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Houston, S., & Montgomery, L. (2016). Reflecting critically on contemporary social pathologies: social work and the 'good life'. DOI: 10.1332/204986016X14811848967494

### Published in:

Critical and Radical Social Work

### Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

### Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:

[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

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## Reflecting Critically on Contemporary Social Pathologies: Social Work and the 'Good Life'

It is incontrovertible that the challenges of contemporary social life have reached a new crescendo. International terrorism, migration, environmental decline, a resurgence in nationalism, and the vagaries of the neo-liberal market, combine to present radically novel forms of insecurity, not only for the dispossessed but also the affluent (Wilkinson and Pickett, 20??). Within the context of these seismic changes, social workers strive to maintain values of person-centred care and social justice, sometimes swimming against the tide of retrogressive social policy, debilitating programmes of austerity, and the retrenchment of welfare provision (refs.). Yet, in a more enabling vein, the domain of the 'social' is where identity politics, and debates about morality, freedom, and the 'good life', are critically teased out (refs.). Because social work is strategically positioned in the interstice between the state and civil society (ref.), it can contribute meaningfully to such issues and debates.

As a way of deepening our understanding of these challenges and opportunities, I examine Axel Honneth's mid-period *oeuvre* which reflects on the nature of *social pathologies* in contemporary society (refs.). In short, social pathologies encumber, curtail and frustrate the attainment of the 'good life': the fulfilment of self-realization and happiness. Critically, they debase personhood and optimal identity-formation through socially reproduced processes of misrecognition. Embracing this definition, we will consider Honneth's description of four core, contemporary, social pathologies. They have been categorised helpfully by Zurn (2015) as: (i) invisibilization, (ii) instrumental rationalization, (iii) reification and (iv) organised self-realization. While Honneth has discussed other manifestations of social pathology elsewhere (for example, restricted understandings of human freedom, ref.), this particular suite has been chosen as they pose distinct and pressing challenges for service users and the social work profession.

So far, Honneth's enunciation of these social phenomena has garnered little attention from the social work academy. Instead, a small number of commentators have concentrated on the tenets of his earlier, seminal text, *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995). Here, he set out his formative recognition thesis with its conditions for optimal identity-formation. This work will be briefly summarised below as it sets the context for examining Honneth's later adoption of social philosophy to critique the four chosen areas. My contention is that we cannot separate Honneth's earlier recognition thesis from his later consideration of contemporary social pathologies and the nature of social freedom (ref.). The attainment of the 'good life' depends on subjects achieving a healthy sense of self through social institutions that sustain and promote appropriate relations of mutual recognition.

Yet, even though Honneth has shown a percipient awareness of key social pathologies in present-day social experience, I argue that there is another modern-day, social pathogen that he has not addressed sufficiently: that is, the 'financialization' of social life (refs. – see Martina). By this I mean, the way in which contemporary relations, interests, ambitions and transactions, under neo-liberalism, have become colonised by financial concerns, risks, acquisitive drives and the pervasive anxiety of debt. Financialization directs the 'self-in-

making(money)' but, in doing so, stifles self-actualisation. Aesthetic and moral development, within the 'lifeworld' of informal inter-personal relations, are thwarted because this particular social pathology elevates material preoccupations over questions of human value (Habermas, ???). Citizen-consumers lapse into a false consciousness as a result, taking-for-granted the presumed normality of such fixations. Honneth's relative neglect of this particular pathology may be due, in part, to the fact that he no longer views capitalism as the sole driving force of all social ills (2008).

To conclude this inquiry, I consider how social workers can become more alert to these pathologies in social life, and take active steps to counter them. It is suggested that one way of becoming more vigilant of their presence, is to apply a critical incident analysis framework (Green, 2007). This conceptual, diagnostic tool provides a structured approach for analysing the societal challenges facing service users, and the social work practices aimed at ameliorating them. Critical reflection, used in this way, contributes to the development of a *socially-intelligent*, anti-oppressive practice that is ever attentive to the nature of the 'social' and how it can constrict human freedoms and aspirations for the good life. In all of this, the aim is to help social workers become more effective social diagnosticians, 'knowing that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues' (Mills, 1959, p. 226).

