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RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Goodbye Hegel! Overcoming “*Geschichtsteologie*” in German Critical Theory

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## ABSTRACT

The paper takes up Amy Allen’s challenge to contemporary German critical theory from the perspective of post- and de-colonial studies, focusing on the role played by Hegel’s legacy. More precisely, it takes up the neo-Hegelian method of normative reconstruction adopted by Axel Honneth and, in some respects, by Habermas. This perspective led Honneth to adopt a teleology of history, in the strict sense of a *Geschichtsteologie*, although certainly in a post-metaphysical form, which represents an obstacle to Allen’s challenge. The teleological conception of the progressive realization of reason, especially during modernity, leads in fact to difficulties in developing a theory of history able to deal with the themes of coloniality, and more generally to discuss from this perspective the correlations between normativity, history and power relations. Finally, from the point of view of the opportunity to establish an organic connection between social critic and subaltern subjects and cultures, this conception is very problematic, especially considering the neo-Hegelian model of immanent critique.

## KEYWORDS

Critical theory; post- and de-colonial studies; neo-hegelianism; theory of history; teleology; immanent critique

“‘Dialectic’ is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton [...].”

Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*, 1976.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

As Amy Allen has shown, the inescapable task of contemporary German critical theory in dealing systematically with the questions posed by post- and de-colonial studies means first of all the need to revise the approach to the concepts of progress and modernity, and to rethink some of the basic relationships between history, normativity and power adopted in this tradition. From this point of view, one of the most problematic theoretical elements can be certainly traced back to the revival of Hegel’s legacy, that is of Neo-Hegelianism. As Allen writes, the attempts to ground normativity undertaken by

contemporary Frankfurt School critical theorists, in particular by Habermas and Honneth, have in fact primarily “coalesced” in a “neo-Hegelian reconstructivist strategy”.<sup>2</sup>

And it is on the legacy of the Hegelian approach that I would like to focus in this paper, highlighting some basic elements of the reconstructive approach on the cross-level of normativity and theory of history, and about specific correlations between *Geschichtsteleologie* and *Sittlichkeit* (teleology of history and ethics). It seems to me that it is in fact on this level, concerning the renewal of Hegel’s legacy, that some of the main obstacles to the updating of critical theory emerge from the point of view of the claims of post- and decolonial studies. The fundamental neo-Hegelian argument of the teleological realization of reason in history is in fact anchored in a sequential vision of the progress and extension of social rationality that can legitimize a hierarchy between forms of civilizations, peoples and historical eras understood as more or less developed, advanced, retrograde, primitive, modern or non-modern. As Amy Allen has pointed out, this conception represents a form of self-celebration of Eurocentric reason and thus hinders the possibility of shedding light on “the dark side of modernity”; moreover, it places the critical theorist on a plane of epistemic and cognitive superiority with respect to social actors and subaltern subjects, peoples and cultures.

By focusing on the role played by Hegel’s legacy, it will be possible to untangle and differentiate some points of contact and distance between the strategies of the foundation of normativity adopted by Honneth and Habermas from the point of view of the theory of history and modernity. As we shall see in the first step, Honneth has in fact pursued a neo-Hegelian programme insisting on the revival of a radically immanentist reconstructive (and socially critical) strategy, which openly aims to bypass the “construction” of principles, ideals and criteria transcending the context, through the revival of the conception of *Sittlichkeit*. Conversely, on this point I will partly distance myself from Amy Allen’s discussion, I will emphasise how Habermas, over time, has included in his reconstructivist methodology salient elements explicitly anchored in neo-Kantian constructivism. In this way he has rebalanced the different components of his theory of morality and communicative action. In contrast, the immanentist approach led Honneth to the need to openly re-launch a teleology of history, a *Geschichtsteleologie* in the strict sense, albeit in a post-metaphysical form, which Habermas rejected.

Once we have differentiated the two reconstructive methodologies, we can follow two lines of analysis: one more theoretical-teleological, the other more political-teleological. We will then see, in a second step, how on a theoretical level the teleology used by Honneth to address a series of problems inherent in the normativity of ethics has generated other problems on the level of the theory of history, precisely because the teleological system in the strict sense projects a predetermined *telos* onto the historical path. A problem that, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has shown, is typical of traditional historicism. The solution to the problem of normativity therefore seems to have proved problematic, if not counterproductive, from the point of view of the (teleological) theory of history.

In a third step, we will then focus on the more historical-political level of the conception of the progressive realization of reason in history, with respect to the conception of modernity. The celebration of modernity inscribed in the vision of the development of reason in history, albeit certainly in light of the recognition of specific ambivalences, has in fact led both Habermas and Honneth to the more or less explicit adoption of a

hierarchical conception of civilizations and historical phases; a hierarchization that was indeed very evident in Hegel's philosophy of history, some features of which we will briefly recall. Here too, the Hegelian legacy of the reconstructive methodology leads to a series of serious difficulties about the criticisms made by post- and de-colonial studies of the "myth of modernity", as Enrique Dussel defines it.

In a fourth step, we will focus on the neo-Hegelian conception of the path of normativity in history as a linear, albeit bidirectional, process: both so-called "progress" or "developments" and so-called "regressions" or "pathological deformations" or "blockages" are placed on the same line. In Honneth this vision is accompanied by a concept of sequential progress that proceeds along stages of development of "human reason" and "rationality" understood as a dimension with a normative value. This vision precludes, among other things, the discussion of the correlations between normativity, fields of knowledge and power relations that has been had, from a Foucauldian perspective, within the framework of post- and de-colonial studies, as Amy Allen has pointed out.

In a final step, we will see that the "cognitive superiority" – as Amy Allen has defined it – and the epistemic asymmetry that post-colonialists object to in German contemporary critical theory in relation to the macro-plane of the path of reason in the course of modern European history, find a correspondence in the symmetry that can be found on the micro-plane of the relationship between the critical theorist and the social actors within a given society. In this regard, we will emphasize the difference between the neo-Hegelian model of immanent critique anchored in a vision of temporal progress, and the model of immanent, internal or organic critique understood as a contextual and specific link with social actors, in particular with subaltern cultures and groups.

### **Sittlichkeit, Moralität, and Geschichtsteleologie**

The model of normative reconstruction proposed by Axel Honneth – and criticized by Amy Allen – represents an explicit actualization of Hegel's conceptions of *Sittlichkeit* and the teleology of history, repropounded in a post-metaphysical version. More precisely, it could be thought of as an attempt to actualize a conception of ethical life understood as a process of progressive realization of reason in history, such as to represent at the same time the overcoming of the neo-Kantian constructive approach to morality. This is the general perspective that differentiates the model of "normative reconstruction" proposed by Honneth in the line of neo-Hegelian immanentism, played out entirely on the level of the historical becoming of ethical life, from the "reconstructive" methodology proposed by Habermas, in which the norms deduced from social reality must always be subjected to the scrutiny of a transcendent principle of universalization, albeit reformulated in terms of communicative theory.

