

A Case for a Neutral Narrative of Recognition Through Reconstructive Normative Simulations

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Abstract: Axel Honneth's recognition theory has had some recent development and revision from his seminal work *The Struggle for Recognition*, his response to critics in *Reification*, and his Hegelian reworking of ethical life in *Freedom's Right*. There is an urgent theoretical need to consolidate these works to articulate the neutral tendencies of Honneth's recognition theory. A consolidated overview of Honneth's works will provide the necessary renewal of its critical potential. My objective in this paper is threefold: 1) to provide a reconstruction and consolidation of Honneth's recognition theory; 2) to demonstrate the critical potential of this consolidated theory that merges the spheres of love, rights, and esteem vis-à-vis personal relations, democratic participation, and market economy; and 3) to use this methodology to provide a critical social simulation of the condition of migration in the Philippines. My proposed methodology is to provide "reconstructive normative simulations" to demonstrate social pathology's narrative from the perspective of misrecognised subjects, covering both internal and external migrations that have been exacerbated by factors emerging from personal relations, democratic participation, and the market economy. I aim to provide some examples of narratives based on a reconstructive normative simulation to elicit a sense of rational dialectical empathy.

Keywords: recognition theory, reconstructive normative simulation, *sadbox*, critical theory

Introduction

One of the challenges posed with an expository discussion of Axel Honneth's recognition theory is the aversion of the current socio-political climate with the idea of normativity. While normativity

might be aligned to the maintenance of the status-quo, any revolutionary or emancipatory ideology is inevitably tied to strive or struggle for the possibility of implementing its normative agenda to replace the status-quo. Much of the difficulty in presenting Honneth's recognition theory is the theoretical ambivalence towards emancipatory movements and its positive outlook towards social solidarity. While normativity provides an internal and structural critique of a social system's pathological tendencies, it is also the goal of any critical theory to re-align and reconfigure existing norms to attain an emancipatory objective. Normativity, much like Derrida's logocentrism, is thus both the source of critique and the object of critique in critical theory. Honneth's theoretical ambivalence towards emancipatory or revolutionary movements traces its root back to his reading of Hegel's *System of Ethical Life*.¹ Honneth notes that the dilemma of the French Revolution lies in the conflict between the merger of revolutionary praxis and expanding market system against the social isolation or *atomistic* tendencies of modern law.² What is at stake in any modern democratic society is the constant tension offered by the possibility of universal unity from the law and the constant recalibration of this universal umbrella to constantly reintegrate atomistic subjects to the folds of society. The tension is notable when the issue of freedom becomes articulated as the source of assent of a norm and social atomism.

In this paper, I will attempt to consolidate Honneth's recognition theory through its development over the last three decades. *Atomism and Ethical Life* provides a brief glimpse of Honneth's reconstructive effort to articulate Hegel's vision of social solidarity that is autonomously validated by individual social subjects in a democratic society. I assert that the overarching theme of Honneth's work is to provide a glimpse into the possibility of a theoretical praxis that enables individual subjects to attain a certain degree of self-realisation of their necessity in the spheres of social interaction. While this may seem to sound pollyannish and might raise some questions as to whether one might have forgotten to remove one's rose-tinted glasses, I also argue that this goal is far from the smooth utopian vision when we begin to enumerate the innumerable steps that need to be taken. This is one of the reasons why Ricoeur raised the issue of the possibility of presenting possible alternatives to a "violent" or agonistic mode of struggles for recognition.³ Much of this issue, however, lies with the segmentary nature of

¹ See Axel Honneth, "Atomism and Ethical Life: On Hegel's Critique of the French Revolution," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* (1988), 359-368.

² *Ibid.*, 361-362.

³ Ricoeur's reading of Honneth's recognition theory (which is limited to *The Struggle for Recognition*) criticizes Honneth's choice of the word 'struggle' insofar as it implies violence and force. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. by David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 186. A response from Honneth's interview can be seen in Gonçalo

Honneth's work. While most scholars are familiar and are limited to Honneth's *Struggle for Recognition*, commentators are at a loss to the overarching goal of recognition theory.⁴ Recent efforts to consolidate Honneth's recognition theory yields an insight into the continuity of Honneth's *Freedom's Right* and its relation to other books such as *Critique of Power, Struggle for Recognition*, and *Reification*. Zurn's *Axel Honneth*,⁵ for example, provides a consolidated outlook of Honneth's recognition theory highlighting the addition of antecedent recognition and the expansion of Honneth's social theory in *Freedom's Right*.

