

SOLVING THE CRISIS OF SOCIALISM:
TWO CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGY
IN HONNETH’S IDEA OF SOCIALISM

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Yusuf Noyan Ozturk, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Solving the Crisis of Socialism:

Two Conceptions of Social Pathology in Honneth's Idea of Socialism

In his latest work on the transformative vision of social philosophy, Honneth aims to present a revitalized idea of socialism that can once be a viable source of political-ethical orientations. After a normative reconstruction of the original idea of socialism that sets the notion of social freedom as the normative core of the idea, he engages in conceptual renovations that would rectify the congenital defects that subjects the original idea to a creature of the past, while still preserving what makes it unique. I contend that this is achieved through two distinct and seemingly contradictory iterations of the naturalistic concept of social pathology, which distinguishes social philosophy as a discipline. While social pathology aims to diagnose and cure specifically social wrongs akin to diseases in organisms, Honneth's renovation resorts to both an organismic conception of social pathology that takes society as an organism, and Dewey's anti-organismic conception that takes it as a life process irreducible to an organism. My argument is that the use of two naturalistic conceptions can be read as a Deweyan attempt in mediating radical and conservative criticisms within the social criticism posed by his idea of socialism. Through a critical and in-depth analysis of the book and Dewey's social philosophy that constitutes its main theoretical framework, I argue that such a reading is not only novel, but also informative with respect to both the idea of socialism's and political theory's prospects in their respective aims towards social-political emancipation in today's social context.

ÖZET

Sosyalizmin Krizini Çözmek:

Honneth'in Sosyalizm Fikrinde İki Farklı Sosyal Patoloji Kavramı

Sosyal felsefenin ortaya koyduğu dönüştürücü vizyona dair son eserinde Honneth, yeniden politik ve etik yönelimlerin kaynağı olabilecek yeniden canlandırılmış bir sosyalizm fikri ortaya koyuyor. Orijinal sosyalizm idealinin sosyal özgürlük fikrini idealin normatif çekirdeği haline getirdiği normatif inşasını takiben orijinal ideali miadı dolmuş bir yaratık haline getiren konjenital defektleri düzelten fakat fikri eşsiz kılan özellikleri korumayı amaçlayan kavramsal bir renovasyonda bulunuyor. Bunun sosyal felsefeyi bir disiplin olarak kuran sosyal patoloji düşüncesinin ilk bakışta çelişkili görünen iki farklı kavramsallaştırılmasıyla başarıldığını düşünüyorum. Sosyal patoloji bilhassa toplumsal sorunları hastalıklara benzeterek ele alırken Honneth, hem toplumu bir organizma olarak gören organismik kavramsallaştırmaya, hem de Dewey'in toplumu bir organizmaya indirgenemeyecek bir yaşam biçimi olarak gören anti-organismik kavrayışa başvuruyor. Tezimde bu iki naturalist sosyal patoloji kavramının bir arada kullanımının, sosyalizm idealinin ortaya koyduğu toplumsal eleştiri içerisindeki radikal ve muhafazakar parçaların dengelenmesine yönelik Deweyci bir girişimin parçası olduğunu savunuyorum. Honneth'in kitabının ve Dewey'in kitabın argümanları için elzem olan sosyal felsefesinin eleştirel ve derinlemesine incelemesi aracılığıyla erişilen böylesi bir okumanın özgün olmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda günümüzün toplumsal bağlamında sosyalizm ideali ve genel olarak siyaset teorisinin amaçladığı toplumsal-siyasal özgürleşme hakkında aydınlatıcı olduğunu düşünüyorum.

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I would like to dedicate my thesis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

21st century entails precarious times for the prospects of social and political theory. Yet history provides us with abundant evidence that theory flourishes in times of need, in times of crises. Written in the transformative years of Athenian democracy, the foundations of political thought in the texts of Plato and Aristotle were no different. As a general rule, people begin to theorize only when they perceive their established customs, institutions or perceptions as inadequate, when they diagnose there is something wrong in the reality they live in, or in their relation to it. This refers to social pathologies, and according to Axel Honneth, these social wrongs constitute the object of a certain strand of political thought that aims to establish its “independent object domain or a distinct set of questions” vis-a-vis the moral and political philosophy that relies upon “criteria of an ethical nature” (Honneth, 2007, p. 4) and thus fail to reach the “deeper layer of reality” (Honneth, 2014b, p. 791) of the social life.

While social philosophy nevertheless depends upon “a convincing justification of our ethical judgments” regarding “the necessary requirements of a good and well-lived human life” (Honneth, 2007, p. 41), the vocabulary of social pathology is quite telling regarding the distinctiveness of social philosophy in its aim of “establishing an evaluative approach to social reality not reducible to the perspectives of moral and political philosophy” (Särkelä & Laitinen, 2018, p. 1). For Honneth, as a philosopher of social freedom, the normative core of this justification

lies in the appeal to freedom that characterizes modern society, but for social philosophy to be a discipline in its own right and to maintain continuity with its historical form that extends way back to Rousseau (Honneth, 2007) or to Plato (Honneth, 2014b), this needs to be built upon a “weak, formal anthropology (that) can be justified in the future” (Honneth, 2007, p. 42). That’s where the controversial notion of social pathology comes into play: The weak, formal anthropology Honneth contends with in his latest work (2017) is the idea of society conceived as a distinctly social life process, one that can fall socially ill and hence suffer from a social pathology, whereas the aim of social philosophy is to diagnose and cure these social pathologies. And by this very definition and terminology, what we have at hand is a naturalistic vocabulary, the first source of the aforesaid controversy.

The controversy is evident at first sight: Such analogies are reductive and naturalizing a social construct feels like the exact opposite of what social criticism is supposed to do. But as we will see below, naturalistic vocabulary does not necessarily mean a naturalist socio-ontological commitment. Throughout their articles on social philosophy, Laitinen and Särkelä distinguishes two strands and four different conceptions of social pathology. They note two normativist conceptions that consider something pathological if it is wrong, i.e. if it fails to meet a normative criteria, and two naturalist conceptions that consider something wrong because it is pathological, i.e. these are distinctly socially wrongs (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 3). Both strands derive their critical authority from the notion of social pathology, thus they are distinct from moral and political philosophy as they aim to address specifically social wrongs using immanent criteria, contrary to addressing normative wrongs by drawing upon an external normative standard. Yet while the latter, naturalistic conceptions of social pathology immediately establish social philosophy

as a discipline in its own right, as they start out by conceiving a structural similarity between the nature and society that would suffice to present a critical authority through the notion of pathology, the former has to give a “story about how social wrongs differ from moral and political ones” (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 4).

The debate, on the other hand, revolves predominantly around two naturalistic conceptions that content-fully use and derive their critical authority directly from the naturalistic vocabulary. Since here, “it is no longer the question of structurally characterized wrongs simply labelled ‘pathology’; on the contrary, social conditions will be exposed as criticizable, because they are dead, ill – pathological” (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 11). Specifically, the contention focuses on the organismic conception of social pathology, which Honneth argues to be a necessary condition of a naturalistic conception of social pathology (2014b) despite its inability to target pathologies of recognition due to its strict and macro-level focus on reproductive values of society. Most importantly, as reproductive ends are taken as given for the “Aristotelian picture of the purposively organized living being” and thus protected from critique due to their indispensable role for the social organism, the organismic conception runs the risk of reproducing the pathology it intends to cure by drawing a static picture of the society and failing to inspire an emancipatory social critique (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 12-13). The disadvantages and advantages of these distinct conceptions of social pathology, their respective metaphysical-cosmological loads and socio-ontological commitments will be covered in detail.

Throughout his texts that aims to establish social philosophy as a discipline in its own right (Honneth 2007, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2017) and those that aim to present its transformative vision (Honneth, 2014a, 2017), Honneth resorts to several

conceptions of social pathology. This dissertation deals with the latest of these works, *Idea of Socialism* (2017), which I believe presents the best prospect for the aforesaid convincing justification for social philosophy. Through a conceptual renovation of the idea of socialism to get rid of its diagnosed “congenital defects” and thus to set it as a viable, convincing alternative capable of once again being a source of political-ethical orientations (Honneth, 2017, p. 5), Honneth sets forth a revitalized idea of socialism that has the notion of social pathology as its evaluative and critical core, and social philosophy of freedom at its helm and at its horizon. Considering that the idea of socialism and social philosophy share the same normative core, that is, the idea of social freedom (Honneth, 2009, 2011), this is not only a fitting endeavour, but also a politically significant one. Moreover, as we will see later on, for social philosophy, Honneth presents perhaps the weakest formal anthropology that can carry it as a discipline in its own right, but also draws upon a cosmology that provides it with the most comprehensive historical outlook possible. But in doing so, Honneth resorts to two distinct, and according to Laitinen and Särkelä, “mutually incompatible” (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 12) naturalist notions of social pathology during his conceptual renovations.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold. On one hand, in chapters two and three, it aims to assess whether Honneth’s Deweyan conceptual renovations and his theoretical substitutes from “a higher level of abstraction” (Honneth, 2017, p. 64) present an internal solution to the crisis of socialism, i.e. whether they can restore the idea of socialism’s power to convince while maintaining continuity with its core values and preserving what makes it unique. To do so, drawing upon Laitinen’s 2017 article titled “Dewey’s Progressive Historicism and the Problem of Determinate Oughts”, I elucidate upon the crisis of socialism and place it on the historical model

of Deweyan experimentalism which Honneth builds his conceptual renovation upon. Taking the idea itself as a process of inquiry as informed by Dewey's experimentalist social philosophy, I discuss whether the renewed idea of socialism has the conceptual means to establish determinate oughts, required to set itself as the answer among rival solutions during the crisis in question. Such an approach not only provides us with a basis of comparison between the original and the revitalized idea and an internal compatibility check between Dewey and Honneth's social philosophies, but also, specifically with the notion of determinate oughts, underlines what I believe to be the most significant contribution of Honneth's renovation: Restoring the idea of socialism's ability to draw upon a historical and social tendency. As we will see in the third chapter, this thesis contends that this ability is restored through the conceptual means and ontological commitments entailed by the naturalistic conceptions of social pathology. This is achieved primarily through the Deweyan social life process conception that constitutes the book's theoretical framework, whereas the organismic conception plays a rather brief and secondary role.

On the other hand, in the third chapter, I will be exploring the exact role of the naturalist conceptions of social pathology for the revitalized idea of socialism and elaborating upon Honneth's use of two distinct conceptions of naturalism, asking whether they are indeed mutually incompatible or not as Laitinen and Särkelä (2018) argues. To do so, I will be drawing upon their four conceptions of social philosophy to elucidate the theoretical framework we are dealing with here, as presented in the second chapter. Then I will proceed to elaborate upon Dewey's social philosophy and its naturalism lying at the core of Honneth's conceptual renovations in detail, to explicate the two distinct conceptions of naturalism and naturalist social pathology in Honneth's work. While I will be arguing that a naturalist social philosophy is a

necessary condition for a revitalized idea of socialism to establish determinate oughts by virtue of being based on a historical and social tendency, the use of two conceptions should also be justified: I will be consequently delivering a convincing reasoning of Honneth's use of both Deweyan and organismic conceptions of naturalism in his conceptual renovation of the idea of socialism, by once again drawing upon Laitinen's notion of determinate oughts. Contrary to Laitinen and Särkelä, I contend that they are not mutually incompatible but reinforcing each other in *Idea of Socialism*, as Honneth aims to mediate what Dewey terms conservative and radical social criticisms of the idea of socialism, just like Dewey aims to do through his social philosophy. And in conclusion, I will be delivering a brief overview of what has been said throughout this thesis, alongside a discussion of the significance of the naturalistic vocabulary of social pathology and my own reading of Honneth's use of two distinct conceptions of social philosophy, with reference to emancipatory social criticism as a whole.

Without further ado, I find it wise to note that while this thesis argues that naturalist social philosophy plays an indispensable role for a revitalized idea of socialism to establish determinate oughts, it agrees with many critiques of organismic conceptions of social philosophy regarding their severe disadvantages we will be seeing below, and contrary to Honneth, it contends that "organicism is not obligatory for social-philosophical naturalism" (Särkelä & Laitinen, 2018, p. 11). As the debate itself is beyond the scope and extent of this thesis, and deserve a dissertation to its own, it is not dealt with here, but I nevertheless hope to explain the crucial role organismic conception plays for Honneth's revitalized idea of socialism, and give a glimpse of why he sees it to be indispensable for social philosophy to

become a discipline in its own right, through its distinct approach of diagnosing and curing specifically social wrongs.

CHAPTER 2

SOLVING THE CRISIS OF THE IDEA OF SOCIALISM

Since its genesis, the challenge presented by the idea of socialism was thought to accompany capitalism inseparably. In its common motto, and not so long ago, the idea that another world is possible had an effective place in the minds of both its proponents and opponents. Yet now it is seen as an obsolete idea that lost its viability as an alternative, and capitalism is seen ever more entrenched, a part of the natural order for many. But the crisis facing the idea of socialism is emblematic of a wider issue: The preconditions for social change are degrading as optimism of the will gets replaced by pessimism and the currents of utopian thinking are interrupted (Honneth, 2017, p. 2): Both of these developments are unprecedented in the history of modern society, and so are the looming, seemingly inexorable existential crises exacerbated by capitalism. Considering that “what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imaginations but is itself shaped by our visions” (Wright, 2010, p. 6), and providing clarity is the main function of theories built upon those visions, emancipatory social theories’ inability to establish determinate oughts also suggests nothing less of an existential crisis. As Honneth notes, albeit it is evident that the outraged have a clear sense of what ought not be, the goal to which the change should ultimately lead is unclear due to various indeterminacies. I argue that the premises of the *Idea of Socialism* succeeds in addressing that, and their study can be informative for the emancipatory social criticism as a whole.

First published in 2015 as a follow-up to his magnum opus, *Freedom's Right*, Honneth's *The Idea of Socialism* strives to restore socialism's power to inspire and convince in the contemporary world. The book aims for conceptual renovations of the idea which would remove various congenital defects that subject it to a creature of the past, while still retaining what makes socialism unique compared to other moral-political theories by presenting an evaluative approach to social reality aimed towards the future. In doing so, Honneth answers various criticisms to *Freedom's Right*¹ by demonstrating that only slight adjustments are needed to see through its methodological restrictions to understand the "entirely different social order" it presents (Honneth, 2017², p. viii).

In this chapter I will be first discussing how to make sense of the crisis of the idea of socialism from the standpoint of progressive historicism by drawing from Dewey's social philosophy and idea of social struggle as a process of inquiry as presented in Laitinen (2017). I will then present Honneth's normative reconstruction of the original idea of socialism and its normative core, the concept of social freedom, before elaborating upon the congenital defects that arose in the context of its inception. Finally, after showing how Honneth tries to find theoretical substitutes for these assumptions, "at a higher level of abstraction, detached from the spirit of industrialization" (IoS, p. 50), I will be arguing that the most significant accomplishment of his renovation is to revive the idea of socialism's capacity to establish determinate oughts in times of indeterminacy. In the proceeding chapter, I will be discussing the theoretical elements of Honneth's revitalized idea of socialism that make this possible, and issues associated with them.

¹ For a collection of these critiques and Honneth's answer, see the special issue of *Critical Horizons* on *Freedom's Right*, 2015.

² Hereafter abbreviated as IoS.

2.1 Making sense of the crisis

As Honneth notes in the introduction of his book, the crisis of socialism we are concerned with here is merely an instance of a general tendency. He starts his discussion by asking why the currents of utopian thinking are interrupted and why ideas of social transformation fail to inspire and mobilize people. While a rather coarse explanation refers to the collapse of communist regimes, obviously the lack of such an example did not prevent people from striving for it before (Honneth, 2017, p. 2). Another common explanation refers to a shift in our sense of time and progress: Often dubbed as post-modernism, this purportedly led to withering away of visions for better life and in human progress, as the future bears within only reprises of the past. Yet advancements in enforcement of human rights (2017, p. 3) suggest the opposite: The transcendental imagination is well alive in those fields, but not when it comes to society. Honneth's preferred explanation refers to this difference, "between a structurally neutral establishment of internally sanctioned rights and a reorganization of basic social institutions" (2017, p. 3). He argues that the interruption in question is confined to the latter, predominantly because, as in Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, socio-economic circumstances seem recondite and opaque, thus close to conscious change (Marx, 1867/2001): Institutional conditions and everyday functioning of the (global) economy seem to be immune to change, "reified", as social relations take "the form of a social relation between things" (Marx, 1867/2001, p. 166).

Considering that inevitability and/or imperviousness of a social phenomenon or institution is merely a matter of political interpretation/disposition, the inability of emancipatory theories to make a dent in the reified consciousness is not an inexorable one. While it is never an easy task to make a convincing argument that

“another world is possible”, especially under the burden of the traditions of all dead generations (Marx, 1852/2009), it is a fact that the idea of socialism, coterminous with capitalism, had that capacity once as a theory of a social struggle, and as something more than a mere explicit theory, “as a practice-guiding system of beliefs, valuations and norms” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 8). In its long history, there have been countless instances where the idea presented a convincingly viable evaluative framework that effectively determined how one should behave, by establishing determinate oughts for its adherents, that is to say, by providing determinate normative guidance through establishing a evaluative framework that “has a constitutive and not merely epistemic role: it determines what one ought to do and not merely what one is justified in believing one ought to do” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 7).

In his article on Dewey’s social philosophy, which plays a constitutive role for Honneth’s revitalized idea of socialism, Laitinen presents the notion of evaluative frameworks to explicate Dewey’s progressive historicism. Arguing that Honneth’s revitalization is also a progressive-historicist one, I will be using the notion as means of comparison between the original and the revitalized ideas of socialism in the proceeding chapters, whereas here I will be presenting the historical model of Dewey’s thought to situate the crisis of socialism. Like socialism, Dewey’s historicism is inspired by Hegel’s philosophy of history, where in each stage deficiencies of the previous stage are overcome (Laitinen, 2017, p. 2). Until inadequacies come to fore in a given historical stage, prevalent evaluative frameworks of the given stage are able to provide determinate oughts within it, but in intermediate phases, where “such inadequacies have come to one’s knowledge” and a new solution is not “generally socially accepted and habitualized” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 2) yet, what is to be done is indeterminate. In that first phase, the dominant

evaluative framework or theory “has a constitutive, not merely epistemic role” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 7) in determining what is to be done. Then a crisis emerges, “a problem without an existing solution or a problem with rival solutions” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 6), and no solution proves superior over the other. In this second stage, both the normative shape of the situation and the answer to the question of what is to be done is unclear: It is a stage of problematization, as there is no updated and determinate version of the evaluative framework in question. While the final, third stage refers to the solution of the crisis and establishment of determinate oughts once again, it is crucial to note that “such ‘intermediate’ phases may be the normal case” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 15), and we need theories that can provide normative guidance in them. I maintain that while the original idea of socialism fails in that regard, Honneth acknowledges this normalcy (IoS, p. 74) and his progressive historicist renovation of the idea of socialism strives to attain this capacity to provide determinate normative guidance once again.

Honneth writes in the “second stage” of the crisis of the idea of socialism and attempts to overcome it by asking “how the original intention of socialism could be reformulated... to make it once again a source of political-ethical orientations” (IoS, p. 5). To do so, he first reconstructs the original idea and problematizes it, before proceeding with his conceptual renovations. According to Laitinen (2017);

Overcoming a crisis requires a conceptual or theoretical innovation that fulfils two conditions: First, it provides a solution to the problems that have arisen; second, it is capable of explaining why the problems were not solved before and what it was that made the tradition incoherent or sterile. This innovation means that the tradition-before-the-crisis is not commensurable with the tradition-after-the-crisis. (p. 13)

This will be my main criteria of assessment below, in asking whether Honneth succeeds in his aim or not. Moreover, as mentioned above, a successful innovation brings an incommensurable, new theory: Honneth acknowledges this by noting that

he recasts socialism and makes its “main purpose and theoretical impulse unrecognizable to the majority of its previous followers” (IoS, p. 106). But to preserve the historical-philosophical premises that make idea of socialism unique as a theory that seeks to “motivate future action” (IoS, p. 50) by establishing determinate oughts, Honneth looks for theoretical substitutes of the constitutive elements of the idea of socialism. In that regard, Honneth strives for an internal resolution of the crisis, by “maintaining fundamental continuity with the shared set of beliefs and assumptions that had constituted the tradition up to this point” (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 362-65, as quoted in Laitinen, 2017, p. 14). Yet as we will see now, the reasons of the crisis of socialism lie intertwined with the problematic premises that make it unique: Then what are the unique aspects of the idea of socialism that are to be preserved, and how? The next two headings are aimed at explicating these premises, in order to disentangle what needs to be preserved.

