

Moral Pluralism in Drag Queen Art
(Critical Analysis of Axel Honneth's Social Recognition Theory through Actor Crossdresser)

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Abstract: In the social world, a wide range of phenomena can become a unique culture to provide representation in the communication of people's lives. The attitude and acceptance of drag queen art become a problem when it is seen from the perspective of moral pluralism. This issue becomes an interesting scheme in seeing art as a medium that can give a new face to the form of social acceptance of moral pluralism, especially respecting and acknowledging diversity. According to the researchers, this situation can be explained through the critical theory of society, specifically Axel Honneth's theory of social recognition. The methodology in the criticism of public through this theory can be done by insight mapping through theoretical studies that lead to an understanding of moral pluralism.

Based on the use of social recognition theory, moral pluralism is legal, but it cannot be dominated by absolute and dominant moral views. It is only with social recognition and respect for multiculturalism for the nobility of human dignity as a person. In this case, intelligence becomes a moral praxis that needs to be discussed in the context of a multicultural society.

Keywords: Pluralism, Moral, Art, Drag queen, Social Recognition, Axel Honneth

1. Introduction

Multiculturalism brings plurality to become a symbol or distinctive features of living together in modern society (Madung, 2014). Modern society makes progress in a multicultural order which appears to be a problem with the diversity of social life schemes. According to Cyril E Black (Faturahman, 2018) modernization is a process of a society that is transformed due to the revolution in science, time, and technology. Modernization in social life and multiculturalism brings society with a view that the value of human needs always contradicts and creates conflict between traditional concepts and dynamic aspects of human life.

The debates and problems that occur revolve around moral views in various scope such as attitudes towards others, professional ethics, environmental ethics, family views, religion, gender, race, etc. Traditionally, morals are principles and beliefs concerning the limits of right and wrong behavior in human life. How humans live in good standards as human law. Immanuel Kant (F Purnama, 2018) states that morals as the conformity of attitudes and actions with norms and laws which is seen as a moral view have become a particular debate to date between the views of the description of moral absolutism (there is only one correct answer) or subjective freedom and relativism (there is no wrong answer) as a reaction to absolutism in seeing the social phenomenon of a liberal society.

Liberalism is stated by Kant's deontology (Kekes, 2013) which "*is above all the story about justice among moral society being composed of a plurality person*". In the last decade, liberal(ism) thought has always been coexisting with the life of a multicultural society which in principle supports the power of pluralism (moral and cultural) (Lubis, 2015). Moral pluralism is the value of people's willingness to accept the diversity (plural) of moral values and good-bad ethics in social life (Kekes, 2013). This brings moral pluralism to be one of the challenges in overcoming the debate in plural society about the extent to which moral attitudes can be tolerated in social life.

Honneth's social recognition theory has a large contribution to create a system in the life of multiculturalism and pluralism by following the spirit of the theory of other critical figures in creating a society that is free from coercion, control, and domination so that each individual or group of individuals are guaranteed their identity and dignity as a human being which comes from intersubjectivity theory of Herbert Mead and his teacher Jurgen Habermas on universal interest.

According to (Rochman, 2016) the Cabaret Show is a performance art genre played by crossdresser dancers with cross-gender appearances featuring dances and musical dramas using the Lypsink method. Cabaret show adapts an art performance from foreign cultures originating from France (Europe) which until now has been widely popular in other countries such as America, England, and even in Asian countries (Indonesia, China, and Thailand). In Thailand, this art is not an exclusive phenomenon but it brings both pros and cons in the social sphere. This art can be very entertaining and amazing because it can be the main attraction for tourism products.

On the contrary, in Indonesia this art has become a socio-cultural controversy on gender and LGBT issues. According to (Fakih, 2012) the interpretation of the term gender is an identity that does not mean sex (biologically), but gender is an inherent trait or characteristics of men and women that are socially and culturally constructed. Similar opinion was stated by (Hanum, 2010) that gender is different from sex. Sex refers to biological differences between men and women.

