

**SOCIALISMO REVISADO COMO REPUBLICANISMO
RADICAL COMPREENSIVO.
UMA LEITURA EXPLORATÓRIA DA TEORIA DEMOCRÁTICA
DE AXEL HONNETH¹**

REVISED SOCIALISM AS RADICAL COMPREHENSIVE
REPUBLICANISM.
AN EXPLORATORY READING OF AXEL HONNETH'S
DEMOCRATIC THEORY

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RESUMO

Nas últimas três décadas, o republicanismo tem sido um dos objetos mais prediletos da pesquisa para diversos e qualificados filósofos políticos. Após diversos artigos e livros publicados sobre o assunto, ficou claro para os analistas que existem diferentes concepções normativas, como representativa, participativa e radical, das quais definir o próprio conceito. Neste artigo assumimos um objetivo teórico exploratório e crítico. Nosso primeiro objetivo será reconstruir a teoria democrática de Axel Honneth, não como uma simples teoria socialista revisada, mas como uma perspectiva republicana radical compreensiva e na qual a justiça social tem prioridade sobre a legitimidade democrática. Em segundo lugar, depois de apresentar os principais pressupostos de sua teoria democrática, vamos compará-la brevemente com o republicanismo representativo de Philip Pettit. Em terceiro lugar, finalmente expressaremos nosso compromisso com uma perspectiva republicana política, reflexiva e participativa.

Palavras-chave: Socialismo; Justiça social; Legitimidade democrática; Republicanismo radical; Republicanismo representativo.

ABSTRACT

In the last three decades republicanism has been one of the most predilected objects of research for diverse and qualified political philosophers. After several papers and books published on the matter, it has been clear for analysts that there are different normative conceptions, representative, participatory and radical, from which to define the very concept. In this paper we assume both an exploratory and critical theoretical aim. Our first goal will be to reconstruct Axel Honneth's democratic theory, not as a simple revised socialist theory, but as a radical comprehensive republican approach in which social justice has priority over democratic legitimacy. Secondly, after presenting the main presuppositions of its democratic theory, we will briefly compare it with Philip Pettit's representative republicanism. Thirdly, we will finally express our commitment with a political, reflexive, participatory republican perspective.

Keywords: Socialism; Social justice; Democratic legitimacy; Radical republicanism; Representative republicanism.

I. Introduction

Since the late 1970s a remarkable and diverse group of intellectuals, specialized in history and political theory, have projected and defended a republican reading of *the political*, as an alternative proposal to the predominant liberal perspective (SKINNER, 1998; 2008). However, it should be noted that the numerous and diverse contributions made by those thinkers have not produced a unitary theoretical expression, but on the contrary, have fed the emergence of various contemporary republican conceptions. In this sense, a synthetic and updated possible cartography of the different republican views existing in contemporary political philosophy, would allow us to identify at least three dissimilar theoretical versions (ELAZAR AND ROUSSELIÈRE, 2019).

First, from a *representative republican perspective*, political freedom is defined as *non-domination*, that is, as the absence, potential or actual, of arbitrary interference in the political course of citizens' action. Representative republicanism seeks to establish itself as an adequate middle ground between a libertarian democratic perspective that understands political freedom as non-interference with the individual interests of citizens; and a populist democratic perspective, which considers that a genuine democracy must promote direct participation of the people in government's affairs. This first perspective starts from a particular interpretation of Harrington and Paine's work, counting Pettit (2012; 2014) among its main defenders.

Secondly, it is possible to identify a *participatory republican perspective*, which not only defends the regulative ideal of non-domination, but primarily affirms the need to promote the normative standard of equal *political participation*, which would demand an institutional design that allows the constant intervention of citizens in the fundamental matters of government. Participatory republicanism would distance itself even more, than its representative republican counterpart, from objections directed at liberalism. This second perspective combines an interesting reading of the main political works of ancient philosophers such as Cicero and Seneca, with that of other moderns such as Jefferson and Harrington, being able to identify Skinner (1998; 2008) among its main promoters.

Thirdly, various recent theoretical developments have given form and content to a third perspective which is defined as *radical republicanism* and distances itself markedly from the two previous named versions. In the track of this third republican perspective, it is worth mentioning a recent

publication, edited by Leipold, Nabulsi and White (2020). There, from an Anglo-Saxon political philosophical perspective, several colleagues propose to recover a revolutionary, emancipatory or radical aspect of the republican tradition, which would be based on a resignify definition of the notions of popular sovereignty, political participation and social domination. This approach is built on alternative interpretations of the works of classical philosophers such as Rousseau and Machiavelli, as well as critical readings of the works of contemporary authors such as Pettit (2012) and Anderson (2015). Among the proponents of this radical republican approach could be located the theoretical contributions of Gädeke (2020) and Laborde (2008).

Considering this precise theoretical framework, we will pursue three main argumentative goals.

Firstly, we will propose an exploratory and critical reading of Honneth's democratic theory. More precisely we will suggest that there are some strong reasons to argue that Honneth's democratic theory could be understood as a *radical comprehensive republicanism*, and not, as himself claims, a mere revised socialism (2014, 2017). It's well known that recently Honneth had revised his own critical political theory by publishing two renewed works: *Freedom's Right* (2014) and *The Idea of Socialism* (2017). In those suggestive books, he proposed to defend a critical democratic conception, which assumes the following characters: a) the attractive of a comprehensive democratic perspective; b) the definition of justice as mutual recognition; c) a sui generis classification of individual freedom models (negative, reflexive and social); and d) the temporal and conceptual primacy of the notion of a just social order over democratic legitimacy. Notwithstanding the usual interpretation and reading of Honneth's democratic theory as revised socialist, we will give some clues about its republican, radical and comprehensive character.

Secondly, and against Honneth's radical comprehensive republicanism, we will reconstruct Pettit's representative republicanism, which: a) departs from a non-comprehensive republican democratic perspective; b) defines justice as non-domination; c) uses a standard classification of models of political freedom (egalitarian, libertarian and republican); and d) grants the temporal and conceptual primacy of the notion of democratic legitimacy over the notion of social justice.