2.2 Reconstructing the original idea of socialism

Born as an “intellectual product of capitalist industrialization” (IoS, p. 6), the history of the usage of the term “socialism”³ goes way back to the reaction of the Catholic theologians against those who opt for human need for sociality rather than divine revelation as the basis of the ordering of society. Until Owen and Fourier used it as if they have invented it in 1820s-30s (IoS, p. 7), the term remained in the field of legal theory. The term was used to refer to a political project only thereafter, but one can trace a certain continuity with its past and extract a core trait shared by all its

³ For a comprehensive history of the term socialism, and communism, albeit focusing on the leftist publications, see Cole, 1953, p. 6-10. Although dated, Cole presents perhaps the most comprehensive and trustworthy account of early socialism and socialists across the literature, and like Honneth, I refer to his multi-volume book to provide this historical overview and a summary of their arguments.

historical iterations: Socialism strives first and foremost to bring the social-economic question to the fore, in order to make the existing society more “social” (IoS, p. 7). While the term was about emphasizing the “social element” in the justification of the need for sociality and social order at its genesis, by 19th century the object of the critique referred to as socialism became the prevailing stress on the individual and individual interest as the yardstick of the emerging social structure, and it was set out to socialize the human relations by emphasizing the social element in it, specifically, by targeting the economic conditions underlying the liberal and individualistic understanding of freedom. But looking back at the Scottish moral philosophers, “Social System” theorists of France, or perhaps even the bees of Mandeville, it is evident that this is hardly a novel attempt. Honneth notes how Leibniz aimed at something similar through his “intellectual clubs” tasked with providing education and economic assistance to the poor to ensure “true love and trustfulness” in society (IoS, p. 7-8), virtually anticipating the proposals of early socialists.

Although there were many different socialist groups, early socialism was principally divided into three common tendencies: Saint-Simonists and Fourierists in France, and Owenites in Great Britain (Cole, 1953, p. 3). All three saw the social question and promotion of general well-being as the most important political issue and that it was incompatible with the emerging social order of the time. While their conception of desired social change and consequently their strategies differed greatly to talk about a shared goal (IoS, p. 8), they all opposed the prevailing emphasis on individualism, on competitiveness in the economic system, the idea of natural law of economics usually coined as *laissez faire* (Cole, 1953, p. 3-6) and strived to socialize the society by establishing collective organizations (IoS, p. 7). But compared to

Leibniz and their predecessors⁴, they were in an entirely different context: Indebted to the principles of French Revolution, first wave socialists could “invoke already institutionalized and universally confirmed principles in order then to derive radical consequences from them” (IoS, p. 8), which is crucial considering that they shared the principles of legitimacy with the order they opposed, and the spirit of industrialism that gave rise to it.

This brings us to the second characteristic of the original idea of socialism: As a response to how after the French Revolution, “the demands for freedom, equality and fraternity remained unfulfilled promises for large parts of the population” (IoS, p. 6) due to the expansion of the capitalist market, all three strands of early socialism traced the injustice to the fact that the economy slipped “out of the control of the broader society.” (IoS, p. 10), and thus prevented the actualization of the demands of the French Revolution. Although it was scarcely developed in their texts, the source of their agreement and their reasoning of this setback laid in the emphasis on individualism in economy and politics following the French Revolution. Therefore, as Honneth notes, one can argue “with a bit of hermeneutic goodwill”, they had discovered an “internal contradiction in the principles of the French Revolution” (IoS, p. 11), and broadly, the idea of socialism strived for the realization of the principles of the French Revolution by correcting this contradiction through emphasizing the social element in human relations.

Here is our starting point: The continuous line of development between socialist ideas begins with the subsumption of the demands and principles of the revolution by the imperatives of the market, whose emergence and expansion was

⁴ For earlier iterations prototypical to the socialist idea, see Ranciere, 1981/2012.

made possible by the same revolution. Considering this shared context of genesis with capitalism and their relation to the principles of French Revolution, it is hardly an overstatement to argue that the idea was “an immanent critique of modern, capitalist social order” all along (IoS, p. 13): The idea of socialism shared the normative bases of justification (liberty, equality, and fraternity) of the latter, but argued that three principles cannot be reconciled thus cannot be realized unless liberty is interpreted in a more intersubjective manner, and that such a reinterpretation required “socially re-embedding the market” (IoS, p. 10). Seen as the source of all evils, the socialization of the market and consequently the entire society became the common motto of socialisms, and this economic or rather technical aspect encroached on or overshadowed the idea’s normative core, its primary political aim and moral demand of actualizing liberty, equality and fraternity for all ever since then.

As Honneth notes, there have long been a conspicuous tendency in opponents of the idea of socialism, particularly in proponents of liberalism and classical political economy, to reduce it into technical terms, usually to a simple call for just distribution of resources (IoS, p. 10). Against the idea of socialism’s attempt of socializing the human relations, such a formulation economizes the idea of socialism, ignoring or, often consciously, severing its links with the principles of the French Revolution. Considering that same tendency can be observed in proponents of socialism throughout its history, generally in an attempt to derive a wider appeal to the idea (Miller, 1989, p. 54), it is further important to concisely extract the normative core of the idea: Socialism’s indictment of market relations refers not to its technical failure of providing a good life but its technical and social incapability to do so by making the three principles irreconcilable with each other, specifically

through the notion of liberty associated with it. Thus, while the distributive, technical critique can be reconciled with features of modern industrial society, idea of socialism's unique charge on the pillars of capitalism lies with its normative core that sees market relations as the source of injustice and distortion of human relations, and liberal individuality as blind to the social origins of individuality. With its normative commitment to realize the principles of French Revolution for the sake of genuine human relationships, it points beyond the ruling rationality drawn upon the principles of the market.

For the three common tendencies of early socialism discussed above, “technical” demands were not ends by themselves but the preconditions of the moral demands that guided their idea, expositions of what ought to be. The definitive core of their doctrine and its driving force, on the other hand, consisted of a normative commitment: The principal aim was the realization of principles of liberty and fraternity by reconciling them through radical social change, because following the subsumption of the principles of French Revolution by the imperatives of the market, prevailing liberal understanding of freedom made the realization of the latter impossible. Equality, on the other hand, often played a subordinate role⁵. As Honneth notes;

(o)ne even gets the impression that the three socialist groups were already content with the fragmentary legal equality of their day and instead strove to erect on this foundation a community of solidarity between producers who recognize each other's abilities and contributions. (IoS, p. 11)

The principal role of this aim of reconciling the individual freedom embodied in liberal conception of freedom with the principle of fraternity gets more evident with the “second wave of socialism”; particularly in the works of Blanc, Proudhon and of

⁵ For a contemporary perspective with idea of equality at the fore, see Cole, 1953, ch. 2. Also, it is important to note that this applies to Marx, too; see Brudney, 2014, p. 467 and Marx, 1932/1988.

course, Marx. Although set on different paths, both Blanc and Proudhon based their critique on the characteristic understanding of freedom prevailing in conjunction with the expanding capitalism. With freedom reduced to the pursuit of private interest, both believed that this prevented “any meaningful change to the grim economic conditions of the time” and realization of the principle of fraternity, thus strived to realize “a kind of ‘freedom’ in economic relations that no longer conflicted with the demand for ‘fraternity’” through various plans of supplementing or replacing the market (IoS, p. 12). This takes us to the definitive element of the idea of socialism; its normative core demanded a “new” conception of freedom, where it is not understood as pursuit of private interests but a social framework of relations where “the self-fulfillment of each must depend on the self-fulfillment of the other” (IoS, p. 13). Honneth refers to this idea as “social freedom”, and notes that none of the early socialists engaged in a “conceptual effort to elucidate the forms of intersubjective interlinking” (IoS, p. 14) needed to overcome the prevailing understanding of freedom and reconcile the goal of individual freedom with a community of solidarity, as they lacked the theoretical means. With his familiarity with the Hegelian tradition, Young Marx was the first thinker to have a go at it.

As early as in his polemical texts in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx sets out to develop an immanent critique of the liberal social order and elucidates how the prevailing conception of freedom is irreconcilable with demands of a community, and of reason (Marx, 1842 October, & Marx, 1842 November). In his comments to James Mill, which exemplifies Hegel’s influence on Marx especially regarding recognition theory and received greater attention lately, Marx notes that in capitalist society, the relationship between individuals are only carried out indirectly, through exchange in an anonymous market (Marx, 1932/1992). What they perceive and what

guides their actions are the imperatives of the market, and not others' need nor individuality; the recognition that members owe to each other "merely consists in the mutual affirmation of their respective right to 'plunder' each other" (IoS, 16). In a total absence of "solidarity", the mutual recognition turns into a "struggle" (Marx, 1932/1992, p. 275-276) where the victor is determined by the market rationality. This rationality, embodied in capitalist relations of production, systematically conceals the dependent relationship between satisfaction of one's needs and actions of others: While subjects exchange to satisfy their needs, and produce to satisfy the economic demand with both parties dependent on one other, in capitalism this relationship is reduced to exchange of money between two parties in the market, evaluated and carried out according to the imperatives of the market with no recognition of the dependence. Marx argues much would be different without the principal medium of this relationship, money, as subjects would be forced to recognize this dependence and each other (Marx, 1932/1992, p. 269-271), thus achieve "a shared concern for the self-realization of all others" (IoS, p. 18).

Like his predecessors, Marx anchors the achievement of this ideal to the social labour, and in this "rather vague economic model" we can find indications of a concept of social freedom (IoS, p. 18) and commonalities with the ideas of early socialists. And like his predecessors, Marx views freedom in terms of self-realization in the least restricted way and believes the prevailing conception violates the principle of fraternity. To solve this internal contradiction, he elucidates a social model interlinking freedom and solidarity, where each perceive their aims as "the condition for the realization of the aims of others" (IoS, p. 18). What is crucial here is that such a relation includes "not only the implementation but also the formulation of aims", as one's pursuit of self-realization should serve the self-realization of one's

“partners in interaction, otherwise the freedom of the other wouldn’t be an object of *conscious concern* [emphasis added]” (IoS, p. 18-19). According to Honneth, Marx believed that;

(...) in an association of free producers the members would realize their shared aims by intentionally producing for each other on the basis of their mutual recognition of each other’s needs, thus performing their own individual actions for the sake of those needs. (IoS, p. 20)

The concept of social freedom constitutes the essence of the idea of socialism.

Against the prevailing liberal understanding of freedom, where subjects can be considered free only if they are able to pursue their aims without hindrance, social freedom is, in Berlin’s terms (1958), a “positive” understanding of freedom. Even if the early socialists were not aware of the arguments in favour of either, they were aware of Rousseau’s social contract and Kant’s social philosophy and regarded it self-evident that “individual freedom requires that our aims be open to reason and not dictated by nature” (IoS, 22). Moreover, while the hindrances in question for liberal conception of freedom consisted of social and/or institutional barriers, socialists included a wide understanding of structural and personal coercion in it (IoS, p. 22) and believed that prevention of the realization of an individual’s rational intentions is a hindrance of freedom. In Hegelian terms, individual freedom under the notion of social freedom could exist only if it was “objective”, i.e. when other members of the society stand not as potential constraints but “partners whose cooperation is required to realize these intentions” (IoS, p. 23).

Reconciling the principle of liberty with fraternity demands a conception of individual freedom capable of coexisting with the requirements of a community of solidarity, and as stated above, with its emphasis on conscious concern of each for each, social freedom contains a distinct element of communitarianism. But although

it involves institutionalization of mutual sympathy (IoS, p. 24), it is not a theory of a harmonious society; its ideal society is not without conflict, nor it is a society where “each individual is always prepared to renounce his or her own interests in favour of those of others” (Archard, 1987, p. 29). Neither harmony nor “selflessness” are theoretical or practical requisites for the idea of socialism, nor for its reconciliation of the principles of liberty and fraternity to make them and self-realization available to all. It refers to a community built upon not fraternal belonging but the principle of fraternity, based on the mutual dependency of each one of us, and in its ideal form⁶, it comprises “nothing less than humankind in general” (Miller, 1989, p. 67).

Consequently, in conditions of mutual dependence, social freedom argues that cooperation in community is not only a necessary condition for freedom, but “the sole way of exercising true freedom” (IoS, p. 24) where subjects act with and for each other. As such, it means that it can be realized only by such a community and not by individuals, “without this collective having to be regarded as an entity that is superior to its individual elements” (IoS, p. 24), turning freedom into an element in a holistic individualism, thus giving rise to the common conflation of communitarianism with collectivism. This conflation can also be seen in several reviews of the *The Idea of Socialism* (Shammas, 2019; Sahu, Schafer & Wolfe, 2020).

In the idea of socialism, the community of solidarity, not the individual, stands as the bearer of freedom; but considering that the former is not regarded as an entity superior to its elements and that it exists through the free interactions between the latter (IoS, p. 28), this does not present a contradiction with the idea of individual

⁶ Whereas in the current social reality and in the political practice, it is almost always theorised as the citizens of a nation-state (IoS, p. 99).

freedom, but only with its liberal interpretation. Contrary to the popular belief and the oft-cited tension between the community and the individual, social freedom actually promote the freedom of choice beyond the liberal notion of freedom to make it effective for everyone, whereas the source of this perception lies in that it is a positive freedom of choice. From the liberal standpoint, there is no freedom in such a formulation as it is limited by the condition of pursuing natural/uncorrupted needs corresponding with the historical stage of reason, by the notion of mutual dependence of individuals, and by a conscious concern for not only oneself but also the others.

Overall, the social freedom's aim is to simply keep the paths of self-realization open for everyone to attempt their rational goals, goals that do not prevent anyone from attempting their own but rather facilitate them, by removing the barriers to sociality. It does not guarantee self-realization, nor it is applicable to all goals. This is not due to the "technical" issue of scarcity and distribution of resources, which is, as mentioned above, of secondary importance for the idea of socialism⁷. And while encroachment of community on individuality in a holistic individualism is indeed a threat with potentially disastrous consequences, it is not inevitable (IoS, p. 24), nor it is an (un)intended result of the notion of social freedom: Rather than placing community above the individual, the notion of social freedom synthesizes individuality and community to give rise to sociality (Archard, 1987, p. 27). Nevertheless, holistic individualism is not the only problematic aspect of the idea of socialism: The original idea's shortcomings arise with its assumptions that make it

⁷ For instance, Marx's theory of a communist society is beyond scarcity (Brudney, 2014, p. 452). The secondary nature of the redistributive project for the idea of socialism can also be thought to informed by the theoretical assumption driven by Hegelian dialectics where thesis and antithesis necessarily lead to a higher synthesis, or broadly, in Marx's terms, "to formulate a question is to resolve it" (Marx, 1844/1978, p. 28). See also Forman, 2019.

unable to comprehend other forms or paths of freedom, but also contain the aspects that make it unique as an evaluative approach to social reality.

2.3 Congenital defects of the original idea of socialism

To get at the problematic legacy of socialism and its loss of the ability to inspire, the social-historical framework and the intellectual context in which the idea developed coterminous with capitalism must be clarified. All early socialists, including Marx, shared the three interlinked background assumptions I will be explaining below, as they played a constitutive role in their conception of social freedom. According to Honneth, all these assumptions are directly related to the early industrial social and intellectual context, whereas some are “much more profound and relate to the structure of the idea itself” (IoS, p. 26). First, they believed that the path to social freedom laid in the overcoming of the capitalist market economy, the sole responsible of the “egotistical narrowness of the prevailing understanding of freedom” (IoS, p. 30). But the task of paving the way for social freedom and its reproduction laid solely in the economic sphere too, thus the “relationship between the economic sphere and hard-fought political freedoms” (IoS, p. 26) was never sufficiently clarified, or outright ignored. Secondly, they assumed that a desire to overcome capitalism was already present in the social relations, and for Marx, in a social class, thus turning socialism into a “mere expression or reflection” of this outrage, aimed at “educating, informing or enlightening a clearly defined social group” (IoS, p. 30). Last but not least, they believed the changes they seek were historically necessary and would inevitably “lead to a community based on the principle of mutual benefit” (IoS, p. 31). Convinced of how such a community would

look like, they saw “no cognitive or political benefit in attempts at gradual change in the present” (IoS, p. 26). As “by virtue of developing their original idea of social freedom in a framework defined by these three assumptions” (IoS, p. 32), they therefore handed down various social-theoretical burdens to the idea of socialism, which are thus referred to as congenital defects.

As mentioned previously, early socialists, including Karl Marx⁸, saw the legal formulation of private property as the underlying principle of the modern social order, based on private and egotistical freedoms. The society of solidarity they contrasted it with it, on the other hand, was to be brought upon by reformation or revolution in the economic sphere: If the principles of social freedom prevailed here, all the necessary prerequisites for relations of solidarity among the members of society” (IoS, p. 54) would be fulfilled. According to Honneth, as freedom was understood with reference to only the economy, the sphere of political deliberation was reduced to “a negligible element of social reproduction” (IoS, p. 33)⁹, leading to an inability to grasp the emancipatory potentials of political rights. Overall, with the experience of industrialization and unprecedented expansion in the scale and extent of economic activity, early socialists believed that the rising productive and administrative capabilities of the humankind made the need for political steering superfluous and thought that the change could (and should) be created entirely within the economic sphere. Since all social affairs could be led by association of producers

⁸ For a lesser-known expression of this idea, see Marx, 1842 October; and Marx, 1842 November.

⁹ According to Honneth best exemplar of this issue can be found in Marx’s essay *On The Jewish Question* (1844/1978), where it is argued that liberal rights to freedom “lose all normative value in socialist society because there would no longer be a separate sphere of common will-formation apart from the economy” (IoS, p. 35, emphasis added). While I find such a formulation problematic (see Brown, 1995), as Marx can be read as taking political rights as a first and, without social rights, necessarily inadequate step towards human emancipation, what is important to note for our purposes is that all early socialists ascribed the role of common will-formation predominantly to the economic sphere, through the association of producers.

and/or communities, they did not pay much attention to the issue of political rights in the framework of emerging nation states.

Motivated by industrialization, all early socialists engaged with “experimental explorations of the possibilities opened up by the new medium of the market”, thus in a sense, they were “market socialists” (IoS, p. 55). Marx was the first to object: He saw an “indissoluble unity” in the modern social order, where the imperatives of the market, capitalist ownership of the means of production, and propertylessness of the proletariat presented a Hegelian “totality” (IoS, p. 56). Formulated as such, his theory put an end to the experimentalism of the original socialist idea: A socialist economy had to get rid of all the market elements, and contrary to his predecessors who argued for a horizontally integrated economy, such a project necessitated a “vertical relationship” between economic actors, as “the only model for such an economy was the centrally planned economy” (IoS, p. 56). Thus, apart from robbing socialism of the chance of experimentation, “totalizing features of his theory represented a great disadvantage” (IoS, p. 57), as the socialist imagination is constrained by the clinging to the central economy even today. For Honneth, revising the equation of the market economy with capitalism is crucial, to experiment with the possibilities offered by the former.

The socio-economic and intellectual context of industrialization also led the early socialists to believe that their theories were the representative of the interests of an already present oppositional group. While exploring the reality to find social desires that would lead the way for the ideals of a theory is hardly a theoretical crime, early socialists “apodictically presupposed” (IoS, p. 38) a desire to realize its ideals as objectively present in the social reality. This led to not only theoretical

arbitrariness, i.e. the credibility of theory was thus inextricably linked to its past success in disclosing social reality, but also it ran the risk of self-referentiality, i.e. theory's justification was delegated to the success of a social movement, its sole addressee, which was constructed by the interests and desires ascribed by the theory itself. According to Honneth, this assumption was particularly evident in the works of Marx, where the proletariat is hailed as the "universal class", be it through the anthropological standard of evaluation of the humankind¹⁰ of his early works where they are the "only collective which represent the deep-seated interest of human beings to objectify and confirm themselves in the product of their activity" (IoS, p. 39), or through the historical standard of evaluation as seen in his later works, where exploitation compels them to be so. Such an assumption bound the idea to a certain social group, making its prevalence in the social reality determine the credibility and viability of both the theory and the political project, hence resulting in socialism turning obsolete with the rise of the post-industrial society, as the prevalence of this social group faded away. Moreover, history provided abundant evidence that a connection "between a class-specific objective situation and certain desires or interests" (IoS, p. 41) cannot be presumed.