Gender is not natural but it is a form of roles or traits that are shaped by cultural values and social processes that result in the differences between men and women. Because this art is performed by a man who appears or dresses as a woman, people often find gender bias which ultimately formulates the popular issues of LGBT, shemale or transgender, and so on. Hence it also blurs the true meaning of art which is very pure because it collides with social and cultural values. Understanding gender also often triggers human rights issues and injustice. In practical terms, the moral value in the tradition of cross-dressing becomes a certain assumption and judgment in multicultural societies. Interestingly, this action sometimes becomes a phenomenon that entertains the public.

Cited from tirto.id, in Japan (*Otoko no ko* or male daughter) it is emphasized in men's activities to wear women's clothes regardless of their sexual preferences. *Otoko no ko* is a form of expression and creativity using costume in a feminine style. In England, during the 1450-1553s, a handful of women wore men's jackets or priest's robes and cut their hair short to create an erotic situation. Source: <https://tirto.id/cross-dressing-tak-selalu-berkaitan-dengan-orientasi-seksual-crQU>.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia especially in Yogyakarta, this art has been known for a long time. For example, *Wayang Wongaya* dance, the role of a woman is played by a man. In *Reog Ponorogo*, a beautiful man plays *kuda lumping* (flat horses trance dance). In *Wayang Wong Srinedari* dance, the role of *Arjuna* is played by a woman. Likewise in Surabaya, the performances of East Java *Ludruk* are played by crossdressers.

The actors of this crossdresser can be divided into two, namely drag queen and drag king. (Muryani & Putra, 2012) in their research stated that a drag queen is a man who dresses in female costumes such as accessories, clothing, and make-up that are commonly used by women. Likewise, a drag king is a female actor who dresses like a man. In this study, the researchers only choose crossdresser drag queen because drag queen is well-known and popular in explaining the terms applied in the realm of the show.

Currently, artistic expression through crossdresser or drag queen has started to open people's minds in this modern era to be dynamic. Entertainment programs on television have started to open up about the artistic life of drag queen in various event concepts and creative content. Various assumptions from society began to arouse controversy in accepting the presence of crossdresser drag queen with an open mind, although some others opposed it.

Like other arts, the crossdresser stage through drag queen, which was originally only limited on certain stages has now started to enter the commercial and heterogeneous entertainment stage such as offices and weddings. Through these platforms, the crossdresser and drag queen begin to show a more open identity as a part of art whose existence is accepted by society. The public began to accept the drag queen's presence with an open mind. What becomes a challenge for a drag queen is to carry out their roles as a drag queen and also as members of society.

The drag queen art is closely related to LGBT issues which makes the current art industry as entertainment needs to be considered as a social conflict. Hopkins (Muryani & Putra, 2012) states that public performance leads to discrimination against drag queens including rejection from friends and family even though all drag queens are not necessarily homosexual or gay. They do this only because of the demands of their profession. This persecution and conflict often occur because some people do not accept someone's sexual orientation. Meanwhile, the art of crossdresser is not always related to sexual orientation.

In Indonesia, this performing art with crossdresser actors often becomes public attention as an individual act that is often criticized and considered deviant and must be prohibited. The life of this drag queen crossdresser is often assumed by some people to be shemale or transgender and/or a group of people who are closely related to LGBT life. This is an understanding that needs to be discussed. The following article or data shows that various discrimination occurs in the scope of life of LGBT and crossdressers (shemale or transgender).

These ultimately become regulations that evolve into regulations without open discussion. Various events also occurred throughout 2018 which were summarized by crunchbase.com. This is in line with the discrimination that can occur to crossdressers who are considered LGBT transgender women due to the lack of experience and knowledge of the general public on this phenomenon.