It is certainly true that Habermas never abandons the idea that "the role of democratic theory is to reconstruct the rational content of the norms and practices that have acquired positive validity since the constitutional revolutions of the late eighteenth century and, as such, have become part of historical reality".<sup>3</sup> Such political theory, therefore, "does not have to understand itself as a normatively *designed* theory" because "its task is instead to *rationaly reconstruct* such principles from existing law and from the corresponding intuitive expectations and conceptions of legitimacy of the citizens".<sup>4</sup>

However, and this is where the clash with the immanentist neo-Hegelian normative model adopted by Honneth is played out, such a reconstructive political theory has been conjugated to a *constructive* and universalist theory of morality, capable of evaluating and thus possibly justifying the given norms by recourse to ideal criteria and procedures, transcending the historically given forms of life.

More specifically – and this is crucial in the criticism put forward by Honneth – Habermas took up and actualized Kantian moral theory through a reinterpretation of the categorical imperative in terms of communicative theory and criticized Hegel’s conception of *Sittlichkeit* from this same perspective. As Habermas made clear in *Morality and Ethical Life*, given the general principle that “only those norms may claim to be valid that could meet with the consent of all affected in their role as participants in a practical discourse”,<sup>5</sup> the ideal universalization criterion is ensured on the basis of communicative intersubjectivity and related normatively charged pragmatic assumptions: “Argumentation insures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument”.<sup>6</sup> Having acquired the normative principle of universalization as a “justificatory test”, Habermas then proceeds to distinguish between normative statements on hypothetical justice actions and evaluative statements on ethical life.<sup>7</sup> Briefly, even if also recently Habermas has insisted on the relevance of reconstructive methodology and “detranscendentalization”, on the level of normative foundation the crucial element seems to continue to be the moral principle of universalization. This approach therefore led Habermas to openly *reject* the Hegelian view of the overcoming of morality in the *Sittlichkeit*, and to affirm “the primacy of the just (in the deontological sense) over the good”.<sup>8</sup> The universalization principle “acts like a knife that makes razor-sharp cuts between evaluative statements and strictly normative ones, between the good and the just”.<sup>9</sup> In relation to *Sittlichkeit*, then, “discourse ethics takes its orientation for an intersubjective interpretation of the categorical imperative from Hegel’s theory of recognition but without incurring the cost of a historical *dissolution* of morality in ethical life”.<sup>10</sup>

Habermas therefore defends the Kantian constructivist approach from Hegel’s criticisms aimed at prioritizing ethics, as can be seen already from the title of his contribution: “Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel’s Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics?”. On the contrary, Honneth moves in a perfectly inverse way, re-launching Hegel’s criticism of Kant, as he makes explicitly clear in *The normativity of ethical life*.<sup>11</sup> According to Honneth, placing Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* as the theoretical basis of normative “reconstruction” makes it possible to bypass the moment of “construction” that appeals to transcendent criteria. This makes it possible to work exclusively on the immanent level. And it is precisely this position that leads him, however, to adopt a teleology of history in the strict sense, as he explains in *Freedom’s Right*. The premise of the argument is that “Hegel’s entire theory of justice amounts to an account of ethical relations; it presents a normative reconstruction of the layered order of institutions in which subjects can realize their freedom in the experience of mutual recognition”.<sup>12</sup> Honneth explains that this approach is an alternative to the neo-Kantian one, since Hegel “understands his own account of the ethical order not as a ‘construction’, but as a ‘reconstruction’, not as the draft of an ideal, but as the tracing of historically given relations”.<sup>13</sup> To ground normativity, therefore, the *historical dimension* turns out to be not only central but even exhaustive: “Hegel does not simply draft up the institutions that are to serve as stations of social

freedom, rather he aims to distil these institutions out of historical reality by employing his concept of freedom, identifying and describing those institutional structures that best meet the corresponding demands”.<sup>14</sup>

[This] methodological procedure is also marked by Hegel’s teleology notion [*die teleologische Vorstellung*] that the present always stands at the forefront of an historical process in which rational freedom is gradually realized. Only because he is convinced of such inevitable historical progress [*Fortschritt in der Geschichte*] can Hegel be so sure that he will in fact find institutions in society that provide a space and a foundation for a social, developed form of freedom. But even if we strip this historical confidence of its metaphysical foundations and objective teleology, enough of it will still remain.<sup>15</sup>

Briefly, the Neo-Hegelian model would thus offer the theoretical “advantage” of bypassing the transcendental moment of foundation, necessary instead – as Honneth writes – in “Rawl’s theory of justice and Habermas’ theory of law” to justify “the historical congruence between independently derived principles of justice and the normative ideals of modern societies”; the “constructive” dimension is therefore removed: “we should follow Hegel in abstaining from presenting a free-standing, constructive justification of norms of justice prior to immanent analysis”.<sup>16</sup> The foundation of normativity is achieved and guaranteed on the level of historical reconstruction alone. Briefly, this is the theoretically decisive pivot of the revival of *Sittlichkeit* and its radical immanentism, and it is what leads directly to the explicit adoption of a post-metaphysical teleology of history: “such an immanent procedure ultimately entails an element of historical-teleological thinking, but this type of teleology of history (*Geschichtsteleologie*) is ultimately inevitable – just as it is for theories of justice that assume a congruence between practical reason and existing social relations”.<sup>17</sup>

## The Baron von Münchhausen and the Legacy of Historicism

The thesis that Habermas has a teleological vision opens up two lines of investigation, which are related but different: one concerns the purely immanentist method of normative reconstruction; the other concerns the relationship with modernity, that we will see it in the next paragraph. Let’s start with the first one. One can certainly argue that the “congruence” found by Honneth between independently derived principles of justice and the normative ideals of modern societies to which Habermas (and Rawls) refer, *does not entail* a recourse to a teleology of history to proceed on the only path of immanence and therefore bypassing the moment of autonomous justification of the ideal normative principles at stake. After all, Habermas explicitly rejects the use of such a teleological approach, explaining that “the philosophy of history can only glean from historical processes the reason it has already put into them with the help of teleological concepts”.<sup>18</sup> But above all, from a methodological point of view, the constructive approach has certainly no need for recourse to a teleology of history in order to achieve a normative foundation.

