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A Critical and Participatory Conception of Practical Philosophy

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Abstract

A Critical and Participatory Conception of Practical Philosophy

The presentation analyses and formulates a participatory and critical founding and methods of moral and political philosophy. The author of the presentation bases his conception on defining the three fundamental elements: critique, explanation, and normativity. He shows that this trichotomy expresses the basic dynamic of participatory moral and political philosophy which should proceed from (1) a critique of negative factors of societal reality via (2) an explanation of positive fragments to (3) the development of these fragments in a normative interpretation of society. The trichotomy is founded on three basic approaches of individuals to reality, or more precisely, to a difficult reality and overcoming it. The first approach is refusal (negation), the second by contrast is acceptance (affirmation) and the third is formation (creation). This set of steps is not meanwhile a one-off approach; it is a repeating action by means of which the individual steps are more and more closely specified.

Marek Hrubec: A Critical and Participatory Conception of Practical Philosophy

Critical and participatory conceptions of practical philosophy presuppose that citizens participate in a political and societal life and criticize various problematic issues. Then, the critical philosophies reflect such a participation and critique. However, while the critical philosophies are based on criticism, they differ in their development of this common starting point. I will analyze three fundamental elements of such moral, social and political philosophies – *critique*, *explanation* and *normativity* – which can be identified already in the initial programmatic documents of their founders, and consequently mapped in texts of their followers up until today. Although these elements have been present in critically oriented philosophy since its beginning, and their existence was an implicit precondition, they have been articulated only vaguely in their complex mutual relations. This is because only some of these elements have as a rule been addressed, and because just a few of the relations between them have been discussed. Only an articulation of all three elements in their mutual constitutive relations will enable them to take a crucial place in critical philosophy. That is why, in this paper, I will present my own formulation of critical philosophy which is built on a conception of three fundamental elements, *critique*, *explanation* and *normativity*.¹

1. Internal criticism

Clarification of the constitutive elements of critical philosophy requires comparing relevant alternative social and political theories. I will start with an analysis of the theoretical approach to criticism presented by Michael Walzer and followed by other philosophers, and by analyzing theories of other authors, will then show its limits and introduce my own standpoint.

· This paper was presented at the Institute of Philosophy, the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on 4 June, 2013 (the editor).

¹ In this article, I try to reformulate my analyses based on the mentioned trichotomy and make it more general in the field of practical philosophy (Cfr. Hrubec 2012). I want to thank the participants of a seminar on “Participatory and Critical Conception of Practical Philosophy” (Budapest 2013), the participants of a conference “Philosophy and Social Science” (Prague 2012), and my students at Charles University who helped me improve my article.

Despite offering an inspiring insight into the issue, Walzer by mixing up parts of a multi-dimensional explication and overlooking others fails to provide sufficient reasons for the bases of criticism.² However, an analysis of his viewpoint helps to clearly articulate viable criticism and distinguish it from other forms of criticism. Walzer considers criticism to be as old as society itself, and an adequate response to it to be “one of the essential forms of mutual recognition.”³ In the interactions of showing, refusing and acquiring respect, a critic may in symbolic fashion say: I criticize, therefore I am. And yet, the complaint he or she raises is a mere beginning, similar to the position in which Descartes declares: I think, therefore I am. With that in mind, it may be said that by challenging the behavior of his fellows Socrates made critics exemplary experts on ‘complaint’.

Walzer conceives of criticism as a kind of social practice characterized by a challenging interpretation. Walzer presents a definition of criticism against the background of other conceptions which from a moral perspective he considers to be less appropriate and to correspond less well to people’s everyday experience. Primarily, he distinguishes three categories of approaches: *discovery*, *invention* and *interpretation*.⁴

The first category, discovery, refers to the kind of approach which focuses on a given area of analysis, analyzes it, and reveals its problems. Such an approach relies strongly on description and explanation of the given study area. It defines the already finished value structure and clarifies its shortcomings. The second category, invention, takes a more active approach compared to the first. It does not discover and work with some already finished subject of its interest, but invents the subject. It attempts to construct values that can be widely shared, “a universal corrective for all the different social moralities.”⁵ This universalistic corrective can then serve as a source of correction of the prevailing problematic practices. As an example, one might mention John Rawls’s principles of the normative theory of justice; these do not occur in practice, but rather are formed by the theorist from behind a veil of ignorance.

According to Walzer, the person who performs the interpretation plays a role similar to that of a judge. As criticism occurs not only in the area of philosophy but also very often

² Michael Walzer: *Interpretation and social criticism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980. 3

³ Michael Walzer: *The company of critics*. New York: Basic Books, 1988, 3.