### **Honneth, Recognition and Social Work**

My contention is that, when prevailing social conditions, in the form of social pathologies, impede or frustrate optimal human development and identity-formation, they involve the *misrecognition* of subjects in some inexorable way. That is why it is vital to briefly rehearse Honneth's foundational recognition thesis as a context for apprehending the nature of these social currents. Moreover, it is imperative to review how such ideas have been received by the social work academy including the critiques and plaudits that various commentators have proffered. Only by doing so can we appreciate the full significance of Honneth's more mature work for anti-oppressive, social work practice.

Honneth's recognition thesis advocates nothing less than a view of the moral basis of human sociality and its connection with the perils and potentials of contemporary social life. His primary concern was the alleviation of everyday misery in the form of humiliation, disrespect, social deprivation, unemployment, social isolation, poverty, the obsolescence of rural communities and social exclusion. In all these types of suffering a normative principle had been violated; that is, there had been a misrecognition of the human subject's feelings at a primal, anthropological level. Honneth addressed these themes by synthesising Hegel's (1979) ideas on the nature of the social self, and Mead's (1967) postulations on social development, to construct a systematic, social theory of recognition. He was swayed by Hegel's argument that one's relationship to oneself was not a solitary experience held in the private theatre of the mind but rather a matter of reciprocity. Mead's theorisation of *perspective-taking* complemented this axiom. This was the process whereby social actors imagined, through an inner conversation, how others might be reacting to them. In doing so, perspective-taking internalised social norms and shaped social behaviour.

With these philosophical premises in place, Honneth constructed the centrepiece of his emancipatory project. It suggested that three 'spheres of recognition' were required to lay the foundation for a positive 'relation-to-self', namely: (a) showing love or friendship (b) respecting the subject's rights and (c) appreciating and valuing a person's capabilities and contribution to the community so as to build solidarity. Disrespect, according to Honneth, was tantamount to the denial of one or more of these three spheres of interactional validation. Moreover, misrecognition provided the validation for struggle, contest and social change. What made conflict a moral enterprise, opined Honneth, were the feelings of outrage - shame, humiliation, hurt - emanating from episodes of misrecognition. In this way, the moral grammar of outrage confirmed the normative ideal of a just society. Pierre Bourdieu's (2006, p. 241) reinforcement of this point is most apposite:

'There is no worse deprivation, no worse privation, perhaps, than of losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to a socially recognised being, in a word, to humanity'.

These ideas have been considered by a small number of social work thinkers including this author. Thus, in a broadly supportive vein, I previously applied and augmented Honneth's tripartite model (of love, rights and solidarity) to the conceptualisation and implementation of family support ( ); the rise of individualism within western societies ( ); the disabling emotion of shame following acts of misrecognition ( ); and the link between recognition and personal change ( ). The central argument in each of these sources was that there was a basic moral demand to be recognised and recognise others affirmatively. Without this precondition applying in social work practice, relationships might suffer to the detriment of a vulnerable person's identity (see also Rossiter's (2014) work on this theme).

A number of other theorists have embraced this latter postulate, albeit taking it in different directions. Thus, Froggett (2004) described how artistic approaches in social work – comprising story-telling, poetry and drama – could assist service users in building a rich, figurative life. She connected this imaginative process with Honneth's recognition requirements arguing that art joined people and validated resourceful expression. Importantly, for Froggett, an aesthetic turn in social work militated against the technocratization of practice. This stance is redolent of clarion calls to reduce bureaucracy in social work (Munro, ; Payne, ).

Complementing this stance, Turney (2012) situated the recognition principle at the heart of relationship-based social work. More specifically, she argued that it was an essential orientation when working with involuntary service users in situations where children were at risk of harm. Turney's argument has credibility as parents value social work interventions that show care, acknowledge rights and identify personal assets (Turnell & Essex, 2006). An involuntary response from a service user may well be a reaction from a threatened identity: one that has most likely experienced various types of disrespect and misrecognition in the past.

In a further complementary move, Jull (2009) extolled Honneth's recognition theory as a normative yardstick for analysing institutional practices in social work. This conception of recognition challenged entrenched forms of *judgement* that labelled, stigmatized and shamed service users. Judgement, it was argued, was often shaped by prevailing social discourses including managerialism, individualism and social care governance. Institutions must be founded, by way of contrast, on respect and effect empowerment, independence and participation (Thomas, 2012). Jull's work is to be commended, because it used Honneth's

recognition order as a counterfactual tool, to highlight breaches of social work principles within institutions.