On the contrary, it can be argued that recourse to the teleology of history may be necessary in Honneth’s neo-Hegelian framework precisely because he adopts a radically reconstructive-immanentist methodology to ground normativity. It is in fact a strategy that aims to identify the criteria of normativity by moving on the level of historical analysis, without a clear and strong recourse to trans-historical criteria, but rather as a peculiar form of “transcendence within immanence”, and therefore avoiding the pitfall of

conventionalism. To this end, the use of a teleological vision of progress is functional in avoiding the fatal risk signalled by Habermas of a “historical *dissolution* of morality in ethical life”.<sup>19</sup> However, as Amy Allen writes while discussing the same problem with Rahel Jaeggi, one might suspect that identifying cogent normative criteria proceeding only on an immanent level, and therefore without ever abstracting from the context, “is a little like trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat”.<sup>20</sup> In yet different terms, the purely immanent procedure, or also a transcendence *within* immanence, could turn out to be circular, and therefore theoretically inconsistent, if it lacks a strong teleology. There is a risk of transposing on a conceptual level the strategy well illustrated by the story of Baron von Münchhausen (famous purveyor of *fake news*) who, having got his steed stuck in a bog, promptly managed to free it by grabbing his hair and pulling himself up with a great deal of effort. Conversely, the use of teleology can help solve this problem because it links the evolution of *Sittlichkeit* to a progressive normative movement projected on the temporal plane of historicity, exactly as it happened (very clearly and strongly) in Hegel’s original model.

However, while the use of *Geschichtsteleologie* may allow one to resolve a series of theoretical problems linked to the tenacity of the immanent methodology of normative reconstruction with respect to the cohesiveness of the criteria, at the same time it raises a series of serious difficulties in terms of the theory of history. In the original Hegelian framework, the priority attributed to *Sittlichkeit* over morality could in fact rely on an “objective teleology” centred on the path of the spirit, which allowed for the adoption of a purely historical-reconstructive approach. Since it was in fact the spirit that guided the history of the World to the final *telos*, the achievement of which was guaranteed from the very beginning of the process, the immanent plan of historicity was more than sufficient to guarantee the cogency of the normative criteria.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the “cunning of reason”<sup>22</sup> and the recourse to dialectics were able to account for every apparent deviation in the teleological path of reason: any historical process and event was always traced back to the overall finalistic framework, supported by the metaphysics of the self-realization of the spirit.

On the other hand, when Honneth separates “Hegel’s method” from his “spiritual metaphysics”,<sup>23</sup> and therefore abandons the original philosophy of history based on “the ontological conception of a progressive self-realization of spirit”,<sup>24</sup> he must face the task of founding a post-metaphysical conception of *Geschichtsteleologie* in terms of the theory of history. But it is precisely on this level of a teleological historicism that we can trace a series of criticisms taken up by Amy Allen at the forefront of post- and de-colonial studies. As Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us: “to critique historicism in all its varieties is to unlearn to think of history as a developmental process in which that which is possible becomes actual by tending to a future that is singular”.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the post-metaphysical revival of Hegelian *Geschichtsteleologie* entails, on the methodological level, a form of *epistemic circularity* between the presupposed *ends* and then the “reconstructed” *ends*, which exposes it to the risk of recursion.<sup>26</sup>

## Deep Teleology and Modernity

The second series of problematic issues concerning the methodology of normative reconstruction in the sense adopted by Habermas as well, concerns its relationship with historical modernity; it is a form that Honneth defines in terms of “deep teleology”:

[C]an we avoid describing and experiencing the modern constellation of our societies without employing the teleological perspectives of progress? I mean, even Habermas' idea that modernity is an unfinished project cannot be maintained without presupposing some kind of deep teleology. And "unfinished" is even stronger: it is referred to an [*sic*] organic understanding of a process that has an internal goal, and this process has to be finished: which means that we have to continue to struggle for the realization of modernity and we have to fight for the realization of the core of modernity.<sup>27</sup>

From this point of view, Amy Allen certainly has good reason to take up the criticisms of post- and de-colonial studies directed at Habermas' theory of European modernity as an "unfinished project", as well as the related notions of "historical progress", "social evolution" and "learning process".<sup>28</sup> As for the *Geschichtsteleologie*, more recently categorized by Honneth as "unavoidability of a weak teleology",<sup>29</sup> the adoption of a vision of the development of reason in history "step by step" is quite clear: the game is played on the level of increasing degrees and stages of rationality, or on the contrary of blocks, regressions and deformations of this path of reason. In other words, the starting point of the "left-Hegelian premise" of the Frankfurt School was that "at each new level of social reproduction, human rationality thus takes on a more highly developed form [*auf jeder neuen Stufe der gesellschaftlichen Reproduktion nimmt daher auch die menschliche Rationalität eine höher entwickelte Gestalt an*], so that the whole of human history can be spoken of as a process of the realization of reason".<sup>30</sup> This assumption, although updated, provides the fundamental theoretical background of the reconstructive strategy, and at the same time of the related immanent critique: "For normative reconstruction must now mean uncovering in the social reality of a given society those normative ideals that offer a reference point for a justified critique because they represent the embodiments of social reason"; Honneth can therefore draw the conclusion: "Thus, with left-Hegelianism, the Frankfurt School solves the justification problem posed by every immanent form of social criticism by inserting a concept of social rationalization".<sup>31</sup> The result is a theory of history centred on the concept of progress and development of social and human rationality: "The critique of society can be based on ideals within the given social order that at the same time can justifiably be shown to be the expression of progress in the process of social rationalization. To this extent, the critical model of the Frankfurt School presupposes, if not precisely a philosophy of history, then a concept of the directed development of human rationality".<sup>32</sup>

But it is precisely this conception of progress by stages played out on the levels of "social rationalization", "human rationality", and "human history", understood in an eminently ethical-normative key, which immediately raises a problem regarding the capacity to grasp what in the field of post- and de-colonial studies can be defined as "the dark side of Western modernity". As Amy Allen has highlighted, this conception of the progressive realization of reason can be in fact understood as a form of self-celebration of modern reason, tacitly but fundamentally Eurocentric. Like Habermas, so too Honneth systematically relies on and revives the image of (Western) "rationality" as the bearer of a progression of norms, which hurtles forward, fulfilling its (immanent) promises of universality (of modernity) and raising the stakes ever higher. From this follows the implicit adherence to that hierarchization of the forms of civilization and historical epochs stigmatized by authors such as Dipesh Chakrabarty.