Finally, in third place, we will briefly sketch a third republican approach that keeps the best features of those previously mentioned approaches and avoids the main critics directed to them. This alternative political perspective, named as *reflexive republicanism*, will be presented as a novel participatory republican approach, expectedly feasible and desirable for our non-ideal western democratic conditions.

II. Axel Honneth's social theory

II.1. A social model of individual liberty

The idea of individual freedom is at the basis of Honneth's theory of freedom. Thereby seeking to satisfy unmet demands, Honneth affirms that "...each constitutive sphere in our society institutionally embodies a particular aspect of our experience of individual freedom. The modern idea of justice is thus divided into as many aspects as there are institutionalized spheres of the promise of freedom..." (HONNETH, 2014, vii-viii). More specifically, and in order of their degree of complexity, this author differentiates, compares and evaluates three models of individual freedom: negative, reflexive and social (HONNETH, 2014, 19-20).

First, "...the idea of negative freedom was born out of the religious civil wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries..." where freedom was defined as "...the mere absence of external obstructions that might hinder a body's ability to move naturally. By contrast, internal impediments deriving from the material structure of simple bodies cannot be viewed as restrictions on freedom..." (HONNETH, 2014, 21).

Second, Honneth affirms that "...since Aristotle, a number of thinkers and philosophers have claimed that in order for individuals to be free, they must be able to arrive at their own decisions and influence their own will..." (HONNETH, 2014, 29). More precisely, according to Honneth "...the idea of reflexive freedom focuses solely on the subject's relationship-to-self; according to this notion, individuals are free if their actions are solely guided by their own intentions..." (HONNETH, 2014, 29).

Nonetheless, Honneth adverts that neither of that two models of freedom, negative and reflexive, "...interpret the social conditions that enable the exercise of freedom as elements of freedom itself. Instead (...) "...in both cases, social circumstances only come into play once the exercise of freedom has already been defined; they are then added externally, as elements of social justice, but not as an inherent aspect of the exercise of freedom..." (HONNETH, 2014, 40).

Due to social freedom, Honneth affirms that "...what makes this new, discursive view of freedom social is the fact that it regards a certain institution of social reality no longer as a mere addition to freedom, but as its medium and condition. On this account individual subjects can perform the reflexive acts required for self-determination only if they interact socially with others who do the same..." (HONNETH, 2014, 42).

So, Honneth affirms that "...the idea of social freedom, therefore, is to be understood as the outcome of a theoretical endeavor that expands the criteria underlying the notion of reflexive freedom to include the sphere that is traditionally set in opposition to the subject as external reality..." (HONNETH, 2014, 44). As it can be seen, Honneth doesn't reject reflexive freedom but expand it by social means, connecting the intersubjective and the communal facets of freedom (HONNETH, 2014, 45).

Then Honneth makes a further and deeper step towards his own theoretical path, assuming that "...once both subjects recognize the need to supplement their respective aims, thus seeing their own aims in the other, merely reflexive freedom becomes intersubjective freedom..." (HONNETH, 2014, 45). In this conceptual framework "...a subject is only free if it encounters another subject, within the framework of institutional practices, to whom it is joined in a relationship of mutual recognition; only then can it regard the aims of the other as the condition for the realization of its own aims..." (HONNETH, 2014, 45).

Resignifying Hegel's theorizations, Honneth points out that, attending to a social model of freedom, institutions must pursue two main aims. In first place, "...as media of transmission, that certain classes of behavioral expressions can be understood as invitations to realize complementary aims together..." (HONNETH, 2014, 49). In this first point it can be seen how Honneth recurs to a comprehensive conception of political interaction obligating every citizen to accommodate to the political aims of the others. In second place, "...these same institutions must enable individuals to acquire an intersubjective understanding of their freedoms..." (HONNETH, 2014, 49). In this second point it reveals that, according to Honneth, political institutions must be actively involved in the promotion of a comprehensive understanding of citizens interactions, which is crucial for the political conformation of a common ethos.

In other words, according to Honneth, without the existence of a just social order, of a socially shared ethnicity, it makes no sense to speak of political institutions that promote the value of individual freedom. In his social model of individual freedom, social conditions are part of the very definition of the idea of freedom, thus being an immanent element to that concept and not an external derivation of the application of a deliberative procedure or the following of an ultimate moral standard (HONNETH, 2014, 51).

In this theoretical context, Honneth affirms that the construction of a just order must be put first, which means to promote "...a system of institutions that guarantee freedom, prior to the decisions of first isolated, then unified subjects. These institutions of recognition within which subjects

can achieve social freedom must be designed before the subjects, in a further step, come to a considered position on that order. In short, recognition within institutions must precede the freedom of atomistic individuals and discursive subjects..." (HONNETH, 2014, 59).

In this way, all the elements considered, Honneth's social model of individual freedom leads to the reversal of the conceptual priority formulated by Pettit (2012, 1-10). In this respect, Honneth warns that "...we must reverse the relationship between legitimating procedures and social justice: We must first regard all subjects as integrated in social structures that ensure their freedom, before they then participate as free beings in a procedure that monitors the legitimacy of the social order..." (HONNETH, 2014, 57).

However, at the end of his work Honneth expresses a manifest contradiction in his sustained position of prioritizing social justice over democratic legitimacy. This is expressed when it states that "...the sphere of democratic will-formation enjoys priority over the other two spheres..." (HONNETH, 2014, 331). In this sense, Honneth give us two main reasons for sustaining the priority of the democratic sphere over the others.

First, in accordance with modern constitutional principles, Honneth affirms that "...state authorities invest this sphere with the legitimate power to turn the changes achieved by social struggles in various spheres of action into enforced conditions and thus into legal guarantees. Democratic self-legislation and the constitutional state form an especially prominent center within other centers anchored in independent norms of freedom, because only democratic will-formation has the generally acknowledged power to interrupt the flow of discourse going on elsewhere and secure the results by means of legislation..." (HONNETH, 2014, 331).