⁴ Michael Walzer: *Interpretation and social criticism*,

⁵ Michael Walzer: *Interpretation and social criticism*, 13.

in everyday life, it does not need to be discovered or invented. A critic engages in dialogue with other members of his or her community and contributes to assessing the conditions for their common activities: a common speech performs an *internal criticism*.⁶ This reflection is an interpretation which assesses the situation in which members of the community carry on discussion among themselves to their common good. Unless the critic identifies with the major values of a given society, he or she cannot define societal problems and cannot focus on issues of injustice that occur in the society without enforcing his or her point of view on the society and acting as an authoritarian.

This argument is encountered in two versions, either epistemological and moral, or practical philosophical. Richard Rorty, as a representative of the first variant, agrees with Walzer that interpretation is an essential phenomenon for understanding criticism. However, Rorty expands this argument toward the theory of knowledge, stating that knowledge of the truth can be realized only within local language games. Criticism cannot exceed its context of understanding in a given language community. If it does so, it may lose a sense of understanding of the issues, and open itself up to the danger of authoritarian abuse.⁷ By contrast, the contextualistic approach which Walzer takes within practical philosophy does not begin with epistemological argument, and where accepting it, finds the practical implications within it that are suppressed by Rorty's proposal for a division of labor between private philosophy, sensitive-oriented literature and political reforms. Walzer's practical philosophy stems from the moral assumption that the validity of norms is based on the established horizon of norms of the given community.⁸ If the social critic ignores this horizon, then he or she stands in the position of an alien who is unable to offer relevant critical reminders of the shortcomings of community life. Without a sensitive consideration of the case, the critic imposes on the community the rules of some foreign life-form, acting toward the community in authoritarian fashion.

Iris Young agree with the main idea of internally grounded criticism, represented by

⁶ Walzer, Michael: *Interpretation and social criticism*, 35.

⁷ Richard Rorty: *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Axel Honneth: The Possibility of a disclosing critique of society: The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in light of current debates in Social Criticism. In: Axel Honneth: *Disrespect*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, 52–3. ; Jonathan Allen: The Situated Critique or the Loyal Critique? Rorty and Walzer on Social Criticism. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 1998, 24, 6: 25–46.

⁸ Walzer, Michael: *Interpretation and social criticism*.

both the practical philosophical and epistemological perspectives.⁹ In doing so they reject a non-historical invention of theory separated from the specific society, such as is produced by the mainstream of contemporary political philosophy, that is, mainly by liberal theory such as that of John Rawls. In contrast to the approach taken by Rawls, Young talks of the model of an internal critic, such as Albert Camus, George Orwell or Mahatma Gandhi, thinkers who are followed also by Walzer. She states: “The critic is engaged in and committed to the society he or she criticizes. She does not take a detached point of view towards the society and its institutions, though she does stand apart from its ruling powers.”¹⁰ Critical and participatory conception of philosophy, according to Young, must reject attempts to form the kind of universal theory that would be isolated from the society. Such an external point of view would run the risk of succumbing to authoritarian elitist dealing or at least to accepting responsibility for a seemingly neutrally worded expertise.

An important contribution comes from Axel Honneth. Honneth’s concept of criticism differs significantly from that of Walzer but shares its basic structure of argumentation.¹¹ Honneth reformulates Walzer’s conception using a different terminology, redefining invention as construction and defining interpretation as reconstruction. In doing so, Honneth differs from Rawls’s constructivism in placing emphasis on the reconstructivism of Habermas. He also agrees with Walzer’s prioritizing of an interpretative model of criticism, recognizing the crucially important role of actors who are under pressure from societal pathology and who formulate their criticisms. Honneth, however, has two reservations here.

First, Walzer’s critic, who reconstructs the conditions of the shared life of community members, is exposed to the pitfalls of relativism. This internal critic derives his or her standards of judgment exclusively from the internal resources of the community, and tends to react to complaints against injustice based on other, external sources in an ignorant manner

⁹ Iris Marion Young: *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. ; Iris Marion Young: *Global challenges: War, self-determination, and responsibility for justice*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2007.

¹⁰ Iris Marion Young: *Justice and the politics of difference*, 6.