About the theme of modernity in German critical theory, Enrique Dussel insisted on the decisive role played by the Hegelian legacy (also taken up by Amy Allen). In particular, in the well-known Frankfurt lecture *Eurocentrism and Modernity*, Dussel begins by explaining that:

Modernity is, for many (for Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor, for example), an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon. In these lectures, I will argue that modernity *is*, in fact, a European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the “center” of a *World History* that it inaugurates; the “periphery” that surrounds this center is consequently part of its self-definition.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the “occlusion of this periphery” and the processes of its colonization and domination, the “myth of modernity” has thus been consolidated in the following terms:

The myth of origin that is hidden in the emancipatory “concept” of modernity [...], has to do above all with the connection of Eurocentrism with the concomitant “fallacy of developmentalism”. The fallacy of developmentalism consists in thinking that the path of Europe’s modern development must be followed unilaterally by every other culture. Development is taken here as an ontological, and not simply a sociological or economic category. It is the “necessary movement” of Being in Hegel, its inevitable “development”.<sup>34</sup>

In more detail, Dussel recalls that in *The Philosophy of History* Hegel clarified that “Universal History represents [...] the *development* of the consciousness that the Spirit has of its freedom and the evolution of the understanding that the Spirit obtains through such consciousness. This *development* implies a *series of stages* [...]”.<sup>35</sup> In addition to tracing the “fallacy of developmentalism” back to the original Hegelian theoretical framework, he also emphasizes how Hegel’s vision of World History reveals the clearest Eurocentric triumphalism, citing a well-known passage in this regard: “The movement of Universal History goes from the East to the West, Europe is the absolute end of Universal History. Asia is its beginning”, while Africa (excluding Egypt) and Latin America are directly and blatantly excluded from world history.<sup>36</sup> Dussel therefore highlights Hegel’s contemptuous judgments on the “immaturity”, the “childhood”, and the “primitive”, “brutal”, “weaker”, “degenerate” characteristics that plague peripheral populations, including Mexico or Peru, as well as their low “level of civilization”, and “the inferiority of these individuals”.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Hegel claims that it was because of this “powerless” that the natives “must expire as soon as the Spirit approached” them,<sup>38</sup> and then that “the weakness of the American physique was a chief reason for bringing the negroes to America, to employ their labour in the work that had to be done in the New World”.<sup>39</sup> Dussel labels these observations “as a kind of fantastic apotheosis of racist ideology”, which shows a “seemingly infinite sense of superiority”.<sup>40</sup>

After all, there are now numerous analyses that, in addition to the overt Eurocentrism, have highlighted the racist tone that emerges in several passages in many writings and lectures of Hegel, especially (but not only) with regard to (sub-Saharan) Africans and indigenous Americans, also taking into account the many and also different opinions of his contemporaries and sources.<sup>41</sup> One of the most important conceptual points from the point of view of the theory of history, is that this conceptual framework presupposes that the “Spirit of a People is a *determinate* and particular Spirit, and is, as just stated, further modified by the degree of its historical development”,<sup>42</sup> Having made

this premise, Hegel outlines an unequivocal hierarchy of the levels of progress of civilizations, which concludes with *das Germanische Reich*, in which the Spirit “is its perfect maturity and strength, in which it returns to unity with itself, but in its fully developed character as Spirit”<sup>43</sup>, and therefore represents “the ultimate result” of the process of History: “*das Ziel der Weltgeschichte*”.<sup>44</sup> Dussel thus has an easy task, albeit in a somewhat schematic way, in highlighting Hegel’s marked and insistent self-celebration of the Germanic people and spirit, summarizing it in the terms of a “sacralization of the imperial power of the North or the centre over the South, the Periphery, the colonial and dependent world of antiquity”.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, the theory of the development of rationality in stages, and therefore of the hierarchical degree of evolution of the morality and ethics of civilizations and peoples, implies the adoption of an apologetic vision of colonialism as a *civilizing mission*.<sup>46</sup> A task clearly formulated for example on the penultimate page of *The Philosophy of History*:

[T]he English have undertaken the weighty responsibility of being the missionaries of civilization to the world [*die Missionaren der Zivilisation in der ganzen Welt*]; for their commercial spirit urges them to traverse every sea and land, to form connections with barbarous peoples, to create wants and stimulate industry and first and foremost to establish among them the conditions necessary to commerce, viz. the relinquishment of a life of lawless violence, respect for propriety, and civility to strangers.<sup>47</sup>

Along the same lines, see also the well-known passage of the *Philosophy of Right*:

The same determination entitles civilized nations [*zivilisierte Nationen*] to regard and treat as barbarians [*als Barbaren*] other nations which are less advanced than they are in the substantial moments of the state (as with pastoralists in relation to hunters, and agriculturalists in relation to both of these), in the consciousness that the rights of these other nations are not equal to theirs and that their independence is merely formal.<sup>48</sup>

In short, returning to the neo-Hegelian *Geschichtsteologie*, there is no doubt that it is far removed from the radical and unilateral outcomes of Hegel’s philosophy of history. However, the concept of the progressive realization of reason throughout history, closely related to the theory of its “acceleration” in modernity, precisely because it preserves the central Hegelian idea of a development through progressive stages of the extension of “reason”, can in fact continue to contribute to legitimizing, more or less indirectly, certain forms of hierarchization of peoples and cultures; just as exponents of post- and de-colonial thought object to this traditional way of thinking.<sup>49</sup>

## Pathologies of Reason and Power Relations

The neo-Hegelian teleological model of the progressive realization of reason raises a series of difficulties also in relation to the very concept (with its normative value) of “reason”, as well as of “social rationality”, “irrationality” and “social pathology” through which processes defined as “regressive” are thematized. The general theoretical framework outlined above is such that the states definable in terms of “social negativity” are fundamentally considered as outcomes of processes in which “the progress of reason is blocked or interrupted” (first of all “by the capitalistic organization of society”).<sup>50</sup> Therefore, a progressive ascending movement is presupposed, in which any obstacles

cause deformations and “social pathologies”, understood precisely as forms of “socially deficient rationality”, as well as “caused by deficient rationality”.<sup>51</sup> As Axel Honneth explains, even in this case it is a question of the revival of “an ethical idea whose roots are in the philosophy of Hegel”: “The thesis that social pathologies are to be understood as a result of deficient rationality is ultimately indebted to Hegel’s political philosophy”.<sup>52</sup>