On the other hand, my recent attempt to consolidate Honneth's recognition theory focused on the themes of freedom, identity, and normativity.⁶ A consolidated outlook of Honneth's recognition theory provides a solution to a lingering problem of the dynamics of recognition and how we deal with the normativistic tendencies of a theory. Zurn's approach provides a resolution of the possibility of reified normativity in the initial phases of recognition in love, rights, and esteem. This approach further expands the context of normativity in a broader social condition that calls for a constant renewal of normative values in modern democratic societies.

The goal of this paper is threefold. Firstly, I will briefly discuss the necessity of a consolidated outlook of Honneth's recognition theory. As mentioned earlier, the pressing matter of validating the issue of normativity is an immediate concern for asserting the viability of recognition theory as an immanent critique. The second goal of this paper is to look at recognition theory's viable theoretical praxis in a thought experiment I have concocted called "reconstructive normative simulations" (RNS). RNS is my way of identifying the resources that are necessary for a functioning social system and how certain deficiencies from the lack of these resources can give rise to pathological relations. This brings me to the third goal of the paper where a critical juncture could be raised in recognition theory's intersubjectivist approach. The renewal of critical theory's vision of social justice is made possible through the constant effort of triangulating the deficiencies in normative resources found in the spheres of private relations, the market economy, and democracy. My goal is to affirm that the dialectical relationship

Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today: An Interview with Axel Honneth," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 39, no. 2 (2013), 217.

⁴ In a previous work, I have documented Nikolas Kompridis' critique of Honneth's recognition theory. While the former has written several essays as a critique of recognition theory, the latter, to the best of my knowledge, has written any response. See Roland Theuas Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 133-158.

⁵ See Christopher Zurn, *Axel Honneth: A Critical Theory of the Social* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

⁶ See Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition*.

between individual identities and the social spheres presents a productive mode of renewing the normative goals of critical social theory.

Recognition Theory: A Consolidated Outlook

Two approaches are possible with Honneth's recognition theory. The first approach is to follow the route provided by developmental psychology's methodology of how norms progress and enable subjects to integrate into already-existing societal norms. Such a method is similar to Freud, Piaget, and even Kohlberg's developmental theories. This route is a common outcome of an isolated reading of Honneth's *Struggle for Recognition*. As much as it provides a developmental framework of understanding the function of recognition in the integrative process of socialisation, the linear understanding of the development does not clarify how pathologies are rectified. Although pathological features are identified in each mode of recognition,⁷ the critical potential of the work is limited to an intersubjectivist model that allows a viable form of communicating instances of disrespect. While there are some indications that *Struggle for Recognition* is only one of the parts of Honneth's broader project of investigating the possibility of social solidarity (can be found in *Atomism and the Ethical Life*, *Critique of Power*, and his discussion of Hegel's idea of crime), the stages and piecemeal delivery of Honneth's work led to the prevalence of this approach to commentators and critics. My proposed approach is similar to Zurn's consolidated outlook which relies on four of Honneth's essential works, namely *Critique of Power*, *Struggle for Recognition*, *Reification*, and *Freedom's Right*. This approach provides a continuity in Honneth's theory that supplements the fundamental concepts of the modes of recognition under the context of critical theory and modern democracy. This approach avoids a linear reading of recognition theory where norms are in the constant process of renewal where dialectical tensions between forthcoming and new identities are constantly engaged in a productive process of revisiting norms.

A linear reading of Honneth's recognition theory would involve looking at the developmental stages of *love/care*, *rights*, and *esteem*. Love provides the first encounter of the subject with an initial receptivity from parents, siblings, and caregivers. While the initial engagement between the baby and the mother or caregiver is that of immediate dependency,⁸ the baby would also begin to understand and recognise the mother's independence.⁹

⁷ Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, trans. by Joel Anderson, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 129.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