But this assumption plays a crucial role for the idea of socialism: If such an interest could not be presupposed anymore, it would lose its ties to the social movement and become just another normative theory. It would either have to accept such a demotion or "search for its lost ties to the workers' movement"; derive principles of justice in competition with other theories or find "an interest within

¹⁰ I borrow the terms anthropological and historical standards of evaluation from Honneth, 1996, where he explores the theoretical history and premises of various social philosophers, including their standards of evaluating "developments and misdevelopments" (p. 10-11). For a similar analysis of the background and legacy of critical theory, see Honneth, 2009.

society which shared socialism's own aims enough to make them immune to the contingent ups and downs of other social movements" respectively (IoS, p. 42). Such a reflexive attachment to the social reality is one of the aspects of the original idea Honneth tries to retain during his conceptual renovations: By opening the path of experimentalism, he mediates and empirically grounds it while drawing the power of a historical tendency to justify such an attachment. And in due course, by setting the end-in-view of the revitalized idea (opposed to a fixed endpoint referred to by a singular conception of a good life/society) as striving for the preconditions of a consummately democratic form of life through expansion of communication, he expands its addressees to include all citizens.

Underlying all these assumptions of the original idea was an unwavering belief in necessary progress, as all early socialists assumed that capitalism would collapse inevitably, and their ideals simply represented the flow of history. According to Honneth, while the boldness of Fourierist, Saint Simonist and Owenist assumptions declined as they engaged more in political activity (IoS, p. 43), Marx's belief in necessary progress was actually strengthened with his study of capitalism: On one hand, in his early works, under the influence of Hegel and Proudhon, he believed that the motor of history was the class struggle, where at each stage an excluded group prevailed over the dominant, whereas socialism signified the victory of the largest group, the objective class of proletariat. On the other hand, Honneth argues that for Marx, following his economic analysis of capitalism, the motor of history became the expanding division of labour built upon "humans' constantly increasing ability to control nature" (IoS, p. 45), as the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production would compel a reorganization of society for the better.

The inevitability of progress and certainty regarding what would come next not only placed the actions of those involved into a secondary role, but also constituted a self-imposed, categorical theoretical handicap by preventing any historical experimentation: There was no need to explore different paths of and opportunities for change in different social spheres and circumstances, as the change was inevitable and they knew what it would look like. This handicap is most evident in “the sphere in which socialist ideas were to be almost exclusively realized” (IoS, p. 47): Like the liberal belief in private property and free market as the best answer to the question of economic organization, “socialists had no doubt what more appropriate institutions of generating social wealth would be like” (IoS, p. 48) and, at least in the popular imagination, restricted themselves with centralized planned economy as the most viable answer¹¹. Yet to retain socialism’s uniqueness as an evaluative approach to social reality and to restore its ability of establishing determinate oughts, a similarly compelling and inspiring, yet more self-conscious, adaptable, and falsifiable idea towards history is a necessity. Honneth tries to achieve that self-consciousness and adaptability by opening the path of experimentation for the idea of socialism, where Dewey’s naturalistic theory based on the idea of expanding free communication provide a historical tendency that both establishes experimentation as a determinate ought, and the basis of a still socialist understanding of history.

¹¹ For a similar discussion, see Miller, 1977.

2.4 Honneth's conceptual renovations

As socialist assumptions of necessary progress and an apodictically assumed social class bringing about radical social change solely within economic sphere fell under the march of history, the original idea of socialism itself came under threat: Its demands could now turn into “mere normative demands” rather than being “the expression of already existing demands” (IoS, p. 63). To avoid this demotion and preserve the uniqueness of socialism as a theory distinct from theories built upon moral-political normativity, an alternative form of historical anchoring is needed (IoS, p. 63), alongside “a more universalizable substitute” (IoS, p. 52) for all its interlinked assumptions. Honneth draws from Dewey's social philosophy to establish these substitutes, arguing that it represents “the best chance for socialism to regain – at a higher level of abstraction – *the force that an anchoring in the historical process* [emphasis added] can provide to their own demands” (IoS, p. 64).

Honneth's first renovation targets the original socialist intention of bringing about the conditions of a community of solidarity solely in the economic sphere. If we are to leave the aforesaid assumptions aside, specifically the equation of market economy with capitalism, thus acknowledge that what will be succeeding capitalism, how, when and through whose activity cannot be known for sure, there remains no reason to assume that there is no alternative except a vertical organization of the economy. As Honneth notes, there are various market-based models aimed at socializing freedom by achieving “the allocation of the means for satisfying generally shared needs on the basis of equal opportunities for participation” (IoS, p. 58), whereas assessment and justification of these models must be left to experimentation.

According to Honneth, the crucial task is therefore to “cleanse the concept of the market from all subsequent capitalist additives” (IoS, p. 67) to pave the way for its assessment as to whether it can present a morally justifiable model, and to show that the system is indeed capable of change. But while the normative commitment of social freedom can constitute the criterion of such an assessment, it is crucial to note that a standard of evaluation is also necessary to constitute its aims by determining what counts as improvement amongst equally worthy candidates: “(A) given social fact” can represent a potential only “if we have already given at least a vague definition of what this fact could be good for” (IoS, p. 60). Considering the aim of retaining the uniqueness of socialism, this standard should be capable of forming the foundation of a theory that can draw upon a historical tendency to derive itself a historical force in order to realize its premises aimed towards the future, i.e. that can establish itself as a determinate ought. This is where Dewey comes into play.

The fundamental goal of Dewey’s social philosophy is, much like the idea of socialism, collective self-directionality (Dewey, 1973, p. 59) to realize potentials. And in close resemblance with the idea of social freedom, the path lies in the expansion of free communication by removing barriers before it, which would, as informed by experimental method, bring about the “most comprehensive answers to a socially problematic situation” (IoS, p. 60). At this point, I find it wise to note that free communication does not simply refer to freedom of expression: It refers to being able to freely and effectively participate in determining the conditions of one’s existence in a given social context, or in society as a whole; whereas the “one” here covers not only the individuals, but also groups, institutions and social spheres. Hence, to illustrate in a simple and rather reductive example, realizing free communication in the economic sphere could mean ensuring the employees ability to

self-determine their work conditions. If we are to turn back to our discussion, two fundamental assumptions underlie Dewey's argument for collective self-directionality, and as it will be elaborated in the next chapter, the naturalism of these assumptions is what provides us with the aforesaid historical anchor and the ability to establish experimentation for the sake of social freedom as a determinate ought. First, Dewey claims that "'associational' or 'communal' behaviour constitutes a basic feature of *all things* [emphasis added]" (IoS, p. 60); be it inorganic, organic, or social. Secondly, he argues that uncovering of potentials happen through the interaction between these entities, setting in motion a hierarchy of "stages of reality" that culminate in the "social", where these potentials are virtually endless due to the "specifically human forms of grouping" (Dewey, 1928/2008, as quoted in IoS, p. 61).

These interactions, specifically the ones between organic entities, are conditioned by a perceived need¹² (Dewey, 2015, p. 8). The relationship between expanding interaction and realizing more potentials still applies in the social, but it also presents a historical force to bring about the fundamental goal: "(T)he more potentials we unleash and realize, the more freely the individual elements will be able to interact with each other" (IoS, p. 61), as there is a constant need, or rather a demand, for expanding interaction in the "social": Like Hegel (1807/1977), Dewey argues that excluded groups will seek inclusion in society as "isolation always entail an internal loss of freedom, a stagnation of prosperity and growth" (IoS, p. 61), whereas experimental method informs us that "the more those who are affected by a problem are involved in the search for solutions to that problem, the more such historical-social experiments will lead to better and more stable solutions" (IoS, p.

¹² While the need in question is also specifically human here, it is crucial to note that evolutionary theory (which Dewey draws upon), hence the non-inanimate stages of Dewey's hierarchy of reality is also based on the same principle.

62). Removal of barriers to free communication thus becomes historically and naturally sanctioned path to a democratic form of life, that will be informed and established through experimentation.

Dewey's argument for experimentalist methodology and historical experimentalism, built on the idea of "expanding free communication" to realize more potentials through removal of the barriers to interaction/communication, provides a solid foundation for our purposes beyond the evident resemblances with the idea of social freedom, which aims to actualize itself by removing the barriers to communication in all spheres of social reality, thus by "expanding the space of social freedom". Moreover, with the idea of free communication, it provides the idea of socialism a historical tendency to build upon, alongside a standard of evaluation to determine what counts as progress, thus making it possible for a revitalized idea of socialism to retain its evaluative approach to social reality while aiming towards the future.

But what is crucial to note is that here, we have a theory immanent to the social reality, as its normative grounds are drawn from our understanding of the social (Hirvonen, 2018, p. 5), based on the authority of associated life. Again, while the concepts will be elaborated in the next chapter, associated life takes the society as something "both needs to reproduce and transform itself" (Särkelä, 2017, p. 121): The need to (expand) interact(ion) is to both ensure the reproduction of society, and its transformation. As a life process, the social can die organically when it fails to reproduce itself through interaction and disintegrate into atomise organic entities, and/or into inorganic mass through extinction; but as a distinctly social stage of reality, it also can die socially when it fails to transform itself through expansion of

interaction and become an organism that can merely reproduce itself: As distinct from other forms of life, social life is “one that lives through and maintains itself in death” (Hegel, 1807/1977, as quoted in Särkelä, 2017, p. 122), and in the call for experimentation for a democratic form of life, delegated by the reproduction of the social as a life process and as a specifically social life process, the criterion is thus the authority of the social life itself. To put it differently, if the ultimate criterion of all social practices is the “qualitative enhancement of our associated form of life”, the expansion and empowerment of its main features (Testa, 2017, p. 242), and the main feature of all forms of life is interaction; the strife to (expand) interact(ion) is not only enhancing life, it is the act of (social) life itself, thus providing us with a criterion immanent to (social) life. Overall, it thus provides not only an autonomous approach, one that is not based on external criteria but one that is immanent to its subject matter, thus not reducible to the normativity of moral or political justification, but also sets expanding interaction as a determinate ought for all members of the society.

Albeit too undeveloped to call it a conscious element, the immanence of the early socialists’ critique was also built around the normativity of social life; the ideal social life was where liberty, equality and fraternity prevailed, and that was to be achieved through removal of barriers to the social freedom, which were all linked to the economic sphere one way or another. This was also true for Marx with his strive for social freedom: the normativity of social life clearly constituted the core of his thought as the ensemble of social relations (interactions) or division of labour constituted the “social” and they had to be freed from the yoke of capitalism for the “social” to flourish. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the idea always based itself

on something immanent to the social life, and consequently presented an autonomous evaluative approach to social reality.

Yet the idea of socialism lost its legitimacy and determinacy with the fall of its assumptions: While the early socialist belief in tearing down the barriers to freedom in the economic sphere would suffice to bring about social freedom in the society as a whole could be justified at the time of its emergence, to truly be the “representative of the demands of the social” and to “remove all social hindrances to the exercise of freedom in solidarity” (IoS, p. 66), it had go beyond that. To be a representative of the social, such an aim had to build itself on the fact that “in the course of history and on the basis of varying social circumstances, new groups constantly seek to draw attention to their own demands by attempting to tear down barriers to communication”, a struggle that “certainly characterizes the entirety of human history and continues even today” (IoS, p. 65); rather than drawing upon necessary consequences of the development of productive forces. But according to Honneth, the idea of socialism simply couldn’t do that, and not only due to the theoretical fetters of its assumptions: While his first conceptual renovation was to break these fetters by substituting the congenital defects of the idea with a new philosophical-historical outlook informed by Deweyan historical experimentalism, and set institutional achievements in all spheres of society (rather than the achievements of the proletariat) as “the true embodiment of the demands of socialism”, thus argue that “socialism must address itself to all citizens” (IoS, p. 74), this expansion of addressees and political horizon still cannot be reconciled with original premises of socialism. This takes us to Honneth’s second renovation, addressing socialism’s inability to recognize the functional differentiation in society.

As discussed previously, the original model of social freedom referred solely to the economic action, first because they believed the main problem of “uninhibited individualism” stemmed solely from there, and secondly, due to “their shared links to the spirit of industrialization” (IoS, p. 78). According to Honneth, as early socialists thought that the industrial production would be the main determinant of all social affairs, and all these could be integrated under this economic sphere, they paid no attention to the “differentiation of the society into various social spheres” unlike their liberal predecessors (IoS, p. 79), and did not permit “the various independent spheres of action the freedom to follow their own respective social logic” (IoS, p. 81). Their attitude was determined by the fact that they did not take the state and the economy as distinct spheres because the latter’s logic dominated the former (and the entire society). In turn, only the rights that were relevant to the economic sphere were deemed relevant in their take on politics, resulting in “their characteristic blindness to the importance of rights” (IoS, p. 81) in bringing about emancipation and with regards to democratic will-formation. Moreover, this blindness was not restricted to the political sphere: Had they not dogmatically attached to bringing about social freedom solely through economic sphere, it would be easy for the early socialists to see how there are various obstacles to a community of solidarity in the private sphere, but since they saw economic relations as the root cause of these obstacles, the economic sphere was the preferred medium through which these would be resolved (Engels & Marx, 1845/1956; Engels, 1884/1986; also, Proudhon, 1846/2012, as quoted in IoS, 83-85)¹³.

¹³ Several critiques of the book note that Honneth skips over many socialist precursors who diagnosed other obstacles before social freedom (Roelofs, 2018 & Forman, 2019) and who were not exclusively concerned with bringing about change in economic sphere (Roelofs, 2018 & Sawyer, 2019). Yet the names he specifically refers to indeed does not employ “the same model they used for conceiving of revolutionary relations of production in order to determine the conditions of freedom and equality in the sphere of personal relationships” (IoS, p. 84). Further inquiry over the theories of those Honneth

Honneth notes that simply setting aside the now obsolete assumptions and correcting the lack of awareness of functional differentiation is not enough, as a “politically motivating, future-oriented project also requires an idea of how these normatively differentiated spheres should be related to each other in the future” (IoS, p. 87). For the sake of a community where individuals can “view their actions as contributions to a mutually supplementary ‘We’” (IoS, p. 89), these spheres need to have mutually reinforcing relations between them, and consequently, their specific forms of social freedom: A renewed idea of socialism should acknowledge that society cannot be fully “social as long as the spheres of personal relationships and democratic politics have not been freed of coercion and influence” (IoS, p. 90).

At this point, Honneth draws upon an organic analogy, inspired from Hegel, who also envisioned a society where “the various social spheres relate to each other by means of their independent functions, which in turn serve the overarching aim of social reproduction” (IoS, p. 90). Formulated as such, what we have is a set of interdependent but differentiated social spheres acting according to their own logic and in accordance with the normative core of social freedom. These spheres freely cooperate with their own independent norms, and their healthy functioning is determined by their success in ensuring the continuous reproduction of the whole (IoS, p. 92). In line with experimentalism, such a society calls for democracy as a way of life, where the individual “can participate at every central point in the mediation between the individual and society”, just as the spheres’ relation to each other and to the whole reflect the general structure of democratic participation (IoS, p. 92). It calls for not a vertical organization of the society, be it from or below, but

leaves out in his historical overview, such as the Fabians, Considerant, Zetkin, Kollontai etc. may be informative.

as “an organic whole of independent yet purposefully cooperating functions in which members act for each other in social freedom” (IoS, p. 93).

As Honneth notes, while this formulation provides us with a central but not fixed guiding principle in our political project which argues for constant examination of options to enhance both the independence of the spheres and their role for the whole, through the “organic analogy” it runs the risk of presenting a spontaneously self-transformative picture of a self-contained organism, thus failing to “effect transformational change” (IoS, p. 94). For the revitalized idea of socialism to act upon the existing social norms and structures through the existing norms and structures as informed by immanent critique, and for it to “gain clarity about what it needs to do and what it needs to influence in order to initiate experimentation on the social organism” (IoS, p. 94), we need to have an appropriate reflexive authority “to steer the necessary processes of transformation, delineation and adaptation”. Moreover, we need addressees, “social points of reference” (IoS, p. 93), in our transformational strive for a community of solidarity. This was an easy question for early socialism where the economic sphere determined the social entity, and thus its addressee was the proletariat. But if we acknowledge independent functioning of the spheres as our goal rather than deeming one sphere more relevant than the other for a community of solidarity, but also argue that the society, like an organism, is an purposefully organised entity more than the sum of its parts, we need to “find an institution or authority that could manage the relation between all these independent spheres” (IoS, p. 95).

If we once again refer to Dewey here, it is obvious that the best answer lies in the sphere where the process of communication can be most comprehensive and

unrestricted, in order to unravel and actualize the capabilities across the entirety of the social. In line with Dewey, Honneth notes that this sphere would be the one that “provides the institutional framework for democratic will-formation” (IoS, p. 96), which is the public sphere, not as something dominant over the others but *prima inter pares*, as it can be all encompassing and thus legitimately capable of setting the law. Secondly, there is the issue of the “addressee” of the renewed socialism. A “consummately democratic form of life” (IoS, p. 98) based on expanding communication also resolves this issue: It must address all citizens, as it is evident that “we must not only abandon the illusion of a fixed, already existing bearer of socialist cause, but also seek to politically represent strivings for emancipation in all subsystems of society” (IoS, p. 98) in accordance with the idea of social freedom and its aim of becoming the representative of the demands of the social.

2.5 Concluding remarks

Like the role of communication/interaction in Dewey’s social philosophy and of his notion of associated life, the original socialist intuition of removing hindrances to social freedom was something immanent to the social life, “as it expressed the definitive structural principle of the social” (IoS, p. 66), and thus established an evaluative approach to social reality. As Honneth notes, a revitalized idea of socialism built upon the notion of social freedom and drawing from Dewey’s social philosophy retains such an approach while preventing its demotion into just another normative theory. This is achieved by providing a revitalized idea of socialism with a new yet still-socialist historical anchor built upon the historical inclusion of the previously excluded and a naturalistic-evolutionary explanation of the social life

process, alongside an immanent criterion of critique and standard of evaluation both to assess what constitutes progress and what is its end-in-view.

While these are enhancements or updates that bring the idea of socialism up to contemporary standards; that explain why it failed to keep up and got subjected to a creature of the past in the first place; and that provide solutions to the problems that have arisen while retaining what makes it unique, thus presenting a successful internal resolution to the crisis of the idea of socialism, I contend that Honneth's most crucial contribution is different. By adapting the Deweyan historical experimentalist outlook, which draws upon both the methodology termed "experimentalism" and a historical model of (social) reality based on experimentalism to socialism Honneth not only makes the idea retain an autonomous, immanent and evaluative approach to social reality, but also, most importantly, provides it, once again, with the ability of establishing determinate oughts: Experimenting for the sake of actualizing social freedom acquires a constitutive, and not merely epistemic role in answering the question what is to be done. But how does it achieve that exactly? What theoretical elements/ontological premises of Honneth's (and Dewey's) theory provides that ability, through two different iterations? These are the questions that we are going to dealing with in the proceeding chapters, where I will be, respectively, arguing that naturalistic conceptions used by both authors provide that distinct ability and exploring why Honneth resorts to two different conceptions of naturalism in his revitalization of the idea of socialism.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL PATHOLOGY AND THE CHALLENGE OF DETERMINATE OUGHTS

Through his conceptual renovations Honneth presents a renewed idea of socialism that aims to become the representative of the demands of the social (IoS, p. 66) and to bring about social freedom in all spheres of social reality. He argues that the best chance of such a project lies in institutional experiments that would not only inform the project itself, but also provide it with legitimacy and viability in the eyes of the public (IoS, p. 76). This experimentation involves equally worthy candidates in bringing about social freedom, and among these, to assess what counts as progress is provided by a consummately democratic way of life aimed at eradicating the barriers to free communication for all members of the society. As mentioned in the previous chapter, through his subscription to the Deweyan historical experimentalism, this idea is built upon an evolutionary historical tendency that can be observed in both the social and the natural reality, thus anchoring “the theory to actual historical process instead of” letting it “become a mere ideology” (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 6). While Honneth addresses numerous issues of the original idea of socialism by substituting its congenitally defective premises in a higher level of abstraction, this dissertation argues that its most significant contribution is to restore its ability to establish determinate oughts, that is to say, definitive normative guidance that draws upon immanent criteria in social reality, contrary to the external criteria used by moral and political philosophy and in the “simple” oughts they present. This is achieved through the new evaluative framework presented by Honneth’s revitalized idea of

socialism, and the theoretical premises underlying in its foundations, namely, a naturalistic ontology.