Even from this perspective – developed in particular in the essay *A Social Pathology or Reason* (2004) – the central correlation between ethics and history that we have seen being thematized as a form of *Geschichtsteleologie* is confirmed: “The assumption behind Hegel’s diagnosis of his own time lies in a comprehensive conception of reason in which he establishes a connection between historical progress and ethics [*eine Verknüpfung zwischen geschichtlichem Fortschritt und Ethik*]. Reason unfolds in the historical process by re-creating universal “ethics” institutions at each new stage [*auf jeder neuen Stufe erneut allgemeine, „sittliche“ Institutionen*].”<sup>53</sup> It is therefore a historical progress understood in a sequential way, with the explicit aim of a “full rational realization”<sup>54</sup> or “a fully realized rationality”.<sup>55</sup>

This process relies on immanent potentials that are already present in social reality, although they can certainly be blocked, and thus opens up an analytical perspective that lies on the boundary between the descriptive and normative levels:

As is the case with Hegel, it seems that boundaries between description, on the one hand, and prescription and normative grounding, on the other [*die Grenzen zwischen Deskription und Präskription, zwischen bloßer Beschreibung und normativer Begründung*], are blurred here as well. The explanation of the circumstances that have blocked or skewed the process of the actualization of reason should have in and of itself the rational force [*soll aus sich heraus die rationale Kraft*] to convince subjects to create a social practice of cooperation.<sup>56</sup>

This is where the dimension of “rationality” therefore seems to have within itself the potential “strength” to overcome any obstacle, according to a logic that we could perhaps interpret as a sort of potential “evolutionary automatism of reason”.

In any case, the problem of the normative priority given to *Sittlichkeit* once again arises, that is, that of “an ethical life that was already established”, and of “rational potential already inherent” in historical “institutions, practices, and everyday routines”<sup>57</sup>, whose progressive movement is no longer sustained by an objective, metaphysical, teleological system.<sup>58</sup> In the terms used by Honneth, “a truly sociological explanation of the historical process that Hegel had described in his philosophy as the self-development of the spirit” [*als einen Vorgang der Selbstentfaltung des Geistes*]” must be offered.<sup>59</sup> Leaving aside the analysis of the many answers and strategies offered by social theory, philosophical anthropology and social psychology,<sup>60</sup> I would like to focus on the teleological character of the theory of history adopted. In this regard, the disposition of the positive-progressive and negative-regressive forms on a unitary although bidirectional conceptual line is particularly interesting, as it refers to the opposing poles of rationality-self-realization and irrationality-pathology.

From this perspective, a first series of problems can be traced back to the adoption of a dichotomous and unilinear, although bidirectional analytical framework: By placing the processes involved along an ideal line in which reason progresses towards increasingly advanced stages, or is blocked, or regresses to previous states, there is a risk of failing

to *grasp the complexity* of all the dynamics that are resistant to this dichotomous order. Conversely, in breaking this binary framework of progress-regression with its “step by step” progression,<sup>61</sup> more complex temporal stratifications could be included, and degenerative spiral processes could be better taken into consideration. Specific dynamics of social struggle that can be interpreted as aimed at emancipation and liberation from specific forms of domination and/or colonization, etc., could thus be addressed *not in* terms of stages of “progressive rationalization”, but as aimed at the achievement of *specific*, normative objectives with potentially *ambivalent* implications and forms.<sup>62</sup>

A second series of difficulties of the teleological model of the progressive realization of reason concerns the definition and articulation of the concept of rationality in relation to the two dimensions of normativity and power relations. The neo-Hegelian model adopts a rationalistic approach in which the normative dimension is subsumed within a very broad concept of “reason”, as opposed to the sphere of power as its “outside”, as an element to be excluded, so to speak, from the realm of the normative. In this regard, Axel Honneth explains for example that, within the framework of German critical theory, a reinterpretation has been consolidated “within a sociological framework” of “the historical process of a deformation of reason” such that “the Hegelian concept of reason” has been translated from the plane of “the internal compulsion of spirit”, “to a learning process consisting in a science of experience that justifies talk of the actualization of reason”.<sup>63</sup>

Within this rationalistic framework, which is centred on the role of learning processes, conflicts with respect to the field of knowledge seem to mainly concern the question of the *Monopolisierung von Wissen*: “the members of the Frankfurt School arrive at the shared conviction that the potential of human reason [*das Vernunftpotential des Menschen*] unfolds in a historical learning process in which rational solutions to problems are inextricably bound up with conflicts regarding the monopolization of knowledge”.<sup>64</sup> The conflict between the spheres at stake therefore seems to be condensed in the problem of the appropriation of knowledge resources by certain social groups: “one must understand the Hegelian actualization of reason as conflictual – that is, as a multilayered learning process in which generalizable knowledge is only gradually won through improved solutions to problems and against groups in power”.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, even the contribution of “non-European” elements to the progressive growth process of “reason”, although contemplated, is marginal: it takes the form of external contributions that are absorbed within a *de facto* paradigm that is firmly Eurocentric: “the concept of reason with which Critical Theory attempts to grasp the increases in rationality in human history [*Zuwächse an Rationalität in der menschlichen Geschichte*] is subject to the pressure of incorporating [*einer Einbeziehung*] foreign and new, particularly non-European, points of view”.<sup>66</sup> As Christopher Zurn writes referring to *Freedom’s Right*:

[A] general worry about Whiggish history is that it tends to idolize one’s own current position as the proper goal of history. [...] European and North American development is hypostasized as the single and sole telos of legitimate or worthy history [...]. Even though the claim to cultural superiority is never endorsed, or even broached, as far as I can tell in Honneth’s book, it seems nevertheless a plausible inference from the celebration of the practices and institutions of social freedom found therein.<sup>67</sup>

In short, this “post-Idealist version of the Hegelian notion of the actualization of reason” seems to *prevent us* from grasping the constitutive links between the field of knowledge and power relations, as highlighted by post- and de-colonial studies, which in this sense systematically resume Foucault’s legacy. As Amy Allen reminds us:

[F]or Foucault, the task of critical thought is to accept and to interrogate the spiral formed by the entanglement of power and reason, by the fact that we are fortunately committed to a form of rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by relations of power and domination. [...] As Foucault put it: «The word “rationalization” is dangerous. What we have to do is analyze specific rationalities rather than always invoking the progress of rationalization in general» (SP, 329).<sup>68</sup>

If it is true that Honneth includes a “genealogical moment” in his immanent critique, this conception “allows genealogy to play an overly circumscribed role”, since it “misses the radical point of genealogy, which has to do with the entanglement of reasons and normativity with power relations”.<sup>69</sup> From this perspective, the specific forms of “rationality” and “knowledge”, understood in their historical forms, always also result in embodying and expressing certain power relations, which in turn embody certain forms of knowledge.<sup>70</sup> This leads to an alternative conception of the systematic relationships between normative elements, fields of knowledge and power relations, capable of grasping the complexity of the different forms of epistemic violence and the coloniality of power found in the historical processes of modernity (and of social reality in general).

