

Between Ideology and Utopia

Honneth and Ricœur on Symbolic Violence, Marginalization and Recognition

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Abstract

This article focuses on multiculturalism in the context of present-day societies and the need to incorporate minorities within a reframed social order. In his critical theory, Axel Honneth rightly draws attention to the idea of the moral grammar of struggles for recognition. Analyzing his theory in depth, the article shows that Honneth underestimates the violent power of ideological discourse in marginalizing and excluding society's others, e.g. cultural minorities. It then puts forward an alternative approach based on Ricœur's creative and original reflections on ideology and utopia. For the incorporation of cultural minorities to occur, the symbolic order of society needs to be critiqued, transformed and expanded. From this perspective, the author highlights the subversive and transformative strength of utopian counter-narratives. The latter form a vital resource for cultural minorities in their struggle for recognition.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Ricœur, Honneth, Recognition, Cultural Minorities

Résumé

La présente contribution se concentre sur le multiculturalisme dans le contexte des sociétés contemporaines et sur la nécessité d'intégrer les minorités dans un ordre social transformé. Dans sa théorie critique, Axel Honneth attire à juste titre l'attention sur l'idée de "grammaires morales" des luttes pour la reconnaissance. En analysant cette théorie en profondeur, l'auteur démontre que Honneth sous-estime le pouvoir violent du discours idéologique dans la marginalisation et l'exclusion de membres de la société, par exemple, les minorités culturelles. Il s'agit de proposer, dans un second temps, une approche alternative fondée sur la réflexion créative et originale de Paul Ricœur sur l'idéologie et l'utopie. Pour que l'intégration des minorités culturelles puisse se produire, l'ordre symbolique de la société doit être critiqué, transformé et élargi. À partir de ce changement de focal, l'auteur met en évidence la force subversive et transformatrice de l'utopie des contre-récits. Ceux-ci constituent une ressource vitale pour la culture des minorités dans leur lutte pour la reconnaissance.

Mots-clés: Multiculturalisme, Ricœur, Honneth, Recognition, Minorités Culturelles

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This article focuses on multiculturalism in the context of present-day societies and the need to incorporate minorities in a reframed social order. For this to occur, the symbolic order of society needs to be critiqued, transformed and expanded. From this perspective, I will not only draw attention to the symbolic violence of ideological discourse but also highlight the subversive and transformative strength of utopian counter-narratives. The latter, I will argue, form a vital resource for cultural minorities in their struggle for recognition. I will develop my argument by drawing primarily from two works: Axel Honneth's *Struggle for Recognition* and Paul Ricœur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.¹

Axel Honneth's critical theory of recognition will be my starting point. That may come as a surprise considering Honneth's major oeuvre, *The Struggle for Recognition*, has played only a marginal role in the debates on multiculturalism. Honneth did not develop his theory of recognition with the specific challenge of cultural diversity in mind. As van Leeuwen rightly notes, "Honneth's main question was not so much how to understand and justify struggles for recognition by cultural minorities in modern democratic states, but how to understand and justify the struggle by lower social classes within capitalist society for social esteem and equal respect."² The reason why Honneth is my first conversation partner, nevertheless, is that he established an emancipatory and *normative* theoretical framework that not only differentiates between various forms of recognition but also reveals the moral grammar of social conflicts. My question is whether this rich and differentiated theory of recognition can be applied to the politics of identity, thereby affirming the moral dynamics of the struggle of cultural minorities.

Recently, Honneth has reflected on his social theory in view of the challenge of multiculturalism. This attempt, however, is not very satisfactory. I will show that Honneth's theory loses a great deal of its emancipatory potential when applied to the "struggle for cultural recognition." Problematic especially, is Honneth's underestimation of the violent power of ideological discourse in marginalizing and excluding society's others, e.g. cultural minorities. Honneth does not seem to recognize sufficiently that the cultural struggle for recognition is dependent upon a transformation of society's symbolic order. Different from Honneth, I will focus on the need to incorporate minorities within a reframed social order. It is my thesis that recognition of cultural *others* depends on countering and expanding the symbolic order of society.

At this point, I will introduce my second conversation partner: Paul Ricœur. Drawing on Ricœur's "Lectures on Ideology and Utopia", I try to put forward an alternative account for the struggle for recognition. Inspired by Ricœur's account of the transformative power of utopian discourse, I argue that utopian *narratives* can serve as a means for cultural minorities to struggle against symbolic violence and to reclaim their self-esteem.

The Struggle for Recognition

The “struggle” for recognition has, within a short time, become one of the most important topics in political philosophy, which seems to have diverted the latter’s attention from ideas of class, equality, economy, and nation towards those of identity, difference, culture, and ethnicity.³ The author who has without question contributed the most to the increased importance for this topic of recognition is Charles Taylor. Since Taylor wrote his important essay “The Politics of Recognition” the term “recognition” has become associated with cultural, often underprivileged, minorities who struggle for recognition of their distinct identities.⁴

Taylor distinguishes his recognition of difference from recognition in terms of respect. The latter is “directed toward others in regard to their sameness with oneself – for example, as equal citizens of a shared polity, as equal human beings.”⁵ Taylor’s thesis is that the struggle for recognition is not concerned so much with *respect* but with the appreciation of particularities. Or rather, the individual does not only wish to be recognized as a citizen (regardless of all differences with others). The individual also wants that what he or she experience as crucial differences are acknowledged. That societies are faced with a multitude of politically organized activities by cultural groups who struggle for recognition for their own value convictions and lifestyles seems to confirm Taylor’s position.⁶

Although Taylor has, without a doubt, contributed the most to “popularizing the theme of recognition” and “the politics of recognition” is one of most cited articles in the field,⁷ Taylor’s approach to the multiculturalism debate also meets with objections. One of the criticisms comes from Axel Honneth. According to Honneth, Taylor’s politics of identity rests on a highly misleading chronology.⁸ “According to [Taylor’s] central historical thesis, while the history of liberal-capitalist societies has hitherto been marked by struggles for legal equality, today their place has largely been taken by the struggles of social groups demanding recognition of their culturally defined difference.”⁹ Honneth questions this shift from demands of equal respect to claims of recognition for particular cultural values or lifestyles. This historical sequence is false: “Today’s ‘identity-political movements can no more be reduced to their cultural objectives than the traditional resistance movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be pinned down to material and legal goals.”¹⁰ The so-called struggle for recognition is *not* a new phenomenon, nor has it somehow taken the place of struggles for equal legal respect.

From a critical outlook, it seems rather to be the case that some social conflicts are able to draw public and political attention, whereas others are less topical. Some social conflicts simply do not move into the political public sphere. Real as they are, they somehow remain invisible. It seems as if there is “a sort of perceptual filter, [that] ensures that only those problems that have already attained the organizational level of a political movement are taken seriously in moral terms.... [What happens is that] in unintended agreement with the exclusionary mechanisms that direct attention of the political public sphere, out of the multitude of everyday struggles only the relatively insignificant number that have already found official recognition as ‘new’ social movements are picked out, as if by artificial light.”¹¹ What Honneth finds problematic especially is that the ever-growing focus on the phenomenon of multiculturalism comes at the expense of less “topical” struggles.

This becomes even more problematic when philosophers likewise remain ignorant about the blind spots in their social diagnosis, especially when they, unintentionally, affirm the

one-sided public attention for some social movements in their theoretical frameworks. Taylor's shift from economic injustice to cultural injustice can be understood as implying that "we no longer have to worry about economic injustice, or that economic injustice is not as important as cultural injustice."¹² It is suggested that only these new social movements that succeed in drawing public and political attention can inform us about the moral objectives toward which a critical social theory should be oriented. This reduction of social suffering can affect policy-making negatively. Thus Honneth states:

A critical theory that supports only normative goals that are publicly articulated by social movements risk perpetually affirming the prevailing level of political-moral conflict in a given society: only experience of suffering that have already crossed the threshold of mass media attention are confirmed as morally relevant, and we are unable to advocatorially thematize and make claims about socially unjust states of affairs that have so far been deprived of public attention.¹³

The formulation of a normative critical theory should not follow directly from an orientation towards social movements because "the forms of institutionally caused suffering and misery to be identified also include those that exist prior to and independently of political articulation by social movements."¹⁴ That is why the development of "a *normative* terminology for identifying social discontent" should happen "independently of public recognition."¹⁵ Only in the final analysis can we ask how this normative theory relates to the topical *politics of identity*.