LGBT incidents throughout 2018 cited from crunchbase.com (found on the documentation attachment page) stated several real actions such as in January when Bambang Soesatyo's rejected the legalization of LGBT which includes transgender people. In February, AdyaksaDault prohibits LGBT indications from joining the scouts. In March, raids occur in the Palmerah area in West Jakarta. In April, ICMI urges the government and parliament to enact laws, bans, and sanctions on LGBT. In May, MUI encourages LGBT punishment in the 6th ijtima ulema of the MUI fatwas commission. In June and July, caning sanction in Aceh. From August to September, there were several raids on gay clubs in Sunter, Jakarta. In October, Cianjur Regency Government regulation regarding the delivery of anti-LGBT Friday prayer sermons. In November, two Transgender women were persecuted and stripped naked in JatiAsih, Bekasi. (businessinsider.com)

The MUI fatwas of the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council consider this action (cross-dressing) as an act that is forbidden in Islamic teachings. "Islamic teachings strictly forbid men to resemble and wear women clothes because, by fate and law, men and women are different," said Deputy Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Zainut Tauhid when contacted by Liputan6.com on Monday 14 October 2018.

(<https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/mui-soal-crossdressing-Allah-melaknat-laki-laki-menyerupai-wanita-sebaliknya.html>)

Some researchers such as Newton and Tawksbury 1994 (Imam Fathoni, 2013) give the notion of the drag queen concept as failed men who associate themselves as homosexuals or gay. However, it turns out that not all drag queens are homosexual. Indeed, a drag queen is a man who does art production by dressing like a woman, but they don't want to be a woman and don't want to have a woman's biological physique.

Communication in the performing arts will be introduced through a form of communication between the actors of the art and the audience and mediated by the performance itself so that the form of communication enters the public domain or mass communication. The researchers consider art (especially the drag queen phenomenon) in Indonesia as the dynamics of thinking about cultural, social, and communication studies (Jaeni, 2007). However, in line with the many cons of this phenomenon, we can see that many people are starting to become permissive towards this crossdresser art. Starting from some management of the entertainment industry who have started employing them as a commodity in many public activities such as family events, offices, weddings which have opened up places and spaces for them to work as entertainment. Is it simply because people don't care that they are LGBT? Or is it only necessary for entertainment purposes?

Paletz(Tannenbaum, 2010) stated that in the practice of pluralism, gender and LGBT issues are the biggest force of individual crossdressers who can also determine the society's perspective in viewing morals. Moral pluralism is a challenge and a way out of the normative diversity of the realities of human social life regarding the acceptance of diversity in multiculturalism.

This formula in the modern era has begun to be considered by certain countries into open discussions in forming a plural society. (Airton, 2018) in his book *Gender Your Guide* reveals that the theme of crossdressers nowadays become an interesting global topic of conversation and is a growing issue. After that, people started to be gender-friendly as a constricting process in the perspective of Moral Pluralism.

Moral pluralism is the source of all welfare, joy, reducing violence for someone who is in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as stated in Article 28 paragraph 2 of 1945 which regulates Human Rights. "Every person is free from discriminatory treatment on any grounds and is entitled to protection against the discriminatory treatment". Moral pluralism in this phenomenon provides insight into communication that also takes place at several levels of the scope of communication. Starting from intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organization, and social communication or what we know as mass communication (Miller, 2005).

In this study, this will be described in a form of moral pluralism system in the critical view of several figures such as Axel Honneth, George Herbert Mead, and Jurgen Habermas. In (Madung, 2014), Axel Honneth explains liberalism and absolute views, as well as the relativism response, are not sufficient to explain moral pluralism because individuals are only seen as law and demand for validation.

1.1 Drag queen Phenomenon

The phenomenon of drag queen art must also be seen as a human being with individuals who have aspects of culture, tradition, and the concept of life (self-concept). Furthermore, the researchers see this phenomenon with the question, how plural can each society see this phenomenon? Does a plural society still need a basis of legal norms and validity? Charles Taylor's intercultural approach is unable to explain it because these cultural peculiarities are only brought to the private space. According to Honneth, another approach adopted from George Herbert Mead is needed, namely intersubjective recognition. George Herbert Mead's social psychology through "Me and I" and self, mind, and society suggests psycho-behavioral, or how to view psychological-social investigations regarding the fusion of individuals into society. He formulated a concept of post-metaphysical realization of the individual transformation of the social order. This is a requirement for an identity formation or social claim, as well as providing a universal view of the wars of absolutism and relativism with love (Mead, 2018).