Principal aim of this chapter is to answer how come a theory can provide determinate normative guidance. As social philosophers, both Honneth and Dewey approach the social as a deeper layer of reality (Honneth, 2014, p. 791), and aim to “establish an evaluative approach to social reality not reducible to the perspectives of moral and political philosophy” (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018, p. 2). This means that their respective approaches derive their evaluative authority and critical power immanently from the social reality, through the concept of “social pathology” which refers to both specifically social wrongs akin to diseases and to social philosophers’ attempt to cure it. In that regard, social philosophy’s distinctiveness vis-a-vis moral and political philosophy seems to be closely linked, if not altogether tied to a naturalistic vocabulary, as exemplified in its core concept of social pathology. This definitive role of naturalistic vocabulary makes it impossible to be dropped if social philosophy is to retain its distinctiveness.

But a naturalistic vocabulary does not necessarily bring forth a naturalistic ontology for social pathology. According to Dewey (1925), for such an ontology, a conception of a continuity between the natural and the social is necessary. In Honneth’s *Idea of Socialism* we see that continuity, in two distinct forms, and if we are to use Laitinen and Särkelä’s (2018) typology of different conceptions of social pathology, what we have at hand is two distinct conceptions. In the third chapter where he draws upon Dewey’s stages of reality that culminate in the social to introduce historical experimentalism to the idea, we see, rather explicitly, what

Laitinen and Särkelä refers to as social life approach¹⁴, and in the fourth chapter where he envisages a democratic society purposively functioning as an organic whole, we see, rather implicitly, the organismic approach. My argument is that Honneth restores the idea's capability to establish determinate oughts through the use of these naturalistic conceptions. Yet the question of why he resorts to two distinct conceptions is open and not tackled anywhere in the literature around Honneth's latest book: In the proceeding chapter, I will be contending that the reason behind his use of two distinct conceptions of naturalism is to engage in a Deweyan mediation of self-transformation and self-maintenance imperatives of the idea of socialism, by establishing both as equally worthy determinate oughts. But to concisely discuss this, and to make the theoretical framework clear to the reader, here I will first be elaborating upon various conceptions of social pathology, emphasizing the two naturalistic approaches Honneth uses in the book. Moreover, in agreement with Repa (2021), I will be arguing that some of the issues of Honneth's revitalized idea that received great criticism, particularly its blindness to the role of conflict in (emancipatory) politics, can be attributed to his use of organismic conceptions of society and social pathology.

I will start by elaborating upon the theoretical strengths of the new evaluative framework presented by Honneth's revitalized idea of socialism in comparison to the original idea, looking for the conceptual means that establish the renewed idea as a determinate ought. Then I will turn to theoretical premises of social philosophy as the source of these conceptual means, with an emphasis on its naturalistic vocabulary

¹⁴ In line with Honneth's use of two conceptions and Dewey's explanation of this naturalistic ontology (2015, p. 15-20), I refer to it as "social life process" to be able to emphasize how social life consists of both organic processuality, i.e. how it needs to "organically" reproduce itself as social life, and of a distinctly social processuality, i.e. how it needs to constantly and "socially" renegotiate its ends and means of reproduction.

and its core concept of social pathology. As I noted in the very beginning, social philosophy stands at both the helm and the horizon of Honneth revitalized idea of socialism, that is to say, it provides both its methodology, and its normative core, consequently its end-in-views. But as Laitinen and Särkelä notes, different conceptions of social pathology paint different pictures of social philosophy, and while they all use a naturalistic vocabulary by their very definition of curing social ills, they are not necessarily naturalistic (2018). I will consequently be explaining these conceptions in detail, through what can be seen as an expanded summary of Laitinen and Särkelä's typology. After presenting these conceptions, I will be engaging in a brief discussion of the perceived disadvantages of the revitalized idea. While the literature around the use of social pathology in Honneth's Idea of Socialism is rather scarce, they more or less converge around its "depoliticizing" potential, and as noted previously, I argue that this can be attributed to the use of organismic conceptions.

3.1 Evaluative framework of the revitalized idea of socialism

In his 2017 article, Laitinen situates Dewey's social criticism to a "'progressive historicist' camp, which tries to avoid appeals to 'universal Archimedean standpoints' upon which objective truths can be set, but also tries to avoid 'a collapse into unconstrained relativism' where each individual can be entitled to their own truths. Progressive historicism draws a Hegelian historical model where 'each stage overcome the deficiencies of the previous stage' (p. 2) and in it, presents 'conceptual means to answer the challenge of indeterminate oughts' (2017, p. 19). As noted previously, this thesis maintains that answering this challenge is the most

crucial contribution of Honneth's Deweyan revitalization of the original idea. The challenge in question refers to the indeterminacy surrounding what is to be done (or whether there is something to be done) in "stage two of a crisis", where the dominant answer to what is to be done remains inadequate and no other answer seems superior over the other. Considering that such an indeterminacy and transitory periods may be the normalcy of a given social structure, in such a model "it is bad if a theory suggests that there are no determinate oughts, no determinate normative guidance during them" (Laitinen, 2017, p. 15).

The normalcy of indeterminacy is evidently true for our contemporary social reality, and I believe it hardly needs evidence that original idea of socialism, at least in the popular imagination, fared badly at the face of the challenge of determinate oughts, with the disagreements among its varying iterations and their respective answers proliferated as its original assumptions fell. According to Honneth, this was a direct result of the totalizing assumptions that burdened the theory with predictions informed by the social and intellectual context of a bygone era¹⁵. With its philosophical-historical outlook predicting an immediate and inevitable fall of capitalism, and its immediate and inevitable succession by socialism, the idea simply could not get to grips with an intermediate stage: One can even argue that the search for a what is to be done constituted the entirety of the original socialist political

¹⁵ As Shammass (2019) notes, Honneth makes it seem like all deficiencies of the idea of socialism and its alleged failures stem from these conceptual defects. I find it wise to note that a close reading of socialism's history would show that Honneth's reasoning of the ideas failures is not exhaustive, and a greater attention must be paid to the revolutionary emphasis in the original idea of socialism, which remains unmentioned across the book.

project, as it could never be content with capitalism being an intermediate stage¹⁶ and not the final stage before an “end”, or something qualitatively different historically.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, original idea’s attachment to the “working class” as its sole addressee and to their social prevalence and successes in the political project prescribed upon them as the theory’s source of justification, validity and viability didn’t help either: It made the theory self-referential. It is my conviction that a self-referential theory can viably exist only in a historical-philosophical context where it can set determinate oughts, since for it to justify itself by itself, it has to be able to definitively guide its addressees with reference to this source of justification. In that regard, the original idea of socialism simply did not have the theoretical means to navigate an indeterminate stage due to its assumptions¹⁷: As the preconditions of the original idea’s assumptions fell in the social reality, came the fall of its determinate oughts, and ideas of socialisms since then engaged in an endless disagreement marked by the challenge of (in)determinate oughts.

To assess progressive historicism within the Deweyan stages of crisis outlined in the preceding chapter, Laitinen sets forth the notion of evaluative frameworks, “the practice-guiding system of beliefs, valuations and norms” (2017, p. 8), “which can be embodied implicitly in practice and in explicit theories” (p. 2). He draws upon a navigation at sea analogy Dewey uses to explain his social philosophy, and likens an evaluative framework to a map, “with which to locate the destination...

¹⁶ One should be reminded that idea of an intermediate stage, or even the idea of a “socialism” as an intermediate stage, was subject to great disagreement in the history of the idea of socialism. Most notably, see Lenin, 1917/2014, also Marx, 1875/1978 and Althusser, 1965/1969.

¹⁷ Yet as Honneth notes, when their assumptions held firm in the popular imagination, it indeed presented determinate oughts for many, and managed to convince and mobilize the masses (IoS, p. 64).

[and] the lay of the coastlines”, and a compass, “to give direction for one’s orientation”, while also being informed by “past experience concerning dangerous routes” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 7). For Dewey, each individual navigates their social reality by the help of such a map and a compass, i.e. with the help of an evaluative framework, and it is the task of the social philosophy to provide it. When faced with a crisis, with an inadequacy that cannot be solved with its present elements and embodiments, the best-case scenario for an evaluative framework is to once again set a determinate ought by solving the crisis internally, that is to say, while retaining continuity with its principal elements and not replacing them with those from a rival theory.

But what should that solution look like, and what should it aim to do?

Alongside their shared commitment to immanent critique, both Honneth and Dewey refrain from “singular substantive model(s) of a good society” and “both adhere to a more general commitment to freedom as the core value of modern societies” (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 6). Thus, their preferred evaluative framework is a notion of inquiry informed by experimentalism, “understood as the struggle of human intelligence”, “not to arrive at a certain picture of the nature of things, but at an inevitably provisional solution to the practical and intellectual problem that sparked inquiry” (Festenstein, 2014, as quoted in Laitinen, 2017, p. 4). For Dewey, this provisional solution, to which Honneth also subscribes to in his *Idea of Socialism*, is embodied as a democratic way of life: A democratic process first and foremost aimed at expanding itself across the social whole by removing the barriers before communication has the best potential to solve any problem (1928/2008). Moreover, as we have briefly discussed in the first chapter, this argument for expanding communication is based on naturalistic and immanent criteria, since interaction and

expansion of interaction is the common way of actualizing potentials both in the nature and in the social reality.

According to Laitinen, an evaluative framework can be thought to consist of elements and embodiments. Elements include all concepts that an evaluative framework uses to evaluate the current situation and all potential others, thus they refer to all that is “relevant for assessing progress” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 8-9), whereas embodiments refer to the ways in which a framework is manifested implicitly in practice and explicitly in theoretical conceptions (p. 10). With his conceptual renovations, especially with the dropping of its philosophical-historical assumptions, Honneth recasts socialism’s evaluative approach to social reality, changing its crucial elements and consequently its embodiments¹⁸, while substituting these assumptions by drawing upon Dewey’s progressive historicist model. To reiterate the argument of the first chapter, Honneth thus retains what makes the idea of socialism unique among other moral-political philosophies, i.e. the evaluative, critical and motivational force it draws from an historical anchor. But to underline this continuity and show what Honneth rectifies through his conceptual renovations, a comparison between the original idea and his revitalized idea is warranted. By virtue of being based on a progressive historicist model, much like the original idea of socialism and as in Honneth’s revitalized idea of socialism, the notion of evaluative frameworks provide us with a coherent set of criteria to compare between the two. And not to

¹⁸ While Honneth’s *Idea of Socialism*, being a metapolitical text (IoS, p. 5), does not specify or recommend a specific form of socialist politics and/or practice apart from discussing what they might be like (see IoS, ch. 4), it is my conviction that changes in its embodiments are inevitable as a direct result of the changes in its elements. Yet, contrary to some critics (Kempf, 2019; Forman 2019), this does not necessarily mean an exclusion of revolutionary politics, albeit it remains unmentioned across the book.

drag on this detour, I will be delving upon select few aspects of the two ideas, those that are relevant to our purposes and/or emphasized by Honneth.

First issue revolves around the conception of goods. As discussed previously, both Honneth and Dewey refrains from a singular conception of good life, and rather take freedom as the endpoint of criticism and aim to establish it through end-in-views (IoS, p. 86; Dewey, 2015). In the case of the idea of socialism, Honneth notes that

(If we must fundamentally exclude any certainty about the final state of a socialist economy, then we cannot take this abstention from certainty so far as to cause us to lose sight of the outlines of our aim or ‘end in view’, as John Dewey once put it. (IoS, p. 69)

For both philosophers, freedom is interpreted with emphasis on its social conditions, its relation to institutions and cooperative nature of human beings (Honneth, 2014a; Dewey, 1925). In that regard, two philosophers of social freedom have a compatible theoretical outlook: The revitalized idea of socialism take social freedom as its normative core, and delegate its actualization to institutional experimentation, where the question of how to compare between “the goods”, and the means to attain them arises.

While this was an easy question for the original idea, as all came down to the economic sphere, here the scope of realization is expanded to all spheres. In line with the democratic experimentalism of Dewey, Honneth looks for the most comprehensive sphere that is capable of legitimately guiding institutional sphere, which is the public sphere. And for an idea of socialism that claims to be the “representative of the demands of the social” (IoS, p. 66), the preferred course of action lies in deliberative democracy, which addresses all citizens, (who were non-entities for the political project of the original idea according to Honneth), and the social spheres that independently function for the organic whole in their respective

social logics (contrary to being in service of the economic sphere as in the original idea). Honneth attributes the failure of original idea's "economocentrism" to its blindness to functional differentiation between the spheres. In his conceptual renovation, he rectifies this by drawing from an organismic conception of society, consisting of a "rationally integrated, harmoniously arranged order that represents more than the mere sum of its parts", parts that "independently and yet purposefully" cooperate (IoS, p. 92-93), as in an organism. This organismic conception is one way to rectify the original blindness to functional differentiation, and it will be revisited later.

What makes such a solution possible but remains latent in the book is Honneth's opening of the theory to "shared frameworks" by "recognizing the social interests of the different parties of social life" as relevant, so that "everyone can feel 'at home' in communal life" (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 3) and meaningfully engage in its functioning as individual parts. As Laitinen notes, "each individual has an evaluative framework of his or her own", but in associated life, communality brings about "shared frameworks" (2017, p. 11): While each group have a shared framework, and their different elements may lead to disagreements, the society as a whole also share a framework (and it can be argued, the humanity as a whole). The demarcations of these frameworks are drawn by elements of the framework, its conceptions of goods, ends, etc, and Deweyan experimentalism informs us that while such different conceptions may conflict, they may also have something valuable to offer to one another. So, the immanent criterion of the democratic way of life, associated living, also constitutes the way to deal with these conflicts, suggesting democratic deliberation as the overall shared framework of the society as whole (Dewey, 1973; see also IoS, p. 90-91). Aim is to ensure the free interaction of its parts, with the sole

condition of not letting it lead to social suffering and alienation, which are the “antonyms of associated living” (Dewey, 1973, p. 85). The same argument applies for institutions, too, they each have different evaluative frameworks towards the social reality, whereas their free interaction in the public sphere may lead them to inform each other in cooperation while functioning independently and separately if there is a broader shared framework that can make them feel “at home” in communality (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 3). This is another way to rectify the blindness and present a rationally integrated and harmoniously arranged order more than the sum of its parts, without reducing the societal structure into an organic structure.

Secondly, while the expansion of the scope of social freedom to all spheres of social reality requires a recognition of functional differentiation, it also raises the issue of historical vindication: While the economic sphere constituted the locus of the original idea, and thus each historical development that contributed to realizing social freedom in the economic sphere was a step forward, what constitutes historical vindication for the revitalized idea of socialism? How to assess its regress and its progress? At first glance, it is evident that all steps for emancipation in all spheres of social reality, and all experiments to do so constitute progress, either by succeeding in bringing institutional change, or by making a dent in the reification just by trying to do so: As experimentalist method informs us, the social issues “should be solved case by case, taking into account the particularities of each solution” (Dewey, 1973, p. 58), and each attempt in institutional change would inform both the subject and the object of the experiment, and the broader public (IoS, p. 87). Still, this process cannot be normatively empty, and in our case, social freedom provides us this normative standard. By removing the barriers before interaction in deliberative democratic process through deliberative democratic process, Honneth aims to

remove the barriers before social freedom and thus to pave the way for a society that can strive for institutionally actualizing liberty, equality and fraternity for everyone, where “the self-fulfillment of each must depend on the self-fulfillment of the other” (IoS, p. 13).

What remains unmentioned, on the other hand, is Honneth’s opening of the idea of socialism to different aspects of vindication. In its totalizing outlook towards the social reality and its philosophy of history, the original idea of socialism could only be vindicated historically, and only through developments that were directly relevant to the economic sphere and the proletariat (IoS, p. 94). Irrelevant developments could not be simply irrelevant either, as they would be the successes of constantly reifying capitalist social order, hence negative developments. In his article, Laitinen (2017) pinpoints three aspects of vindication, which are dynamic, dialogic and historical: Dynamic aspect refers to a framework’s “ability to meet challenges” by overcoming “*unsolved inadequacies* and unanswered questions”, whereas dialogic aspect of vindication refers to its vindication in comparison with other frameworks regarding the “defined *area of agreement and disagreement with other traditions*” (p. 12-13). Finally, the historical aspect refers to framework’s own narrative account of its history and encounters with other frameworks (Laitinen, 2017, p. 13), providing us with its track record and an account of how the elements and embodiments came to be.

The original idea’s interlinked assumptions provided it with an unfalsifiable aspect of vindication to which it had to rely upon when the social reality did not conform to its arguments. To explain its inadequacies, it could simply refer to a lack of awareness on worker’s part despite the fact the force of history was with them, or

the opposite, that the theory predicted otherwise but proletariat/the relations of production set the path anyway. By setting institutional achievements in all spheres of social reality as its criteria of success, the renewed idea has a greater capacity for dynamic vindication, and through its experimentalist outlook, it is increasingly so, as all attempts of overcoming an inadequacy will be informative for the framework. And while such a formulation also helps the framework vis-a-vis others in terms of dialogic justification, here the crucial role is played by the idea's opening to multiple and shared frameworks: As discussed previously, assumptions of the original idea prevented the recognition of the need for social freedom in other spheres, robbing the idea of many "alliances" and/or mediums of advance against capitalism¹⁹. Overall, vis-à-vis other frameworks, the idea is both robust by establishing an autonomous evaluative framework towards social reality, and flexible by refraining from fixed endpoints and simply setting "end-in-views" guided by a general commitment to a social freedom and to being the "representative of the social". Finally, formulated as such, all attempts, all experiments at emancipation contribute to the renewed idea's historical account, both in terms of the Hegelian idea of history as the social inclusion of the previously excluded groups, and related to that, Deweyan realization of potentials through free interaction in each stage of reality.

Now, let's turn back to the challenge of (in)determinate oughts:

During different phases in history, different frameworks are in force, and so what people ought to do is different. The challenge is to understand what – if anything – people ought to do during the intermediate transition periods. It is unclear and indeterminate. (Laitinen, 2017, p. 15)

The original idea itself emerged in an intermediary transition period, where there were competing views around the social organization that would ensure the three

¹⁹ See pages 34-35.

principles of legitimacy of the modern society: Liberty, equality and fraternity. The liberal-capitalist social order emerged as the dominant view, but during this phase, the original idea managed to set its political project as a determinate ought for many, providing determinate normative guidance about what to do by establishing a convincing evaluative framework of its own towards the social reality, built upon the three interlinked assumptions detailed before.

I hope it is clear by now that after leaving the assumptions of the original idea, the renewed idea should draw upon a new historical-philosophical grounding to be able to present itself, convincingly, as the answer to the question of “When there are several views around, which answer should one follow?” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 16). It is important to remember that here we are concerned with the crisis of the idea of socialism: The evaluative framework of the stage one is still around, i.e. the proponents of the original idea still maintain that it presents a viable, rationally justified whole and thus stands as a determinate ought. But as the inadequacies of the original idea are becoming more and more evident, the need for a new answer that will maintain continuity with the core values of the stage one view is becoming more acute, too. While attempts in new answers are proliferating, “answers a la stage three” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 17), none proves superior over the other and manages to establish themselves as prevalent determinate oughts, even though some have conceptual means to do so. As noted in the first chapter, here Honneth sees an “interruption in the currents of utopian thinking” (IoS, p. 2) and it is a curious, historically novel case: While Dewey would attribute this to a unclarity in the normative shape of the situation, Honneth seems to think that the normative shape of the situation have never been this clear: “Although the outraged have a clear sense of what they do not want and what outrages them about current social conditions, they

have no halfway clear conception of the goal to which the change they desire should ultimately lead.” (IoS, p. 2). So, what one should do if they are outraged with the current state of affairs, and believe that idea of socialism holds a vital spark that can be a “source of political-ethical orientations” (IoS, p. 5)?

Drawing upon similar debates in the field of positive law, Laitinen presents several models regarding how to choose what is to be done in an intermediary stage: First, there is the law in force model; the previous framework must be followed if it is the law. But this would mean “the social movements challenging Stage One are always in the wrong” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 16), so it is a hard pass. Then there are the theories of civil disobedience, which argue “one ought to promote the Stage Three view but be ready to publicly bear the consequences for violating the Stage One view” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 17). While evidently correct in the field of positive law, outside the legal context its only justification can be non-conformity with people’s expectations (in this case, perhaps being labelled as a revisionist, reformist or moderate by the followers of the “stage one” socialism), or the common sense of bearing responsibility of one’s actions. Then there are the “both-and model”, that argues both Stage One and Three frameworks are equally right in Stage Two, and “one’s own conscience” model, that argues what is the right thing to do can be only determined by one’s own conscience, but both are close to useless in looking for a emancipatory theory, because formulated as such, that means “everyone has remarkable powers to make anything right” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 17). But this can also be overcome by arguing “one must consult one’s own judgments *and* the judgments of others and preserve what is good in the Stage One view” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 18); whereas whether the judgments in question are the right thing to do depends on the case, and this can only be known retrospectively.