The Moral Dynamic of the Struggle for Recognition

In his *magnus opus*, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*¹⁶ Axel Honneth sets out to develop a theoretical framework that can provide such a normative base "on which social critique can identify contemporary pathologies and point to directions of emancipation."¹⁷ To that end, "insight into the motivational sources of social discontent and resistance"¹⁸ is prerequisite.

Social science is dominated by utilitarian accounts of social conflicts. According to such accounts, people are caught in a state of constant competition over interests. The primary motivation for rebellion is the unequal distribution of material resources and opportunities. What Honneth finds especially problematic is that, within this so-called interest model, the moral dynamics of social conflict is lost from view. The fixation on interests obscures the fact that moral feelings of indignation constitute the driving force behind rebellion and protest. Honneth's aim is to reconnect social conflicts with the "web of moral feelings."¹⁹ To that end he introduces the notion of recognition as the hermeneutical key to understanding social (in)justice.

Honneth's theory takes its point of departure in what he depicts as a "formal conception of the good life."²⁰ His concept of the good is that of individual self-realization, understood as the process of actualizing different aspects of one's personality and of realizing one's self-chosen life goals. The pre-condition for self-realization is a positive self-relation, understood as "a degree of trust in oneself and one's abilities to set goals, to embark upon particular life-plans and to pursue these successfully."²¹ The latter becomes possible only through patterns of mutual recognition. Self-realization depends on others and is thus intersubjectively construed. "The only way, in which individuals are constituted as persons is by learning to refer

to themselves, from the perspective of an approving or encouraging other, as beings with certain positive traits and abilities.”²² According to Honneth the very possibility of a positive identity-formation depends on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three practical self-relations can be developed fully only through different patterns of mutual recognition, namely love, respect, and solidarity.

Under the heading of love relationships, Honneth includes family ties, friendship, and sexual relationships. Characteristic of love is one’s emotional involvement in the welfare and needs of the unique other. This affection can be produced only for a limited number of people, since one cannot feel love for everyone nor can one be a friend to all. Love is the most fundamental form of recognition. Only those who feel love can build up the self-confidence that constitutes the psychological condition for the development of the other attitudes of self-respect. Respect is characterized by its universal claim to transcend the limited intimacy of the affective relationships. Understood as respect, recognition is situated within the domain of universal rights that can be claimed and thus belongs to the legal sphere. Recognition here means understanding each person as autonomous and equal to every other person. The positive self-relationship that results from the experience of knowing one is recognized as a subject of rights is “self-respect.” The legal affirmation of universal human dignity confirms one’s own human dignity. Respect implies both civil rights and political and social rights: each class of these basic rights is compelled by arguments that refer implicitly “to the demand for full-fledged membership in a political community.”²³ These rights are attributed on the basis of universal human dignity. In other words, respect concerns the recognition of the individual as a subject of rights, regardless of his/her particular attributes.

The third sphere of recognition, which Honneth connects with the notion of *solidarity*, provides social esteem for one another’s abilities, practices, lifestyles, and characteristics. The idea is that “persons can feel ‘valuable’ only when they know themselves to be recognized for accomplishments that they precisely do not share in an undifferentiated manner with others.” Whether or not an individual is found to be worthy of respect depends on the way in which his or her social contribution is judged in the light of the shared horizon of the attribution of meaning. Honneth pays primary attention to the role of labour because the background of his social theory has a specific struggle for recognition in view: not so much a struggle for recognition between different cultural groups but rather a struggle for recognition of lower social classes within the same cultural context.²⁴ A positive assessment leads to a positive self-relation, understood as self-esteem. This is the possibility of seeing oneself as a valuable member of society. Thus, solidarity can be understood as “an interactive relationship in which subjects mutually sympathize with their various different ways of life because, among themselves, they esteem each other symmetrically.... The all-dominating agreement on a practical goal ... instantly generates an intersubjective value-horizon, in which each participant learns to recognize the significance of the abilities and traits of the others to the same degree.”²⁵

Because of the dialogical nature of selfhood, people are vulnerable in a specific way. This vulnerability points to the internal connection between recognition, morality, and struggle and highlights the normative core of Honneth’s social theory:

Disrespect [in its different forms] represents an injustice not simply because it harms subjects or restricts their freedom to act, but because it injures them with regard to the positive understanding of themselves that they have acquired intersubjectively. ... The

normative self-image of each and every human being ... is dependent on the possibility of being continually backed up by others.²⁶

To be denied recognition unjustly for particular claims to identity is experienced as an insult. At stake is not a mere psychological injury but a moral wound because it disrupts a person's practical relation-to-self. Misrecognition is experienced as a violation of one's dignity. The latter is a form of moral injustice.²⁷

The distinction between the three patterns of recognition forms the hermeneutical key by which Honneth distinguishes just as many kinds of disrespect.²⁸ Within the recognition model of love the negative experience of non-recognition takes the form of violations of physical integrity. The expression of this denial is physical violence (abuse and rape). Here the humiliated subject loses all control over his or her own life, which threatens his or her needed self-confidence. The humiliated individual feels as if he or she does not exist and thus loses the ability to live confidently in the world. The negative counterpart of respect is the experience of structural societal exclusion and the denial of rights. It means that in the society in question one is not recognized as a full subject of rights and thus not as a full conversation partner. Finally, non-recognition within the third sphere is denigration and insult. According to Honneth, the impact of this final form of non-recognition is often underestimated. He even speaks of great social suffering when people capable of contributing to society do not receive any appreciation for their contribution. If this non-recognition is structural, it can be very difficult for the individual or group in view to have a positive relationship to her or their skills, characteristics, or values.

The driving intuition behind his theory is that "social progress is based on the normative expectations of individuals, which must be construed as moral claims, rather than as socio-economic interests."²⁹ Social conflicts are not the expression of human self-interest but indications of injustice. Whether they concern questions of distribution, the attribution of legal rights, or the allocation of esteem, social conflicts are always motivated by an unfounded disrespect. That is why they are rightly called struggles for recognition.

When individuals undertake a struggle, they do not just fight *against* various forms of disrespect but are also motivated by a dynamic aiming for a just social order. Here we touch upon the normative perspective of Honneth's social theory, which aims for the social integration of previously excluded and marginalized people into a social order that satisfies their normative expectations. In this regard, Honneth connects his formal idea of the good – non-violated personal integrity – to the legitimate expectation of full membership in society. The latter is realized when persons can publicly uphold and practice their lifestyles without shame and humiliation.

In the concrete assessment of claims for recognition Honneth proposes using the following principle of justice. "All the claims that can be understood as contributions to coming to an expansion of recognition are justified. In contrast, claims that lead to a decrease of already established forms of recognition are not justified."³⁰ Ultimately public debate must determine which aspects of recognition are justified and which are not. According to Honneth, "[t]he justice or well-being of a society is proportionate to its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition under which personal identity-formation, hence individual self-realization, can proceed adequately."³¹

Cultural Identity and Struggle for Recognition

Honneth's social theory of recognition is grounded in the idea that intersubjective recognition is the precondition for undistorted self-realization. Since subjects depend on stable patterns of recognition they are vulnerable in a specific way. It is up to society to guarantee such relations of mutual recognition in which the various aspects of one's personality are recognized. When dealing with multiculturalism, Honneth pursues this line of thinking in arguing first of all that people are vulnerable in their cultural attachments. This vulnerability derives from the fact that one's cultural belonging is part and parcel of what it means to be a person. Culture is not only a universal constitutive characteristic of personhood; cultural embeddedness is also a necessary condition for personal autonomy. Far from being an atom without a context, the subject is attached to a cultural context that allows him to make choices and decisions. Cultural embeddedness is the condition *sine qua non* of autonomy.