¹¹ Axel Honneth: 2000a. Rekonstruktive Gesellschaftskritik unter genealogischem Vorbehalt. Zur Idee der ‘Kritik’ in der Frankfurter Schule. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (2000) 48: 729–37. ; Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds.): *Recognition and power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

which confirms the status quo: This is how we do it here. Walzer's relativism is visible, for example, in the conclusion he draws in his book on *interpretation and criticism*: "It is a mistake, then, to praise the prophets for their universalist message. For what is most admirable about them is their particularist quarrel."¹² However, this approach ignores the fact that criticism also requires an explicit corrective without which it falls into the relativism of particular disputes which can only be arbitrated on the basis of temporal and local coincidences of opinion of members of the society. Honneth adds that any real criticism must be based on internal criticism, but must formulate it in a way that also reflects some non-relative scale.¹³ This criterion is represented by the identification of elements of critical development in the long term perspective, from the past through the present to the future. The criterion of practical critical reason can be seen as a constructivist element, but only – and this is crucial – in the context of criticism.

This basis of criticism is necessary but not sufficient. Honneth's view also requires the application of the second criterion, which is missing from Walzer's classification. The second criterion is conceived in relation to Nietzsche's genealogy. Critical philosophy sees not only positive elements in history, but also negative ones which embody the social pathologies in historical development. As mentioned earlier, the concept of discovery defined by Walzer seems at first glance to be a variant of Honneth's genealogy. Honneth, however, rejects this similarity because he considers discovery in connection with the redefined positivist approach, while considering genealogy to be an approach separate from the mapping of pathological social norms.

In Honneth's view, critical conception requires that criticism connect the earlier-mentioned components of construction, reconstruction, and genealogy. He states that it is desirable to link the formulating of the moral foundations of criticism with construction of the critical development of recognition in history, and thence to genealogical methodology, so as to show especially the paradoxes of society.¹⁴ However, Honneth's analyses and this

¹² Michael Walzer: *Interpretation and social criticism*, 93.

¹³ Axel Honneth: The Possibility of a disclosing critique of society: The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in light of current debates in Social Criticism. In: Axel Honneth: *Disrespect*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, 52–3. ; Axel Honneth: *The struggle for recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

¹⁴ Axel Honneth: Rekonstruktive Gesellschaftskritik unter genealogischem Vorbehalt. Zur Idee der 'Kritik' in der Frankfurter Schule. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (2000) 48: 729–37. ; Axel Honneth: *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit: Aufsätze zur praktischen Philosophie*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2000.

approach in general contain several shortcomings.

2. Trichotomy of *critique, explanation and normativity*

Problems with both Honneth's and Walzer's interpretations are apparent when we analyze them from the perspective of a more appropriate conception of criticism and its elements. We can already identify a more appropriate layout based on the internal connections of three elements: an identification of problems by individual and collective subjects, a description of the related reality, and a derivation of desirable societal norms. This approach is based on internal *criticism*, formulated by societal agents, which makes it possible to focus attention on descriptive *explanations* of relevant topics and on this basis, also on the formulation of *normative* conceptions of society. I consider the trichotomy of *critique, explanation and normativity* a more adequate specification of criticism than other alternatives.

I will seek to articulate the trichotomy which is based on three basic approaches of social agents to a reality, specifically to a problematic reality and to its overcoming. The first approach is *rejection (negation)*, the second, contrasting one is *adoption (affirmation)*, and the third is *formation (creation)*. Rejection represents a critical attitude of the societal agent to a problematic reality; adoption focuses on those elements of the reality which crystallize as positive fragments of it in the background of the criticized parts of the reality; and creation concerns a development of the positive fragments of the reality into a set of desired standards and a normative complex of societal arrangements. Nevertheless, this sequence of steps is not a one-shot approach. It is an iterative process through which individual actions are increasingly specified; it represents the dynamics of historical development. The trichotomy contains the basic elements which in their mutual connection perform the dynamics starting with negation of an undesirable situation, going on to identify positive fragments of reality, and subsequently developing them into the desired state.

Concerning the modes of discourse, traditional designations such as *narration, description* (including exposure) and *argumentation* can freely conform to the earlier-mentioned trichotomic approach to reality. However, a better linkage is provided by a more theoretically focused triad of terms derived from the concept of 'scribere' (to write):

proscription which refers to denial, accusation or condemnation; *description* which relates to what exists; and *prescription* concerning what should be done. These terms have a common basis and thus make clear their mutual connection. With regard to the theme of criticism, which is both theoretical and practical, they nevertheless have disadvantages firstly in their one-sided focus on writing, which emphasizes the theoretical side of criticism, and secondly in their lack of anchorage in social and political theory. The terms *critique*, *explanation* and *normativity*, by contrast, have both subtle connotations in social and political theory and also refer to its practical dimension.