Second, Honneth adverts that "...only in the political-democratic sphere does interaction consist in an exchange of arguments, i.e., a reflexive process, whereas in the other two spheres, cooperative interaction primarily consists in a reciprocal completion of practical actions, which can only be supplemented secondarily with reflexive mechanisms..." (HONNETH, 2014, 331). So, for Honneth "...the political-democratic sphere enjoys a certain priority over the other two spheres of action that likewise thrive on ideas of social freedom. In public will-formation, everything that has been withdrawn from discussion due to misdevelopments or political oppression can and should be made an issue..." (HONNETH, 2014, 331-332).

II.2. Honneth's revised socialism

As we previously affirmed, it's well known that Honneth's social conception of freedom is intimately connected with his proposal of revising the classical socialist theory. In this line of thought Honneth affirms that "...the early socialists all assumed that the largely legal notion of individual freedom was far too narrow for it to be reconcilable with the principle of fraternity (...) Though they might not have been very aware of it, these socialists all sought to expand the liberal concept of freedom in order to reconcile it somehow with the aim of fraternity..." (HONNETH, 2017, 5).

More importantly, Honneth adverts that the aim of reconciling "...the principles of liberty and fraternity by reinterpreting the former becomes even more apparent in the second wave of socialism..." (HONNETH, 2017, 11). Second, wave socialists affirmed that "...the aim of fraternity, of mutual responsibility in solidarity, cannot even begin to be realized as long as liberty is understood solely in terms of the private egoism characteristic of competition in the capitalist market..." (HONNETH, 2017, 11-12).

Instead of insisting on defining freedom from a private perspective, socialists affirmed that "...freedom was to be understood as a form of free cooperation, thus reconciling it with the other revolutionary promise of fraternity..." (HONNETH, 2017, 13).

In this conceptual framework Honneth adverts that in "...the republican tradition upheld today (...) extent of what can count as coercion is expanded to include even the influencing of the wills of others..." (HONNETH, 2017, 22). However, socialists go far beyond this intentional approach and assume that "...coercion can even include situations in which a person's rational intentions, which therefore demand realization, are hindered by the opposing intentions of others..." (HONNETH, 2017, 22-23). Nonetheless it must be stressed that contemporary republicans like Pettit assume not a simple but a complex democratic model which includes intentional and non-intentional political mechanisms, reason why it adopts the name of dual democratic model (PETTIT, 2012, 229-238).

Republicans, as Honneth correctly states, conceive the existence of "...a community of solidarity as a necessary condition for the exercise of (...) freedom (...) But socialists want more. They not only regard cooperation in the community as a necessary condition for freedom, but also as the sole way of exercising true freedom; in their mind, nothing else even deserves to be called freedom..." (HONNETH, 2017, 23).

On this comprehensive account, freedom can't "...be realized by individuals at all, but only by a collective (...) However, the collective only becomes a bearer of individual freedom if the community manages to instill

certain modes of behavior in its members, thus institutionalizing that behavior..." (HONNETH, 2017, 23-24). What is relevant here, for Honneth, is to attend to that network of routines and obligations in which moral attitudes are inserted in the form of social practices, thus he assumes an Aristotelian method according to which, in certain contexts of practical philosophy, it is habits practiced intersubjectively, and not only cognitive convictions, but that also make up the field of public ethics (HONNETH, 2014, 7).

After clarifying this conceptual aspects, Honneth formulates three main objections to classic socialism usual presuppositions. First, "...because these thinkers address both the supposedly merely private and egotistic freedoms and the new, social freedoms exclusively with reference to the economy, their accounts raise a problem (...) They rob the entirely different sphere of democratic popular rule (...) of any normative value..." (HONNETH, 2017, 33). Second, "...because the hope for reconciling freedom and solidarity rested entirely on the prospect of a communitarian reorganization of the economic sphere, socialists felt they could dissolve all individual rights into a cooperative community, leaving no legitimate place for the autonomy of the individual, nor for the intersubjective exploration of a common will..." (HONNETH, 2017, 36). Third, "...this astounding blindness to the democratic significance of basic rights also explains why socialists were long incapable of allying with radical liberal republicans (...) The only difference is that liberal republicans did not base their reinterpretation on the flaws of the economic sphere, but on the deficits of the new state institutions..." (HONNETH, 2017, 82-83).

To sum up, Honneth affirms that "...if we wish to take back this false step in socialist theory, then we need to argue (...) that the other constitutive spheres of society also depend on specific forms of social freedom. Furthermore, if socialism is still to represent the vision of a better form of life, then we must define how these independent spheres of social freedom are to relate to each other adequately in the future..." (HONNETH, 2017, 89).

Contrary to a *classical socialism*, Honneth stress that a *revised socialism* must assume "...that all three spheres of action require free cooperation and thus social freedom. This form of socialism cannot, therefore, content itself with abolishing heteronomy and alienated labor in the economic sphere. Instead, it must realize that modern society cannot be genuinely social as long as the spheres of personal relationships and democratic politics have not been freed of coercion and influence..." (HONNETH, 2017, 89-90).

II.3. Honneth's revised socialism as a radical comprehensive republicanism

In this section we are going to express some connections between Honneth's revised socialism and republicanism in general for later justify our exploratory hypothesis, that more precisely we must qualify its work as a radical comprehensive republicanism.

Undoubtedly Honneth's democratic theory gives a huge importance to intersubjectivity and public sphere. In this sense, Honneth himself affirms that "...republicanism takes its orientation from antiquity's ideal of a citizenry for whose members the intersubjective negotiation of common affairs has become an essential part of their lives..." and mentions that republican regard "...the democratic public sphere (...) as the medium of a self-governing political community..." (HONNETH, 1998, 763).

The connection between common good, an ethos and political community, is also clear when he affirms that "...political republicanism has by nature a certain tendency to understand legal norms as the social instrument through which the political community attempts to preserve its own identity (...) law is crystallized expression of the particular self-understanding of a solidary citizenry..." (HONNETH, 1998, 764). In this same interpretative path, it also must be state that Honneth's definition of self-esteem "...points us to a (classical) republican conception of the democratic polity in which individuals are recognized as equal members of a self-governing political community who are bound to the collective determination of the common good and whose political identities are forged by participating in this collective activity..." (OWEN, 2007, 305).