If one considers cultural belonging as a precondition for the equal exercise of individual autonomy, an argument can be built to grant certain rights to cultural minorities. The idea is that "the members of minorities, in order to exercise their liberal right to autonomy, need a familiar culture as a context of choice, just as the members of the majority do."³² Not to grant cultural rights can be experienced as an undue violation of one's personal integrity and can hinder a person in his or her functioning as an autonomous subject in society.

The personal autonomy of the individual owes its existence to a particular mode of reciprocal recognition, namely that of legal equality. And thus part of the struggle for recognition "takes place within the normative framework staked out by the equality principle of legal recognition."³³ Within this framework an argument can be built for reasonable accommodation, for it can happen that laws that are intended to apply to everyone in an equal way so as to avoid discrimination have an application that is substantially unequal. Cultural minorities "may claim that they have to bear unjustified disadvantages compared to other groups, and especially that governments policies in certain areas (language, education and so on) give unfair advantage to a majority group."³⁴

Legal equality requires the law to be symbolically neutral: "it should not create ranks and orders of citizens on the basis of any symbols."³⁵ It has become clear that equality is often absent because many laws privilege the ideological position of the majority and this can give way to a fundamental social inequality. Factories that require shift work are a case in point. Saturday is a work day but Sunday is not, whereas for Jews the Sabbath starts on Friday evening at sunset and ends on Saturday at sunset. In this respect, cultural and religious commitments can be a hindrance or even a handicap. According to the principle of reasonable accommodation, these handicaps should be eliminated as much as possible. Next to civil rights guaranteeing liberty, political rights guaranteeing political participation and social rights guaranteeing basic welfare, cultural rights guarantee the expression of cultural commitments. To grant cultural rights is thus the next step in the gradual expansion of the rights claims.

Honneth acknowledges, however, that the above-mentioned demands do not completely cover what is meant by *the so-called politics of identity*. Within the debate on multiculturalism recognition, so he affirms, does not seem to have "the merely indirect sense of ensuring a community's continued existence by either non-interference in or promotion of its cultural practice, but rather the entirely direct sense of acceptance of – or indeed esteem for its

objectives or value orientations as such. Cultural groups seek esteem for their goals, life-styles and values.”³⁶

The goal of the social integration of formerly excluded and marginalized people will not be reached only by granting them special cultural rights. People experience being part of society only when they, from their particular cultural perspective, can contribute to a common social project and the symbolic order from which society derives its identity. Conversely, it can be experienced as a form of social denigration if one is not allowed to contribute to the common good because one’s culture is believed to be *incompatible with* the standards and norms of society at large. The so-called politics of identity rightly questions the liberal ideal of neutrality, which underestimates how humiliating and destructive it is to be allowed to sing along in a choir whose director requests that we do not make a sound in the interest of the “public good.”³⁷

Bearing this in mind, it would seem that one could argue that “one’s culture should enjoy social esteem not because it should not be disadvantaged vis-à-vis the majority culture, but because it in itself presents a good that society should acknowledge.”³⁸ What plays a role here is no longer the principle of equality but rather the desire for appreciation. People are looking in a certain sense for a confirmation of the possibility that what is valuable and meaningful to them can form a valuable contribution to society at large. If this confirmation does not follow, it can reflect on the individual, who can experience this as a *personal rejection*. Following Honneth’s social theory, we could speak of a moral injury.

At first glance, it seems that the recognition of cultural particularity can be situated in the third sphere, which concerns solidarity, and where it can accommodate these claims for cultural appreciation. This third sphere of recognition touches upon the symbolic order of society and its prevailing cultural values, which determine what counts as valuable and worthwhile within a society. The focus lies on the symmetrical appreciation of particular contributions in view of a shared horizon of values, which holds society together. However, Honneth emphasizes that the shared framework of orientation is always open, porous, and susceptible to change.³⁹ Because of its profoundly pluralistic nature, society’s value-horizon should make it possible for each member of society to be esteemed for his or her particular contribution. Indeed, Honneth claims to have achieved defining a horizon of ethical values that admits both a plurality of life goals and the collective identity for generating solidarity. From this perspective, one would suspect that cultural minorities could draw attention to the value of their cultural perspective by means of symbolic force.

Strangely enough, Honneth does not follow this line of argumentation. Although he briefly considers the possibility of the third sphere to accommodate cultural claims to esteem, he decides this is not a fruitful path to pursue. The reasons he gives are twofold, both of which are – to say the least – ambiguous. First, Honneth claims that there can be no such thing as a *moral demand for cultural appreciation*, thereby at once questioning the *normative character of the demand itself*.

The sort of social esteem that would be entailed in recognizing a culture as something valuable is not a public response that could be appealed for or demanded, since it could only raise spontaneously or voluntarily according to the standards of evaluative examination.... There is no possibility of normatively demanding the positive evaluation of cultural life itself. At best, we can speak only of the readiness to take note of the specific qualities of other cultures such that their values can then be examined.⁴⁰

Honneth is saying that it would be wrong to conclude from the fact that people are vulnerable in their cultural attachments that it is appropriate to somehow *spare* people in order to avoid possible injury.⁴¹ Although people long for appreciation, they simultaneously desire this appreciation to take place independently of their longing. Honneth is correct in noting the paternalistic nature of *giving appreciation* just because people desire it. Real appreciation presupposes critical evaluation. De Dijn captures the problem as follows: "If someone who asks for recognition were to discover that the other does not really know what it is about or gives recognition [just] to please him, then he would consider this recognition worthless or even an insult."⁴² Honneth's point is taken, but it is not a *profound* objection against the struggle for cultural appreciation, because, in the end the "moral logic" of cultural minorities who demand appreciation is no different than that of social movements demanding esteem for their contribution to society.⁴³ Appreciation, either positive or negative, always requires *evaluation*, and authentic evaluation requires an attitude of hermeneutical openness. Appreciation presupposes the willingness to take unfamiliar claims for legitimacy *seriously*. For that matter, this allows not only positive appreciation but also critique and self-critique.⁴⁴ The claims of cultural minorities are no different from those of the social movements, which are so central in Honneth's theory of recognition: evaluation precedes appreciation.

Honneth raises yet another objection, which likewise raises several questions. According to him, esteem can only be given according to *already existing standards of evaluation*. Cultural value is measured against the existing framework of orientation:

For the cultural community the consequence of this would be that it would have to present its own practices and way of life as representing essential contribution to the reproduction of society ...⁴⁵

Honneth acknowledges that this schema does violence to the particularity of cultural minorities. Recognition becomes dependent on the willingness of the *other* to *reproduce* the already existing value pattern of the society.⁴⁶ To avoid this violence, Honneth suggests that cultural minorities adopt an alternative way of grounding their demands:

the value of their culture would be appealed to not relative to an accepted recognition principle, but independently of all previously institutionalized value references, and in this sense absolutely. However, what this could mean in the contemporary debate is anything but clear.⁴⁷

Honneth rightly points to the fact that it is problematic simply to value cultural minorities from the perspective of the symbolic order of the dominant culture. Not only does this actually affirm the existing hierarchy between the majority and minority culture(s) by suggesting that the latter lack something that only the majority has and can confer on them. It is also problematic because it seems to equate recognition with identification: recognition requires the assimilation of difference into the familiar, e.g. the shared horizon of orientation.⁴⁸

However, Honneth's somewhat vague solution to this problem – a sort of absolute recognition – actually bypasses the fact that people can acquire self-esteem only by having the idea that their activities and projects have a positive social meaning in the light of the values of society as a whole. The struggle for cultural recognition is in part motivated by a desire to *connect*

one's particularities to the broader social perspective. Such an *absolute recognition* cannot accommodate this claim and is thus fundamentally insufficient.