As can be seen, such sources have appraised Honneth's contribution to social work in a predominantly positive light. Nonetheless, some commentators remain unconvinced about its plausibility. A lead antagonist is Paul Michael Garrett (2010). He argued that Honneth's theory apprehended human problems from a mainly psychological frame: one emphasizing personal deficits over structural causes. If adopted, this would lead to a blame culture in social work. It is important to note, however, that Honneth's critical social theory (as it has progressed over time) has embraced a much wider sociological perspective examining areas such as contemporary social struggles, socio-political conflicts, patriarchal ideology, egalitarian social justice, and socio-economic history (Zurn, 2015).

This rejoinder aside, Honneth's failure to attend to the neo-liberal state, how it promulgated social and economic cleavages, further worried Garret. For him, the state (in Honneth's theorizing) was peculiarly a 'lost object of critical analysis, critique and comment' (p. 1527) even though, in reality, it played a central role in generating social divisions, inequalities and social stratification. This charge has merit particularly as regards Honneth's early work. Yet, even in his more recent exegesis of the modern, constitutional state (2014), he caricatured it as the harbinger of social freedoms. Manifestly, the state was a work-in-progress towards qualitative improvement: a sphere that could honour lawful guarantees and enable citizens to find their social freedoms through communicative exchanges in a thriving public sphere. Hence, according to Honneth, a democratic public sphere and constitutional state together 'constituted a form of social freedom by enabling individuals, in communication with all other members of society, to improve their own living conditions' (2014, p. 274). However, by rendering it in such utopian terms, the blight of the neo-liberal state, its dark side, was not something that unequivocally registered with Honneth. This may be because he framed it as an idealization, rather than an actualized reality. In doing so, he also partly misunderstood the workings of power in this constellation (McNay, 2008). To be fair, though, Honneth saw a vibrant public sphere as the antidote to retrogressive state policies. For him, the state ought not to be the primary concern: it was deliberative democratic exchange within this sphere that must be the ultimate focus of attention.

Garrett (2013) has also raised a further set of concerns in the light of the central debate between Honneth and Fraser concerning the sufficiency of the recognition paradigm for examining different forms of injustice (ref.). *Contra* Honneth, Fraser's contention was that failed attempts at 'recognition' and 'redistribution' led to disparate, bivalent kinds of social injustice that had dissimilar causes and internal dynamics: the former relating to cultural misrecognition with the latter centring on economic inequality. Consequently, they required different remedies situated within a two-pronged approach addressing both areas with equivalent parity. Alternatively, for Honneth, the 'recognition' construct was sufficient (as a fundamental, all-embracing moral category) to examine demeaned cultural identities *and* economic injustices arising from political economy. For Garrett, though, Fraser's critique had merit because 'questions of recognition...can only be examined satisfactorily if fused with questions relating to the economy...' (2013, p. 174). Elsewhere, this was a position broadly supported by Webb (2010) when applying the recognition-redistribution debate to social work. However, Zurn (2015) has argued convincingly that to link recognition theory solely with identity-centred forms of cultural injustice, was to misrepresent Honneth's overall intent:

'Honneth's substantive concerns have always been wider than this, and he has consistently tied his recognition theory to issues of political economy: the division of labour, the nature of work and working conditions, the role of the unions and corporations, levels of income and wealth inequality, the risk-mitigating function of welfare-state interventions in the economy, the rapid progress of neoliberal privatization, and so on' (p. 9).

Moreover, Honneth's rejoinder to Fraser (ref.), argued that the dynamics of capitalist markets, and the economic injustices to which they led, arose from deeply institutionalised and embedded relations of recognition. A superimposing recognition order would consequently have a formative influence on society's economic distribution. There is some evidence for this counter-claim. Hence, cultural ascriptions shaping attitudes to gender, ethnicity, familial roles, life-course ambitions, and occupational tasks (such as house and care work) can have a formative impact on reproducing the division of labour, levels of financial reward and inequalities (McNay, 2008). In this context, the normative consensus that accepts remuneration for work outside the home, yet blithely endorses the 'second shift' of unpaid domestic work within the home, is a misrecognition irregularity.