But progressive historicism has another suggestion: “the fact that ‘View Three’ *will* become the accepted shared view in Stage Three is a constitutive criterion for it being right to act in accordance with it as soon as one can understand the view’s appeal” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 18). Of course, one’s judgments are fallible in Stage Two, yet progressive historicism’s answer to the problem of “whether there is something to be known during Stage Two” (Laitinen, 2017, p. 19) is affirmative, but one can still err. Laitinen concludes his article by simply stating that “progressive historicism has conceptual means to answer the challenge of indeterminate oughts” (2017, p. 19). So what are these conceptual means that make progressive historicism, or in our case, Honneth’s revitalized idea of socialism, capable of establishing determinate oughts?

The determinate ought of the renewed idea is to engage in constant institutional experimentation to bring about social freedom in all spheres of social reality, and this argument acquires its determinacy first through by being founded upon an autonomous and evaluative approach to social reality. With its commitment to immanent critique, such an approach delivers its answers with an evaluative authority that draws its normative grounds from the actual processes of life that are already present in or even constitutive of that reality: It draws upon not an external criterion that sets forth something as this is what one ought to do, but starts from a negative beginning to uncover what prevents the unfolding of the original aims of that social reality, and then determine what one is ought to do. According to Honneth, for the idea of socialism what is unrealized is the three principles of French Revolution: The modern society, in its capitalist form, subscribe to liberty, equality and fraternity as its sources of legitimacy yet these remain unrealized for the majority of the population, because liberty is understood in purely legal and individualistic

terms. A normative commitment is required to constitute this as an issue and to assess what would count as progress, and in our case, this is based upon immanent and not external criteria. As such, the critique claims to have the motivational element within, by drawing from the norms persons are committed to in a social setting but remain unrealized. Thus, it is “ought to provide reasons for action” (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 7) to the persons committed to the norms critique is based upon. Yet for that to be a determinate ought, both a naturalist vocabulary and a naturalist approach plays an indispensable role, by providing a historical and metaphysical foundation to speculate upon, as we will see below.

As we have argued previously, on one hand, the normative commitment in question is social freedom, and its realization across the spheres of social reality is the precondition of the mutual realization of the three principles. The source of this commitment is immanent to the given social reality, and on the other hand, this source also provides us with an idea of what is to be done: In Honneth’s Dewey-inspired revitalization of the idea of socialism, this normative commitment is based upon Dewey’s notion of “associated living”, which resembles social freedom very much in its commitments. While it is a distinct trait of sociality, it is based upon the common trait of all that exists: Things interact/associate, and evolve through this interaction/association. In due course, inorganic processes make way to organic processes, and organic processes to sociality, presenting us a hierarchy of different stages of reality that culminate in the social, where potentials are endless due to the specifically social forms of interaction. Simply put, argument is that if the expansion of interaction is the source of the evolution of life, if not the distinctive trait of social life, then it is also the right thing to strive for in our social reality, by expanding interaction/communication through the removal of the barriers before social freedom.

I believe elaborating upon the naturalist ontology, conceptual means and theoretical commitments behind such an argument should be the first step in clarifying it.

3.2 Social philosophy and different conceptions of social pathology

The critical power of the social philosophy comes from the naturalistic concept of social pathology, which refers to distinctively “social” wrongs that can be likened to diseases seen in organic beings. For Honneth, social pathology constitutes both the task and the subject matter of social philosophy throughout its entire legacy (Honneth, 2007), as it refers both to the very negative definition of the peculiar social wrong at hand, and to the task of diagnosing and curing them (Honneth, 2009). To be able to speak of a social pathology, it requires a “conception of normality related to the social life as a whole” (Honneth, 2007, p. 34) and through the term, social philosophy claims to “take a more extensive view of things than moral or political philosophy” (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018²⁰, p. 3), as it aims to address “social wrongs that cannot be adequately addressed as injustices” (Särkelä & Laitinen, 2018²¹, p. 4). Simply put, this extensive view lies in the fact that if our criteria of assessment inevitably stem from the social reality we live in, and if there is something wrong with that social reality, then our criteria are necessarily distorted by that social reality. It is also distinct compared to the “contemporary professionalized sociology which avoids ethical speculation altogether” (S&L, p. 2): While social philosophy is committed to negative beginnings and not positive ends, its evaluations also depend upon a positive account of the conditions of freedom, thus it is also dependent upon a

²⁰ Hereafter abbreviated as L&S.

²¹ Hereafter abbreviated as S&L.

conception of good life. But the “good life” itself can have two distinct formulations: It can both refer to a “healthy” life process in a naturalistic manner, or to a formal ethics of good life in a normativist manner. While the naturalistic vocabulary persists in both naturalist and normativist approaches, simply because they talk about the social as a life process, the dilemma leading to different conceptions of social pathology begins here: What makes a social phenomenon a distinctly social wrong? And consequently, can the social entities be reduced to or meaningfully likened to natural ones?

Laitinen and Särkelä start their typology by explicating the different attitudes in this dilemma, asking the theories “is something ‘pathological’ because it is *wrong* or is it wrong because it is *pathological*?” (L&S, p. 3). The normativist position refers to a specifically social issue that “fails to meet some pre-established normative ideal” as a social pathology, whereas the naturalist position diagnoses a specifically social issue as socially wrong, thus a social pathology, and it is this diagnosis that sheds light on “how it is wrong, or what the wrong-making features are” (S&L, p. 1-3). As we will see below, while the normativist accounts still use the term “social pathology”, the naturalist connotations of the term are discarded: It is used in a predominantly metaphorical way by translating it into a normative vocabulary (L&S, p. 8).

Laitinen and Särkelä writes about two distinct conceptions under normativism, and two under naturalism. First, there is the “anti-theoretical” approach, where social pathology stands as an umbrella term for all criticisable social arrangements. It consciously refrains from seeing anything more than a “family resemblance” between these social wrongs, as “it would be a distortion to force the

phenomena into the straitjacket of a unified structure” (L&S, p. 4), as argued in the works of Walzer, Taylor or Gadamer (Walzer, 1987; Taylor 1991; Gadamer, 2004; as quoted in L&S, p. 4). As the authors note, such a formulation of social pathology can only inform us about the task of social philosophy if “it has a story about how social wrongs differ from moral or political ones” (L&S, p. 4), which is a contested debate but not without answers. Yet if one chooses an anti-essentialist approach that argues there cannot be an informative account of a shared structure in social wrongs, why would one use such a naturalistic concept? That is to say, if naturalist element is not going to provide any sort of a critical and/or evaluative power, why would one use it in the first place? So as Laitinen and Särkelä notes, here we can speak of “a rhetorical gesture, albeit not a theoretical reason, behind sticking to the term ‘pathology’” (L&S, p. 5).

Second normativist conception of social pathology, on the other hand, argue that these phenomena share a structure, one that can be analysed in anti-naturalist terms. While the use of the terminology of pathology is once again optional, it presents a conception of pathology that can establish social philosophy as a distinct approach from moral and political philosophies, as it highlights that “(u)nder pathological conditions, the questions of moral rightness and political legitimacy appear as one-sided” (Laitinen, Särkelä & Ikaheimo, 2015, p. 10-11) and therefore fail to fully grasp the issue at hand. A prominent example of this approach is Zurn’s (2011) second-order disorders, which was also commended by Honneth in his *Freedom’s Right* (2014a, p. 86; see also Honneth, 2015). Zurn argues that all social pathologies can be conceived of second order disorders, “constitutive disconnects between first-order contents and second-order reflexive comprehension of those contents, where those disconnects are pervasive and socially caused” (Zurn, 2011, p.

345-346). But despite its theoretical power, there are some issues. First, it misses the fact that there may be something wrong with the social reality itself, as “the fault need not lie in the disconnect between reality and reflection” (L&S, p. 6), and the fact that all faults are necessarily second order as phenomena need to be reflected upon to be deemed as such does not mean there cannot be first-order disorders. Secondly, while such an approach stands rather “narrow” to address social wrongs of “other” orders²², it broadly considers “such diverse phenomena as ideology, reification, invisibilization, organized self-realization, etc” as sharing one common structure, thus runs the risk of “being too abstract” (L&S, p. 8). Last but not least, as an answer to Honneth’s approval of Zurn in *Freedom’s Right*, authors note that such a conception would be better for a theory of reflexive freedom where one deems themselves or each other free or unfree through reflective thinking, hence in the second order. Yet as social freedom is “about actualization of individual’s freedom in social roles” (S&L, p. 6) and as it targets the social wrongs in the first order, in the ensemble of these social roles, it is better served by a conception of distinctively social pathology.

I believe a short reminder to the reader would be wise and warranted at this point: It is my conviction that in *Idea of Socialism*, a conception of social pathology that locates the cause of the pathology in the social reality is required not only for the purposes and premises of social freedom, but for the revitalized idea of socialism itself. For the idea of socialism the fault before unfreedom lies not in the instance of reflection (although it is inevitably perceived through reflection) but simply in the social reality itself. As I detailed in the first chapter, Honneth builds his idea of

²² In their article, Laitinen and Särkelä note that there can also be “third order” disorders, alongside suggestions for a more-encompassing account for a similar anti-naturalistic approach (L&S, p. 7)

socialism upon a normative reconstruction of the normative core of the idea, the notion of social freedom, which sees the prevalent one-sided and merely legal conception of freedom as pathological: The notion of social freedom sees the prevailing understanding freedom as a deformation of the socially effective reason characterized by the three principles of French Revolution. The idea of socialism, as a future oriented emancipatory theory with the notion of social freedom as its normative core, diagnoses this deformation as pathological, as a direct result of the expansion of capitalism that led to the subsumption of the three principles by the imperatives of the market, and aims to rectify it through emancipatory social change. What we have at hand in Honneth's *The Idea of Socialism* is therefore a normative core built upon a normative conception of social pathology (prevailing notion of freedom/liberty is pathological because it fails to meet a normative standard) and an emancipatory theory built upon two distinct naturalistic conceptions of social pathology: Social reality that gives way to this distorted notion of freedom/liberty is pathological because it prevents different spheres of society from functioning as the parts of a purposively organized organic whole, and because it causes stagnations and degenerations in the social life process. Let's see the premises of these conceptions and the distinction between the two in detail.

Unlike the previous two normativist approaches, naturalistic approaches content-fully use the term social pathology in both its meanings: As an illness or disease of the social, and as the science of that disease, aimed at diagnosing and curing it. The organismic view takes the medical and biologic connotations of the term seriously and conceives social pathologies as "deviations from the reproductive values and ends of society" (L&S, p. 9), and society as something that can fall ill, if social "organs" fail to "serve the reproductive end of the social whole" (Laitinen,

Särkelä & Ikaheimo, 2015, p. 12). It is crucial to note that here the naturalistic vocabulary is not a metaphor; “the parallel here is not drawn between society and organism but between the society, itself represented as an organism, and living organism” (S&L, p. 9). This parallel constitutes the source of the critical claim: It diagnoses not the individuals, nor the organs, but the society itself, conceived as an organic being, and for that organic being to survive, healthy functioning of the organs is required. Here, this survival refers to organic survival, i.e. self-maintenance of an entity as itself (Dewey, 2015): Social as an organic whole survive through the purposively organized and exclusive functions of its organs, and as an organic entity falls ill when one of its organs fail to function properly, society itself falls ill when its institutions fail in their function.

Organismic approach is a controversial one, with serious limitations. While it conceives enough structural similarity for a meaningful analogy between the society and the biological organism, this conceived similarity requires it to refer to a metaphysical/cosmological explanation regarding the distinction between the natural and the social: If both the society and biological organism are organisms, with a structural similarity in between, there has to be “something added to society that is not present in pre-social nature” (L&S, p. 12). While this is hardly a deal-breaker if one clarifies their metaphysical commitments, its socio-ontological commitments are also up to debate. First, if the diagnosis proceeds from a necessarily less-complex pre-social nature to evaluate upon a by-definition more complex social reality, it is reductive at its very outset. Moreover, by casting the society in such static terms, in an Aristotelian picture with necessarily cooperating and indispensable organs serving the given reproductive ends in their exclusive functions, and with entire structure collapsing in case of failure in its parts (L&S, p. 12), “it renders radical critique

impossible” and ironically reproduces “the pathology it intends to cure” (Adorno, 2003, as quoted in Laitinen, Särkelä & Ikaheimo, 2015, p. 13). By virtue of its reproductive emphasis, critique is based upon safeguarding given reproductive ends, and as these ends are uncriticizable by virtue of constituting the survival of the organic whole, anything that disregards these reproductive ends themselves become pathological.

These shortcomings make themselves felt in Honneth’s book, too, even though the organismic conception of society and social pathology is of secondary importance compared to the Deweyan historical experimentalism and his life-process conception that constitutes the main theoretical framework of his conceptual renovation. Yet, as it serves to substitute some of the key assumptions that make socialism unique in a higher level of abstraction, I argue that it stands as the reason behind a key issue with Honneth’s revitalized idea of socialism noted by several critiques of the book: By conceiving an organic society consisting of purposively organized and independent parts each agreeing with the uncriticizable reproductive ends of the whole they constitute, Honneth pushes the relationship between emancipatory politics and conflict into obscurity. He presents his organicist conception of a democratic form of life solely on the social spheres, and by virtue of being represented as organs of a biological organism, the relationship between these social spheres paint an organic picture, not a political one: The role ascribed to “politics”, or in its only manifestation across the book, to deliberative democracy, is merely to create social forms (Sawyer, 2019) that act like, nay, function as purposively cooperating organs of a biological organism. With not a single mention of the constitutive role of struggle or conflict against capitalism on the emancipatory

projects, specifically on the idea of socialism, Honneth paints a picture of blissful democratic experimentation (Baruchello, 2018),

Conceptualized as parts of an organism, the aforesaid social spheres contain no potential of conflict and in a way, Honneth thus draws a positivity/self-certainty like one troubled socialism before, but this time, through a reduction of the extent of the relationship between social spheres, rather than through what he argues to be the conflation of the role of economic sphere. This in turn undermines the aim of “revitalizing socialism as democracy” by “neglecting the intrinsic link between politics and conflict” (Repa, 2021, p. 37). Moreover, by apodictically assuming an organic integration of the social spheres²³, Honneth brings the old into new, echoing the original idea’s perceived need for a social harmony in its theories of ideal society (Repa, 2021, p. 40-42). While Honneth acknowledges that the book is a metapolitical text (IoS, p. 5) and, very briefly, that the institutional experimentation for the sake of social freedom and historical experimentalism does not exclude revolutionary methods and/or conflict (IoS, p. 64), these does not change the fact that his “image of democracy as a form of life seeks to guarantee the organic integration of the spheres of freedom into a whole” (Repa, 2021, p. 46). In this light, I believe Honneth’s use of an organicist conception of society despite all such evident shortcomings further begs the question: Why Honneth resorts to two distinct naturalistic conceptions of society in his *Idea of Socialism*?

²³ In his Marxian critique of *Idea of Socialism*, Kempf also criticizes the revitalized idea’s depoliticization of emancipatory politics through its neglect of the intrinsic role of conflict in emancipatory politics and quite similarly argues that such a formulation assumes a “hegemonic ‘idea of socialism’ or ‘social freedom’”, as if there is an already constituted universal subject aiming at such an end (2019, p.3).

At this point I find it wise to note that Honneth presents this rather static picture very briefly in the fourth chapter, and this use of organismic conceptions is accompanied with the aim of expanding communication for the sake of a distinctly social form of life, i.e., the two naturalistic conceptions are used conjointly with organismic conceptions. Moreover, I would like to remind the reader that as I have maintained in this previously²⁴, Honneth could have resorted to the anti-organismic, Deweyan social life approach I will be discussing below. Overall, this dissertation maintains that the emphasis on the self-preservation imperative of a life process through the organismic conception, and the emphasis on the self-transformation imperative of a distinctly social life process through the Deweyan life-process conception, stand together as a conscious choice across Honneth's conceptual renovation, and actually stand to act together in the ensuing political idea. I will therefore be arguing that Honneth's renovation can be read as a Deweyan attempt in mediating two emphases/critiques of the idea of socialism in the proceeding chapter.

The last approach in Laitinen and Särkelä's typology of different conceptions of social pathology is named the social life approach, or, as I have referred to it interchangeably so far, social life process approach. I believe it would be best clarified through Dewey's social philosophy, and since I will be presenting it in detail next chapter, here I will be merely giving an outline of its key theoretical premises. While organicism takes the object of its analogy as an "ideally organized self-maintaining substance" and this as the "ontological principle of life", here we are talking about a "distinctively social-life... a *life-process* operating above and beneath the living body" (L&S, p. 14), one that developed through a metaphysical/cosmological common trait as the ontological principle of life. The life

²⁴ See pages 50-51.

process in question, social life, is something irreducible to organic life/organism, it is a distinct layer of reality: “Even if ‘society’ were as much an organism as some writers have held, it would not on that account be society” (Dewey, 2016, p. 178).

As we have seen previously, Dewey’s naturalistic social philosophy was based upon an ontology of interaction and a cosmology of associated interaction as the common trait of all that exists (1973): All things interact, and evolve through this associated interaction, making way to different stages of reality. While inorganic stage consists of inorganic processuality, consequent organic life forms are characterised by their distinct trait of interacting to maintain themselves as they are (Dewey, 2015, p. 17). On one hand, this applies for the social life process too, social life needs to maintain itself through self-reproduction, but on the other hand, it is irreducible to organic life in that it engages in this self-reproduction through self-transformation, by constantly renegotiating or reshaping its means of self-reproduction. While this approach thus rejects organicism, it is still naturalist in its ontological commitments: Social constitutes a life process and social philosopher is to diagnose and cure its ills “by acting upon what he knows” (Dewey, 2015, p. 13). Therefore, it still has to provide a metaphysical-cosmological account of why social is a distinct life process, compared to other, “lesser” life-processes as presented above, and detail the relationship between them in a way that would warrant its use in social criticism. The conceived social pathology of such an approach is the “stagnation or even degeneration of a distinctively social life-process” (L&S, p. 14). Both stagnation and degeneration of social life can be seen as a demotion/degeneration to a “lesser” life process (Särkelä, 2017, p. 117), as the approach takes “social life and organic life as *homologous*” (L&S, p. 15), i.e. takes the former as grown out of the latter. Simply put, if social life stagnates, i.e. merely

reproduces itself like an organism, it dies socially and turns into organic life, but if it fails to reproduce itself, it can indeed die organically and turn into inorganic mass.

Overall, life process approach combines the advantages and avoids the disadvantages of the normativist conceptions by content-fully utilizing the terminology of social pathology and by avoiding the “static model of the social *organism*” (Laitinen, Särkelä & Ikaheimo, 2015, p. 13). It represents “social life as a kind of synthesis of organic and inorganic nature” (L&S, p. 16): By taking social life as a life process that has to both reproduce and transform itself to maintain itself as social life, and through a commitment to immanent critique, such ontologies manage to situate the critique within its object. Whether it is transformation or it is to pave the way for transformation, critique thus stands as a vital function of a distinctly social life process, ensuring that the social life form will kill its reproductive ends every now and then, to shed its “already dead shell” (Dewey, 1973, p. 87). And considering that it can both construct and destroy ends or means, critique therefore becomes a medium of life in the social, a specifically social life-process by itself. It is my conviction that the determinate ought of the revitalized idea of socialism, removing the barriers before communication/interaction, aims to set this medium of life free, in order to bring about social freedom in all spheres of social reality, and to ensure that the social life will be able to both self-transform and self-reproduce itself. And as we will see below, I contend that this dual aim stands as the reason of Honneth’s use of two seemingly-contradictory naturalistic conceptions of social pathology.

3.3 Concluding Remarks

The naturalistic conception of social reality and social pathology constitutes the source of the determinacy of Honneth's renewed idea of socialism's proposals: Its determinate ought of institutional experimentation to break down the barriers before free interaction in all spheres of social reality for the sake of bringing about social freedom is immanent to the "associated life" that characterizes the social reality: What it draws its inspiration and justification from, and what it proposes to undertake is the social life process itself.

Formulated as such, Honneth, by drawing upon Dewey's naturalistic social philosophy, bases his revitalized idea of socialism upon a naturalistic ontology that provides a historical-evolutionary anchor to its premises and consequently an ability to draw upon an emancipatory historical force. By thus establishing its emancipatory project of removing the barriers before freedom and expanding free communication across social reality as a determinate ought, idea of socialism thwarts the risk of "degenerating into merely one theory of justice among others, turning its demands into mere normative demands rather than the expression of already existing demands" (IoS, p. 63): The demand of inclusion, of emancipation, of being able to communicate freely acquires a basis across the history of nature and the society, which is marked by the gradual expansion of interaction/communication. Moreover, premises of the revitalized idea of socialism draws heavily upon Dewey's methodology, too. Simply put, in line with experimentalist method, the revitalized idea is built upon the fact that "(t)he more those who are affected by a problem are involved in the search for solutions to that problem, the more such historical-social experiments will lead to better and more stable solutions" (IoS, p. 62).