What I find remarkable is that Honneth's engagement in the debate on multiculturalism does not lead him to question the way he interprets the notion of *solidarity* and the way this notion relates to the assumed shared framework of orientation that secures the identity of society. The debate on multiculturalism gives ample reason to ask first of all if Honneth's notion of solidarity relies too much on an assumed cultural homogeneity. Cultural minorities actually draw attention to the fact that they do not recognize themselves in the so-called *shared horizon of values*, thereby immediately challenging the presumption of "solidarity." Cultural minorities urge us to pose critical questions such as: Shared by whom? *For whose benefit? At what cost?*⁴⁹ For cultural minorities this *shared horizon of values* actually functions as a moral boundary the outcome of which is social exclusion. Should the prevailing standards of evaluation in a multicultural society not become intercultural? Should that not be the *normative goal* of the cultural struggle for recognition?

Honneth does not pose these questions. He appears to be content with the fact that "the overwhelming majority of claims for recognition by social minorities are essentially determined by the recognition principle of legal equality."⁵⁰ For him, the politics of identity is not a "struggle for cultural recognition" but an expanded struggle for legal equality. I do not agree with Honneth. Although I do not dispute the fact that *part of the struggle for recognition can be settled within the legal sphere*, I would argue that this struggle will not be successful if the symbolic order of society remains unaltered. The reason for this is that the law itself is not symbolically neutral. First of all, the law came into being in a particular historical and cultural society, with a certain ideology, from which values, norms, and social goods grew. The law is not value-neutral but is ideologically embedded. It is always an embodiment of values. The law is a reflection of the society's identity. Next, the law always stands in need of interpretation, certainly in view of legislative conflicts. When various laws conflict and a decision has to be made as to which legislative principle should prevail, ideology certainly plays a part in this process. It is not just the law as such that should be accounted for but also society's so-called *shared framework of orientation* and how that impacts the interpretation of the law. It is not unlikely that *demands for special cultural rights* will not be received as valid appeals because they do not tally with societal goods.

The argumentation based on the moral dynamics of the struggle for recognition will most likely not suffice in this regard: to demand recognition because the lack of equal respect affects one's self-respect will probably not be convincing. Lara is right when she states that "[i]n order for a groups to gain recognition, it takes a lot more than just demanding it, more than justifying it on the basis of anthropological reciprocity."⁵¹ What it takes is first of all a transformation of the symbolic order so that the relations of solidarity can be expanded in a more inclusive direction. The normative goal of the cultural struggle for recognition is a *difference-friendly society* that express its recognition of cultural minorities by allowing them to contribute to the shared framework of orientation. The contribution by the minority is not only part of the dominant culture, but it changes it as well. True solidarity lies in the discovery of this transforming reciprocity. Without such a reciprocal transformation, Honneth's notion of solidarity loses its emancipatory force and will instead reinforce the privileged position of the majority.

In the next section I will suggest a change of perspective. Instead of focusing on those who are *in demand*, *those who suffer injustice*, I will look at those who are *in charge*, *those who commit injustice*. I want to explore the role of the dominant group in marginalizing and silencing society's others. My focus will be the potentially violent nature of society's symbolical order. From that perspective I will consider the role of the elite in projecting ideological discourse in which minorities are often depicted in a negative way. I will show that there is a connection between the way a society constructs its identity on the one hand and the way it deals with its others on the other. The challenge of multiculturalism is not simply something that affects and concerns "the other"; it is also something that concerns the way society reflects about itself.

The reason for this change of perspective is twofold: first I am convinced that a strong argument for multiculturalism can be built by conceptualizing the defense of multiculturalism in terms of the symbolic violence that is experienced by those harmed by the subtle form of exclusion effected by the communication of being unwanted to cultural minorities.⁵² If it can be shown that the so-called *shared framework of orientation* is interest-driven – legitimating and conserving the privileged position of those in power – the moral necessity of cultural transformation will gain impetus. It will become clear that transformative strategies are needed that seek to overcome injustice by transforming the symbolic order of society. Next, by bringing into focus the way ideological discourse thwarts the cultural transformation needed for social solidarity, we will be better equipped to ask how this struggle for transformation can be fought.

Ideology

To attempt to unpack the potentially violent nature of ideological discourse, I now turn to Paul Ricœur who wrote extensively on this issue in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*.⁵³ Ricœur's position is original for several reasons. First of all, as the title of the above-mentioned work already suggests, he attempts "to put the two phenomena of ideology and utopia within a single conceptual framework that he designates a theory of cultural imagination."⁵⁴ Next, he moves beyond a mere pathological reading of both ideology and utopia, without however becoming blind to their negative excrescences. He regards both as necessary and productive dimensions of the cultural imaginary, which, however, can take on pathological forms. Both are ambiguous phenomena. Third, Ricœur develops the hypothesis that ideology and utopia are complementary figures of the social imagination: "it is quite possible," so he claims, that "the positive side of the one and the positive side of the other are in the same complementary relation as the negative and pathological side of the one is to the negative and pathological side of the other."⁵⁵ Fourth, Ricœur emphasizes the connection between *imagination* and action: "without imagination, there is no action."⁵⁶ There is no social action that is not already symbolically mediated.⁵⁷ Fifth, Ricœur's theory is grounded especially in narrative, thereby directing attention to the way narratives function in either affirming or interrupting social reality. His social theory is thus thoroughly hermeneutical. Ricœur states:

the *social imaginary* is the ensemble of narratives possessed by all societies that serve to mediate human reality. There is no starting point for human nature, no creative foundation, but instead a world of narratives (or stories) into which we all enter. The focus of understanding must, for Ricœur, therefore be hermeneutic as we try and recollect meaning mediated through the symbol, always indirect and historically located...In many ways the social imaginary is akin to the notion of epistemes in Foucault (1970, 1971, 1972),

which both allow and limit understanding and expression. Ideology and Utopia provide the boundaries, the lower and the upper limits, for the social imaginary since narratives can project and support distorted traditions as well as ideal alternatives.⁵⁸

Last but not least, in his theory the subject remains at centre stage and is “not resigned to being nothing more than a pawn of prevailing economic forces.”⁵⁹ The subject is *not only passive but also capable of acting, reacting, and interacting*. Behind social systems are always moral subjects who can be called to responsibility.

In what follows I am interested especially in ideology as one expression of cultural imagination. However, as I will show in a later stage of this article, it is precisely Ricœur’s approach through cultural imagination, which draws attention to the overarching complementarity between ideology and utopia, that will prove to be fertile in reflecting on the (im)possibility of social transformation.

Ideology as Integration, Legitimation, and Conservation

In the general vein of critical theory ideology is negatively depicted as false consciousness. Ricœur clearly dissociates himself from this line of thinking by emphasizing both the positive and the negative dimensions of ideology. Like Honneth, he stresses primarily the importance of ideological discourse for social identity construction. Ricœur would agree with Honneth that a minimal sense of national solidarity is vital to a social world in which personal and collective differences do not give rise to serious social instability.⁶⁰ A society without some shared meanings and internal consistency cannot survive. Here we encounter the constructive role of ideology.