Even so, it is surely disingenuous to argue that the recognition order entirely explicates *all* forms of economic injustice. Because of the intermingling of economic and political elites, working at the uppermost echelons of the capitalist state (Klein, 2007), and their imbrication in international movements of capital and multi-national corporations, there are macro-economic practices beyond the nation state and civil society that regulate distributional wealth. Joblessness may not be due exclusively to a recognition order gone askew, but linked as well with international measures involving labour saving knowhow, changeable interest rates, over production and prohibitive tariffs. Taking all of this into account, we can conclude from the Fraser-Honneth debate that, while the former downplays the significance of recognition for economic distribution, the latter (at times) miscalculates its potential as an illuminative concept explaining some forms of inequality, particularly those linked to economic outcomes. This conclusion reverberates with Webb's view (2010) that social workers must focus on cultural *and* economic discrimination if they are to remain true to the profession's core values.

### **Honneth, Social Pathologies and Social Work**

Whereas Honneth had previously developed his central recognition thesis through the portal of moral anthropology (that is, the ethical commitments arising from human ontology), he next turned to *social philosophy* to explore the nature of social pathologies in contemporary society:

'Social philosophy is primarily concerned with determining and discussing processes of social development that can be viewed as misdevelopments, disorders or 'social pathologies'...Its primary task is the diagnosis of processes of social development that must be understood as preventing the members of society from living a 'good life' (Honneth, 2007, p. 4).

Honneth's adoption of social philosophy to review various troubles within society built on a long history of his intellectual forebears within the Germanic tradition who had likewise made use of the standpoint to formulate social critique. Going back to Hegel's (ref.) concerns about the limitations of subjective freedom, then to Nietzsche's (ref.) apprehensions about nihilism, and finally moving to the theorists in the Frankfurt School (ref.), with their trepidations about the predominance of instrumental reason in modern-day states, we can see a firm commitment to social philosophy as a way of diagnosing and remedying social pathologies.

To reiterate, Zurn (2015) has enumerated four of the substantive social pathologies revealed by Honneth, identifying them as: (i) invisibilization (ii) instrumental rationalization (iii) reification and (iv) organized self-realization.

### *Invisibilization*

For Honneth, invisibilization can involve the subtle humiliation of another person by looking through or past him or her. In this mode, it represents a form of *ontological blanking*. Alternatively, identification with the person might be very dismissive, tacit, tokenistic or minimalist. Putting this another way, the (invisible) one becomes not so much a bodily non-presence to the other, but rather a non-existence in a social sense. Or, invisibilization might show itself in a more blatant manner through the disdainful disregard of another. Here, people might be put in their place, being reminded of their subservient status due to their class or racial affiliations. In each of these expressions, the dominant extol their social superiority by not recognizing those they dominate, not showing any of Honneth's recognition requirements covered earlier for optimal identity-formation. There is no positive, affirmative stance towards the other, no acknowledgement of her or his moral worth as a subject, breaching Kant's (ref.) categorical imperative to show respect. In human interaction, the subtle facial gestures that denote warmth and acceptance of the 'other' are withheld.

A literary case study portraying invisibilization can be found in Ralph Ellison's (1952) iconic novel, *Invisible Man*. Here, the protagonist, an African-American man living in the 1950s, is socially invisible not only to the white people around him, but also organizations such as the Communist Party (a body purporting to champion his rights). He is rendered socially indiscernible because of his race. The plot mirrors Franz Fanon's (ref.) study of how black people were made to feel invisible in colonial periods. Notably, both of these sources reflect Söderberg's (2002, p.70) impassioned yearning that:

'We want to be loved; failing that, admired; failing that, feared; failing that, hated and despised. At all costs, we want to stir up some sort of feeling in others. *Our soul abhors a vacuum. At all costs, it longs for contact*' (my emphasis).

Such existential longing is taken up by Stern's (1977) and Spitz and Wolf's (1946) classic studies on childhood socialisation and development. These authors reveal the way nurturing parents affirm the young infant, through gestural communication, and bodily ways of expressing and showing warmth. Such care provides an emblematic model for how people should generally make others visible in a way that fundamentally recognises their ontological worth. There are other parallels to these themes in Winnicott's concept of the 'mirror role of the mother' and in Cooley's (ref.) 'looking-glass self' metaphor where a person's identity emerges through interpersonal interaction and the perceptions of others.