## Two Alternative Models of Immanent Critique

The teleological vision of the progressive realization and extension of reason in history, and of social pathologies such as blocks, deformations and regressions of this sequential development process, ultimately plays a crucial role in the articulation of the neo-Hegelian model of immanent critique and exposes it to Foucauldian objections from the post- and de-colonial studies side. This model, considered by Axel Honneth as constitutive of the whole tradition of German critical theory, is presented as an alternative to the “models of social criticism that are constructed in the spirit of Michel Foucault’s genealogical method or in the style of Michael Walzer’s critical hermeneutics”:<sup>71</sup> “Critical Theory – in contrast – and in a way that may be unique to it – insists on a mediation of theory and history in a concept of socially effective rationality”<sup>72</sup>; that is: “Against the tendency to reduce social criticism to a project of normative, situational, or local opinion, one must clarify the context in which social criticism stands side by side with the demands of a historically evolved reason”.<sup>73</sup> And it is precisely this contrast between the abstract neo-Hegelian concept of “*einer geschichtlich gewachsenen Vernunft*” on the one hand, and “situational” and “local” social criticism on the other, that is highly problematic from a decolonial perspective. And equally problematic is the related question of the critical theorist’s positioning.

As clearly emerges in *Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso*, the approach of “context-bound” criticism that “operates locally” is opposed to the “classical model of critique” of the Frankfurt School, which Honneth aims to defend, thus moving away from Habermas’ approach in several respects. In this way, Honneth knowingly exposes his project to the “risk of paternalism or even despotism”, as well as to the idea of a “totalizing ideology”, found in Horkheimer and even more openly in

Marcuse.<sup>74</sup> And it is this approach that leads in the opposite direction to the model of immanent critique adopted by Walzer, in which the critic works from within to “interpret” the norms and orientations shared by social actors, and therefore openly rejects a position of detachment and superiority.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, the neo-Hegelian reconstructive model, as Honneth explains, has “a completely different meaning than Walzer’s interpretation”, since its aim is the “uncovering in the social reality of a given society those normative ideals that offer a reference point for a justified critique because they represent the embodiment of social reason”.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore a question of centring the discussion on the critique of the “blocks” to the progressive development of “social reason”.

Two alternative models of “immanent critique” are at stake here, both of which can be traced back to the constellation of German critical theory. On the one hand, there is the model defined by Michael Walzer of “criticism from within, or as it is sometimes called, ‘immanent critique’”,<sup>77</sup> understood in this way not only because it is anchored in the use of historically given (and not invented or “discovered”) normative criteria, but also in the sense of the organic connection between the critic and the social actors. A model that Walzer explicitly traces back (also but not only) to the tradition of the Frankfurt School highlighted by Raymond Geuss, particularly to Habermas’ theses on the positioning of the social critic, and to Adorno’s contextualism;<sup>78</sup> and which, at the same time, he opposes to the model of the detached critic present in authors such as Horkheimer and Marcuse. They are authors whose approach Honneth instead endorses, including the use of concepts like “false consciousness”.<sup>79</sup> In short, while in one case the issue of paternalism and detachment does not seem to be a major problem, in the other it is crucial: the traditional figure of the social critic is rejected precisely because he can be compared, as Walzer writes, to that of an “imperial judge in a backward colony” who works *paternalistically* for the good of the natives.<sup>80</sup>

We may then begin to see how the immanent critique model of organic connection is as close to the approach of post- and de-colonial studies as the neo-Hegelian model of social reason is far from it. Moreover, Walzer’s idea of the “connected” critic also refers to the writings of Antonio Gramsci and his condemnation of the paternalism of the traditional intellectual:

This expression “the humble” [*gli umili*] is characteristic for understanding the traditional attitude of Italian intellectuals towards the people [...] the expression the “humble” indicates a relationship of paternal and divine protection, the “self-sufficient” feeling of one’s undisputed superiority; like the relationship between two races, one superior and the other inferior; like the relationship between adults and children in old schooling; or worse still, like the relationship of a “society for the protection of animals”, or like that of the Anglo-Saxon Salvation Army toward the cannibals of Guinea.<sup>81</sup>

For Gramsci, the traditional positioning of an intellectual as “distinct and detached from the people” must be overturned in favour of “an organic attachment in which impassioned sentiment becomes understanding and hence knowledge”.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Gramsci’s writings dedicated in particular to subaltern groups were fundamental in the elaboration of the theoretical paradigms of authors such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, whose relevance Amy Allen has also emphasized in order to decolonize German critical theory. Central, in this regard, is precisely the attitude of critical theorists who, instead of

considering the subalterns “cognitively inferior”,<sup>83</sup> aim “to enter into intercultural dialogue with subaltern subjects without presuming that we already know what the outcome of that dialogue should be, that it to say, with an openness to the very real possibility of unlearning”; it is therefore a question of working for “the kind of openness to the other” that Chakrabarty has characterized as a “capacity to hear that which one does not already understand”.<sup>84</sup> This approach radically challenges the classic paternalism of the “missionary” colonizer who speaks for the “immature” colonized. The roles must be reversed: “otherwise, the *damnés* would be deprived of their ‘right’ to liberate and de-colonize and will have to wait for the generous gifts of the colonizer ‘given them freedom’”, as Walter Mignolo writes.<sup>85</sup> Amy Allen further problematizes this issue by recalling Gayatri Spivak’s position with respect to the crucial role of the “(im)possible perspective of the native informant”, his possible “silences”, and the risks connected to the re-edition of approaches characterized by forms of superiority and/or violence.<sup>86</sup>

In conclusion, the neo-Hegelian model of immanent critique, understood above all as an analysis of the regressions, blocks and pathological deformations of the teleological realization of reason in history, not only marginalizes, but actually opposes the model of internal critique understood as an organic bond between the situated critic and social actors; in particular with respect to subaltern groups and cultures. The latter approach is based on a horizontal dialogic relationship characterized by listening. While one model is based on a *spatiality that is horizontal*, of the proximity and organicity of the critic with respect to the social actors, the other establishes an *epistemic fracture that is vertical*, in which the critic places himself on a plane of *superior cognitive* status, from which he judges individuals and groups, considering them, for example, as prey to “false consciousness” or of a “blinding ideology”.<sup>87</sup> The “immanent” dimension only concerns normative criteria, not the social critic’s position, who is instead located in his high ivory tower. At the level of social criticism, therefore, the same asymmetry and superiority is reflected, typical of the hierarchization of the levels of the learning processes “achieved” by different peoples and cultures, determined by the neo-Hegelian conception of the progressive and sequential realization of “reason” in history. At this level too, the Hegelian legacy thus proves to be more of an obstacle than a theoretical resource.