At its deepest level, ideology is integration, fulfilling the important role of symbolically gathering people together as a community. It both establishes and preserves a community’s sense of unity “by means of symbolic systems immanent in action and thereby preserves the social identity of the political community.”⁶¹ A society revolves around a cultural heritage grounded in shared memories that are commemorated. “[This commemoration] takes place in [their] narratives, [their] legends, [their] histories, whose heroes are people, or at least individuals; it happens in [their] feasts with their celebrations, their rituals.”⁶² Ricœur states:

Every society possesses.. a socio-political *imaginaire* – that is an ensemble of symbolic discourses that can function as a ... reaffirmation. As reaffirmation, the *imaginaire* operates as an “ideology” which can positively repeat and represent the founding discourse of a society, what I call its “foundational symbols,” thus preserving its sense of identity. After all, cultures create themselves by telling stories of their past.⁶³

The privileged place of ideological thinking occurs in politics. There the question of the legitimization of power arises, which Ricœur depicts as the second function of ideology. Power is always “power over” and “political life always involves the dominance of some people over others.”⁶⁴ To this, Taylor adds: “Every social order in some sense seeks the assent of those it rules, and this assent to the governing power is what legitimates its rule.”⁶⁵ The problem is that there is no complete overlap between the claim to legitimacy by those governing and the belief in the order’s legitimacy by the governed. Ricœur calls this a problem of legitimization: “while the

citizenry's belief and the authority's claim should correspond at the same level, the equivalence of belief with claim is never fully actual Thus, there is always more in the authority's claim to legitimacy than in the beliefs actually held by the group members."⁶⁶ This gap can never be fully bridged; a tension will always remain if only because those in power do not actually represent everyone and are likewise not recognized by all citizens. According to Ricœur, the rulers always ask for more than what the ruled actually offer in terms of belief and creed.

Those in power are engaged in a constant struggle for recognition: they seek the consent and cooperation of the people.⁶⁷ To that end, they resort to ideological discourse as a "rhetorical tool" used to breach the credibility gap. Especially when dissenting voices start to grow louder or changes happen in quick succession, those in power tend to resort to ideological discourse, projecting a social consensus. "[A]t [such] critical point[s] ... the symbolic systems and their rhetorical expressions ... are seen to be mobilized. They supply the selling points that elevate ideology to the level of surplus value added to the belief in the legitimacy of power".⁶⁸ Ideology is deemed to "preserve the semblance of a social consensus." In the final end, ideological discourse revolves around power.

Ideology not only legitimates; it is also conservative. According to Ricœur, "In a sense all ideology repeats what exists by justifying it, and so it gives a picture ... of what is."⁶⁹ Here imagination fulfils its reproductive function. It functions as the confirmation of the present situation:

[I]magination may function to preserve an order. In this case the function of the imagination is to stage a process of identification that mirrors the order. Imagination has the appearance here of a picture [I]deology has a function of preservation, of conservation.⁷⁰

The conservative character of ideological discourse reveals itself also in the way it dissimulates the gap between what is and what ought to be. This dissimulative function is problematic in as far as it allows people to look away from distorted situations. It has the *status quo* as its vis-à-vis.

From Ideology to Violence

Ideology functions as a pre-given symbolic realm, permeating all discourse, claiming a certain naturalness. It exerts a power over how people within a society think, what they accept as reasonable, what they consider important, valuable and worthy of pursuit. It thereby sets boundaries between those questions, concerns and demands that are central and those that are peripheral. Especially problematic is the fact that the codes of the ideological imaginary function in an oblique manner, operating at a pre-rational level. And so "[t]he ideological process ... remains hidden ... it is unacknowledged, it masks itself by inverting itself, denouncing its adversaries in the field of competition between ideologies, because it is always the other who stoops to ideology."⁷¹ As Ricœur puts it, ideology has no author. Because ideology functions at a pre-rational level, it is *per definition* uncritical (which does not mean that critique is not possible). That is why it is susceptible to violence. This violence is not necessarily intentional; it can occur even if it is not intended and if it is not realized.⁷²

This violence does not take the form only and primarily of brutal force. Rather, it takes the form of symbolic violence, the victims of which are however no less real. The violent nature

of ideological discourse manifests itself primarily from the perspective of the tense relation between ideological discourse and otherness.

Ideology often takes on the form of reactionary discourse, reacting against change and, of course, strangeness: "It signifies that what is new can only be accommodated in terms of the typical, itself stemming from the sedimentation of social experience."⁷³ Especially when something unfamiliar becomes problematic in a society, there is a clear tendency to resort to ideological discourse. "The phenomenon of the intolerable arises when the experience of radical novelty threatens the possibility of the social group's recognizing itself in a retrospective reference to its hallowed traditions."⁷⁴ Ricœur calls this *the temptation of identity* or *la déraison identitaire*, which leads to ethnocentrism.⁷⁵

When strangeness is experienced as a threat to what is known, when the unfamiliar is associated with the excavation of the familiar, when change is opposed to tradition, ideological discourse flourishes. We could call it the last resort for societies at drift, trying to stop the process of innovation, and they do so by drawing boundaries, Bourdieu would call them magical frontiers. "These frontiers reinforced constantly and relentlessly in discursive acts of recognition and misrecognition, appear to have a crucial role in the construction and maintenance of social worlds" in which the cultural perspective of the majority is generally held to be superior to others.⁷⁶

Clearly, societies wrestle with the question of how their collective identities are to survive this ongoing process of cultural diversification. The prevalent feeling is a sense of loss. Societies mourn the end of their monocultural outlook.⁷⁷ They are dominated by nostalgic sentiments, reflecting back on *what used to be*. Overwhelmed by regrets, they look for ways to retrieve a clear sense of identity. What happens then is that society projects its identity in terms of a non-negotiable, clear-cut package of collective memories, values, norms and ideals: this is *who we are*; *this is what we value*; *this is what we hold to be true*. They see this as a clear-cut package and as something that needs to be protected against loss of meaning, undermining, and relativizing.

This usually entails a retrieval of the past and a "protective withdrawal" into their own cultural tradition.⁷⁸ Thus, ideological discourse shows "prevailing vestiges of monoculturalism and national cultural identity."⁷⁹ The one-sided *archeological* focus on ideological discourse defines collective identity in terms of *cultural inheritance*, the survival of which is society's responsibility. That responsibility, of course, also entails the end of further excavation. Ricœur compares this process with the functioning of the immune system, which is driven by fear of contamination. The organism furiously defends its identity by rejecting whatever is foreign. Chryssides explains: "Ways of world making and identities may be feared to be tarnished – further exacerbating a lack of legitimization of the Other. Furthermore, the unconscious nature of ideology, coupled with the unconscious nature of this fear of contamination, may explain the apparent irrationality of ethnocentrism."⁸⁰ This fear of contamination fits both the increasing problematization of the cultural non-conformity of minorities on the one hand and the call to protection of the norms and values of a society's own cultural heritage.⁸¹ The increasing gap between the multicultural reality and the social imagination that results is too great and continues to grow at the expense of the social integration of the others. Although multicultural society is a fact, the society's symbolic order lags behind due to its limited and distorted imagination. Fadil and Kanmaz state:

A segment [of society] is not only placed outside our collective imagination, but social problems are also associated with a part of our social fabric that we stamp as strange, as something that did not originate with us, and that we do not desire to integrate into our social body either.⁸²

The Critical and Transformative Power of Utopian Narratives

A harmonizing ideological discourse that oppresses plurality and diversity is a violent discourse, whose victims are especially the others of society. Outsiders are construed as violating social norms, maintaining the perceived superiority of the in-group and uniformity within society.⁸³ Once rendered illegitimate, contributing to the construction of the so-called *shared framework of orientation* is impossible.

It is not unlikely that these *outsiders* will interiorize the message that society at large does not really appreciate their presence. One can imagine that this can negatively affect the practical self-relation of people belonging to a cultural minority. They are given the impression of being second-class citizens: as if they do not really belong and have nothing to contribute to society's self-understanding. They are deprived of the *right* to contribute to the construction of society's symbolic imagination. Their voice is marginalized.