Table 1: Forms of approaches according to authors

Forms of approaches	Authors
Critique	Walzer – interpretation; Honneth – reconstruction
Explanation	Walzer – discovery
Normativity	Walzer – invention; Honneth – construction

	Honneth – genealogy
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In Table 1, I set out my further understanding of the trichotomy *critique, explanation* and *normativity* in relation to the individual forms of Walzer’s and Honneth’s approaches. On the one hand, my division corresponds more with Walzer’s differentiation of kinds of approaches, while on the other it refers to the line of Honneth’s thinking which aims at linking critique with other approaches. Walzer covers various kinds of approaches relatively well, but does so in a way that promotes only one kind of approach (interpretation) and rejects the other kinds. Honneth meanwhile employs a more complex analysis concerning the individual kinds of approaches, and understands the need to reformulate them and integrate them into the overall framework of criticism.

Walzer rightly prefers the kind of approach which places emphasis on internal criticism that derives from the understanding of oppressed subjects and from their historical and current problems, and not from external sources which can be remote from the needs and interests of community members and which can generate authoritarian practices. However, Walzer is not able to explain why internal criticism should be represented primarily by interpretation. The role of interpretation in human life is significant, as evidenced by Taylor’s interpretation of human beings as interpreting and self-interpreting beings.¹⁵ However, an interpretive approach to the world does not necessarily mean a critical approach. The interpretations may be various and may highlight the contradictions in reality, but this approach can confirm the status quo and show alternatives to be much worse than the current social arrangement. Furthermore, since internal criticism is not only a theoretical act, particularly in Walzer’s version in which criticism is a kind of social practice, it is not adequate to conceive of internal critique primarily as interpretation, because the common practice of internal criticism often has a form which is not for the most part implemented in the mode of interpretation. Such criticism may well be deficient even if it is still internal, and with regard to the other aspects, completely sufficient. Internal criticism should follow

¹⁵ Charles Taylor: *Human Agency and Language. Philosophical Papers 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985.

Charles Taylor: *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1989.

primarily from a rejection of negative phenomena, and should not simply represent the formulation of a point of view on an issue. The judge, who is noted by Walzer as performing an act of interpretation, speaks with members of the community, but his or her judgment may be uncritical and may confirm the status quo.

The two remaining kinds of approaches are explained by Walzer more convincingly, even if he rejects both of them. As I explained above, the second type of approach, discovery explains the given situation and focuses on its description. The last kind of approach, invention, is not limited to passive acceptance of a given state of affairs but actively introduces new norms for a desirable future.

I would now like to attend in more detail to the problem that I outlined above in connection with Honneth’s criticism of Walzer, and which consists specifically in the fact that the Walzer’s categorization of approaches favors only isolated internal criticism and does not gain any inspiration from other approaches (i.e. discovery and invention). As I have already explained, Honneth rightly warns of the dangers of relativism, which creates a particular voluntaristic point of view from this kind of isolationist internal criticism. Nevertheless, I will explain that Honneth’s own solution of the problem is also deficient. My analysis, together with more adequate approaches to the articulation of the problems, is summarized in Table 2, which lists the mutual relations between the elements of the trichotomy of social criticism. While the nouns in this table refer to the core or essence of an approach, the adjectives complement this essence by listing its main characteristic.

Table 2: Mutual relations between elements of the trichotomy

<i>Combination of approaches</i>	Critical characteristics of the approach	Explanatory characteristics of the approach	Normative characteristics of the approach
Critique	X	explanatory critique	normative critique
Explanation	critical explanation	X	normative explanation
		explanatory	

Normativity	critical normativity	normativity	X
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Focusing first on reductionist approaches conceived separately, as shown in the left-hand vertical column of the Table, we can say for example that *critique*, separately conceived, corresponds with Walzer's criticism. Independently conceived *explanation* represents a reductionistic approach which occurs in representative form mainly in (quasi)positivist theories within the social sciences, i.e. in the current social science mainstream. Independently conceived *normativity* is usually a characteristic feature of contemporary normative theories in the sphere of political philosophy.

Axel Honneth rejects separate types of approaches, and in his general formulations considers it desirable that the elements of his version of criticism should be linked. Various forms of interconnection of elements of criticism can also be found in formulations by other philosophers but the roles and interconnection of the elements have not yet been developed.