However, Honneth affirms that republicanism doesn't "...exhaust the spectrum of alternatives that present themselves today in the attempt to renew and expand democratic principles..." (HONNETH, 1998, 764). He claims that Dewey's theory of democracy offers a genuine "...alternative to the liberal understanding of politics..." (HONNETH, 1998, 765). In his opinion, Dewey's democratic theory is attractive because it "...simultaneously conceives of reflexive procedures and political community and (...) combines the idea of democratic deliberation with the notion of community ends..." (HONNETH, 1998, 765).

Honneth takes his own positive radical definition of freedom from Dewey's republican theory. As he adverts "...freedom for Dewey is primarily the positive experience of unconstrained self-realization that teaches the individual to discover in herself those talents and capabilities through which she can in the end contribute, on the basis of a division of labor, to the maintenance of the social whole..." (HONNETH, 1998, 769). Social

cooperation is in this radical democratic scheme a prepolitical scenario for building and construct citizens identities and freedoms. In Honneth's words, social cooperation, "...such a prepolitical institution of direct, cooperative self-administration would only be possible because the self-realization of people goes automatically, as it were, in a direction that motivates them to develop socially useful capabilities..." (HONNETH, 1998, 770).

From a radical democratic perspective Honneth emphasizes that "...Dewey's notion of how individual freedom springs from communication is gleaned not from intersubjective speech but from communal cooperation. As a consequence, this difference leads to a very different theory of democracy, one that has..." some advantages over republicanism (HONNETH, 1998, 777). First, from Honneth's view, his radical democratic perspective doesn't ask too much from citizens. Contrary to this alleged modesty, "...in the tradition of republicanism, citizens are expected to develop political virtues, which are said to represent an essential presupposition for participation in the intersubjective practice of opinion and will formation (...) Such a strong ethicization of politics, scarcely compatible with the actual value pluralism of modern societies ..." (HONNETH, 1998, 777-778). But, as we have anticipated is clear that Honneth's social cooperation and freedom concepts are notably comprehensive. In fact, using his own criterions, we can even say that his radical comprehensive republican perspective is also not compatible with value pluralism.

As we have early expressed, "...Honneth's argument for democracy as reflexive co-operation is articulated by way of the claim that Dewey's mature democratic theory combines two elements: (1) a theory of human socialization that links self-realization to membership of a community of co-operation, and (2) an epistemological argument for democracy that emphasizes the rational value of democratic procedures for problem-solving..." (OWEN, 2007, 290). In this line of interpretation, it must be said that Honneth's socialization concept "...is only intelligible if we understand human beings as having a general second order interest in the realization of their own individuality as the fullness of integrated personality, which is obstructed by non-co-operative ways of life..." (OWEN, 2007, 292). As Owen states, Honneth's social cooperation requires from citizens to have an excellent and constant predisposition to toleration, accommodation and comprehension of political interests (OWEN, 2007, 290-297).

However, Honneth directs two main critics to the classical republican perspective. The first is (...) the privileging of political activity as the highest form of human activity requires that this form of republicanism be intolerant of those comprehensive conceptions of the good that do not assign priority to political activity..." The second is "...that it is never entirely clear according

to what standard the institutional form of intersubjective opinion formation is to be precisely measured since it is an end in itself..." (OWEN, 2007, 297-298).

Nevertheless, Owen directs two proportional objections to both Honneth's critics to republicanism. First, due to the fact that republicanism is intolerant to other interpretations of the concept of common good, Owen affirms that, as actual and relevant bibliography express "...it is not clear that this is in fact the case..." (OWEN, 2007, 298). Second, Owen considers false the assumption that republicans don't clarify their institutional evaluative criteria, is not difficult to recognize that "...for republicans, it is precisely the capacity of particular institutional forms to avoid or minimize the corruption of the citizenry that provides criteria on which to differentiate and evaluate institutional forms..." (OWEN, 2007, 298-299).

Honneth's normative perspective is overdemanding because he thinks that "...only a political ideal of radical democracy that combines a commitment to securing democratic procedures of rational deliberation (that is, the maximal conditions of the experience of respect-recognition) with a commitment to democratic political community (that is, the maximal conditions of the experience of esteem-recognition) are capable of satisfying both fundamental human needs..." (OWEN, 2007, 305).

In this line of critics Owen also offers two direct and relevant objections to Honneth's democratic theory. Firstly, Owen finds problematic "...Honneth's account of the conditions requisite for the pre-political formation of the social consciousness of co-operation..."; and secondly, Owen finds as not attractive "...Honneth's account of democracy as reflexive co-operation itself..." (OWEN, 2007, 315-316).

With respect to the first issue, Owen affirms that "...in a culturally diverse society, to promote such a consciousness of social co-operation would require not only a just division of labour but also a mutual willingness on the part of different cultural communities to acknowledge each other's value..." (OWEN, 2007, 316). Related to the second issue Owen states that "...it will be hard to maintain relations of trust unless the demand for sacrifice on the part of citizens is itself equitably distributed over time..." (OWEN, 2007, 317). In this sense, Owen thinks that Honneth not adequately theorizes about the relevant concepts of mutual willingness and normative sacrifice, that analytically seem to be essential to the conceptual stability of Honneth's democratic theory (OWEN, 2007, 318).

On the implications for democracy as reflexive co-operation itself Owen remarks two aspects. "...First, it would seem to be the case that this ideal now needs to acknowledge that the political community is not only composed of individuals but also of culturally diverse groups..." (OWEN,

2007, 318); and "...Second, the articulation of this ideal also requires acknowledging the centrality of the issue of ethical integrity (...) that is to say, the authority of one's voice within the political discourse of the community is dependent not merely on what one says or the reasons one offers for some course of action, but also on what one is..." (OWEN, 2007, 318-319).

Another line of argument for build a bridge between Honneth's democratic theory and republicanism is the recently valuable work of Laitinen. In of his latest publications this author "...compares Philip Pettit's account of freedom to Hegelian theories of freedom, with special emphasis on the role of mutual recognition as a constituent and a precondition of freedom..." (LAITINEN, 2015, 1). In this specific conceptual scenario, Laitinen affirms that "...Pettit's republicanism and Hegel's republicanism share the key insight that characterizes the tradition of republicanism (...) to be subordinated to the will of particular others is to be unfree..." (LAITINEN, 2015, 4).