If we follow Honneth's claim that the goal of a normative social theory is to stop a distorted practical self-relation (negatively) and to promote a positive practical self-relation (positively), then it can be argued that the so-called cultural struggle for recognition can likewise derive its motivational force from the fact that people are vulnerable in their cultural attachments. This vulnerability affirms the moral dynamic of cultural struggles for recognition. From this perspective, we can understand the moral grammar of *cultural struggles for recognition*.

What motivates my investment in multiculturalism is not so much a desire for appreciation; rather, but rather an effort to end ideological violence.⁸⁴ What motivates me is an idea of justice as *openness beyond the same*. The ultimate goal is not to maintain structures of privilege just by letting a few more people in but rather to pluralize society's symbolic order without losing the perspective of a common social vision, enabling the relation of solidarity, whose importance Honneth rightly indicated.

Although multicultural society is a fact, the society's symbolic order lags behind due to its limited and distorted imagination. If we accept that the distorted cultural imagination is in part responsible for the marginalization of cultural minorities, and if we accept that this cultural imagination is constructed at the benefit of the majority, we can also think about how it might be changed. It is my hypothesis that the *reality* of marginalization can only be changed if society's symbolic order is transformed.

Having arrived at this point, we may recall Ricœur's thesis on the complementary relation between ideology and utopia, according to which the latter can remedy the pathological distortion of the former. Ricœur views ideology from the perspective of integration, legitimization, and conservation. Unlike ideology that represents what is, utopia represents what may be, a view from nowhere that projects a real and possible future. Indeed it provides a challenge to "what is."⁸⁵ Utopias create a distance between what is and what ought to be.⁸⁶ The positive role utopia fulfils is that of rupture, challenge and transformation. As it turns out, it can also function as "an imaginative way to shatter the present order in the prevailing ideology."⁸⁷

Thus utopian imagination provides a necessary balance and check to the pathological aspect of ideology as distortion. This means, concretely, that attempts at cultural recognition can take the form of utopian narrative disruptions in which alternative visions of cultural solidarity are projected. Utopian counter-narratives⁸⁸ (altern(arr)atives) disrupt and contest the ideological programme of society and appeal to the possible. They are aimed not at restoring the past but at projecting a possible future from which present injustices can be criticized.

In the last part of this article I will further develop this idea and argue that utopian narratives may hold much promise as a means for cultural minorities to struggle against symbolic violence, to reclaim their self-esteem and to achieve the “goals of reshaping ... the public good for deeper relations of solidarity.”⁸⁹

As we have seen, cultural minorities are often confronted with negative narratives that are written by others about them, pushing them in a *situation of passivity*. Nevertheless, people are also resilient. The oppressed are not mere victims; they have the capacity to act and react. They have the capacity to fight back, and in this fight they are driven by normative expectations about what a just society might look like. Active resistance to oppression and active defence of multiculturalism are possible, even though those *fighting for recognition* are starting from an unfavourable position, which is marked by asymmetrical power relations.

This struggle begins by refusing the dominant ethnocentric story that society tells about them and contesting the role constructed for them. It is a struggle of cultural minorities to contradict how they have come to be construed in their host societies. It is not just a struggle for cultural appreciation but especially a struggle to be liberated from the oppressing symbolic order that excludes them. It is a struggle to be freed from the framework that renders them and their way of life illegitimate.

Important here is the effort especially of people belonging to cultural minorities to regain authorship of their identity and to enter the public sphere with their story told from their perspective. Narrative serves as a primary means for marginalized people to find their way to personhood. In her work “Moral Textures”, Lara convincingly demonstrates how utopian counter-narratives have played a decisive role in the feminist struggle for recognition. In the feminist movement “women’s narratives grasped the potential of a utopian horizon that created a critical space in which they could become authentic subjects.”⁹⁰ The feminist struggle for emancipation has to a great extent been (and still is) a struggle for the transformation of society’s symbolic order in which women were assigned an inferior place. In a similar vein, cultural minorities can recover their sense of personhood, by claiming the right to designate themselves; they refuse to be pushed into the role of a direct object of ideological discourse.

Moreover, counter-narratives can repair the damage inflicted on identities by replacing the harmful story by one that commands respect and esteem. Counterstories are a form of resistance; they aim at altering the oppressor’s perceptions of members of a group as well as altering the perceptions of self.⁹¹

By making explicit and public *a differentiated perspective*, these counter-narratives not only challenge the so-called shared framework of orientation and especially its presumed homogeneity, but they also highlight the violent nature of the social solidarity and bring its ‘victims’ into focus. It is a struggle to break open society’s closed ideological discourse that denies them full membership in society by preventing them from contributing to the symbolic order and society’s self-understanding. Fadil and Kanmaz state:

Identity movements make primarily the presuppositions visible that lie at the foundation of the common framework and public space. A process that is necessary to transcend these presuppositions and to evolve to something collective. Claiming the difference forms, as it were, the condition for arriving at more commonality.⁹²

The ultimate purpose of narration is not complaint: counter-narratives should not be read or heard as lamentations. The ultimate goal of this storied struggle for recognition is to include the narrating self as a *full member of society* in rewriting society's symbolic order. Indeed, as Ricœur has argued, utopia is not simply a *counter-narrative*, it is also an effort to expand to symbolic order so that exclusion is transformed in inclusion. The end-purpose of utopia is to revamp the social and cultural imagination so that more and more people can identify themselves with the social order to which they belong.

Such a transformation will come about only if it can be shown that these narratives are not only personal but have an import that transcends the personal and affects the public realm. This requires cultural minorities to succeed in connecting their personal *counter-narratives* to the narrative(s) society at large tells about itself. Narration becomes a rhetorical tool in the struggle for recognition only when the storyteller succeeds in revealing how his or her story is *one thread of society's story* and how it can change society's understanding of justice for the better. In this regard Lara claims that this narrative approach is both agonistic and consensual:

The agonistic refers to the initial asymmetry of ego's position and her capacity to produce a powerful narrative that provides an account of the lack of justice created by situations about marginalization, oppression or exclusion. The other moment consists in the consensual act of reaching agreement about the normative content of this claim for recognition, which must relate such account to the moral sphere and depends upon the capacity to propose a better understanding of what justice means and how it can be reconceived through institutional transformations.⁹³

Here we encounter the importance of couching these counter-narratives in a utopian form: that is "the precondition and possibility of imagining politics differently for opening a site of ideological struggle aimed at social reorientation and projective transformation."⁹⁴ As Ricœur puts it, "the critique of ideologies can only be carried out by a conscience capable of regarding itself from the point of 'nowhere'."⁹⁵

Crucial here, of course, is the etymology of utopia, which is connected to both *no place*, understood as displacement, and the *good place*, understood as that what can be hoped for. What must be emphasized is the benefit of this kind of extraterritoriality for the social function of utopia. From this "no place," an exterior glance is cast on our reality, which suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted. The field of the possible is now opened up beyond that of the actual, a field for alternative ways of living Utopia is the way in which we radically rethink what is family, consumption, government, religion and so on. The fantasy of an alternative society and its topographical figuration "nowhere" works as the most formidable contestation of what is. What some, for example call cultural revolution proceeds from the possible to the real, from fantast to reality.⁹⁶

In this way these counter-narratives not only reject the unjust *status quo*, they also imagine an alternative. Utopias challenge our imagination so that we might rethink what it

means to be human and how we might live communally.⁹⁷ Utopia evokes not “acquiescence” but a stimulus for the here and now. That is why Ricœur connects utopia with social subversion. Indeed, Ricœur highlights the linkage between the utopian imagination, semantic innovation, and action. Utopian narratives not only function as a *laboratory* in which different, more inclusive ways of organizing society are “tried out imaginatively,” these stories also motivate action: they imply a claim – the claim that what is imagined can become real. And so utopias, like ideologies, are concerned with power and must seek to realize themselves in very practical ways.