This recognition of independence, while maintaining a continuity of love,¹⁰ provides the necessary scaffolding for further future social relations. Love and care undergird the entire structure of social relations insofar as it recognises that the self and other individuals are rightful recipients of care. This recognition of individual independence leads to the development of the understanding of reciprocal social relations. Insofar as the self understands that he or she is a subject deserving of love and care, he or she also recognises that others are likewise deserving of love and care.¹¹ As a bearer of this right, we understand that the value of reciprocating this form of recognition with others is a necessary function of any productive social relations. The third stage of recognition theory is the social currency that motivates communal unity towards shared goals and objectives.¹² Esteem provides value to individuals insofar as their contributions to the community elicit a graded response of affirmation by others. This linear and developmental reading of Honneth's recognition theory can provide an understanding of normative practices in a community and at the same time explain why certain social pathologies exist. As a neutral narrative, Honneth's readers will have to understand that the idea of normativity in recognition theory accounts for already existing normative practices within a community. However, this does not exclude the possibility and necessity of a community to revise and reconsider existing norms to adapt to social changes such as the inclusion of new identities, crises, and rectification of social pathologies. The force of normativity does not terminate simply in the reproduction and practice of a community, it is subject to constant re-evaluation and scrutiny where mis-recognised individuals can either re-align themselves to the norm or contribute to the change of norms. Social solidarity, in the case of growing and expanding communities, must therefore take into consideration the asymmetric nature of norms despite their need to maintain symmetry among the community of individuals. Honneth notes that this issue was not sufficiently addressed in Hegel and Mead:

In thus sharpening the normative point of the category of a community of value, this move yields two theoretical advantages, the extent of which was clear to neither Hegel nor Mead: on the one hand, because it contains the possibility of further equalization and individualization, the course of development that is already laid out in the recognition relationship associated with social esteem only needs to be extended

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹² *Ibid.*, 122.

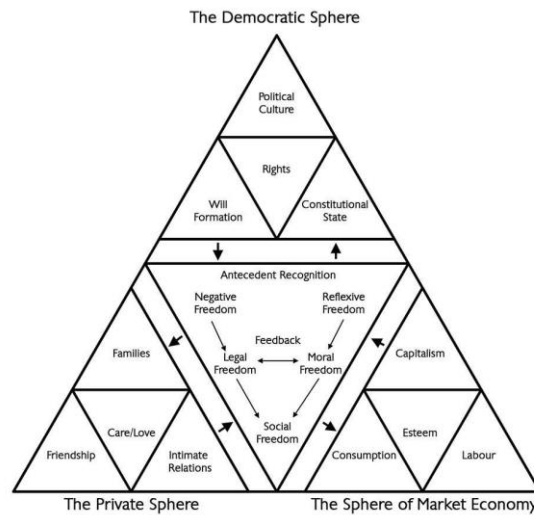
beyond the present into the future for it to reach the idea they outlined; on the other hand, however, this idea is itself so constituted as to admit only community-generating values that are structurally compatible with the moral conditions of modern law, that is, with the individual autonomy of every individual.¹³

The dynamic approach of reading Honneth's recognition theory begins where the linear approach ends. The modes of recognition of the spheres of love/care, rights, and esteem are already established in their developmental progression, supposing for example that we situate the context of normativity in a modern democracy. Individuals at this point are already engaged in a variety of social interactions, with their personal relations, the market economy, and the democratic sphere. Individuals in a modern democratic society participate in a give-and-take relationship where they take and receive the initial three modes of recognition (care/love, rights, and esteem). The context of normativity in these modes is subject to what Honneth refers to as *antecedent recognition*.¹⁴ This means that in the case of our established experience of norms from the initial engagements with either family, personal relations, and friends are evaluated, revised, and recalibrated to accommodate new identities and reintegrate each other to expected norms of social interactions. Antecedent recognition plays an important role in filling up the gap left between the possibility of reified norms and the linear approach of recognition theory. Moreover, Antecedent recognition also addresses a long-standing criticism of optimism in Honneth's recognition theory by confronting the actual danger of norms that are left to linger as a habit and convention of social interactions.¹⁵ Furthermore, I assert that the function of antecedent recognition is present in all the modes of recognition as an adaptive core that allows love/care, esteem, and rights to compliment the specific functions of each mode. Here is an illustration of the overarching structure of recognition theory:

¹³ *Ibid.*, 178. My emphases

¹⁴ Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56.

¹⁵ See Christopher Zurn, *Axel Honneth*, 193. See also Nikolas Kompridis, "From Reason to Self-Realisation? Axel Honneth and the 'Ethical Turn' in Critical Theory," in *Critical Horizons*, 5, no. 1 (2004), 347.



