocimiento, intersubjetividad, Escuela de Frankfurt, pulsión, identidad.

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