From this perspective we can understand counter-narratives as *political actions*. It is a form of public engagement aimed at reshaping public discourse and life. Curtis explains: “For the true utopian sees her project as both a critical reflection on the flaws of her society and also a prescriptive outline for the possibility of a better future.”⁹⁸

This public engagement consists of two moments. The first moment refers to the capacity of counter-narratives to disclose a differentiated perspective, thereby at once disclose new meanings and understandings in relations to the society’s symbolic order. The other moment is transformative and refers to the reordering of society’s cultural imagination. From this perspective, I argue that utopian narratives are emancipatory narratives that mediate between particular group identities and universalistic moral claims, providing new frameworks that allow those who are not members of the group to expand their own self-conceptions and their definitions of civil society. That is why utopian narratives have the power to both perform identity claims and institutional transformations. Utopian narratives are no end in themselves. Their final goal and purpose is transformative action. They are told to bring about change.

Here, we can recall the conjunction, so central to Ricœur’s work, between utopian narratives and transformative action.⁹⁹ According to Ricœur, narratives “transform our lived experiences, thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, but they do not have the final word. They carry within themselves a dynamism that calls out to be refigured in the [socio-political] world...”¹⁰⁰ The innovation and transformation of the social imagination finds its final destination in meaningful action. If society’s self-understanding is no longer defined in terms of excluding *the other*, but rather finds new ways to enlarge and transform its self-understanding, thereby including *the other*, one can expect that this will translate in affirmative action towards true solidarity.

Conclusion

In his groundbreaking essay “The Politics of Recognition”, Charles Taylor argued that cultural minorities not only long to be respected as equal citizens, but also seek appreciation of their cultural differences. Taylor quite rightly called attention to cultural groups who struggle for their own values, convictions, and lifestyles to be recognized. Honneth, however, criticizes Taylor for not elaborating systematically on a social theory of recognition, which could explain the moral dynamics, and thus the normative nature of recognition claims. In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth addresses this lacuna by formulating a social theory based on the anthropological intuition that people can become self-conscious and free beings only through mutual recognition. He argues that a failure to be recognized is connected with the experience of a violation of one’s personal identity and thus is a form of moral injustice. According to Honneth, the circumstances experienced as “unjust” provide the appropriate key for an initial anticipatory elucidation of the internal connection between vulnerability, morality and recognition.

When dealing with the challenge of multiculturalism, Honneth pursues the line of thought that people are vulnerable in their cultural attachments. He sees cultural attachments as a precondition for the equal exercise of individual autonomy. From this he builds an argument to grant certain rights to cultural minorities. The idea is that, the members of minority groups, in order to exercise their liberal right to autonomy, need a familiar culture as a context of choice, just as the members of the majority do. The denial of cultural rights can thus be experienced as an undue violation of one's personal integrity and can hinder a person in his or her functioning as an autonomous subject in society.

According to Honneth, the struggle of cultural minorities is first and foremost situated in the legal sphere, where people demand to be treated equally before the law. Sometimes this entails the application of the principle of accommodation. Honneth recognizes, however, that his analysis does not completely cover what is meant by the so-called politics of identity. The goal of the social integration of formerly excluded and marginalized people will not be reached simply by granting them special cultural rights. People experience social belonging when they, from their particular cultural perspective, can contribute to a common social project and its symbolic order. Conversely, it can be experienced as a form of social denigration, if one is not allowed to contribute to the common good because one's culture is believed to be incompatible with the standards and norms of society at large. Still, Honneth sees no possibility to inscribe "moral" demands for "cultural appreciation" in his critical theory. Appreciation can only be given according to already existing standards of evaluation.

Here Honneth's understanding of society's symbolic imagination turns out to be monocultural and static. This does not just lead Honneth's theory to lose a great deal of its critical potential but also to underestimate the power of ideological discourse and the symbolic violence resulting from it. Honneth downplays the increasing gap between the multicultural reality and the society's symbolic imagination, which inhibits the social integration of cultural minorities.

In light of the above considerations, I have argued that the marginalization of cultural minorities can only be undone, if society's symbolic order is transformed. As long as the symbolic order of society, which is marked by a limited and distorted symbolic imagination, remains unaltered, the struggle for recognition of cultural minorities will not find any hearing. Inspired by Ricœur, I first called attention to the potentially violent nature of society's symbolical order. Ricœur's account of ideology and utopia shows that society's social imagination often takes the form of ideology, understood as a discourse of integration, legitimization, and conservation. Ideology functions as a pre-given symbolic realm, permeating all discourse, claiming a certain naturalness. It exerts a power over how people within a society think, what they accept as reasonable, what they consider important, valuable and worthy of pursuit. This symbolic order is in part responsible for the "natural" marginalization of society's others.

It is my claim that the distorted cultural imagination is in part responsible for the marginalization of cultural minorities, and if we accept that this cultural imagination is constructed for the benefit of the majority, we can also think about how it might be changed. It is my hypothesis that the reality of marginalization can only be changed if society's symbolic order is transformed. Ricœur claims that the pathologies of ideological discourse can be remedied by utopic discourse, which can function as an imaginative way to shatter the prevailing social order. In this sense, utopian counter-narratives can become a primary means for cultural minorities to struggle against symbolic violence, to transform the symbolic imagination of society, and to

reclaim their self-esteem. Utopian counter-narratives are aimed not at restoring the past but at projecting a possible future from which present injustices can be criticized.

- ¹ In "A Struggle for Recognition: A Festive perspective" I address Ricœur's work *Course of Recognition*. In this article, I focus on the question of how to avoid becoming battle-weary. Where do people find the strength to continue this struggle without lapsing into violence? Ricœur claims that the only way to avoid the struggle for recognition degenerating into violent conflicts, is to place it in a horizon of hope – the hope that the struggle does not have the final word on interpersonal relations. I take up Ricœur's suggestion and elaborate it successively from a broad religious perspective and a Christian-Biblical perspective. This also allows us to develop new anthropological insights concerning the struggle for recognition. See Marianne Moyaert, "The Struggle for Recognition: A Festive Perspective," *Philosophy and Theology* 23 (2010): 105-130.
- ² Bart Van Leeuwen, "A Formal Recognition of Social Attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition," *Inquiry* 50 (2007): 180-205, 181.
- ³ Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 3.
- ⁴ Paul Ricœur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 212-13.
- ⁵ Lawrence Blum, "Recognition, Value and Equality: A Critique of Charles Taylor's and Nancy Fraser's Accounts of Multiculturalism," *Constellations* 5 (1998): 51-67, 52.
- ⁶ Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," in *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, eds. Nancy Fraser & Axel Honneth (London, Verso, 2003), 110-97, 117.
- ⁷ Markell calls it a "catalytic essay" and McNay speaks of a "signal essay." Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2; Lois McNay, *Against Recognition* (Cambridge, Polity, 2008), 3.
- ⁸ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 122.
- ⁹ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 122.
- ¹⁰ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 123.
- ¹¹ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 119-20.
- ¹² Presbey, "The Struggle for Recognition in the Philosophy of Axel Honneth," 553.
- ¹³ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 116.
- ¹⁴ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 117.
- ¹⁵ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 125.