In today's world, invisibilization permeates many contemporary contexts. Hence, we witness the invisibilization of sex workers, trafficked peoples, political refugees, poorly paid and treated employees in the service industries, and mostly female carers engaged in child-care, housework and social care with adults. Furthermore, we see it in migration where racialized subordination comes to the fore and in the way homeless people are sometimes ignored.

Not only that, when considering social work practice, invisibilization is present in paternalism or tokenistic partnership with service users (Duffy, ?). For example, parents - whose children are in the care system – attend a case conference but their presence and contribution is only tacitly acknowledged by the professionals sitting around the table. For these parents, the outcome is a ‘stitch-up’. Furthermore, many inquiries and case management reviews (for instance, Climbié plus other refs.) have highlighted how a child-centred focus in child protection was missing, especially with young children. The child remained invisible perhaps because there was an inordinate focus on the parent. Or the painful reality of child abuse was suppressed due to psychodynamic factors including fears of contamination (Ferguson, ; Rustin, ). In the case of Jasmine Beckford, she remained unseen by the social worker despite having a fractured leg. Other examples of invisibilization include the neglect of the carers in some mental health social work interventions (Wilson et al, 2015); the strict, unbending adherence to procedures to the disadvantage of human relationships (Niemi, 2015); the preoccupation with abstract risk calculations (totting up the risk factors) to the detriment of concrete human need (ref.); and the implementation a medical model in adult services that belittled client self-determination (Barrie and Yuill, 2008).

### *Instrumental rationalization*

Instrumental rationalization, according to Honneth, privileges a means-end rationality over all other forms of reasoning. It focuses on the most expedient, cost-effective way of achieving a pre-defined end but does not deliberate on the *value* of that end. Thus, whose interests are served by that end, whose are marginalised, and how power is used in an enabling or constraining way, are not pertinent questions. The emphasis is on the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ but not the ‘why’. It therefore leads to a distortion of reason, the subjugation of nature and people because the motivation is not necessarily to benefit the human condition, but rather to achieve the best cost-output ratio or performance target. Centrally, instrumental rationalization is a driving force in modern capitalism and fuels the proliferation of bureaucracy, technology and rational-choice economics for solving problems in modern-day life.

As a *modus operandi*, instrumental rationalization has been widely critiqued by critical social theorists including Honneth. Weber (ref.) saw it ultimately leading to an ‘iron cage’ of bureaucracy, stifling human innovation, creativity and discretion. Bauman (ref.) cautioned that modernity’s adoption of efficient, optimal goal-implementation strategies, displaced moral considerations causing ethical myopia or blindness. Heidegger (ref.) warned that untrammelled calculative thinking would spawn technologies detrimental to human life and the natural environment. There is plenty of evidence to support this view (Klein, ). The Frankfurt School (refs.), of which Honneth is a third wave proponent, challenged the idea that efficiency ought to be the dominant lens for viewing human progress. Habermas (ref.), a member of the school’s second wave, argued that instrumental rationality colonized meaningful communication between subjects, distorting their meaning systems. In a somewhat different vein, but compatible with Honneth’s concerns, Ritzer (ref.) contended that instrumental rationality had shaped the McDonalidzation of sections of society. By this he meant that culture in western nations was becoming increasingly homogenised around



four central characteristics of the McDonald's fast food chain: efficiency, quantification, predictability and control. Needless to say, Ritzer viewed them as de-humanizing tendencies.

In social work, there have been similar concerns about an over-reliance on instrumental rationality given it has led to a proliferation of procedures, checklists, audit criteria, electronic monitoring and regimes of governance. Moreover, it has placed an inordinate attention of the 'means' instead of the 'ends' of social work intervention (Gottschalk & Witkin, 2015). Keeping within this vein, Blaug (1995) embraced Habermas' ideas, to call for a reinvigoration of social interaction and relationship in social work, arguing against the dangers of an over-bureaucratized system. In an evocative sentence, he suggested that it was far better to start an interaction with a service user 'with a cup of tea' as opposed to fulfilling a procedural mandate. A simple gesture such as this satisfies Honneth's emphasis on recognition as a form of care. Payne (ref.) reinforced the essence of this view but more assertively by signalling his anti-bureaucratic stance. For him, bureaucracy led to rigidity in social work, privileging the organization over partnership with service users. Similarly, Munro (ref.), in her seminal report on child welfare in the UK, highlighted the need for professional discretion in the face of burgeoning procedural demands. Rational systems and processes were not always apposite for novelty or the vagaries of social life: situations which necessitated critical thinking. Lastly, Dustin (2016) has maintained that the development of care management in social work has shown key features of McDonaldization. Her thesis has credibility as care managers must process their work with efficiency, predictability and control. Likewise, as co-ordinators of care, they are required to measure inputs, outputs and outcomes.