Yet despite his reliance on Dewey and his naturalism, characterised by the idea of social life-process and criticism of what Laitinen and Särkelä terms the organismic approach, Honneth resorts to both organismic and anti-organismic conceptions in his conceptual renovations. In his *Idea of Socialism*, Honneth introduces Dewey first in the third chapter when he begins his conceptual renovation and presents his anti-organismic naturalistic approach in detail. This conception stands as his main theoretical framework across the book, providing the idea with a new yet still-socialist historical anchor built upon the historical inclusion of the previously excluded, alongside an immanent criterion of critique and standard of evaluation both to assess what constitutes progress and the idea's end-in-views. But in the fourth chapter of the book, Honneth resorts to an organismic conception of naturalism, as he attempts to rectify the original idea's blindness to the "reality of a functionally differentiated society", making it "impossible to apply this concept [social freedom] to gradually separated social spheres" (IoS, p. 77). Here, Honneth conceives the society not as a distinct life process vis-à-vis an organism, but as an organism, as he attempts to pave the way for a "politically motivating, future oriented project" that can explain "how these normatively differentiated spheres [of society] should be related to each other in the future" (IoS, p. 87). As we have seen in this chapter, and as noted by several critiques of the book, this conception leads to a static conception of society that not only risks reproducing the pathology it intends to cure, but also risks depoliticizing the revitalized metapolitical idea of socialism, particularly by presenting an already existing desire/interest in harmonious democratic experimentation and ignoring the inextricable relation between conflict and emancipatory politics. In the next chapter, I will be exploring why Honneth resorts to both the organismic conception and the Deweyan social life-process

conception, arguing that a potential answer may be found, once again, in Dewey's social philosophy: I contend that the conjoint use of organismic and anti-organismic conceptions can be read as a Deweyan mediation of the radical and conservative social criticisms that address self-transformation and self-reproduction imperatives of the social life process, respectively.

CHAPTER 4

DEWEYAN MEDIATION OF RADICAL AND CONSERVATIVE CRITICISMS

So far we have discussed Honneth's normative reconstruction of the original idea of socialism, his conceptual renovation of the idea and the way he rectifies the "congenital defects" that subject the idea into a creature of the past. To do so, Honneth introduces Deweyan historical experimentalism to the idea, upon a naturalistic conception of the social reality where society is seen as a distinctly social life process, and an organic conception that takes society as an organic entity, consisting of purposively organised, independently functioning organs. While I discussed this conceptual framework and the ontological commitments therein, I have not sufficiently distinguished the Deweyan social life process approach vis-à-vis the aforementioned organismic conception, nor elaborated upon the theoretical premises underlying it. Since it constitutes the theoretical core of Honneth's conceptual renovation, and since it draws from several key concepts of Dewey's social philosophy and essentially provides him with the end-in-view of his social philosophy, I believe it warranted a separate heading.

The overarching question I will be dealing with in this chapter is why Honneth resorts to two distinct conceptions of naturalism, discussing whether these two conceptions are mutually incompatible as Sarkela and Laitinen argues (2018). Moreover, while the literature around Honneth's ontological commitments and conception(s) of social pathology is rather scarce, I will also be addressing criticism around the depoliticizing aspects of the revitalized idea, which, in agreement with

Repa (2021), seems to be directly related with Honneth's use of an organismic conception of society and social pathology as he envisions the relation between different social spheres where social freedom can flourish. I will be arguing that Honneth's rationale behind the use conjoint use of organismic and anti-organismic conceptions can be once again found in Dewey's social philosophy. I contend that these two conceptions are not only compatible, but actually, they work together in Honneth's *Idea of Socialism* to present a theoretical framework that can be read as a Deweyan attempt in mediating two contrasting forms of social criticism.

Therefore, I will be first elaborating upon Dewey's social philosophy and his anti-organismic social-life process approach that constitutes the ontological commitments of his philosophy, providing the ultimate criterion of its critique with the notion of "associated life". Through this discussion, I hope the theoretical framework Honneth uses in his *Idea of Socialism* will be completely clarified for the reader. I will be then returning to Honneth's book, explicating the social pathology (or pathologies) he diagnoses, and in line with the dual meaning of the term, the social pathology through which he tries to cure the specifically social wrong at hand. In due course, I will be discussing his synthesis of the two conceptions, presenting my own reasoning behind such a choice, and offering an alternative reading that considers them not parts of distinct theoretical frameworks, but conceptual elements that work together in a Deweyan attempt of mediating two contrasting forms of social criticism. The discussion will be concluded with the implications and significance of such a reading of Honneth's book, with reference to the various disadvantages of the revitalized idea as formulated in *Idea of Socialism*, and to several critiques around these disadvantages.

4.1 Dewey's social philosophy and forms of social criticism

In his *Lectures in China* (dated 1919-1920, published in English in 1973), and in his notes for the *Lectures in China* (first published in 2015), Dewey sets the object of his social philosophy as associated life and likens its method to the art of medicine, aimed at diagnosing and curing social pathologies. So far, we have seen that it is a naturalistic approach in the sense that it presents a continuity between the organic and social life and explains why society is a life process. Being a social life process, society as an irreducible whole can experience distinctively social wrongs.

In a nutshell, naturalistic social critique of Dewey “is an immanent criticism by force of the evaluative authority of ‘associated life’ itself” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 123). In its aim of diagnosing and curing these wrongs, Dewey's social philosophy not only diagnoses the associated life, and draws its immanent normative core from it, but also, in its specific way of curing it, stands as a part and parcel of this life-process: By virtue of being a self-transformative practice aimed at making social life critically relate back onto itself and ensure both its self-transformation and self-reproduction, the critique of Dewey's social philosophy becomes a medium of life in the society by the authority of associated life. And since associated life is the ultimate source of the criteria of all critique, including the social criticism for self-transformation and self-reproduction, it is the ultimate source of our social existence itself (Testa, 2017, p. 240-241). So, how to make sense of all this? First, I will elaborate upon Dewey's social philosophy and, drawing from Sarkela's work, further explicate its naturalism. Then, drawing upon Dewey's habit ontology underlying his social philosophy, I will present how the authority of associated life constitutes the immanent core of his social criticism. This heading will be concluded with a

discussion of the distinct forms of social criticism Dewey distinguishes in a social life process, and of how these criticisms one-sidedly understand the associated life, whereas his social philosophy aims to mediate them under the authority of associated life. In the second heading of this chapter, I will be showing that Honneth aims at something similar through the use of two naturalistic conceptions in his conceptual renovation.

Through his naturalistic ontology and methodology, Dewey understands emancipatory struggle as a process of inquiry (1973, p. 83-84), and builds his historical progressivist understanding upon this conception. As we have seen in our discussion of the role of Dewey's social philosophy in Honneth's *Idea of Socialism*, the revitalized idea draws its historically-ontologically anchored critical and evaluative authority upon this model. According to Honneth, Dewey provides

...a methodological response to the question as to the criterion for the experimental exploration of appropriate solutions to problematic situations. The more those who are affected by a problem are involved in the search for solutions to that problem, the more such historical social experiments will lead to better and more stable solutions. Whenever barriers to communication are removed, the ability of the community to perceive as many of the currently hidden potentials for solving a problem productively will grow. (IoS, p. 62)

To reiterate, the ontological commitment behind this model is Dewey's naturalistic conception of society as a distinct life process that emerged out of organic life, through expansion of interaction. This evolutionary theory persists in organic life's emergence out of inorganic processuality, too (Dewey, 2015, p. 15), and for the social life process, it provides us with an immanent criterion to draw a historical-natural force for a consummately democratic way of life: Since expansion of interaction leads the way for actualization of more potentials, it is what social life, where potentials are endless due to the specifically social forms of association, ought

to strive for. Moreover, considering the highest, “social” stage of reality is distinct from others by virtue of constantly transforming and renegotiating its means of reproduction, it can be argued that expansion of interaction is the social life process. But as we are talking about a social life process, this is merely one of the conditions of its self-maintenance as it is: Dewey’s notion of social life consists of a dual processuality: It has to be both self-transforming itself to be a distinct life form vis-à-vis an organism, and self-maintain its societal structure, like an organism.

Dewey’s naturalism entails a strong commitment to process metaphysics, as he takes association, or rather, associated interaction as the “ontological law of all that exists” (Testa, 2017, p. 232). The evolution of Dewey’s stages of reality is built upon interaction of things, therefore it is universal, and it consists of associated behaviour, because it is an interaction of things (Dewey, 2016, p. 179; see also Dewey, 1928/2008, p. 41). These processes take place in, for our purposes, three degrees of reality that culminate in “the social”. The physical degree of reality consists of inorganic processuality, which, according to evolutionary theory, leads to organic processuality, through millions of years of interaction (Dewey, 1928/2008, p. 45-50). Organic processes on the other hand, “aim at maintaining themselves as precisely *these* processes they are” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 117); their distinctive trait is to maintain their existence as they are. Organic processuality eventually gives way to social beings, which are defined by the fact that they “continuously re-negotiate *how* their form of life is to be reproduced” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 117-118). Social interactions therein thus constitute an “associated life”, the social life that aims for both reproduction and self-transformation. But while Dewey formulates the structure of his model of stages of reality as such, what about its agents? Where can we locate the agents and their actions in this theoretical framework? The individuals that constitute

the associated life, the social human beings, interact both for their own sake, and for the maintenance of the life-process of the society (Dewey, 2015, p. 20), and Dewey makes sense of their actions through his habit ontology, which I will be building towards now.

As Hirvonen notes, “Dewey’s critical social theory starts from the scientific understanding of human practices” (2019, p. 4). He starts his notes for the *Lectures in China* (2015), where he develops his social philosophy built upon his progressive historicist model of stages of reality (Dewey, 1973) and his inevitably provisional political goal of solving problems through “a notion of inquiry understood as the struggle of human intelligence to solve problems” (Festenstein, 2014), with the circumstances that give rise to and effects of thinking/theorizing. Dewey notes that thinking arises in time of need: “Men think when forced to do so by trouble by something the matter which makes it necessary to find some way out not provided by habit and inclination... only when these begin to cease [to] function satisfactorily” (sic) (Dewey, 2015, p. 7).

Dewey’s social philosophy begins when there is an inadequacy, a social pathology, and once “thinking arises so to speak only in the thin cracks of solid habits, and only with great difficulty penetrates the resistant mass” to answer these inadequacies, life “does not go on just the same” (Dewey, 2015, p. 8). If we are to refer to the notion of evaluative frameworks once again, it then becomes an intrinsic part of the framework, providing it with stability, coherence, and most importantly, flexibility (Laitinen, 2017, p. 4). By being embodied in the form of an explicit theory, the evaluative framework turns into something dynamic: Something that can engage in self-transformation of its means and ends of reproduction, therefore can

adapt to changing circumstances in order to ensure the survival of the social life process, and simultaneously, something that can self-evaluate itself to ensure its reproduction as a social whole by preserving its core values.

Considering that association is an ontological law of all that exists, what makes this (socially) associated life distinct is that it consists of “conjoint”, “shared” and “common” action (Dewey, 2016, ch. 6). Simply put, only living beings can engage in an action, thus our associated life consists of living beings (Dewey, 2015, p. 27). In a social context, these actions are shared or conjoint, thus actions are intrinsically social but in due course they categorically define what an individual action is (Dewey, 1928/2008); and all actions happen in the context of prior action, thus they are cast into habitual patterns (Dewey, 1928/2008; see also Testa, 2017, p. 231-232)²⁵. On one hand, ensuing habits, customs and institutions guide and regulate actions of the social beings, in turn guiding the social life process itself. On the other hand, the social as a distinct life form maintains itself through constant re-negotiation of both its reproductive ends and means, but this process itself is initiated by criticism of social beings’ habits, customs and institutions. Pathologies emerge in cases where the mediation process of social interactions fails. As I have argued previously, both constant success in self-maintenance and failure in self-maintenance, is a social failure, former leading to social death, latter leading to organic death (Dewey, 2015, p. 17). So, once again, “self-maintenance is only one

²⁵ Testa notes that Dewey’s habit ontology is not only a descriptive approach to social reality, but also a critical approach, first due to their dynamic, plural and projective structure, that consists of and exists through interaction (2017, p. 234-6). Consequently, its aim is to prevent disruption of interaction, particularly through domination, to bring about public recognition of all social groups (Testa, 2017, p. 235-7). Therefore, while Dewey sets out from the scientific understanding of practices, it is the Hegelian-recognitive idea of master-slave dialectics that sets its normative core, and the negative effects of “forced forms of association” is the grounding of its social critique (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 4). For our purposes, however, I am focusing on Dewey’s naturalism, and his process metaphysics rather than his habit ontology, but I find it wise to say a few words about the normative core of his idea, which also gets its normative authority from the authority of life itself.

value of associated life” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 115); for the social to flourish it also needs self-transformation, and for both, it needs social criticism that will enact the necessary changes in habits of the society.

With reference to these two processes of associated life, self-maintenance and self-transformation, Dewey distinguishes two forms of criticism according to their means and ends, respectively addressing social pathologies of “deficiency and excess” (Dewey, 1973, p. 53). Deficiency refers to social life’s loss of its capability to maintain itself as associated life, i.e. loss of its sociality through social disintegration, whereas excess refers to it merely maintaining itself, i.e. loss of its sociality through not being self-transformative anymore. To exemplify, first emerges²⁶ the conservative criticism in case of deficiency, delivering self-evaluative critique when constitutive groups disintegrate and engage in socially conflicting ends. In such a case, social life fails to become a society, because social groups that are tasked with societal self-maintenance, the organs of self-maintenance, fail in their function and cooperation. Sarkela distinguishes this as an organic pathology of the social, and terms it a societal pathology (Sarkela, 2017, p. 119-120), as it refers to a problem in the societal structure, like an organism. Then, secondly, there is the radical criticism that emerges in time of excess, delivering self-transformative critique when social life degenerates into the organic process of merely self-maintaining itself, in order to restore the self-transformative capacity of the social life. This refers to a peculiarly social death, what Sarkela terms a “*social pathology in a full sense*” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 119). Here it is crucial to note that a society can

²⁶ I start out with conservative criticism because in Dewey’s social philosophy, reflection for self-transformation starts in time of need, i.e. after a crisis emerges in an established, ongoing social life process. While self-transformation is the definitive imperative of a *social* life process, it comes after the self-evaluation/preservation imperative of a social *life process*. See Dewey, 2015, p. 17-20.

still function healthily according to organismic conceptions in case of a social pathology; that the organic form of life functions through domination where a “social group or institution makes other social groups or interests the organs of societal self-maintenance” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 119); and that for associated life to both reproduce and self-transform itself, it needs both self-evaluative and self-transformative criticism.

But these social criticisms also cause social and societal pathologies. On one hand, conservative reactions run the risk of causing social pathologies by idealizing the reproductive means and ends of the given social life (Dewey, 1973, p. 51). On the other hand, transformative ideals of the radical reaction need to be viable, reproducible and, to some extent, compatible with the reproductive means and ends of the society (Dewey, 1973, 54) in order not to cause societal pathologies. As we have seen in the second chapter, one needs to tread lightly with statements around reproductive ends: For Dewey, a proper radical social reaction/criticism should both be able to present an organically reproducible social life-process, and at the same time be compatible with the core values and beliefs of the society (Dewey, 1973, p. 52-54). While the first premise is inarguably true if one is not aiming at eradicating social life, the latter is rather problematic as it limits the scope of emancipatory political action. It leads Dewey to advocating gradualism and opposing revolutionary methods (Dewey, 1935), and, for us, it underlines how limiting organicist arguments can be.

Dewey indeed acknowledges that radical critique will inevitably (and to some extent, should) disturb the given social life to lead it to self-transformation (Dewey, 1973, p. 53): Through this formulation he does not aim to sanctify the social fabric

against radical social criticism, apart from his explicit rejection of revolutionary methods and advocacy of gradualism, but as we will see below, he calls both criticisms to recognize each other. I find it wise to note here that Honneth says nothing against (nor anything in favour of) revolutionary methods in his book, and the compatibility between radical theory and the fabric of social life, apart from his organicist conception of the relationship between different social spheres (IoS, ch. 4), is argued simply through a strict adherence to the core value of social freedom for everyone (IoS, ch. 1, 2, & 3). Nevertheless, formulated as such, what Dewey sees in social life is a tragic oscillation of excess and deficiency (Dewey, 1973) due to the suppression of social criticisms by monopolizing habits (Testa, 2017, p. 239-240) of both conservative and radical criticisms. Overall, associated life that persists through constant renegotiation of its means and ends of reproduction needs the stability provided by habits, customs and institutions to persist as a societal life form. These tend to be disturbed into disintegration when radical theory becomes “one-sidedly transformative” and monopolizes “social life by abstract patterns”, thus causing a societal pathology. This pathology in turn leads to conservative reaction becoming dominant and suppressing self-transformation, forgetting that its self-evaluative criticism is “an organ of social life” alongside the self-transformative criticism (Sarkela, 2017, p. 119-122), thus causing a social pathology.

Dewey sets forth his social philosophy itself to answer this oscillation, as a third form of criticism. Taking social life as a “pulsating processual unity of the organic and the inorganic” (Sarkela, 2017, p. 122), his philosophical criticism is a criticism of the one-sided criticisms we have seen above: “By diagnosing and curing the arrhythmia” of that pulsation, he aims to mediate “the reproductive and transformative claims of social life by transformative practice itself” (Sarkela, 2017,

p. 122-123), thus preventing the tragic oscillation of social and societal pathologies. Here, it is the dual processuality and evaluative authority of the associated life that provides the criteria of Dewey's immanent social philosophical criticism: Two criticisms need to be mediated for social life to flourish on its own, for it to self-evaluate and self-transform itself through the individuals' joint inquiry to solve their own, each other's, and their society's problems. What Dewey thus proposes is therefore the consummately democratic way of life Honneth subscribes to in his *Idea of Socialism* and as such, presents us with a "new way of thinking about the potentialities of a new democracy – simultaneously radical, political, and social" (Novak, 2019).

I believe the statement "authority of associated life provides the criteria of all social criticism" becomes clear now. According to Testa, "the ultimate criterion is the qualitative enhancement of associated living", grown out of inorganic and then organic processuality through associated interaction (2017, p. 242); radical criticism aims to preserve its self-transformative capacity, the conservative criticism aims to preserve its self-evaluative capacity. For both these criticisms that one-sidedly grasp associated life's dual processuality, and for Deweyan social criticism that aims to mediate them, the qualitative enhancement of associated living is "the expansion and empowerment" (Testa, 2017, p. 243) of this associated interaction, or in its human form, communication. But one-sidedness of the two criticisms lead to pathologies, by preventing free communication of the other criticism. Therefore, Dewey's mediating philosophy not only aims to expand communication as "a criterion immanent to life, deeply embodied in its associated form" (Testa, 2017, p. 242-3), but by expanding free communication to mediate the two criticisms, this mediating philosophy thus becomes the medium of associated life itself. It is upon this theoretical foundation

Honneth builds his revitalized idea of socialism upon, and as such, it presents a determinate ought: Its aim of bringing about social freedom in all spheres of social reality through the removal of the barriers before communication is not a demand drawn from external criteria, it is immanent to social life, and actually, it is the demand of the social life.

To reiterate, I will be illustrating Dewey's aim of mediating two social criticisms from the perspective of Laitinen's evaluative frameworks and stages of social inquiry (2017): We can say that conservative criticism posits the evaluative framework at stage one, since a society, first and foremost, needs to be established and maintaining itself to encounter an inadequacy in this self-maintenance. Then a crisis emerges at stage two, compelling the society to transform its means of self-reproduction, leading to the emergence of radical criticism and its constant competition with conservative criticism. Consequently, the stage two is marked with the oscillation of deficiency and excess, and maintenance of their respective pathologies. This oscillation may come to be the normalcy of stage two. Nevertheless, resolution of this crisis requires a social criticism that recognizes the dual processuality of the associated life and thus mediates two criticisms by the authority of associated life itself, which is also the ultimate normative core of all social criticisms. Such an aim establishes a determinate ought, i.e. provides determinate normative guidance: Radical and conservative criticism must be mediated for the sake of associated life itself.