## Notes

1. M. Foucault, “Truth and Power”, in Id., *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, p. 114 s.
2. A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, New York: Columbia U.P., 2016, p. XV.
3. J. Habermas, *A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere and Deliberative Politics*, (2022), Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2023, p. 4.
4. Ivi, p. 9.
5. J. Habermas, “Morality and Ethical Life”, in Id., *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990, p. 197.
6. J. Habermas, “Morality and Ethical Life”, cit., p. 198.
7. J. Habermas, “Morality and Ethical Life”, cit., p. 204.
8. J. Habermas, „Preface“, in Id., *Justification and Application. Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, Cambridge, MT: MIT Press, 1993, p. VII.
9. J. Habermas, “Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification”, in Id., *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, cit., p. 104.

10. J. Habermas, "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason", in Id., *Justification and Application*, cit., p. 1.
11. A. Honneth, "The normativity of ethical life", in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 40/8 (2014), 817-826, p. 817.
12. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right. The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*, Cambridge: Polity, 2014, p. 57.
13. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 59.
14. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 59.
15. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 59.
16. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 5.
17. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 5; the English translation here is not accurate enough because it misses the words used by Honneth to explain that it is "a type of teleology of history"; see the original German: "Sicherlich läuft ein derartiges, immanentes Verfahren am Ende darauf hinaus, erneut ein Element geschichtsteleologischen Denkens in Anspruch zu nehmen; aber dieser Art von Geschichtsteleologie ist genau bis zu dem Maße unvermeidbar [...]", *Das Recht der Freiheit*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011, ed. 2013, p. 22.
18. J. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms, Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (1992), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996, p. 2.
19. J. Habermas, "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason", in Id., *Justification and Application*, cit., p. 1.
20. A. Allen in "Progress, Normativity, and the Dynamic of Social Challenge: An Exchange between Rahel Jaeggi and Amy Allen", conducted by Eva von Redecker, in Id. and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *From Alienation to Forms of Life*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2018, p. 159.
21. See especially G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Kitchener: Batoche, 2001, pp. 23-24.
22. See for example G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 47: "This may be called the *cunning of reason* – that it sets passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss".
23. A. Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, cit., p. 56.
24. See A. Honneth, "The normativity of ethical life", cit., p. 823: "generally speaking he [Hegel] relies on the ontological conception of a progressive self-realization of the spirit advancing independently of any deliberate efforts on the part of human agents. Given the failure of this sort of objectivist historic teleology the question today is whether the elements of historical change inherent in Hegel's concept of ethical life may perhaps be sufficient, or at least provide us with some clues, for making the idea of moral progress in history intelligible without presupposing the existence of an anonymous self-realizing spirit".
25. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University press, 2000, second edition, 2008, p. 249.
26. In this sense, one could object to the teleology developed in *Freedom's Right* the same argument used by Honneth in the essay *Pathologies of the Social*: "The development of human history could only be teleologically related to a single goal because a normative perspective had already been implied in which heterogeneous material would combine into a meaningful totality", cfr. A. Honneth, "Pathologies of the Social", in Id., *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007, p. 38.
27. A. Honneth, "Recognition, democracy and social liberty: A reply", in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 45/6 (2019), 694-708: 700.
28. See above all the chapter 2 in A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., and the critical discussion of Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; see in the same direction Amy Allen's review of the book published in *Constellations*, vol. 18, n. 3, (2011), 487- 492, and Id., "Normativity, power and gender: reply to my critics", in *Critical Horizons*, vol. 15, n.1 (2014), 52-68: 54-55. For Habermas see above all Id., *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, cit., chapter V. Falling within this scheme of progress as a "learning process" aimed at dealing with "crises and contradictions" in the traditional Hegelian sense, and regressions

- as “building blocks” of such processes, is the proposal elaborated by Rahel Jaeggi in *Fortschritt und Regression*, cit., see especially pp. 37 ss.
29. A. Honneth, “Recognition, democracy and social liberty: A reply”, cit., p. 700.
  30. A. Honneth “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso. On the Idea of “Critique in the Frankfurt School”, in Id., *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 50.
  31. A. Honneth “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso”, cit., p. 50.
  32. A. Honneth “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso”, cit., p. 50.
  33. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)”, in *boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1993), 65-76: 65-66.
  34. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., pp. 67-68.
  35. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., p. 68; the quote is taken from Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, Hamburg: Meiner, 1955.
  36. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., p. 69; the quote is taken from Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, cit.; see G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 121: “The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is the absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning”.
  37. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., p. 69.
  38. See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 98: “Of America and its grade of civilization, especially in Mexico and Peru, we have information, but it imports nothing more than this culture was an entirely national one, which must expire as soon as the Spirit approached. America has always shown itself physically and psychically powerless, and still shows itself so. For the aborigines, after the landing of the Europeans in America, gradually vanished at the breath of European activity”.
  39. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 98.
  40. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., p. 70.
  41. See for example G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., pp. 110-111, where he writes: “In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence – as for example, God, or Law – in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. [...]. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character”.; on slavery see especially pp.113 ss; see first of all the accurate reconstruction, based on the analysis of various works by Hegel, on his sources and the contemporary literature made by R. Bernasconi, “Hegel at the court of the Ashanti, in *Hegel after Derrida*, ed by Stuart Barnett, New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 41-63, and Id., “With what must the philosophy of world history begin? On the racial basis of Hegel’s eurocentrism”, in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 22:2 (2000), pp. 171-201, especially pp. 185 ss.; on racism and teleology see Daniel James and Franz Knappik, “Exploring the Metaphysic of Hegel’s Racism: The Teleology of the “Concept” and the Taxonomy of Races”, in *Hegel Bulletin*, 44/1 (April 2023), pp. 99-126; see also the exchange between Joseph McCarney “Hegel’s racism? A response to Bernasconi”, and Robert Bernasconi, “Hegel’s racism. A reply to McCarney”, in *Radical Philosophy*, 119 (May-June 2003); although recognizing Eurocentrism and teleology, a defense of the “logic” of Hegel’s world history is developed by Andrew Buchwalter, “Is Hegel’s Philosophy of History Eurocentric?”, in *Hegel and History*, ed. by W. Dudley, New York: SUNY, 2009, pp. 87-110: “I have questioned the charge of Eurocentrism typically leveled at Hegel’s philosophy of history. While not disputing the presence of such dimension, I have argued that it is less pernicious than commonly assumed”. (p. 104).
  42. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 68 s.
  43. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 126.
  44. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 127.
  45. E. Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, cit., p. 73.