### *Reification*

For Honneth, reification *objectifies* the subject: it views him or her as a transposable entity or tradable portfolio of capacities, as opposed to a subject characterized by a sense of unity, and narrative consistency over time. Accordingly, people are not viewed as sentient, emotional and intentional beings with their own desires, consciousness, goals and projects, but rather as inert 'things' or objects devoid of such human qualities. Reification correspondingly adopts a calculative stance, one that asks: 'how can I manipulate this person-object in order to gain from, control it or denigrate it'? The end product is that the individual can be typified as a number (every now and then emblazoned on her body), or statistic, or commodity to be used in one's prudential calculations. In other words, people are used and disposed as natural resources to meet the manipulator's own ends.

In all these ways, reification ignores primordial, time-honoured norms that, at their very least, view the other as a subject or fulfil Honneth's pre-requisites of love, rights and esteem. Reification therefore instrumentalizes and de-humanises. The people who adopt reifying practices become de-sensitised to others – seeing them as devoid of human, existential characteristics. Reification is therefore a fundamental category error with huge moral overtones. Essentially, for Honneth, its crucial cadence is a *forgetfulness of the need for primordial recognition of the other*, perspective-taking with the other, where empathy has drained away, where the other is viewed as a cog in the machine to be used and abused – shunned as it were.

Current socio-political events are replete with examples of reification. Thus, the way some refugees and political asylum seekers are treated as 'others' who need to be 'distanced' from non-porous European borders, through population transfer and debarment, is most apparent. Another prominent example is ethnic cleansing, as occurred in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In these contexts, subjects are re-categorized as 'viruses' or 'cockroaches' to be cleansed or purged. More mainstream, is the continuing objectification of women throughout the world, a theme that is central to feminist theory. For instance, Nussbaum (ref.) highlights the depiction of women as sexual objects, lacking subjectivity, autonomy, and agency – viewing the woman as a 'something' instead of a 'someone'. More contemporary illustrations of reification are funnelled through digital channels, finding expression, at times, in on-line job interviews and on-line dating.

But what of reification in social work? Beckett and Maynard (2005) take up this theme in their consideration of values and ethics within the profession. They suggest that this particular social pathology manifests itself in two main ways in social work. First, it occurs when professionals and welfare agencies act as a conduit of policies and procedures that have the effect of objectifying service users. Practically, this might occur when maintaining procedural orthodoxy comes before responses that are human-centred. In child protection, for instance, where risk outcomes are much to the fore, there can be a presumed safety in following the procedures (as an end in itself), even when discretion and tailored responses fit better with ethical practice. Second, social workers can fall into the trap of reifying service users as a defence against pain. Situations of severe abuse to vulnerable children and adults can lead to natural distress and feelings of being overwhelmed within social workers. The experience of sadness, fear and guilt can subsequently invoke attempts to *distance* oneself from others, cutting off from their human experience. Distancing is reflected, moreover, in the adoption of reifying terms, such as 'bed-blockers', 'new referrals', 'cases', and 'delinquents'. In all of this, we are reminded of Horne's (1999) clarion call to always create the subject in social work, by locating the 'human' behind the label.

### *Organized self-realization*

In many western nations, according to Honneth, self-realization has become a societal necessity. This fixation, he contends, emerges from a new form of reflexive individualism: a privileging of the 'self' over social life, and the needs of the social group. Put another way, subjects are expected to express their own individuality and authentically realize their own unique nature and potential. In this way, self-realization has become an inescapable outward demand rather than an inner expression of existential choice and freedom: a condition of societal normalcy that has become institutionalized. Concomitant with this expectation, is the pressure to engage in personal introspection to discover one's authentic self. This 'turning inwards' by compulsion, however, is an asocial process. As opposed to finding identity through social relations and bonds, which Honneth wants to revivify, organized self-realization valorises detached inner awareness by diktat to achieve insight into 'true' and 'false' expressions of the self.