However, it must be stressed that "...what in the Hegelian approach is a constituent or a precondition of positive social freedom is for Pettit not an issue of freedom at all...", in fact, Pettit's favored concept of freedom is negative, "...whereas Hegelian individual autonomy and social freedom go beyond the ideal of negative freedom..." (LAITINEN, 2015, 2). In sum, "...for Pettit freedom is ahistorical and objective, although anthropocentric...", whereas for Hegel freedom theorizes about the "...historicist and self-interpretational implications of..." freedom (LAITINEN, 2015, 4).

The hypothesis of Laitinen is that "...Pettit's and Hegel's theories of freedom and recognition can be seen as illuminating the broader contexts of non-domination...", because "...despite all their metaphysical differences, Pettit's ideal of non-domination captures a crucial aspect of Hegel's understanding of the structure of being at one with oneself in another..." (LAITINEN, 2015, 14).

Another conceptual comparative avenue to take is the one offered by Deranty's work. In his most recent text, Deranty states that "...Anderson's conception of relational or democratic equality shares a number of key conceptual elements with Honneth's theories of recognition and social freedom..." (DERANTY, 2021, 67).

Deranty expresses that while Anderson seeks to retrieve the republican, Honneth pretends to enrich the socialist legacy. However, Deranty affirms that "...in both traditions, one of the defining features, and a key point of departure from mainstream liberalism, was the rejection of formal theories of equality and the pursuit instead of real equality..." (DERANTY, 2021, 67). Though, Deranty finds an interesting difference

between Anderson's and Honneth's definitions of mutual recognition. From a republican conception, recognition is defined as "...reciprocal acknowledgement between autonomous beings that is extrinsic to the individuals. They rely on each other instrumentally for the fulfilment of their claims (...) In Honneth, by contrast, recognition is intrinsic to the very construction of the individual's identity (...) the very process of identity formation relies upon the affirmation of the self by others..." (DERANTY, 2021, 73-74).

Finally, Deranty affirms that socialist concept of social cooperation "...goes deeper, as it were, than in the republican conception..." (DERANTY, 2021, 74). Nevertheless, it must be stressed that Deranty is not saying that Honneth's socialist view isn't related or even capture by some sort of republicanism. For the sake of our argument, it must be advert, that Deranty is only stating that Honneth's conception of the social is deeper than Anderson's (DERANTY, 2021, 74-75).

Now, after presenting an important amount of qualified theoretical comments on Honneth's democratic theory, there still be some skeptical readers that keeps questioning: ¿why is Honneth's democratic theory a radical comprehensive republicanism? In order to clarify this relevant aspect of our paper, it would be appropriate to reconstruct those commentaries in a form of precise and analytical reason. In this aim, it could be found in our previous words, at least, five strong reasons that confirms our exploratory interpretative hypothesis.

First, it must be stressed that Honneth connects his revised socialism with the republican principle of fraternity. He mentions that early or classical socialists considered fraternity as the main hermeneutic tool for differentiating their conceptual proposal from the liberal (HONNETH, 2017, 12). More in our favor, Honneth affirms that the principle of fraternity must be employed to combat the liberal definition of freedom as mere external non-interference, and to enhance, not to abandon, the republican coercion concept (HONNETH, 2017, 13).

Second, it's well known that comprehensive republican doctrines usually promote a robust substantive conception of the people, political community or citizenry. As we previously affirmed, Honneth builds his own democratic theory upon a very heavy definition of political community (HONNETH, 1998, 763). This observation it must be empowered or stressed by the very theorizations of Pettit and Lovett who indicate that within republican tradition we can find a communitarian approach that promotes the dependence of the individual on the community in the context of a broad complex process of identity construction (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12). The comprehensive character of Honneth's democratic theory perfectly

matches with Rawls' definition of a comprehensive doctrine. As it's perfectly known Rawls affirms that a theory is comprehensive "...when it includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, as well as ideals of personal virtue and character, that are to inform much of our nonpolitical conduct..." (RAWLS, 1996, 175). In other words, if Honneth really wanted to assume a non-comprehensive, only political, perspective, he wouldn't impose on the personal and the economic spheres of freedom the same requirements that poses over public political sphere. In Rawls' own words, if he would rather prefer to promote a genuinely political theory then "...the kinds of rights and duties, and of the values considered..." must be clearly "...more limited..." (RAWLS, 1996, xlili).

Third, one of the most renowned classical republican concepts is that of common good or good form of life. This concept indicates that not every political, social or human path is to be consider valid, just or legitimate in a precise society or political community. In this sense, Honneth explicitly says that socialism must be revised in order "...to represent the vision of a better form of life..." (HONNETH, 2017, 89). Of course, not every good, better or privilege form of life must or can be defined as republican but is out of question that is truly the case when the candidate in question promotes civic virtues, or as Honneth prefers "...modes of behavior..." (HONNETH, 2017, 24), oriented towards a necessary, intertwined and complementary political community in which citizens are completely co-dependent (HONNETH, 2014, 49).

Fourth, it must be pointed out that Honneth himself names his democratic theory as radical (OWEN, 2007, 290). The adjective radical means here a more profound compromise with a social definition of democracy, than other liberal theories, that not only includes rational and reasonable reflexive political procedures but also a strong and ethical definition of political community (HONNETH, 1998, 765). It's appropriate here to remember that in the introduction of this paper, we expressed that there is an emergent republican conception, that is theoretically connected with the School of Frankfurt, to which Honneth belongs, which could be defined as *radical republicanism*. Political philosophers have recently expressed that there are interesting conceptual and normative connections between republicanism and critical theory. Within these radical republican conception, we can identify two interesting specimens, defined itself as *critical republicans*, which give more importance to social justice than there representative or participatory republican rivals.

On one side, we can identify Laborde's work that presents a contextual and analytical republican perspective in which the principles of fraternity, social justice and social cooperation are protagonists. In her own

words "...critical republicanism links together liberty, equality (...) articulates a progressive, social-democratic, and inclusive version of republicanism..." (LABORDE, 2008, 11). In fact, the similarities with Honneth's theory are bigger, due this author proposes a democratic radical theory in which "...all citizens enjoy (...) basic personal autonomy (...) material capabilities, and intersubjective mutual recognition as equal citizens..." (LABORDE, 2008, 11). Here we can see mirrored Honneth's proposal of considering different spheres of freedom, such as personal, economical and democratic.