From this illustration,¹⁶ we can locate the various functions that individuals have in varying modes of recognition. As social beings, we engage in relations with families, friends, and intimate partners. We are also participants in the sphere of the market economy as producers, consumers, and investors. As members of democratic societies, we participate in the formation of discourse, opinion and will be forming activities, and cultivating political culture not only in voting for government officials but also in the function of influencing legislative activities that affect society. The vantage point offered by this perspective is that individuals are not merely bound by the burden of an intersubjectivist demand for recognition of other subjects, but also of our introspective responsibility of regulating what we can take or contribute to the modes of recognition from these spheres. Exhaustion or depletion of normative resources from the modes of recognition creates conditions of pathological relations for subjects that draw from the necessary resources to maintain stable social relationships. For example, if left without legislative intervention, the sphere of the market economy will function amorally or with anomie since its primary concern is to accumulate wealth.¹⁷ Private relations if left unchecked by the market and the legal democratic sphere can elicit an infinite amount of demand for resources to meet its agenda. Likewise, a democratic legal sphere, if not bound by its responsibilities to the sphere of private relations and the market economy, will be detrimental to the functions of the latter-mentioned spheres.

¹⁶ Pada, *Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy of Recognition*, 164.

¹⁷ Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right* (New York: Polity Press, 2014), 192.

While Honneth appears too optimistic in certain aspects of his theory, I argue that the dimension of social pathologies is often left unscrutinised since it places both burdens on subjects that demand and dispenses recognition. In other words, identities that demand recognition are also duty-bound by the covenant of social relations to reciprocate this demand for recognition. Following Honneth's early 1988 essay evokes an unspoken intention of his works, it seems to indicate that the general object of Honneth's social theory is focused on the dynamics of social atomism and social solidarity. My take on the matter is that Honneth is pursuing a contemporary reconstruction of Hegel's system of ethical life that encompasses the common foundational structures of contemporary democratic societies. Whether my assumption is false or correct, the lesson that can be gleaned from this approach is that the burden of social pathologies can be alleviated by continuous participation in the production and dispensation of normative resources from the modes of recognition.

Reconstructive Normative Simulations: An Intersubjectivist and Introspective Proposal

In my most recent work, I have outlined a method of identifying social pathologies through the triangulation of normative resources that are deficient in the modes of recognition. My objective was to provide "simulations" of pathological or *atomised* subjects that are unable to receive and/or dispense normative resources in the modes of recognition. I drew inspiration for this idea from Honneth's constant use of literary and historical characters ranging from Ralph Ellison's unnamed protagonist from *The Invisible Man*,¹⁸ Kleist's *Michael Kolhaas*, to Ulrike Meinhoff, the left-leaning West German militant. Other sources of inspiration, on my part, came from local literary works such as F. Sionil Jose's *Ermita*¹⁹ and the Filipino penchant for entertainment based on the suffering of other people. The goal of reconstructive normative simulations is to construct conditions that would simulate the consequences and the cause of pathological social relations or what I would refer to as a *sad-box*.

Reconstructive normative simulations offer a dynamic approach to recognition theory's agenda of critique by localising discourse at the level of the subject's experience of disrespect and their possible contribution to the cycle of social pathologies. While my initial intention was to promote the intersubjectivist and introspective dimension of recognition theory, I can see further development of this approach in empirical sociological studies. What

¹⁸ See Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

¹⁹ See F. Sionil Jose, *Ermita (A Filipino Novel)* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1994).

we can explore at the moment is the potential of renewing critical theory to address contemporary forms of social atomism. Social atomism is a condition that dates as far back as Hobbes' depiction of the human condition to our contemporary incredulity towards the social, political, and economic status quo. Not only are we prone to neglecting our intersubjectivist duties towards our social relations we are also prone to the dereliction of our introspective responsibilities. I mention Hobbes in this juncture to specifically address the unstable societal expectations in contemporary modern democracies. We expect too much, give too little, or give too much, and expect a paltry recompense for our effort. Part of the difficulty that we encounter is the fact that the modern development of democracy has led to the strong emphasis on the need for subjects to self-actualise and societal mechanisms have evolved to encourage the exploration of these possibilities for self-realisation. While there has been a radical growth in the development of freedom for individuals at the turn of the century, little attention has been given as to whether this growth could be sustained by existing normative resources. Thomas Sowell, for example, makes a case with the issue of minimum wage laws. He argues that although minimum wage laws might appear beneficial to disadvantaged minorities or racial groups, their viability remains problematic because employers might in turn opt not to hire new employees.²⁰ Sowell's argument against minimum wage laws presents an interesting scenario where an RNS of institutions shows a possible reaction to deficits in the resources dispensed in the modes of recognition. One can imagine a scenario where unemployment is raised despite a high rate imposed by minimum wage laws. The demand of the mode of rights to pressure the market economy creates a deficit in resources needed by the sphere of private relations. Outcomes may vary depending on the socio-cultural contexts while the affected sphere of private relations is no longer receiving the proper normative resources to sustain stable relations. In this scenario, younger adults might no longer opt to seek independence from their parents, families might become burdened by the lack of material resources to sustain everyday expenses, or worse, people might turn to illicit and criminal activities to sustain a living wage.