While I have already mentioned that the terminology of the trichotomy *critique*, *explanation* and *normativity* allows its use both in theory and in critical practice as well, further analysis requires a conceptual trichotomic differentiation of the reality to which social agents relate. I specify this differentiation as follows: a practical critique of bad reality, good activity (positive fragments and progressive trends of reality), and normative standards proposed in practice. Individual theorists differ as to which of these elements or which relationships between them they emphasize. Nancy Fraser, for example, agrees that it is crucial to establish the right sort of relationship between description, criticism, and normative theorizing.¹⁶ She also distinguishes between the theoretical and practical levels of analysis of the relationship.¹⁷ At the *theoretical level*, she speaks of philosophical and social-theoretical reflections which allow an explicit formulation of the paradigms of different theories of justice. This theoretical reflection differs from the *popular conceptions* of justice which provide members of civil society with various ideals needing to be analyzed by theorists in order to keep their theories from falling into non-situated standpoints which would ignore the practical issues of injustice. These popular conceptions are not often

¹⁶ Nancy Fraser and Marek Hrubec: Towards global justice: An interview with Nancy Fraser. *Czech Sociological Review* (2004) 6: 886.

¹⁷ Nancy, Fraser and Axel Honneth: *Redistribution or recognition?* London and New York: Verso, 2003.

examined explicitly, and for the most part are supported only implicitly by agents of civic society, etc. The conceptions refer to two directions, critically to bad facticity with its causes of injustice and positively to possible solutions of injustice, and from here to derived political requirements regarding justice. By explaining these issues, Nancy Fraser formulates her ideas especially in the form of *explanation* from which she derives *critical explanation* and *normative explanation*.¹⁸ These types of explanation may have both practical and theoretical forms.

Fraser emphasizes the importance of linking the conceptions which occur in practice with philosophical and social scientific concepts. Thus, in general, she refuses theories which does not require legitimation by citizens and which judges society in authoritarian ways 'from the top down', i.e. independently of society.¹⁹ Meanwhile, critical analysis of these concepts will allow for transcending the given reality and opening a space for critique which will provide criticism with immanence and transcendence. In this sense, Fraser in illuminating fashion begins her entire commentary in the form of *critique*, and not *explanation*.

However, this approach also has its limits because once Fraser moves on one of these levels, whether theoretical or practical, she starts from the form of *explanation* from which she then derives *critique* and *normativity*. Or more specifically, she then derives both theoretical and practical criticism of bad facticity and theoretical or practical political normative demands. This means that her meta-reflexive consideration of the connection of theory with practice provides her approach with a priority of the form of *critique*, while at individual levels, namely theoretical and practical, the form of *explanation* effectively acquires primary status. The connection of the forms of approaches is therefore incomplete, because critique is realized only in the most general mode without specification in terms of *explanatory critique* and *normative critique*. Similarly, normativity occurs in the framework of the form of explanation. Nor, in the case of Fraser, does this appear with specifications in the form of *critical normativity* and *explanatory normativity*. Thus, the position presented by Fraser in her theory can be summarized as follows in respect to Table 2: (1) *critique*, (2)

¹⁸ Nancy Fraser: *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the 'postsocialist' condition*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

¹⁹ Nancy Fraser, and Marek Hrubec: Ke globalni spravedlnosti [Interview]. In *Rozvijeni radikalni imaginace*. by Nancy Fraser, Praha: Filosofia, 2007, 21; Nancy, Fraser and Axel Honneth: *Redistribution or recognition?* London and New York: Verso, 2003.

critical explanation, (3) normative explanation.

Axel Honneth takes a position different from that of Nancy Fraser. In his response to the theoretical connection of critique, explanation and normativity, he proposes an analysis that explains the ‘hermeneutic circle between normative premises and social-theoretical explanation’.²⁰ This circle, which reminds one of the hermeneutical positions in the sense in which it is employed by Gadamer, is considered by Honneth to be adequate. Honneth understands that each element of criticism should not be isolated and should contain relations to other elements. Although he does not perform a precise conceptualization of these interrelations between individual elements, his standpoint in this case is clear and fully understandable. It also shows the parts of his argumentation on which Honneth places the greatest emphasis.

Where good facticity in social arrangements is concerned, Honneth argues that we should always consider facticity ‘in light of the normative principles’ contained in our analyses of society. He also says that normative principles should not be specified without social-scientific – i.e. descriptive or explanatory – analyses of the practice of social reproduction.²¹ In this way, Honneth articulates a connection between elements of criticism using the characteristics and forms of approaches which I described in Table 2 as *normative explanation* and *explanatory normativity*. Honneth thus formulates these claims, but as will be exposed, he is able to meet the claims only partially, as he incorporates only one of these two elements into his theory.