On the other side, we can mention Gädeke's recent work in which she proposes to justify a critical republicanism as a normative approach included in the more abstract family of radical republicanism, that it's build upon resignificate discursive presuppositions originally emerged from the critical School of Frankfurt. More precisely, Gädeke is interested in analyzing, politicizing and transforming certain relations of domination actually existing in our democratic societies, which would be inherent to certain intersubjective relations (GÄDEKE, 2020, 23-24). Stressing the connections with Honneth's social democracy, we can undoubtedly say that her inspiring academic work could be presented as particular but strong normative critical conception of democracy that promotes not only formal or discursive but mainly social or material, non-domination (GÄDEKE, 2020, 42).

Fifth, many renewed colleagues consider that Hegel himself, which is Honneth's main philosophical inspiration, must be considered a strong, comprehensive and radical republican. In this line of thought we can mention the recent and valuable academic work of Laitinen who even compares Pettit's and Hegel's republican perspectives, pointing out that the former adopts an ahistorical, analytical and objective republicanism, while the latter offers us a historical, critical and self-interpretational republicanism (LAITINEN, 2015, 1-5).

Another proof of Honneth's connection, relation or inclusion with/in the republican tradition could be found in Deranty's very recently work, in which he relates and contrasts Anderson's republicanism with Honneth's socialism. It's necessary here to say that Deranty's work insist on differentiating republicanism of socialism, but not in all the possible ways. Deranty's work points out that Honneth's socialism couldn't be equated to Anderson's republicanism, but he leaves the door open to another connections or relations with other types, conceptions or approaches of republicanism. In fact, Deranty affirms that even "...Anderson's conception of relational or democratic equality shares a number of key conceptual elements with Honneth's theories of recognition and social freedom..." (DERANTY, 2021, 67). If we take literally Deranty's words we can even stress that his definition of Honneth's socialist ideal "...of the just society as

an order of cooperation, or an association of partners who are not just equal in terms of their right for self-realization but co-dependent in this pursuit..." (DERANTY, 2021, 74-75), could be perfectly or undoubtedly used to reconstruct the main considerations of classical or early republicans about political interaction in pursuit of the common good (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12-18). Finally, more in advance, this well-known neorepublicans state that "...not only did socialism depend on the republican conception of freedom as nondomination in order to advance the idea of wage slavery, but also that very formula had its origins in republican circles..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 20).

III. Pettit's representative republican theory

Pettit's representative republican is presented as a fair middle ground between two questionable extremes, the negative liberal conception and the positive populist conception. On the one hand, like the negative liberal conception, the republican conception understands freedom in terms of denial of something, but here interference itself is not denied, but only that interference that qualifies as arbitrary. On the other hand, like the positive populist conception, the republican conception attributes to the concept of political freedom certain evaluative judgment, which would make it possible to determine whether an interference is arbitrary or not. However, this evaluative judgment does not necessarily require the development of a behavior, a state of mind, a psychological predisposition or a moral sacrifice, but simply assesses the lack of subordination of one person to the will of another. Thus, the concept of republican freedom constitutes an intersubjective normative relationship expressed in terms of a legal status, which is only achieved through compliance with certain institutional rules (PETTIT, 2012, 1-8).

Pettit's representative republicanism promotes two central political criteria, which converge on the ultimate goal of non-domination. On the one hand, it promotes democratic legitimacy, understood as the consistency between the coercion exerted on citizens and their freedom understood as non-domination. Citizens should be in a position to control State interference in their lives by defining the direction in which they should act. Democratic legitimacy prevents the public domination of the State over individuals. On the other hand, it promotes social justice, understood as the empowerment of citizens in the exercise of basic freedoms, defined as consequences of the more general idea of freedom as non-domination. Social justice requires adequate infrastructure for equitable social development and prevents private domination among individuals, since it

does not allow individuals to arbitrarily interfere in the lives of others (PETTIT, 2012, 297-301).

Contrary to Honneth's perspective, Pettit points out that a big failure in a democratic legitimacy matter would compromise deeper the idea of freedom than a failure in a social justice matter, given that the lack of social justice would make us vulnerable only to our fellow citizens, while the lack of political legitimacy would make us vulnerable to them and the State. In other words, Pettit warns that if we are subject to the domination of a government, we will have no political influence and control over the direction of the main government affairs, just as we will be victims of the abuses of our fellow citizens who benefit from the absence of a legitimate government. To sum up, it is clear that for Pettit a problem in the public domain would have deeper costs than one occurred in the private domain (PETTIT, 2012, 24-25).

Thus, Pettit states that the republican ideal of freedom as non-domination gives priority to democratic legitimacy. In this sense, Pettit warns that a considerable number of experts in contemporary political philosophy reduce the idea of justice to the notion of social justice. While, from its republican perspective, on the contrary, this conceptual priority is foolish and it is necessary to prioritize citizen control of democratic government, that is, it is relevant to give priority to democratic legitimacy (PETTIT, 2012, 25).

It is conceptually precise to name Pettit's republicanism as a form of neorepublicanism because the neologism is used "...to designate the attempts by current political scientists, philosophers, historians, lawyers, and others to draw on this classical republican tradition, adapting and revising its various ideas, in the development of an attractive public philosophy intended for contemporary purposes..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12). In this more accurate reading, neorepublicanism "...should be strictly distinguished from a more communitarian approach that is sometimes described as republican..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12). Classical republicanism or just republicanism thematizes "...the dependence of the individual on the community for his or her identity and values, the virtues required of individuals for a community and polity to flourish, and the equation of individual freedom (...) with active participation in the process of collective will formation..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12). More precisely it must be said that neorepublicans hold that classical republicanism must be considered as "...insufficiently pluralist..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 12).

From this reconstructive approach, Pettit's neorepublicanism is connected with four claims: "...first, that a person is free insofar as she is

not subject to domination; second, that domination may be present without actual interferences; (...) third, that interferences may be present without domination..." and fourth that freedom must be interpreted as "...the overall condition of persons..." or as "...a status enjoyed..." by persons (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 17).