The above scenarios are highly viable for the analysis offered by RNS. While they are not necessarily new scenarios that we encounter in different cultures, nations, and socio-economic conditions, it does point out that an introspective approach is required to balance the demands of intersubjective awareness. While subjects of recognition are always free to demand their need for societal affirmation, they also need to consider how certain demands for recognition may have detrimental effects on other social participants in

²⁰ Thomas Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 73.

the sphere of private relations, the market economy, and the democratic state. A popular trope in the Philippines that merits the attention of RNS is the *taguyod* trope experienced by Filipino families. *Taguyod* is a Tagalog word for support or establishment of a goal, usually involving the need to fulfil great economic demands in an impoverished scenario. The popularity of *taguyod* tropes in film, literature, and television lies precisely in its accurate reproduction of the social dynamics of modern Filipino families. The pathological relationship developed under these conditions usually involves deficits in the three spheres, namely the inability of the democratic sphere to intervene in individual rights, the lack of resources dispensed by the market economy, and the insatiable demands of private relations.

A common formula for the *taguyod* trope is that there is a struggling, minimum-wage, family with multiple children. In their escape plan against poverty, they consolidate their meagre resources to facilitate the education of one of their children, usually the eldest, to a labour career that could be exported to a first-world country. In our RNS, let us suppose that the preferred export career for Filipinos is in the field of nursing. The parents, or in most cases, *one of the parents*, will scrape every bit of resources that they can muster to pay for the education and training of the child with the hopes that their *investment* will bring some comfort for the rest of the family. During this process, the child's siblings are neglected, because the attention was focused on the education and development of the chosen child. Supposing that the chosen child succeeds in securing a career as a nurse in a first-world country, the parents at this point have already expended their productive capacities, and the siblings are in no position to secure a stable source of income. Consequently, the chosen child will be obliged to pay for the expenditures of the entire family. This involves the parents, the siblings, or in most cases, even the children of the siblings.

The outcome of this RNS or *sad-box* is the social entanglement of the chosen child's private relations, which prevents any further self-realisation among the parties involved. The siblings were denied the possibility for self-actualisation, and the chosen child is burdened with the economic responsibility of providing resources for the rest of the family. Some anecdotal variations with the *taguyod* trope may not involve export friendly careers, it might involve taking over a family business, or a financially rewarding career that can uplift the family's economic status. Despite these variations, the trope employs foregoing the autonomy of an individual to pursue the individual needs of the family to the extent that it damages the capacity of the altruistic individual to self-actualise. It is a common occurrence in Filipino families, joint families, or even generational families to rely on a singular resource earner to sustain the needs of the entire family. While this may provide a picture of a success story of 'Filipino resiliency'

amidst the difficulty of economic survival, it also presents a chain of social pathologies as its consequence. On the level of personal relations, the migrant worker might find himself or herself socially alienated from his or her family, friends, and intimate partner. In the case of the market economy, the contribution of the migrant worker as a skilled labourer might deprive his or her home community of products and services that he or she might have made locally available. Finally, in the democratic sphere, the migrant worker's distance (perhaps, also the lack of direct participation) from their community might lead to apathy and reliance on aggregated information that would in turn influence their interaction with the democratic sphere. The case of a migrant worker's participation in the democratic sphere presents an asymmetrical value for their home community. On the one hand, migrant workers spend most of their time away from their home community which deprives them of the necessary experience and information that can aid them in their political participation in their respective home community such as electing a public official or a referendum. On the other hand, migrant workers are also burdened with a much pressing concern of aligning themselves to a foreign community.