The situation is similar with his concept of critique. Here, however, he places the biggest demands on the interconnection with the other two elements of criticism. He agrees that “the critical experience of negativity (...) is what puts a circle of normative formation of principles and social-theoretical analyses into motion (...) not only in the genetic sense but also in the logical one”.²² He thus starts from the ‘bottom’, in an anti-authoritarian way.

²⁰ Axel Honneth and Marek Hrubec: O kritice a uznani [Interview]. In Axel Honneth (ed.): *Zbavovat se svepravnosti*, Praha: Filosofia, 327.; Axel Honneth, Axel:1994. Pathologien des Sozialen. Tradition und Aktualität der Sozialphilosophie. In Axel Honneth (ed.): *Pathologien des Sozialen*, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 2007, 9–70.

²¹ Axel Honneth: *The struggle for recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.; Axel Honneth: Rekonstruktive Gesellschaftskritik unter genealogischem Vorbehalt. Zur Idee der ‘Kritik’ in der Frankfurter Schule. *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (2000) 48: 729–37.

²² Axel Honneth and Marek Hrubec: O kritice a uznani [Interview]. In Axel Honneth (ed.): *Zbavovat se svepravnosti*, Praha: Filosofia, 2007, 328.

Firstly, misrecognition based on bad facticity, that is, on injustice and social pathology, leads us to try to formulate norms that will allow us to express the experience as misrecognition. Secondly, this conception of norms is at the same time related to social-theoretical assumptions of social reality in which good facticity is the starting point of practice that goes beyond this reality. Thus while Honneth in the context of the second point again maps *normative explanation* and *explanatory normativity* (while in fact developing only explanatory normativity), in the terms of the first point he discusses what I set forward in Table 2 as (1) *critique*, (2) *normative critique*, and (3) *critical normativity*. In the process he gives priority to critique, and subsequently connects it with approaches of other forms. Here we come to the most challenging and inspiring ideas of Honneth's analyses.

A problem arises, however, as soon as Honneth has to specify in more detail how to begin critique or to formulate normative critique. It may be said that analysis of the differences between Honneth's general theoretical demands and his own realization of theory leads to the conclusion that he reduces critique and normative critique and replaces them with a approach of normativity because he underestimates the role of an agent of social change; then, he commits to normativity, i.e. to a transition from the priority of critique to the priority of normativity. Honneth considers that in the 20th century the role of social agent in the theory was problematized so strongly that binding to this agent is now impossible. Therefore, he analyses in particular the moral conditions of criticism, and in setting out his formal conception of morality, largely performs a transition from critique to normativity.

When Honneth discusses his ambition to develop the foundations of theory of society which have a normative content, he formulates *explanatory normativity*. This ambition cannot be read as an attempt to develop social theory in the social-scientific sense of explanation that would be complemented by the normative content. Here we have the *foundations* of social theory which is not primarily social-scientific. These foundations are developed in close relation to Honneth's announced moral content, and are especially morally normative. This is a *normative theory* that expounds a moral basis for social theory.

When Honneth talks about criticism as a reconstruction which is a form of internal criticism based in the local community, he does not mean critique of particular social agents. He rightly draws attention to the historical decline of collective subjects of change in the 20th century but the problem is that he does not attempt to identify at least partially positive aspects of such contemporary subjects of social change. For the most part he merely replaces them with his own moral considerations in the normative terms of internal criticism. Such a

disillusionment, resulting from the failure of various subjects in the struggle for recognition in the 20th century, means ignoring the various unrecognized and misrecognized groups of people. With his moral reflection on the normative conditions of criticism, Honneth implicitly incorporates a critical approach of reconstruction into the approach of normativity which he complements with a neo-Hegelian and neo-Nietzschean background.

In clarifying his standpoint, he talks about the development of reason in history, and presents the historic development of patterns of recognition as an explanation for the development of normative patterns. Such a position can be understood in two ways, either within the form of explanation or within that of normativity. This means that it is possible to consider either description of norms what I call *normative explanation*, or analysis of norms themselves, i.e. what I call *explanatory normativity*. According to whether a preference is shown for the first or the second, the standpoint becomes either explanation or normativity. Honneth favors the second variant, normativity, and makes normative theory his priority.