But it's quite important to advert that Pettit himself recognizes the enormous importance of social justice in its many areas of application. More precisely, neorepublicans affirms that "...there can be no general enjoyment of republican freedom without a reliable rule of private law, a culture of civic trust, a reasonably prosperous economic life, and a sustainable environment (...) Together, the various public policies tending to these background conditions might be described as providing the infrastructure of nondomination..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 20).

The connection between republicanism and revised socialism, could be stressed in "...the definition of good citizenship as consisting in a vigilant commitment to holding the State to its domination-reducing aims, while preventing it from becoming a source of domination itself. Classically, this idea manifested itself as civic virtue..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 23). The connection or similarities between Honneth's "modes of behavior" and Pettit's political predispositions is clear. Honneth adopts a substantive, comprehensive and intrinsically definition, while civic virtue is considered by Pettit as "...instrumentally useful both in bringing about the right sorts of laws, institutions, and norms on the one hand, and in ensuring their durability and reliability on the other. Indeed, to guard against this common misunderstanding, it might be better to speak of "civic-minded dispositions" rather than civic virtue..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 23).

To sum up, the concept of democratic legitimacy assumes in the neorepublican approach a specific definition of citizens, named as contestatory citizenry. The idea of contestatory democracy "...is that properly designed democratic institutions should give citizens not only electoral rights but also the effective opportunity to contest the decisions of their representatives..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 25). For more precision, it could be said that for neorepublicans contestatory democracy requires, at a minimum, three things "...there must be explicit formal procedures, known to all, by which the agencies and branches of the government exercise their authority..."; "...the relevant decision makers (...) must be required to present reasons for their resolutions, and those reasons must be subject to open public debate..."; and "...there must exist institutionalized forums for citizen contestation (...) where citizens can raise objections to public laws and policies and demand a response, with some chance of success..." (LOVETT and PETTIT, 2009, 25).

Finally, it's relevant to advert that neorepublicanism, or more precisely Pettit's representative republicanism, has been criticized for several relevant reasons. Among those objections it could be rescued the following: a) Pettit's institutional proposal leaves unchanged the main representative political intuitions of a liberal democratic model, as well as doesn't promote the adoption of citizen normative filters of political legitimacy and social justice on the functioning of the economic market of goods and services, on the contrary it leaves democracy under the tutelage of the financial system and seeks to analogize its operation with the market's invisible hand theory; b) Pettit doesn't thought the concept of citizen political control as the fruit of a group or collective agency, but as the aggregation of individual political wills. Thus, in its consideration, political freedom understood as non-domination doesn't require an identity, belief, or collective sense, and even prevents us from think under the umbrella of as social group or collective movement; and c) the control mechanisms established by Pettit place their emphasis on certain formal intergovernmental accountability mechanisms typical of a liberal model, to the detriment of direct citizen controls, thereby it only allows us to think in the ex-post contestability of certain political measures already decided and/or implemented by the representatives (LABORDE, 2008; HONNETH, 2017; LAFONT, 2020; GÄDEKE, 2020).

IV. In defense of a reflexive republicanism

While in previous sections we explicit the conceptual and normative presuppositions of Honneth's comprehensive republicanism and Pettit's *representative republicanism*, in the present we will present the main three characters of a reflexive republican conception which finds support in most recent conceptualizations offered by valuable specialized political theorist. Those definitional characters would be *political, reflexive and participatory*.

IV.1. A political republicanism

The political character of reflexive republicanism is mainly connected with two theoretical lines.

On the one hand, it should be noted that J. Rawls stressed in his latest works a relevant distinction between political morality and comprehensive morality. The first type of morality is called *political* because it is offered as a more abstract and at the same time broader perspective than the second, in the sense that it is based on the justification of a certain normative

framework generated after an overlapping and reflexive consensus of comprehensive moral doctrines existing in a given society. The second type of morality is called *comprehensive* because it refers to a more specific and at the same time more restricted perspective than the second, since it offers foundational moral principles of a morality that rival in an exclusive way with other possible principles, or with other formulations of these same principles (RAWLS, 1996, 154-158).

On the other hand, Gutmann and Thompson have offered a particular way to redefine this debate, pointing out that we can classify political theories into those that are first or second normative level. First normative level theories would be those that offer moral answers to specific political problems, appealing to a restricted conception of what is meant by good, valid, legitimate and just, which rivals other possible conceptions of these concepts. Second level normative theories are those in which political morality is founded on more abstract principles, perfectly compatible, coherent, and consistent with diverse, though reasonable, first-level moral theories (GUTMANN and THOMPSON, 1996, 1-10).

According to both classifications, Honneth's republicanism could be considered a comprehensive and first level normative perspective. On the one hand, Honneth offers a particular neo-Aristotelian formulation of certain political principles, such as social justice, mutual recognition, and political community, which rival other comprehensive moral conceptions. In this sense, certain religious, philosophical and moral perspectives would not agree on the definition of these terms defended by the author. On the other hand, Honneth would assume a normative first level political theory by defining such terms in a precise and restricted way that rivals other normative first order theories. In this regard, various first order normative theories of justice, such as utilitarian, egalitarian, libertarian, republican and communitarian, would not coincide with Honneth's (KYMLICKA, 2002, 1-7).

In presenting Pettit's republicanism, we have already made explicit the first normative principle defended here, namely: freedom as non-domination. However, we previously referred to a second normative principle, citizen reciprocity, which promotes a moderate political mutualism between citizens and representatives. Reciprocity implies the ability to seek just and legitimate terms of social cooperation between citizens (GUTMANN and THOMPSON, 1996, 52-54). As Rawls says, the criterion of reciprocity expresses that "...our exercise of political power is proper only when we sincerely believe that the reasons we offer for our political action may reasonably be accepted by other citizens as a justification of those actions..." (RAWLS, 1996, xliv). The principle of reciprocity is more modest than

Honneth's mutual recognition principle, since the process of justification that it promotes is guided by mere citizen acceptability, and not by Aristotelian theses of necessary and complementarity existing political interests. The motivation behind reciprocity is mutual justification between those affected by the topic under discussion. The procedure that embodies the principle of reciprocity does not involve a comprehensive moral worldview of politics as suggested by Honneth's principle of social justice, nor an altruistic discussion of complementary moral ends as suggested by his mutual recognition principle, but a respectful deliberation of the diversity of existing subjects, opinions, and interests.