While it is important to note the pathological effects of social alienation on private relations, the market economy, and the democratic sphere, we should take into consideration that these areas of social interaction are also possible sources of social alienation. I have already noted the effects of a pathological relationship that is latent in personal relations, notably, social pressures emanating from the needs of a migrant worker's family. The market economy can likewise add pressure to the migrant worker. A devaluated workforce will seek other labour opportunities in other places where their services are appreciated. To compound things further, the government acting on behalf of the democratic sphere might even encourage work migration as a quick solution to undervalued labour. These pathological responses can cascade to other areas of society, creating norms that further amplify anomie between individuals and institutions. In Japan, the phenomenon of *Hikikomoris* or social recluses is a cascade effect of various societal pressures and circumstances.²¹ Zimbardo and Coulombe, likewise observe that modern demands on families, specifically single-parent families, create a condition of detachment and purposelessness.²²

My intention with the migrant Filipino worker as an example is not to valorise any national pride or uplift the Filipino spirit through a localised trope. The reason for this excursus is to highlight the necessity of a reciprocal

²¹ Takahiro Kato et al., "*Hikikomori*: Multidimensional understanding, assessment, and future international perspectives," in *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 73, no.8, 427-440.

²² Philip Zimbardo and Nikita Coulombe, *Man Interrupted* (Massachusetts: Conari Press, 2016), 39-62.

outcome of recognition. Heroic acts of sacrifice and altruism are only heroic when the story of heroism is declared as an abrupt end to a narrative. What happens after the heroic act is often spliced out of the narrative to leave a palatable conclusion to the story. My point is that social interactions are sustained through continuity of stable relationships through the three modes of recognition. This is the reason why Honneth would prioritise the necessity of a reciprocal outcome of recognition above the infinite demand of altruism.²³ Likewise, an emphasis on the necessity of an introspective should at least be prioritised equally with the intersubjective aspect of recognition theory. Pathological tendencies in social relations can be resolved if subjects are willing to engage dialectically and negotiate their demands for recognition. With the popularity of asserting the demands for recognition for minorities and the oppressed, considerations should be made as to whether these demands could be met or if they could lead to a sustainable outcome for stable social relations. A neutral narrative for recognition provides a fecund ground for critique by acknowledging the pathological conditions of affected parties and institutions involved that may negotiate for a symmetrical outcome.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Critical theory's capacity to renew its approach towards attaining its normative agenda relies on its dynamic ability to adjust its trajectories and maintain its productive discourse. The question whether critical theory can overcome its Eurocentric tendencies or the viability of its theory in developing nations is an issue that requires careful consideration for recognition theory. I think that the Eurocentric accusations of critical theory merit some consideration of how philosophical inquiry has sustained itself through its continuity of discourse. I find the accusation of Eurocentrism in critical theory as the symptom of a problem rather than the cause of the problem that haunts the viability of critical theory. The ancient Greeks were never embarrassed by acknowledging ideas from the gymnosophists. In the case of the scholastic thinkers of medieval philosophy, they were able to find a renewal of their theory from pagan and Arabic sources. Likewise, I find that the renewal of the energies of critical theory relies on the creative appropriation of theory and the willingness of a thinker to take risks with innovation. Such innovation should be guided by the emancipatory agenda of critical theory that remains consistent with its thinkers despite the differences in its approach.

²³ Marcelo, "Recognition and Critical Theory Today," 217.

To conclude this paper, I would like to go back to the emphasis on the dialectical tradition of critical theory. I think that the preservation of the viability of critical theory lies in its ability to dismantle itself and adjust to the dynamic nature of contemporary social contexts. Considering the current social-economic-political climate of our time, arguing for the necessity of introspective reflection is difficult or might even appear naive. While we often become outraged and fight battles for the infinite demands of the oppressed and underprivileged, we might also need to consider the possibility of its juxtaposition as foresight to possible pathological outcomes that these demands might incur. While it is an acceptable cause to fight against the possibility of fascism for those who are in power, we might also benefit from looking at fascism in the direction of those who demand power. In a similar vein, I propose to look at the fine balance between critical theory's intersubjective demands and its introspective requirements. If we are not careful, our emancipatory theory could also become our prison. As Adorno would say, "the splinter in the eye is the best magnifying glass."²⁴

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²⁴ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N. Jephcott (New York: Verso, 2005), 50.

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