- ¹⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996).
- ¹⁷ Jean-Philippe Deranty and Emmanuel Renault, "Politizing Honneth's Ethics of Recognition," *Thesis Eleven* 88 (2007): 92-111, 92.
- ¹⁸ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 125.
- ¹⁹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 116.
- ²⁰ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 171.
- ²¹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 174.
- ²² Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 173.
- ²³ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 116.
- ²⁴ Bart Van Leeuwen, *Erkenning, identiteit en verschil: Multiculturalisme en leven met culturele diversiteit* (Leuven: Acco, 2003), 111.
- ²⁵ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 128.
- ²⁶ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 131.
- ²⁷ Axel Honneth, "Recognition or Redistribution? Changing Perspectives on the Moral Order of Society," in *Recognition and Difference: Politics, Identity, Multiculture*, ed. S. Lash and M. Featherstone (London: Sage, 2002), 48.
- ²⁸ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 136.
- ²⁹ Deranty and Renault, "Politizing Honneth's Ethics of Recognition," 92.
- ³⁰ Paul Van den Bergh and Gijs Oenen, "Ethiek van Erkenning: Interview met Axel Honneth," *Krisis* 77 (1999): 31.
- ³¹ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 174.
- ³² Van Leeuwen, *Erkenning, identiteit en verschil*, 185.
- ³³ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 164.
- ³⁴ Bernhard Peeters, *Understanding Multiculturalism*, IIS-Arbeitspaper 14 (Bremen: Institut für Interkulturelle und Internationale Studien, 1999), 32.

- ³⁵ Herman De Dijn, "Nussbaum on Religious Diversity and the Law," *Bijdragen: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology* 69 (2008): 471.
- ³⁶ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 167.
- ³⁷ Rudi Visker, "The Irony of Contingent Solidarity: Some Problems with Rorty," *Ethical Perspectives* 3 (1996): 97.
- ³⁸ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 167.
- ³⁹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 122.
- ⁴⁰ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 168.
- ⁴¹ Marianne Moyaert, "Religion in the Public Arena: Recognition, Vulnerability and Tragedy," *Ethical Perspectives* 16 (2009): 290.
- ⁴² Herman De Dijn, *Erkenning, gelijkheid en verschil*, intr. Marcel ten Hooven (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2001), 25.
- ⁴³ Van Leeuwen, "A Formal Recognition of Social Attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition," 186.
- ⁴⁴ Van Leeuwen, *Erkenning, identiteit en verschil*, 110.
- ⁴⁵ Honneth "Redistribution as Recognition," 168.
- ⁴⁶ Kelly Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony," *Parallax* 10 (2004): 79.
- ⁴⁷ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 167.
- ⁴⁸ If pushed to the very limit, such a schema could turn into assimilation, understood as "a process by which members of subordinated groups modify behaviours, beliefs, or appearances to fit dominant modes of being and knowing. Assimilation requires increasing degrees of conformity and conformity in the form of symbolic violence because it arbitrarily values one way of being while it devalues others." See Daniel Schubert, "Defending Multiculturalism: From Hegemony to Symbolic Violence," *American Behavioral Scientist* 45 (2002): 1096.
- ⁴⁹ Gregory Jay, "Knowledge, Power and the Struggle for Representation," *College English* 56 (1994): 10.
- ⁵⁰ Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," 196.

- ⁵¹ Pia Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 136.
- ⁵² Schubert, "Defending Multiculturalism: From Hegemony to Symbolic Violence," 1088-1089.
- ⁵³ Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press), 1986.
- ⁵⁴ Paul Ricœur, "Ideology and Utopia," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and J.B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern Press, 2007), 308.
- ⁵⁵ Ricœur, "Ideology and Utopia," 309.
- ⁵⁶ Paul Ricœur, "Imagination in Discourse and in Action," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, 177.
- ⁵⁷ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 258.
- ⁵⁸ Darren Langdrige, "Between Ideology and Utopia: Re-Thinking Conflict and Reconciliation in Psychotherapy," *Existential Analysis* 16 (2005): 644.
- ⁵⁹ Langdrige, "Between Ideology and Utopia," 644.
- ⁶⁰ Van Leeuwen, "A Formal Recognition of Social Attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition," 183.
- ⁶¹ Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 82.
- ⁶² Ricœur, *Fragile identité: respect de l'autre et identité culturelle*. Texte prononcé au Congrès de la Fédération Internationale de l'Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture, à Prague en Octobre 2000.
- ⁶³ Paul Ricœur, "The Creativity of Language," in *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*, ed. Richard Kearney (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 29.
- ⁶⁴ Bernard Dauenhauer, "Ricœur and Political Theory," in *Ricœur across the Disciplines*, ed. Scott Davidson (New York: Continuum, 2010), 113.
- ⁶⁵ George Taylor, "Editor's Introduction," in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, xvi.
- ⁶⁶ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 13.

- ⁶⁷ Bernard Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricœur: The Promise and Risk of Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 216.
- ⁶⁸ Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 84.
- ⁶⁹ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 309-310.
- ⁷⁰ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 256-266.
- ⁷¹ Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 82.
- ⁷² Schubert, "Defending Multiculturalism: From Hegemony to Symbolic Violence," 1095.
- ⁷³ Paul Ricœur, "Science and Ideology," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, 251.
- ⁷⁴ Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricœur: The Owl of Minerva* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 80.
- ⁷⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, 81.
- ⁷⁶ Adrian Blackledge, "The Magical Frontier Between the Dominant and the Dominated: Sociolinguistics and Social Justice in a Multilingual World," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 27 (2006): 23.
- ⁷⁷ Allison Chryssides, "Commentary: Conditions for Dialogue and Illuminating Inequality in Multicultural Societies," *Journal of Community & Social Psychology* 18 (2008): 376.
- ⁷⁸ Paul Ricœur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," in *Paul Ricœur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage, 1996), 4.
- ⁷⁹ Jose Padilla, "Death to the Originary Narrative! Or, Insurgent Multiculturalism and Teaching Multiethnic Literature," *Melus* 30 (2005): 16.
- ⁸⁰ Chryssides, "Commentary: Conditions for Dialogue and Illuminating Inequality in Multicultural Societies," 378.
- ⁸¹ Karel Arnaut, "Het gekooide Vlaanderen. Twintig jaar gemist multicultureel debat," in *Een leeuw in een kooi: De grenzen van het multiculturele Vlaanderen*, ed. Karel Arnaut (Antwerp: Meulenhoff/Manteau), 2009.
- ⁸² Nadia Fadil and Meryem Kanmaz, "Identiteitspolitiek en burgerschap in Vlaanderen: Een meervoudige kritiek," in "Het gekooide Vlaanderen", 120.

- ⁸³ Chryssides, "Commentary: Conditions for Dialogue and Illuminating Inequality in Multicultural Societies," 377.
- ⁸⁴ Schubert, "Defending Multiculturalism: From Hegemony to Symbolic Violence," 1097.
- ⁸⁵ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 16.
- ⁸⁶ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 179.
- ⁸⁷ Langdrige, "Between Ideology and Utopia," 647.
- ⁸⁸ I use the term *counter-narratives* here to distinguish them from *ideological narratives* that serve a "restorationist agenda seeking to perpetuate a previously established identity in the face of threats of change." Although narratives can be employed to affirm the established order and to reinforce the status quo, narrative can also be a source of critique and transformation.
- ⁸⁹ Rosemary Carbine, "Turning to Narrative: Toward a Feminist Theological Interpretation of Political Participation and Personhood," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010): 381.
- ⁹⁰ Lara, *Moral Textures*, 59.
- ⁹¹ Hilde Nelson, *Damaged Identities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
- ⁹² Fadil and Kanmaz, "Identiteitspolitiek en burgerschap in Vlaanderen: Een meervoudige kritiek," 120.
- ⁹³ Lara, *Moral Textures*, 3.
- ⁹⁴ Robin Sylbergleid, "Women, Utopia, and Narrative: Toward a Postmodern Feminist Citizenship," *Hypatia* 12 (1997): 160.
- ⁹⁵ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 324.
- ⁹⁶ Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 320.
- ⁹⁷ Claire Curtis, "Rehabilitating Utopia: Feminist Science Fiction and Finding the Ideal," *Contemporary Justice Review* 8 (2005): 147-162, 148.
- ⁹⁸ Curtis, "Rehabilitating Utopia: Feminist Science Fiction and Finding the Ideal," 148.
- ⁹⁹ See Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*.
- ¹⁰⁰ Richard Kearney, "Foreword to the New Edition," in *From Text to Action*, ix.