IV.2. A reflexive republicanism

Politically speaking there are, at least, two relevant semantic uses of the term reflexive. On the one hand, with the term reflexive we refer to a particular way of understanding the relationship between the ideal and non-ideal, as necessary components of a normative political theory, which imposes compliance with the requirement of feasibility. On the other hand, reflexive refers to a particular way of understanding the notion of democratic legitimacy. This second semantic use is especially important for us.

With regard to this second sense of the term reflexive some theorists point out that there are three main aspects considered important to evaluate reflexivity in matters of democratic legitimacy: political will expressions, political subjects and political times. From a reflexive republican conception, these three aspects must receive the following interpretations: a) the political will is thought of in a plural way, in the sense of assuming that political preferences: they are complex, not homogeneous, they are built during the debate, not preconceived to it, they are expressed during the deliberation, and not only at the time of voting, their definition is not only philosophical but also historical; b) the notion of people is multivocal and not univocal, so it refers to at least three complementary meanings: electoral people, as an abstract subject born after elections, a social-people, understood as a historically situated subject coinciding with a cultural community, and a principle-people, defined as that collective subject of ideal or abstract existence which pursues the realization of certain normative principles; and c) political temporality is not closed at the election moment but mainly includes the deliberative moment between representatives and citizens, politics cannot be reduced in its temporal face to a single aggregative moment of fixed wills, but must be understood as a

set of dialogical interrelated moments of wills under construction (ROSANVALLON, 2011, 129-134).

Thus, it is clear, that while Honneth's republicanism is more or less consistent with Rosanvallon's republican democratic interpretations of elements (a) and (c), it does not seem to coincide with his explicitation of element (b). In this regard, as we have pointed out, Honneth assumes a comprehensive moral vision of the notion of political community, which implies a reductionist conception of the term that does not finish capturing all its complexity. On the contrary, in this work we assume together with Rosanvallon a multifaceted notion of citizenship, which can be understood in its triple dimension as citizenship-electoral, citizenship-social and citizenship-principle, while this allows to escape the reductionisms of the libertarian conception of people, as well as the populist conception of people. In other words, reflexive republicanism employs a third definition of the term people, since project it as a complex collective entity, composed of those three dimensions which are constantly redefined in the non-ideal conditions of its validity (ROSANVALLON, 2011, 129-134).

IV.3. A participatory republicanism

From a reflexive republican perspective, which is proposed as an adequate middle ground between the representative republican and radical republican perspectives, we propose as desirable and feasible to pursue the regulatory standard of *civic participation*. In other words, we consider that, in order to guarantee political commitment, Pettit's standard of non-domination is insufficient, just as Honneth's principle of social cooperation is inappropriate (LAFONT, 2020, 161).

In this sense, we share the diagnosis of various political philosophers who have warned that citizens feel abandoned and poorly represented by their representatives and political institutions, which would indicate that we urgently need to design and implement appropriate mechanisms for citizens to genuinely decide within their democracies (LAFONT, 2020, 1). Thus, in the absence of adequate responses to their demands by the formal political system, citizens no longer perceive themselves as free equal subjects, with the capacity for democratic self-government. From this perspective it would be necessary to increase the citizen possibilities of deliberating, deciding and controlling the main matters of government (LAFONT, 2020, 2).

However, reflexive republicanism combats "...the mistaken assumption that all participatory conceptions of democracy require citizens to be politically active and participate in political decision-making..." (LAFONT, 2020, 25). Such a moderate notion of civic participation would

allow us to refute two unfounded prejudices about the participatory democratic perspective, namely: i) to assume that it is a kind of direct democracy that is unviable in our complex contemporary societies (LAFONT, 2020, 27); and ii) affirm that it presupposes to deploy a constant citizen deliberative face to face political process to settle up each and every public discussion (LAFONT, 2020, 28). From this reflexive republican approach, elective and non-elective political representatives should submit to the instructions and evaluations of certain democratic bodies composed partially or entirely of citizens. These necessary accountability processes would make it possible to impose political sanctions on officials in the face of proven cases of irresponsibility (LAFONT, 2020, 28-30).

So, contrary to Honneth and his radical comprehensive republicanism, we don't pretend to impose on individuals the enormous burden of constantly and necessarily deliberate to accommodate and complement their political interests, nor we promote that the State or any governmental organism make propaganda or deploy cultural mechanisms to consolidate a comprehensive political ethos predominant in a situated society.

V. Conclusion

In this paper we developed three argumentative steps. Firstly, we proposed an exploratory and critical reading of Honneth's democratic theory. More precisely we suggest that there are five strong reasons to argue that Honneth's revised socialism could be interpreted as a *radical comprehensive republicanism*. Secondly, we compare Honneth's radical comprehensive republicanism with Pettit's representative republicanism. Thirdly, we briefly sketched an alternative political, reflexive, participatory, republican approach that keeps the best features of those previously mentioned and avoids the main critics directed to them. More precisely, we presented *reflexive republicanism* as a novel participatory republican approach, expectedly feasible and desirable for our non-ideal western democratic conditions.

Finally, to sum up, we consider that reflexive republicanism would offer three comparative advantages over Honneth's radical comprehensive republicanism. First, by taking a political approach would make it possible for those who defend various normative theories of justice and democracy to adhere. As we well know, the existence of deep, persistent and inerradicable disagreements on political issues requires all contemporary democratic theory to adopt a conceptual framework flexible enough to capture the different normative intuitions of citizens. This objective would be facilitated in our theory by the adoption of the values of political freedom

understood as non-domination and citizen reciprocity, defined as mutual civic understanding. Second, by assuming a reflexive character republicanism would assume a more complex and attractive conception of the notion of people. Third, by adequately promoting civic participation, rather than overdemanding comprehensive aims, reflexive republicanism would be adequately sensitive to the diverse and complex political conditions of contemporary Western democratic societies.

Notas

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