In similar fashion, Honneth proceeds to examine the case of genealogy. The critical mapping which he provides of the development of negative normative tendencies, such as the neo-Nietzschean mapping of the spread of the negative features of instrumental rationality, can be taken as a critical approach in four ways. Where normativity is concerned, we can either talk about what I designate as *normative critique* within the form of critique, or we can mention what I refer to as *critical normativity* within the form of normativity. Alternatively, in respect to explanation, it is possible to consider the choice between *critical explanation* within the form of explanation and *explanatory critique* within the form of critique. Honneth concentrates primarily on the partially negative norms (paradoxes), and selects a critical normativity within the form of normativity.

This connecting of elements of criticism does not limit approaches exclusively to one or another of them, and provides some analyses of their relationships, but the entire project is carried out within only one form of approach, specifically within normativity. Although the normative part of the approach cannot be neglected, limiting the approach to this part is problematic. Honneth raises some initial expectations by promising an explanation of the development of standards which within interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research evokes description in the framework of the social sciences. His references to social science literature appear to signify the form of normative explanation. However, he does not meet this expectation of description of the relevant facts, of global economic and cultural interactions, for example. Similarly, Honneth does not deliver on the promise of critical

analyses of negative trends as critical explanation or normative critique.

Critical normativity and explanatory normativity are important components of approach, but Honneth's conception is made vulnerable as a normative reductionist approach by its limitation to only these two components. Of course, this is not a pure reductionism, operating under only one form of approach. It is a version of limitation which, in its inaccurate determination of relationships between forms of approach, gives one of them priority while the other two, critique and explanation, are taken into account only partially. Thus, we cannot talk about an interconnection of three components of criticism, as Honneth states is his intention, but only about a normative theory which also includes certain aspects of critique and explanation.

Additionally, it may be considered that any normativity is essentially a critical approach because the very fact of commitment of a normative approach means a recognition of interest in alternative social arrangements, and thus implicitly a dismissive detachment from reality. This appendix of normativity, however, suffers from several shortcomings, at least in terms of the weakness resulting from the speculative formulation of this critique, which is not based in a critique of concrete social agents. Like isolated normativity, this normative quasi-critique thus lacks a firm basis.

With reference to Table 2, Honneth's position may be summarized as follows: (1) *critique*, (2) *critical normativity*, (3) *explanatory normativity*. Though he starts in the adequate fashion from critique, Honneth in his theory then concentrates almost exclusively on normativity. This unbalanced focus on normativity, together with the underestimation of critique and explanation, has important implications for the formulating of Honneth's theory. His omission of the appropriate articulation of critique carried out by specific social agents and consequent lack of explanation of the empirical facts associated with the phenomena being criticized results in problems with the formulation of a desirable normative vision. With such a focus, the theory formulated in this way lacks a critique of serious problems, and at times leads to a reorienting of research into secondary subtopics. Honneth's absence of a sufficient critique and description of the social and political inequalities between North and South in the context of globalization processes is just one example of this problem.

Walzer's reduction of critique to interpretation, Honneth's partial reduction to normativity, and Fraser's partial reduction to explanation show that these authors are proceeding in the right direction but that their formulations remain at the midway point, and there are no guarantees that they will not go astray. Individual positions with regard to the

relations between elements of the trichotomy of criticism become clearer if we also note other authors and the places they occupy in this arrangement. In order to mention also some other authors it is possible to say that while Habermas in his early writings at least tried to combine approaches of all forms, the late Habermas focuses in his theory mainly on normativity, though sometimes also connecting it with the form of explanation. Michel Foucault operated in the modes of critical explanation and explanatory critique.

I do not say that an adequate critical and participatory conception of practical philosophy must necessarily apply all six of the approaches to the mutual relationships between elements of criticism that I indicated in Table 2. However, I think that every critical and participatory philosophy should include *each* of the three forms of approach in order to carry out the three types of activity expressed conceptually in the Table using the nouns *critique*, *explanation* and *normativity*. The question of accent, expressed in the Table using the words *critical*, *explanatory* and *normative*, taking into account the relationships between the elements of the trichotomy, can then be a specification of the individual theory depending on the preferences of the author. However, reduction to one form of interpretation (whether critique, explanation or normativity) or partial restriction to two of the forms is a deficient version of theory that is not able to fully realize the requirements placed upon it.

3. External criticism

Generally taken, all internal criticisms may be said to be connected by the view that rejection of injustice and the formulating of demands for justice need to stem, whether directly or indirectly, from a social agent within the community. Following Honneth, it is possible to say that struggles for recognition in a given community are based primarily on the articulation of people who experience misrecognition. Internal criticism requires an involvement in internal matters. This means that internal criticism prevents anyone from outside from intervening in an alienated, authoritarian way in the community's decision-making.