4.2 Social pathology of Honneth's idea of socialism

As noted previously, this thesis maintains that Honneth's *The Idea of Socialism* can be read as a similar mediation of radical and conservative elements of the social criticism presented by the idea of socialism. Moreover, considering his use of two distinct conceptions of naturalism, namely the organismic conception of social life and the conception of society as a distinctly social life process, it is my conviction that this is a conscious choice. Below, I will be first presenting the conception(s) of social pathology Honneth resorts to in his conceptual renovations. Simultaneously, by drawing upon Dewey's social philosophy, I will be presenting my own reasoning of why Honneth resorts to both organismic and anti-organismic conceptions of naturalism.

Previously, we have argued that Honneth's renewed idea of socialism establishes itself as a determinate ought. To finally put this in a coherent formulation, we need to understand the social pathology, or pathologies, of the renewed idea of socialism. Let's reiterate what we have seen so far, and first things first: Social freedom constitutes the normative core of the idea, and it is developed through a normative reconstruction addressing a normatively conceptualized social pathology in both *Freedom's Right* and in the first two chapters of *The Idea of Socialism*²⁷. In the first two chapters of *The Idea of Socialism*, the social pathology capitalism causes is the rise of a merely legal and atomizing conception of freedom that ignores social sources of freedom, following the subsumption of the three principles of French Revolution by the imperatives of the market. While mutual realization of these principles (liberty, equality and fraternity) for everyone represents the socially

²⁷ In his normative reconstruction of the notion of social freedom in first 2 chapters of *The Idea of Socialism*, Honneth does not use any naturalistic vocabulary.

effective reason, that is, social freedom, prevalent liberal understanding of freedom represents a deformation of this socially effective reason: It is a normative conception of social pathology as the social wrong is defined by a failure to satisfy a normative-rational criterion. But this is the diagnosis part of Honneth's social philosophy: To cure this social wrong while retaining the theoretical elements that make idea of socialism unique, i.e. with an autonomous evaluative approach to the social reality that is not reducible to the normativity of moral and political philosophy and that can establish its aim as a determinate ought, he resorts to naturalistic conceptions of social pathology in his conceptual renovation, namely, organismic conception in the last, and social life conception in the third chapter. But why does Honneth use two distinct conceptions of naturalism, when Deweyan life process conception could also be used to give an idea of how the "normatively differentiated [social] spheres should be related to each other in the future" (IoS, p. 87), instead of an organismic conception²⁸?

In the third chapter of his book, after leaving the totalizing aspects of the original idea aside and thus leaving future as something that cannot be foreseen, Honneth introduces historical experimentalism to the idea of socialism in order to bring about "the most appropriate steering principle when it comes to realizing social freedom in the economic sphere" (IoS, p. 59) and a dilemma emerges: As socialism loses the progressive historical tendency it assumed, it requires an "alternative form of historical anchoring" to prevent its demotion into a "theory of justice among others" (IoS, p. 63). Here, Honneth resorts to Dewey's process-metaphysical understanding of social life (hierarchical degrees of reality that culminate in the social), and the idea of free interaction/communication as the motor of this

²⁸ See pages 50-51.

development. He draws upon both the evolutionary role of free interaction (IoS, p. 60) and the fact that free communication constitutes the normative core of Dewey's mediation of social criticisms with reference to its constitutive role in associated living (IoS, p. 60-62). Arguing, rightfully, that removal of the barriers to communication stands as the common aim of both Dewey's social philosophy (authority of associated life demands free communication both for the mediation of social criticisms and for the recognitive demands of the excluded social groups) and social freedom (which desires to "remove all social hindrances to the exercise of freedom in solidarity", IoS, p. 66), Honneth provides the idea of socialism with a historical foundation: By setting removal of barriers to interaction/communication as the motor of the natural/social history, history becomes the realization of potentials and inclusion of previously excluded groups through expansion of free communication communication, whereas the renewed idea of expanding communication becomes the representative of the social.

Two results of such a formulation establishes the aim of institutional experimentation for the sake of social freedom as a determinate ought: Institutional experimentation to remove hindrances to social freedom is thus immanently linked with the authority of the "social", whereas the conceived pathology thus becomes the barriers erected before the "social" itself. These barriers prevent the self-transformation of the social life process, subjecting it to an existential crisis as a social life process, since if it fails to self-transform itself, it degenerates into simple organic life that merely reproduces itself. Here, the radical criticism Dewey writes about comes to fore, entailed by social's need to constantly renegotiate its terms of existence as a distinctly social life-process, that can self-transform itself. By the authority of social life, removal of these barriers become a determinate ought, for

social life to persist as a distinctly social life process. To give an empirical example of this pathology, one can simply think of climate crisis and how the rigidity of contemporary capitalism and the social structure built around the imperatives of the market prevent taking effective action on many issues that present an existential threat to human life in our planet.

Yet, in the fourth and final chapter of his book, Honneth resorts to an organismic conception as he strives to rectify idea of socialism's blindness to functional differentiation in the society and make it "permit the various independent spheres of action the freedom to follow their own respective social logic" (IoS, p. 81). Here, Honneth's aim is to establish the terms of the relationship between different spheres of society to meet the preconditions of bringing about social freedom in all spheres, thus in the society as a whole (IoS, p. 89). But as we have seen before, simply dropping economocentrism is not enough and an idea of "how these normatively differentiated spheres should be related to each other in the future" is required (IoS, p. 87). Organismic conception emerges as Honneth argues that "*to be able to speak of a form of life* [emphasis added] in such a functionally differentiated society, *we must assume* [emphasis added] a rationally integrated, harmoniously arranged order that represents more than the mere sum of its parts" (IoS, p. 92). As such, Honneth conceives society "as an organic whole of independent yet purposefully cooperating functions in which members act for each other in social freedom" (IoS, p. 93). Here, the healthy functioning of these spheres is determined by their success in ensuring the continuous reproduction of the whole (IoS, p. 92) as the organs of the social organism. Honneth then proceeds to theorise about the appropriate reflexive authority in such a society, and the social points of reference required for the transformational processes the idea of socialism aims at

(IoS, p. 94-95). Informed by both the experimental method of Dewey's social philosophy, and the idea of actualizing potentials through expanding communication, he opts for a consummately democratic form of life, where the political sphere is tasked with "reflexively steering overall social reproduction" (IoS, p. 96): Political sphere is "*prima inter pares*, since it is the only place in which problems from every corner of social life can be articulated for all ears and be presented as a task to be solved in cooperation" (IoS, p. 97).

Formulated as such, the pathology caused by capitalism becomes the obstruction of the different social spheres from functioning in their respective social logic, thus putting the reproduction/maintenance of the social life as a life process at risk: Ensuring this reproduction becomes a determinate ought, by the authority of the social life itself. Here, to give an empirical example, one can think of how contemporary capitalism and its profit maximization imperative directly exacerbates the deterioration of the natural world we depend upon by preventing different social spheres from conducting their duties, for instance the political sphere from taking the necessary actions, thus pushing the social life process into an existential risk. The conservative criticism à la Dewey and social's need to reproduce and self-evaluate itself comes to fore with such a formulation, and it provides the renewed idea of socialism with a theoretical check to prevent it from causing what Sarkela calls societal pathologies. Honneth's formulation, once again drawing from the immanent criteria drawn upon the notion of associated/social life, also provides a theoretical check to conservative criticism by setting a consummately democratic form of life aimed at expanding free communication as a precondition of the organically conceived relationship between the "organs" of the society.

We have so far established that social as a life process, just like associated life, needs to both reproduce and transform itself to maintain itself as social life. While this dissertation agrees with Laitinen and Sarkela that organismic conception is not a necessary condition for a meaningful social pathology, and maintains that Deweyan historical experimentalism could have informed Honneth's aim of rectifying original idea's blindness to functional differentiation and the need for a conception of the relationship between social spheres, I will be arguing that such a conception is a necessity for the renewed idea of socialism of Honneth below. Moreover, while this thesis agrees with Laitinen and Sarkela's depiction of the shortcomings of organismic approach, it rejects that two conceptions are mutually incompatible (S&L, p. 1; L&S, p. 14; Sarkela, 2017, p. 120).

It was stated that organismic approach is a macro level approach that fails to diagnose pathologies of recognition. While this would be a definite problem for the reflexive freedom detailed in *Freedom's Right* (individuals are considered free if "their actions are guided solely by their own intentions", 2014a, p. 29), the normative core of the idea of socialism, which was presented through a normative reconstruction of a socially effective reason as in *Freedom's Right* (individuals become free only if their reflexive acts of self-determination, which can be conducted only through social cooperation, are mutually recognized by the others, 2014a, p. 42), is ultimately grounded in both the organic human life form and its social existence. As Honneth notes, "Social freedom... means taking part in the social life of a community whose members are so sympathetic to each other that they support the realization of each other's justified needs for each other's sake" (IoS, p. 24): Here we see the associated life in action, as the idea based upon the fact that the constituents of the distinctly social stage of reality, human individuals, just as other

organic beings, aim to maintain themselves as they are. But as a distinctly social life forms, maintaining themselves as they are requires them to cooperate with one another. The immanent standards of associated living we see in *The Idea of Socialism* resonate squarely with the premises of social freedom Honneth sets in *Freedom's Right*. Neither here, nor there, Honneth resorts to a naturalistic conception of social pathology in his theory of social freedom but derives it through a normativist conception where the prevalent understanding of (liberal) freedom is deemed pathological as it fails to satisfy a normative criterion. In *Idea of Socialism*, the conception of social freedom is then sought to be realized through a historical experimentalist “project” inspired by Dewey and his conception of society as a distinct life process.

In this project, organismic conception comes into play in order to show “how the different spheres of social freedom are to harmonize with each other in the future”, “if socialism does not want to abandon its traditional vision of a future way of life necessitated by the forces of history and tangible enough to awaken the willingness to realize it at least experimentally” (IoS, p. 90). Previously, we have seen that such an approach is reductive as it proceeds from a less-complex pre-social nature to evaluate the complex social reality, that it must be metaphysically loaded to proceed as such, and that by conceiving society as an organism with organs serving given reproductive ends, it deems these organs and ends uncriticizable. While it is inarguable that organismic approach is reductive, and unacceptably so if a theory’s critical-evaluative power is solely derived from it, the renewed idea of socialism draws its critical-evaluative power from the life-process conception of social pathology, and specifically from the process metaphysics of Dewey’s social philosophy. Organismic conception therefore plays a rather secondary role with

respect to the theoretical framework of the idea itself, as it stands to provide an example of the potential basis of organization of the social spheres²⁹. Moreover, it is certainly true that Honneth, by resorting to an organismic conception of social pathology, sets economy, politics and personal relationships as indispensable for social life, and the idea that they should cooperate for their own sake and the society as a whole as something uncriticizable. It is also true that, on one hand, the idea of socialism as a political project has nothing else to work with except these social elements, and on the other hand, this is a limitation already in place with the idea's commitment to immanent critique. As Hirvonen notes, "To stay within the bounds of immanent critique -for the reasons that the critique should be understandable and compelling- the potential for freedom should already be found from within the existing structures" (2019, p. 8). Beyond this conceptual limitation, the strict reference to these social elements is further justified if we consider the fact that the aim of the book is to salvage the vital spark socialism still retains, and revitalize it "to make it once again a source of political-ethical orientations" (IoS, p. 5). It is also crucial to note that experimental approach also informs as such: "We should search for the real expression of the future wherever trace elements of desired progress in the expansion of social freedoms can already be found in existing institutions" (IoS, p. 73)

So far, I hope to have shown that two naturalistic conceptions Honneth uses have their respective roles to play in his conceptual renovation, whereas the core of his theoretical framework in the book is built upon the Deweyan social life process

²⁹ I believe the fact that Honneth explains the "metaphysical load" to establish a meaningful analogy between society and biological organism only once in the third chapter where he resorts to social life conception, and states nothing of the sort in the final chapter where he resorts to organismic conception also justifies this claim.

conception. It is my conviction that there is no deal-breaking incompatibility between two conceptions of naturalism used by Honneth, and actually, the two conceptions reinforce each other by addressing respective parts of the social life it conceives³⁰. After all, if organismic approach is not a necessary condition for social pathology, if it does not provide any distinct source of critical-evaluative power for the theory, and as it was argued before, if the dilemma it addresses could also be addressed through the social life conception of naturalism that was already developed as the critical core of the renewed idea in the book, why would Honneth resort to it?

Much like Dewey's social philosophy that mediates radical and conservative criticism to recognize and ensure the satisfaction of associated life's need to both reproduce and transform itself, I believe that Honneth, in his conceptual renovations to revitalize the idea of socialism, is trying to mediate its radical and conservative criticisms. But unlike Dewey, for whom this mediation is a philosophical stance that calls for a third way of social criticism, Honneth enmeshes this criticism of criticisms within a radical social critique. In other words, Honneth is aiming to balance the radical, self-transformative idea's self-evaluative and self-transformative premises regarding the social life, to prevent it from causing both social and societal pathologies, which the idea of socialism, at least in the popular imagination, is prone to do so. My argument, in a single sentence, is as follows: As both Honneth (IoS, p. 90-92) and Dewey (2015, p. 14-16; 1973, p. 50-54) implicate, if a naturalist conception is used to conceptualize the society as a form of life and to establish the transformation of this society through experimenting to expand free communication as a determinate ought, and if the maintenance and self-reproduction society is not

³⁰ While this relationship will be clarified below, I find it wise to remind the reader that organismic conceptions may fail to recognize what Särkelä distinguishes as *social* pathologies. See p. 23.

set as a determinate ought in due course, the self-transformative emphasis of the society would overwhelm the requirement of social self-maintenance, as the aim of expanding communication would stand as the sole and the ultimate source of social life.

While Honneth's theory calls for institutional experimentation for the sake of bringing about social freedom, and social freedom, as a structural principle of the sociality, is set as the normative core and guide of this experimental process, it is crucial to remember that this argument is drawn from a process metaphysics that sets associated interaction as the motor of all evolution, and in due course, social existence. And even if we rectify the idea of socialism's blindness to functional differentiation of society through experimentalism and the notion of shared frameworks, it still would not suffice: If we are to set out on an experimental process with the idea that expansion of interaction/communication is the root cause, if not the rationale of (social) existence, the reproduction of the social life should also be safeguarded by a naturalistic principle and not be set aside or left to experimentation. Succinctly put, if experimentation for the sake of bringing about social freedom through expanding free communication, i.e. social transformation, is explicitly established as a determinate ought, self-evaluation and reproduction of that society must also be established as a determinate ought, to prevent the former from overwhelming the latter, and thus causing societal pathologies.

Apart from the reasons that we discussed so far, there is no way to concisely argue that Honneth's conjoint use of organismic and anti-organismic conceptions of naturalism was a conscious attempt to mediate the self-evaluative and self-transformative imperatives of the social criticism posed by an idea of socialism. That

being said, there is also nothing that suggests it is not, and I hope to have shown that it makes perfect sense to read Honneth's conceptual renovation and use of two distinct conceptions of naturalism therein this way. Let me briefly reiterate what have we argued thus far, this time with this specific argument in mind, to further elaborate upon why such a reading makes sense, and what are its advantages.

First and foremost, the constitutive role of Dewey's social life-process conception in Honneth's conceptual renovation requires an account of both the organic nature of the social structure, and the dynamic nature of the specifically social life-process. As noted previously in the second chapter, if one is to take social reality as a life process, as something that emerged out of inorganic and organic processuality as a qualitatively distinct and higher stage of reality, a metaphysical-cosmological account is necessary to show the structural similarity between these stages, to show why a naturalistic conception is warranted and has a critical and evaluative force. As social philosophers, both Honneth and Dewey attempt to address social pathologies, distinctly social wrongs akin to diseases observed in organisms, by engaging in social pathology: "Both the physician and the social philosopher 'diagnose' pathologies but also necessarily attempt to 'cure' them, and just as the diagnosis perfects the cure, so the cure also perfects the diagnosis" (Dewey, 1973, p. 48). Honneth resorts to not only Dewey's way of diagnosing social wrongs, but also his way of curing them: The diagnosis and the therapy of a revitalized idea of socialism requires the evaluation of both the organic and social nature of the life process at hand. The cause of the pathology in a given life process may be due to a failure in its organic nature, but it may also lie in what makes it a social life process. If we were to look at only its organic nature, that would be a huge step back to the crude organicism seen in *body politic* of, for instance, Aristotle, and would be highly

limited in its emancipatory potential as we have seen in our discussion of organicism above. On the other hand, if we were to look at only its sociality, this would not be a distinct approach vis-à-vis the normativity of the moral-political philosophy. As Honneth notes in his latest definitive work on the notion of social pathology, where he argued that organicism is a necessary condition for social-philosophical naturalism (2014b, p. 701-702) and sparked an ongoing debate that I believe to be beyond the scope of this dissertation, that way it would not “be quite clear why we are dealing with the case of a disease and not merely with a malformation or an institutional maladjustment” (p. 700).

Moreover, I find it wise to remind the reader that it is this dual nature that constitutes the guideline of the cure, i.e. the normative core of the idea, be it the “authority of the associated life”, or the notion of “social freedom”. On one hand, associated life can fall ill both in a society that merely reproduces itself, thus get caught in a social pathology where society’s sociality is at risk, and in a society that fails to reproduce itself as a social life process, thus get caught in a societal pathology where society’s organic structure is at risk. Moreover, the notion of social freedom also requires recognition of this dual processuality of social life. Let’s take another look at it, this time with emphasis what it adds to reflexive freedom: According to Honneth, “individual subjects can perform the reflexive acts required for self-determination *only if they interact socially with others who do the same* [emphasis added]” (2014a, p. 42). This is due to both an organic and social requirement: Individual human subjects need each other both as organic life processes that live in a society, and as social beings that desire mutual recognition for their self-determination. In light of these, it is my conviction that a future oriented

idea aimed at bringing about social freedom should therefore address both the organic pathologies of the social, and the distinctly social pathologies of the social.

Furthermore, I contend the fact that dilemma organismic conception addresses could also be addressed with the social life process conception (see chapter 2; also see Sarkela & Laitinen, 2018) and that the required metaphysical account for a naturalist social pathology is only given once as the Honneth introduces Dewey's social philosophy, suggests the use of two conceptions is a conscious choice, but not by the virtue of presenting an organismic approach per se, but as a requirement of the Deweyan naturalistic social philosophy. But beyond these inevitably speculative reasons, I would also like to note that reading *Idea of Socialism* and the use of two distinct conceptions of naturalism therein as a Deweyan mediation of two social criticisms not only has its own advantages, but also, to some extent, ameliorates the disadvantages of the idea noted by the critiques of the book.

Apart from the disillusionments regarding the revitalized idea's distance to the original idea, be it the dismissal of its revolutionary outlook (Shammas, 2019; Forman, 2019; Kempf, 2019), its argument for a specific political subject and addressee (Kempf, 2019; Shammas, 2019) or alleged emphasis on representative democracy among its adherents (Roelofs, 2018; Shammas, 2019), the most significant shortcoming of the revitalized idea is its blindness to the role of conflict in (emancipatory) politics. Even though the book itself is a metapolitical text that makes no practical recommendations, its reliance on an organismic conception of society presents an "image of democracy as a form of life seeks to guarantee the organic integration of the spheres of freedom into a whole" (Repa, 2021, p. 46). But if we are to acknowledge that the static picture drawn by the organismic conception

is accompanied with the dynamism provided by the notion of a distinctly social life process across the book, and checked by the condition of ensuring self-transformation through free communication of the social spheres, what we have at hand is precisely the mediation we discussed above. While I agree with Repa's reservations about the organismic elements of the idea, it is my conviction that as a whole, the revitalized idea does not present a static society, but on the contrary, by setting both social self-transformation and self-maintenance as a determinate ought, it paints a picture of a highly (and necessarily) dynamic society that should be constantly striving for self-transformation while recognizing the validity of the conservative critique, as society is a life process akin to an organism.

What about *The Idea of Socialism* neglect of "the intrinsic link between politics and conflict" (Repa, 2021, p. 37), and how it presents a picture of blissful democratic experimentation (Baruchello, 2018)? Apart from noting that the rationality and the imperatives of the economic sphere dominate everything else, preventing them from independently functioning in their respective social logic(s) (IoS, p. 80-81) Honneth says nothing about the potential or existing conflict(s) between the individuals, institutions and the social spheres. That being said, while the revitalized idea of socialism does not explicitly refer to the potentiality of conflict, it does not entirely exclude it either: As I argued in the second chapter, and if we are to once again refer to Laitinen's notion of evaluative frameworks here (2017), Honneth's conceptual renovations and rectification of the "congenital defects" of the original idea paves the way for it to recognize the multiplicity of evaluative frameworks that can exist in the society by "recognizing the social interests of the different parties of social life" (Hirvonen, 2019, p. 3) as relevant. Contrary to the original idea, revitalized idea is thus capable of recognizing different

evaluative frameworks with respect to their respective elements, embodiments and consequently, interests, without necessarily referring to or reducing them to their position in the ensemble of socio-economic relations. It can thus form “alliances” with different evaluative frameworks and articulate them in a common struggle, or rather, if we are to stick solely to what has been explicitly said in the book, in democratic institutional experimentations aimed at bringing about social freedom in all spheres of society.