Crucially, however, there is a psychological cost in all of this, argues Honneth. A potential consequence of this structural demand, is the emergence of inner emptiness,

meaninglessness, and depression within subjects, most notably when they fail to achieve the expected results. Hence, the demand for a heightened individualism and reflexive awareness, can place an unbearable burden on the individual:

Urged from all sides to show that they are open to authentic self-discovery and its impulses, there remains for individuals only the alternative of stimulating authenticity or of fleeing into full blown depression, of staging personal originality for strategic reasons or of pathologically shutting down (Honneth, 2004, p. 475)

Honneth observes that organized self-realization penetrates both the private and public spheres of life. With regard to the latter sphere, employees in work settings are often required to be independent, reflexive, creative, inventive, polyvalent, self-aware entrepreneurs. Thus, we see the rise of the *entremployee* under neo-liberalism: the worker who might have to feign self-realization in order to maximize her chances for career advancement, and fend off the ambient insecurity and expendability that comes with short-term, employment contracts. Leaders, and 'movers and shakers', within organizations are required to be self-aware, to know their innate styles and yet build up new repertoires for managing their selves and others so that they vindicate their creative potential as change agents.

Tellingly, for Honneth, self-realization should not be forced nor compelled. Ideally, it ought to be self-directed and initiated. What is more, organized self-realization contravenes the thrust of his recognition thesis which states that human identity is first and foremost a social affair. Essentially, human identity-formation does not take place in the private theatre of the mind but rather in social interaction with significant others. The assertion is that we are social beings all the way through, that the 'I' is in the 'We'.

Other social commentators have mirrored these themes. Peterson (2011) refers to the rise in depression in society but views it as a social pathology that 'reveals the dark side of today's social demand for authentic self-realization' (p. 6). For this author, the plea for self-realization becomes an irrepressible stress factor that can precipitate existential exhaustion. Ehrenberg (2000), in a similar vein, argues that self-realization has become an arduous performance in which the self is a sacred totem pole around which the individual must dance. Because of its unremitting nature, the dance can lead to psychological enervation. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), in their analysis of the changing nature of capitalism, see self-realization as the quintessential activity in modern-day life: one that is integral to socialization. If not performed correctly, social bonds will be affected.

In terms of social work, self-realization has been an important therapeutic goal in person-centred practice, whether in counselling or person-centred planning with service users.

## *Financialisation*

### **Summary of social pathology**

Responsibilization, self-reliance and individualism act as an unholy trinity in promulgating a culture of consumption, credit, debt, and veneration of the entrepreneurial actor. Such processes devalue the actor by reducing him and her to the status of a *homo-economicus*: a

coldly calculated, narrowly interested actor who privileges monetary success over aesthetic or moral advancement

### **Financialisation in society**

- See Martina's differentiation document;
- Commodification in society under neo-liberalism ie people are turned into commodities that can be bought and sold in the free market;
- The anxiety of debt
- FINANCIALIZATION/CONSUMERISM/MATERIALISM ATTENUATES SOCIAL LIFE, MAKING IT BECOME ONE-DIMENSIONAL (CF MARCUSE), STRIPPING IT OF THE AESTHETIC IN SOCIAL LIFE EG ART, MUSIC, DRAMA, EMBODIED EXPERIENCE EG DANCE
- SEE SECTION ON FINANCIALIZATION IN KIERAN KEOHANE & ANDERS PETERSON'S BOOK (2013) THE SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES OF CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION, ASHGATE

### **Financialization in social work**

- Care management;
- Personalisation of social work;
- Commodification and social work IE WELFARE ENTITLEMENTS ARE LINKED TO THE MARKET;
- Debt management and social work;
- BRINGING IN THE AESTHETIC TO S/USERS' LIVES;
- Privatization of human welfare services.

Concluding comment: As the esteemed author, Marilynne Robinson, lyrically puts it in her much-admired novel, *Gilead*, 'any human face has a claim on you, because you cannot help but understand the singularity of it, the courage and loneliness of it'. Because of this, in social life, all cognition should lead to *recognition*.

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