46. See Bernasconi, “With what must the philosophy of world history begin? On the racial basis of Hegel’s eurocentrism”, cit., pp. 188 ss.; on the other hand, Alison Stone recognizes this attitude, although she aims to question it “for rescuing Hegel from himself”, see Id. “Hegel and colonialism”, in *Hegel Bulletin*, 41/2 (August 2020), pp. 242-270.
47. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, cit., p. 475 s.
48. G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: CUP, 1991, §351.
49. On the role of the idea that “historical trajectory whose culmination was Europe” see also A. Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America”, in *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1.3, 2000, pp. 533-580: 541 ss.
50. See A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason. On the Intellectual Legacy of Critical Theory” (2004), in Id., *Pathologies of Reason, On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 19-22.
51. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., pp. 21-22; on this topic see Jörg Schaub, “Misdevelopments, Pathologies, and Normative Revolutions”, *Critical Horizons*, vol. 16, n. 2 (2015), 107-130.
52. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 22 s.
53. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 23.
54. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 41.
55. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 35.
56. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, p. 29.
57. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, p. 23; see also *ivi*, p. 36: “The forces that contribute to the overcoming of the social pathology are supposed to stem from precisely that reason whose actualization is impeded by the form of organization present in capitalist society”.
58. See A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, p. 29: “As is the case with Hegel, it seems that the boundaries between description, on the one hand, and prescription and normative grounding, on the other, are blurred here as well. The explanation of the circumstances that have blocked or skewed the process of the actualization of reason should have in and of itself the rational force to convince subjects to create a social practice of cooperation”.
59. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, p. 31.
60. For an analysis of the multiple levels of Honneth’s social philosophy see J.-Ph. Deranty, “Reflective Critical Theory: A Systematic Reconstruction of Axel Honneth’s Social Philosophy” in *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays*, ed. by Danielle Petherbridge, Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 59-88, who immediately clarifies p. 60: “for Honneth the normative progress accomplished with modernity is a *fact* [...] indeed his Hegelianism starts with the idea of modernity as progress in ‘subjective freedom’, as moral progress”; and p. 62: Honneth’s “teleological reading of modernity [...] emphasises the normative *continuity* in modern history”; on the “teleological” methodology adopted by Honneth on several levels see also pp. 74 ss.
61. See A. Honneth, “Recognition, democracy and social liberty: A reply”, cit., p. 701.
62. I have tried to develop this double perspective in Marco Solinas, «Immanent teleologies versus historical regressions: Some political remarks on Honneth’s Hegelianism», in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 45/6 (2019), pp. 655-664; and in “Kritik der Regressionen. Politische, geschichtliche und psychosoziale Betrachtungen“, in *Zeitschrift für kritische Theorie*, XXV, vol. 48/49 (2019), pp. 145-166.
63. See A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., pp. 30-31.
64. See A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 31.
65. See A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 31.
66. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit. p. 33.
67. C.F. Zurn, *Axel Honneth. A Critical Theory of the Social*, Cambridge: Polity, 2015, p. 194.
68. A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., p. 219 s., the quote is from Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, in *Power*, New York: New Press, 2000, p. 329.
69. See A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., p. 107.

70. See for example M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, New York: Penguin, 2008.
71. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 19 s.
72. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 20.
73. A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., p. 20.
74. See A. Honneth, “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso”, cit., pp. 44 ss., 49.
75. See also A. Honneth, “Idiosyncrasy as a Tool of Knowledge” Social Criticism in the Age of the Normalized Intellectual” (2002), in Id., *Pathologies of Reason, On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009; Id. and Luc Boltanski, “Soziologie der Kritik oder Kritische Theorie? Ein Gespräch mit Robin Celikates”, in R. Jaeggi und T. Wesche (eds), *Was ist Kritik?*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2009, p. 86; on this model see also J. Habermas, “Max Horkheimer. Die Frankfurter Schule in New York”, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2/3-8-1980.
76. A. Honneth, “Reconstructive Social Criticism with a Genealogical Proviso”, cit., p. 50.
77. M. Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 54-55.
78. See M. Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, cit., p. 76, footnote n. 21, he refers to Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 63: “This contextualist view of Adorno’s fits well with the strongly held Frankfurt view that a critical theory is ‘directed at’ or ‘addressed to’ a particular group of human agents and contributes in a special way to their self-knowledge. [...]. A critical theory is addressed to the members of *this* particular social group in the sense that it describes *their* epistemic principles and *their* ideal of the ‘good life’ and demonstrates that some belief they hold is reflectively unacceptable for agents who are trying to realize this particular kind of ‘good life’. In general, then, a critical theory specifies for *these* agents how they would have to modify their beliefs to attain *their* ideal of a rational, satisfying existence”.
79. See also M. Walzer, *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Basic Books, I ed. 1988, II ed. 2002; Id., “Mut, Mitleid und ein gutes Augen: Tugenden der Sozialkritik und der Nutzen von Gesellschaftstheorie”, in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 48 (2000), 709-818.; on the other side see also A. Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason”, cit., pp. 30, 36 ss.
80. See M. Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, cit., p. 33.
81. A. Gramsci, “Subaltern Social Groups”, ed. by J.A. Buttigieg and M.E. Green, New York: Columbia, 2021, *Prison Notebooks*, 9, § 135, p. 69.
82. A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg, vol. III, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 11, § 33, vol. 3, p. 173: “The error of the intellectual consists in believing that one can *know* without understanding and, above all, without feeling or being impassioned: in other words, that the intellectual can be an intellectual if he is distinct and detached from the people. One cannot make history-politics without passion, that is, without being emotionally tied to the people, without feeling the rudimentary passions of the people, understanding them [...]. Only if the relationship between intellectuals and people-masses [...] is based on an organic attachment in which impassioned sentiment becomes understanding and hence knowledge [...]”.
83. See A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., pp. 1, 75 ss.
84. A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., p. 201; the quote is from D. Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, cit., p. 36.
85. W.D. Mignolo, “DELINKING. The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality”, in *Cultural Studies*, 21:2 (March-May 2007), pp. 449-514: 458.
86. A. Allen, *The End of Progress*, cit., p. 155; the quote is taken from G. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 62.

87. I have tried to develop this theme in M. Solinas, “The Political Deficit of Immanent Critique. On Jaeggi’s Objections to Walzer’s Criticism”, in *Critical Horizons*, vol. 22, issue 2 (2021), pp. 128–139”; for an overview of the problematization of the traditional model of social criticism see L. Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011.

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