But still, Honneth presents his organicist conception of a democratic form of life solely with reference to the social spheres, which are represented as organs of a biological organism. As argued previously, the relationship between these social spheres paints an organic and not a political picture, whereas the ensuing democratic form of life seems to serve, first and foremost, the aim of achieving a harmoniously integrated society necessary for a society where its members “do not merely act ‘together’ but ‘for each other’” (IoS, p. 23). While this stands as an obvious disadvantage for a book that aims to present an emancipatory political idea capable of being the representative of the demands of the “social” (IoS, p. 66), I would like to once again note that the idea itself does not exclude the potentiality of conflict between institutions and/or between spheres either. First of all, the idea tries to address the incapacity of different spheres/institutions to function independently in their respective social logics due to the dominance of the economic sphere/imperatives of the capitalist market, and aims to remove this dominance so that they can interact, to inform and transform each other as informed by historical experimentalism. While the fact remains that the proposed organic image of spheres’ relation to each other and to the whole said to reflect (only) the general structure of democratic participation across the book, my conviction is that this is because this

structure presents the main proposed cure of the book: After all, it is the determinate ought presented by the revitalized idea, set forth in a metapolitical text that aims to reformulate the idea of socialism “to make it once again a source of political-ethical orientations” (IoS, p. 5). Therefore, while it is rather unsurprising that the book paints a picture of blissful democratic experimentation, I contend on Honneth’s part it would be wise to have an explicit acknowledgment of the fact that this experimental process is not going to be necessarily harmonious, that in due process, the potential of conflict is always present³¹.

This is precisely where I believe a reading of Honneth’s use of two conceptions of naturalism as a Deweyan attempt in mediating radical and conservative social criticisms presented by a revitalized idea of socialism is most insightful, as it is specifically built upon the tension between, on one hand, the habits and self-maintenance imperative of a social life process, and on the other hand, social criticism and self-transformation imperative of a social life process. As discussed previously, for Dewey, theorizing for transformation arise in time of need and it lies necessarily at odds with the prevalent habits that constitute the means/ends of reproduction of the given society. Considering that it is through these habits society reproduces itself as a social life process, and simultaneously, that these habits need to be constantly renegotiated for social to persist as a distinctly social life process, self-transformative (radical) social criticism must acknowledge the need for (conservative) social criticism that aims for self-maintenance, and two criticisms must be mediated so that they will not suppress each other. If we are to think that

³¹ Actually, in an online discussion that took place on July 1st, 2021, Honneth talks about his “idea” of socialism (and his *The Idea of Socialism*) and acknowledges the struggle/democratic experimentation for socialism will, inevitably, be full of conflict, and perhaps be violent. (see Critical Theory in Berlin, 2021)

Honneth is also aiming to mediate these two critical elements of the criticism posed by his revitalized idea of socialism, it becomes evident that his revitalized idea acknowledges (albeit implicitly) and tries to address the potentiality of social conflict, between individuals, institutions and/or spheres that prioritize one over the other. And like Dewey, it does so by targeting social pathologies that emerges out of prioritization or outright suppression of one over the other.

4.3 Concluding remarks

Previously, we have seen that Honneth, through his conceptual renovations that substitutes the idea of socialism's congenitally defective assumptions from a higher level of abstraction presents an internal solution to the idea of socialism's crisis that subjected it to a creature of the past. And in order to retain its unique theoretical premises as an autonomous, evaluative framework to social reality not reducible to the normativity of social and political philosophy; as a theory directed towards the future with a claim of representing the "social"; as a theory whose criteria is immanent to the social reality itself and backed by a historical process and/or tendency; and as a theory thus capable of establishing determinate oughts in times of indeterminacy, he resorts to naturalistic conceptions of the social life and of social pathology.

Yet, as we have seen, Honneth resorts to two distinct conceptions of naturalism, an organismic conception, and the Deweyan conception, which is anti-organismic since it sees society as a distinctly social form of life irreducible to an organism. In the first half of this chapter, I elaborated upon Dewey's social philosophy in detail, to familiarize the reader with all the concepts, theoretical

premises and ontological commitments that constitute his naturalist conception of society and social pathology. We have seen how, through his analysis of various forms of social criticism, Dewey's social philosophy aims to mediate these in a third way of social criticism, a criticism of criticisms, to recognize the dual processuality of the social life process it conceives. Then, in the second half of this chapter, I explicated the social pathologies we see in Honneth's *The Idea of Socialism*, namely the normativist conception we see in his first chapter through his normative reconstruction of the idea of social freedom, the Deweyan social life process approach we see as he introduces historical experimentalism to the idea, and the organismic conception he uses to present a picture of the potential relationship between social spheres in a consummately democratic form of life. I have shown that how these two conceptions are used conjointly in what I believe to be a Deweyan attempt of recognizing the dual processuality of social life process in the critique posed by Honneth's revitalized idea of socialism. Moreover, while it is far beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss whether organismic conceptions of naturalism, or even naturalism itself are necessary conditions for a social philosophy, I hope to have shown that it is a must for a revitalized idea of socialism to retain the unique aspects of the original idea.

I believe reading Honneth's conjoint use of two conceptions of naturalism as part of a Deweyan mediation attempt at mediating the radical and conservative critiques within the social criticism presented by the idea of socialism, and the book itself as a "criticism of the criticisms" set forth by the idea of socialism not only answers a seemingly contradictory or unnecessary use of two distinct naturalistic approaches to social philosophy, but it also clarifies the argument of the book and the contribution of Honneth's revitalized idea of socialism: Considering that this

mediation is the main aim of social philosophy, what we now have at hand is a revitalized idea of socialism, with social philosophy at its helm, and its horizon.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion chapter, I will be simply summarising what I have argued so far, before concluding with some reflections upon my own reading of Honneth's *Idea of Socialism*. In the second chapter, I presented a general overview of the starting point of Honneth's book, its diagnosis of the general interruption in the currents of utopian thinking, and as an instance of this crisis, I outlined his diagnosis and cure of the crisis of the idea of socialism. Honneth's effort of presenting a revitalized idea of socialism starts out by extracting the normative core of the idea; the notion of social freedom. We have seen that according to Honneth, the idea originally emerged in a transitory period that witnessed the inadequate actualization of the three principles of French Revolution for the broader public due to the subsumption of its principles by the imperatives of the expanding capitalist market, and since its genesis, the idea was built upon what can be termed an immanent critique of the principles of legitimacy of the modern society. Specifically, it aimed to address the incompatibility between three principles by rectifying the merely legal and individualistic, hence distorted, notion of liberty. In contradistinction, the notion of social freedom, proposed latently in early socialists' doctrines and first developed through Marx's elucidation of the intersubjective interlinking that would overcome this liberal understanding of freedom, became the normative core of the idea, the vital spark Honneth tries to resurface in his conceptual renovation. Here, the pathology represented by the liberal

understanding of freedom was a normative one, as it failed to satisfy the demands of the normative criteria set by the “historically effective reason”.

According to Honneth, this original idea had “congenital defects” by virtue of its intellectual-social context of genesis, and their theoretical burden were the direct causes of the crisis of socialism: As the assumptions of the original idea fell, so did its ability to inspire. These defects were its clinging to the economic sphere as the sole locus of the struggle for social freedom, its apodictical assumption of an already present interest in the idea, and its belief in necessary progress/inevitable victory over capitalism. After presenting the crisis of socialism in the model of Dewey’s progressive historicism and historical experimentalism, I discussed Honneth’s conceptual renovations that aim to provide theoretical substitutes to these faulty premises since they could not be simply abandoned: They constituted an evaluative and autonomous approach to social reality built upon a historical-social tendency that guided its diagnosis and cure, thus made socialism unique. As we have seen, Honneth’s conceptual renovation included introduction of Deweyan historical experimentalism to the idea in a bid “to present a socialist understanding of history that enables us to retain confidence in the realizability of socialist demands for improvement, while abstaining from any belief in historical inevitability” (IoS, p. 50), and of an organismic conception of society to rectify the original ideas blindness to the functional differentiation of social spheres. I argued that Honneth henceforth restored the idea’s ability to establish determinate oughts, since experimenting for the sake social freedom took a constitutive, and not merely epistemic role in answering what is to be done as in the premises of the original idea, and as such, argued that his conceptual renovation presented an internal solution to the crisis of socialism by maintaining continuity with what made the idea unique.

Main aim of the third chapter was to explain how come a theory can provide determinate normative guidance. Here, I elaborated upon “social philosophy” that both Honneth and Dewey is committed to in their respective theories, and its core concept of social pathology, which plays a definitive role for the discipline of social philosophy: Social pathology constitutes both the object and method of the discipline, as it aims to address specifically social wrongs, i.e. social pathologies that cannot be adequately addressed by the normativity of social-political philosophy, and as it aims to do that through social pathology, i.e. by aiming to cure them. In order to clarify the theoretical framework we are dealing with in Honneth’s conceptual renovations, I elaborated upon various conceptions of social pathology as denoted in Laitinen and Sarkela’s typology (2018) and showed that these conceptions are not necessarily naturalistic, despite the fact that they all resort to a naturalistic vocabulary.

I emphasized the naturalistic conceptions that are used by Honneth, and in general, role of naturalism in social philosophy throughout the chapter, and discussed their respective advantages and disadvantages. I believe, specifically, the organismic conception is a controversial one and can be directly associated with various criticisms of the *Idea of Socialism*, namely its disregard of the constitutive role of conflict in (emancipatory) politics and the static, hardly political picture it paints with respect to the relationships between individuals, institutions, and social spheres that Honneth sets as the indispensable parts of an organic whole. In due process, I have argued that the source of the determinacy of Honneth’s renewed idea of socialism comes from its naturalistic ontological commitments, as they provide the idea’s determinate ought of institutional experimentation to bring about social freedom with the Deweyan immanent criterion of “associated life”, that stands as the ultimate

source of all social criticisms: On one hand, society criticizes itself to maintain itself as a social life process, and to transform itself in order to remain a distinctly social life process, both by reference to the authority of associated/social life itself. On the other hand, social pathology as an act of diagnosis and cure also refers to the authority of associated/social life, both its imperatives, in its “practice of criticizing the ways of social life to critically relate back onto itself” (L&S, p. 17).

Consequently, the proposed cure is also located in the metaphysical-cosmological source of associated, social life: Expansion of interaction/communication that gave way to distinct stages of reality that culminate in the social, through the actualization of potentials.

In the fourth chapter, the overarching aim was to answer the crucial question of why Honneth resorts to two distinct naturalistic conceptions; an organismic conception, and an anti-organismic conception. After giving an account of the main premises and ontological commitments of Dewey’s social philosophy, I explained how society, as a distinctly social life-process, needs to both self-maintain and self-transform itself, whereas an interruption in either of these constitute a social pathology. Dewey distinguishes two forms of social criticism with respect to this dual processuality of the social life process: Drawing from Sarkela’s distinction between social and societal pathologies (2017), there is the conservative criticism that addresses societal pathologies that threaten the societal structure itself and its means/ends of reproduction, and the radical critique that addresses social pathologies that threaten the society’s distinct characteristic of constantly renegotiating its means-ends of reproduction. Formulated as such, what we end up with an oscillation of what Dewey calls excess and deficiency in reproduction (1973): Both mere reproduction and mere transformation present social and societal pathologies, and

social criticisms, through their monopolizing habits or abstract patterns, tend to suppress or disregard the other. Dewey's social philosophy itself, on the other hand, posit a third criticism, a criticism of criticisms; one that aims to mediate the conservative and radical criticisms as they both address respective needs of a distinctly social life process. Like these two criticisms, his mediating philosophy also draws upon the ultimate criterion of all criticisms, but while radical and conservative social criticism stand one-sided by addressing either the organic or social processuality that constitutes the criteria of associated living, he recognizes the dual processuality of associated life, and the need for both criticisms. Therefore, by the authority of associated life, his proposal is to mediate the two, through expanding free communication so these criticisms can serve their respective functions for the social life process.

Main argument of this thesis is that Honneth's use of two naturalisms can be read as a similar Deweyan attempt to mediate the imperatives of two criticisms within the idea of socialism. But unlike Dewey, Honneth's mediation does not aim for a rather conservative third-way critique, but actually, enmeshes the dual processuality of associated life within the radical critique. After explicating the social pathology(s) of Honneth's conceptual renovation in both its meanings, and showing that two conceptions are not mutually incompatible at least in the Idea of Socialism, I presented what I believe to be a concise argument for such a reading: If we are to refer to both Honneth (IoS, p. 90-92) and Dewey (2015, p. 14-16; 1973, p. 50-54), we can infer that if the transformation of this society through experimenting to expand free communication set as a determinate ought, and if the self-reproduction is not based on an argument of similar theoretical strength, i.e. not set as a determinate ought, the self-transformative emphasis of the society could overwhelm the

requirement of social self-maintenance since the aim of expanding communication would stand as the sole and the ultimate source of social life. I then drew upon previous discussions to support this reading, reiterating that organismic conception is always presented conjointly with the Deweyan social life process conception; that the premises of two conceptions mutually support each other; and that the use of organismic conception is a conscious choice despite its evident disadvantages and despite the dilemma it addresses could very well be addressed by the Deweyan conception already presented in the book, in greater detail. Therefore, I argued that Honneth resorts to organismic conception of social pathology not by the virtue of presenting an organismic approach to social reality per se, but as a requirement by the authority of associated/social life. Finally, in the last pages of my fourth chapter, I discussed the advantages of such a reading, which can be summarised as its explanatory power regarding the premises and requirements of social philosophy, and regarding the dual processuality of social life that needs to be addressed by a theory that aims to be the “representative of the demands of the social” (IoS, p. 66). And perhaps most importantly, I argued such a reading shows that Honneth’s revitalized idea of socialism acknowledges the potentiality of social conflict, both the inevitable conflict between habits and transformation, and potential conflicts between individuals and between institutions that emphasize one of the two social criticisms.

As noted by several critiques, *Idea of Socialism* is nowhere near presenting a comprehensive account of a new idea of socialism, and it lacks an account of the prevalent relations in the current socio-economic landscape. But I believe the book satisfies its own aim of reformulating the original intention of socialism “so as to make it once again a source of political-ethical orientations” (IoS, p. 5) by presenting

the theoretical pillars and the normative core of an emancipatory theory that can establish determinate oughts. I believe this emphasis on providing a vital belief is of crucial importance, considering that it is a necessary condition of any emancipatory political project (Wright, 2010, p. 11). I contend that providing this vital belief is particularly more important if we consider that the relations emancipatory political theories are targeting seem to be getting more and more reified for many. As Honneth notes, the socialist project that refuses to let go of capitalism and that recently made promising advances across the world (Critical Theory in Berlin, 2021) emerged primarily as a normative ideal, aimed at reconciling three principles of French Revolution through a new, social understanding of freedom. I agree with Honneth that this normative core is still alive and strong, or in his words, it still contains a vital spark.

But what I believe to make Honneth's *Idea of Socialism* stand out in our current context are, first, its use of the notion of social pathology, and related to that, its emphasis on both the diagnosis and the cure, especially if one reads it as an attempt in mediating radical and conservative elements within the social criticism presented by the idea of socialism. It is my conviction that the naturalistic vocabulary of social pathology serves to underline the urgency of the tasks of emancipatory politics uncannily well: There has to be something pathological in our social structure itself if we are failing to stop or even slow down crises that are, if not addressed, sure to eradicate our existence on planet Earth: Capitalist market relations and its overarching implications in our social existence cause a social pathology by blocking self-actualization of individuals through preventing them from free communication in social spheres they participate in and by keeping these social spheres from functioning in their respective social logics. They also cause a societal

pathology, threatening the social existence of individuals by atomising them, reducing the specifically human relations into exchange relations by systematically concealing the dependent relationship between satisfaction of one's needs and actions of others. Capitalism threatens the social life process with social death, i.e. degeneration into a social structure akin to simple organic life that aims to merely preserve itself, with organic death, i.e. total disintegration of the social structure, but also, unlike any other human construct hitherto existed, it threatens not only the social life process, but each and every single individual life process, i.e. extinction. Therefore, the vocabulary of social pathology not only provides one with a conceptual tool to address specifically social wrongs by recognizing that our criteria of assessment, born out social reality we live in, may be distorted since the social reality itself is distorted. It also specifically highlights what we are striving for and why, by drawing upon the ultimate criterion of all criticism, our associated life. Therefore, as the doomsday clock is approaching midnight³², consistently since the last two decades, I believe the notion of social pathology adequately distinguishes and underlines the urgency of the tasks of political theory. Succinctly put, social pathology highlights what comes first: "Let us save the planet and make a decent life possible for all, first of all. Then there may be time for fluid, democratic, dialogical experimentation" (Baruchello, 2018).

Last but not least, it also underlines the importance of both our diagnoses and ideas around potential cures. I believe this is particularly important for the idea of socialism: While Honneth's book has clear ramifications about the social-political theory and emancipatory politics as a whole, it is, after all, about the idea of

³² See Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Science and Security Board (2022). At doom's doorstep: It is 100 seconds to midnight. Retrieved from <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time>

socialism. But unlike other attempts in restoring or resurfacing the normative elements of the idea, here we distinct emphasis on its diagnoses and its cures. Simply put, it has become almost proverbial among both the adherents and opponents of socialism that while it is successful in criticising capitalism, it is lacking when it comes to offering an alternative. As a metapolitical text, Honneth's *Idea of Socialism* offers no alternative, and one would be disappointed if they look for a comprehensive account for a new idea of socialism in it. Rather, Honneth merely presents a theoretical framework for a new, revitalized idea of socialism that maintains continuity with the original idea by forming an autonomous, evaluative approach to social reality, one that can draw upon a still-socialist (but devoid of a belief in necessary progress) understanding of history to propagate its demands. Here, however, this idea of socialism has social philosophy at its helm and its horizon: The notion of social freedom constitutes its normative core, democratic experimentation for the sake of bringing about social freedom stands as its means of attaining its end-in-view, which could be summarised as expanding free communication to bring about the preconditions of a consummately democratic form of life.

If we are to think two conceptions of naturalism Honneth uses not as mutually incompatible but reinforcing each other in a Deweyan attempt of mediating conservative and radical social criticisms within the social criticism of the new idea of socialism, it becomes clear that Honneth's *Idea of Socialism* contains within a criticism of criticisms: While it offers no alternative, nor an account of a specific form of political action directed towards an alternative, it offers a guideline regarding how these alternatives should be set, and how they should be pursued. Society, taken as a distinctly social life process, needs to be both self-transforming and self-

maintaining itself, and an emancipatory political theory that aims to be a representative of the demands of the social, that draws its normative core from the authority of the associated/social life itself, should recognize that in its pursuit of emancipation. Moreover, I believe such a call for caution and mediation of these two aspects is further warranted for the idea of socialism, since, with the baggage of its “history”, it is already perceived as monopolizing or neglecting other criticisms by many. This is not to argue that Honneth engages in some sort of apologism of the idea of socialism or its alleged “real” or theoretical crimes. On the contrary, Honneth, through his social philosophy, aims to retain what is usually seen as the source of socialisms’ monopolizing abstract patterns of thinking: A historical-naturalistic anchor that draws force to its diagnoses and proposed cures. In his idea of socialism, Honneth simply exercises greater caution, by establishing two aspects of conservative and radical social criticism with equal theoretical strength. That is to say, by presenting them both as determinate oughts within the criticism posed by the revitalized idea of socialism, he aims to present the demands of associated life itself, demands of the social in his words, with a revitalized idea directed towards the critique of the ways of social life to make them critically relate back onto itself (L&S, p. 17), by means of self-transformative practice (Sarkela, 2017, p. 122). Overall, as Dewey notes, transformative ideals need to be viable, reproducible and, to some extent, compatible with the reproductive means *and* ends of the society (Dewey, 1973, 54) and it is my conviction that such a mediation enhances the prospects of the idea in becoming a new source of political-ethical orientations, as it provides reassurance that it will be addressing social pathologies without causing societal pathologies.

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