I would now like to make the difficult step to the external type of criticism. In its very realization, the role of critic provides the necessary degree of distance from the rest of society without which criticism could not be properly formulated in a reflected way. However, this distance may be more a problem of the subjective perception of this state by the critic or his or her fellow citizens than a problem of its institutional segregation from the

rest of society.

The weakest version of external criticism is that which merely takes the form of external criticism, but is in fact internal criticism. External criticism in this case may be only fictive and pretended because the author is, for example, at risk of being persecuted for his or her internal criticism. Externality can help here to make the critical voice allowable and to spare it persecution. A famous example is Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.²³ These show that if the internal norms of the community are legitimate and very binding, then a critic often cannot express a fundamental criticism without losing legitimacy with the majority of the population or even without being punished. But the critic can let someone else voice the criticism, and can also conceal his or her otherness by pretending that the author of the text is a different person.

However, there are also stronger pressures. Under certain conditions, in fact, the attempt to implement internal criticism can become unviable. Such a situation arises in the case of a community which succumbs to strong pathological tendencies and becomes, for example, Nazi or Stalinist. This danger is especially great when the majority of the population shares these tendencies, often in a cultural context that obscures the unjust tendencies and mixes them with historical trends which were not problematic in the past. Under these and similar circumstances, criticism becomes a weak voice of marginal groups whose opinions are heard in the local community – if at all – precisely as external, like the opinions sent home by an emigrant. Ultimately, such criticism can only be a 'message in a bottle', and it is very uncertain that it will reach potential readers who will really identify with the criticism and consequently try to transform society. Michel Foucault, for example, was very close to this variant of criticism in some of their periods of life.

The topic of externality, however, becomes more complex if one asks the vexing question of who is really an external critic. Is not the real external critic rather an internal person who is part of the majority population which has adopted a pathological system, such as the Nazi regime? One can ask whether a majority – or a substantial part – of the population has not been alienated and has not taken an alienated, external attitude to itself and its culture. Although the critic in this situation could act as an external critic, his or her value framework may reflect the internal value system of the society at the time before the

²³ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu: *Persian letters*. Charleston: Nabu Press, 2011.

pathological regime came to power.

It is also necessary to consider such misrecognized social groups as the Jews or the Roma in such a pathological society as, for example, the Nazi system. The experience of such groups would also be a source of criticism which the social critic could develop. To take another example, when a critic declares that black slaves are also people, he or she then brings an external element, the claim of the slave, into the value horizon of the slave regime. While we talk about internal criticism from the point of view of slaves, in terms of the society of the slave regime this is external criticism. Therefore, there is no reason why we should talk about externality in connection with a person misrecognized by the pathological society and a critic who criticizes the misrecognition and who is not linked to the pathological aspects of the society.

It may seem that the only real external criticism is criticism of all of human civilization, whose members pursue the pathological trends of development of the human civilization. In this case, the critic would have to speak from a position outside of the human civilization. But if such a critic, intent on voicing external criticisms, tried to establish his or her approach firstly on the basis of internal criticism which through no fault of his or her own was unrealizable, then from a methodological point of view even his or her external criticism would not in principle represent an external approach. The main criterion of justification here is the starting point in internal criticism, though due to historical and territorial circumstances the subsequent attitude of a social critic may end up as external. If the starting point is internal, then the critic can in intercultural fashion monitor the long-term historical positive trends in various communities, trying to articulate the criticism of social pathologies that people formulate in their practical struggles. In this way, the critic may exceed his or her territorial limitations, coming to inhabit the entire planetary crisis of human civilization. Using analysis of the long-term historical trends of criticism, the critic may succeed not only in maintaining his or her general standpoint, but also in remaining located within certain historical stages of the development of certain communities and in the long run as well, may function within the bounds of internal criticism. This means to ask what tendencies and lines of development are positive and which are not. In this sense, the above-mentioned types of external criticisms that come from internal sources and from long-term historical trends are in fact, in their intention, internal criticism. However, circumstances of serious crisis may in practice force the critic to undertake external criticism. This may be oriented internally, but amid strongly negative circumstances, its internal character may for

some time be quite uncertain.

To conclude, all internal criticisms are linked by the view that directly or indirectly, the rejection of injustice, the formulation of positive elements of reality, and the normative requirements for justice must be articulated from below. Critical and participatory conception of practical philosophy can offer appropriate approaches to this kind of task.