The phenomenon of drag queen which is seen in an intersubjective way does not always show the relationship between the experience of suffering and active actions through communication. In Honneth's point of view, plurality is necessary in social action to see universal pragmatic through communicative actions initiated by his predecessor Jurgen Habermas or the colonialization of the world of social life (Lubis, 2015). To form moral pluralism, Honneth goes beyond Habermas with the paradox of universalized moral principles by placing social recognition of human nature as well as justifying multiculturalism to create solidarity (Seran, 2013). Honneth puts human nature as a subject through three reciprocal social recognition towards moral pluralism including love, legal order, and solidarity.

The objective of this study was to critically discuss how moral pluralism requires a system that refers to Axel Honneth's concept of social recognition. This research will provide an understanding and view of the truth about the social life of drag queens. It does not justify the life of drag queen crossdressers.

Through this journal, the researchers want to provide some views to a group of people on how to respond to moral pluralism to see a good and bad value, which often collides with the understanding norms. Of course, this is a consideration to become an advanced human being and uphold an attitude of justice and stay away from social discrimination. Further, this paper intends to explain the relationship between moral pluralism and Axel Honneth's theory of social recognition, the scheme of the critical tradition of the moral pluralism system that he proposes goes beyond Mead and Habermas, and examples of how moral pluralism and social recognition in art phenomena by drag queen actors explain the causes this results in creating new values and spaces that become human struggles and multiculturalism societies, that pluralism does not have to be about absolutism and relativism. However, it is social recognition.

2. Discussion

In the social world, a wide range of phenomena can become a unique culture to provide representation in the communication of people's lives. The attitude and acceptance of dragqueen art become a problem when it is seen from the perspective of moral pluralism. This issue becomes an interesting scheme in seeing art as a medium that can give a new face to the form of social acceptance of moral pluralism, especially respecting and acknowledging diversity.

According to the researchers, this situation can be explained through the critical theory of society, specifically Axel Honneth's theory of social recognition. The methodology in the criticism of public through this theory can be done by insight mapping through theoretical studies that lead to an understanding of moral pluralism. Moral pluralism contains a system to achieve it perfectly. Axel Honneth's critical analysis of social recognition theory becomes a bridge to see the process of moral pluralism in the phenomena of a drag queen in this study. The way society decides on moral judgments with different meanings in representing these values and views. The problems in this study include integrative interests in a theory and practical phenomena by identifying social sources to see their practical transformation. And how do drag queen actors carry out social fusion from the individual to the social community that arouse pros and cons in multicultural life.

The researchers try to understand the extent to which moral pluralism is understood and its success in the coexistence and multi-interpretation of society and becomes a problem of communication. In the section on problem identification, the researchers see the problem from a practical and theoretical perspective. Practical problems will explain how the exploration of Drag Queen communication in one profession and audience. How do they tell the form of communication that is used to be accepted in society. Also, the researchers will propose assumptions based on theoretical understanding to build this research.

3. Research Methods

Several things need to be understood about methodology and methods. The two things are similar but not quite the same. The term methodology is usually used to describe the method because the methodology is the basis of the method. The methodology is a research process to achieve and conduct research. Communication sciences or communication studies require beliefs that are known as paradigms and philosophical foundations, namely ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (what is considered knowledge, and how knowledge claims are affirmed), axiology (the role of value in research), and methodology. (Creswell, J, 2014). The methodology provides the basis for the philosophical work of a method (Engkus, 2009). This research methodology is a social critical methodology.

According to the group and science x methodology of knowledge (Seran, 2016), the critical social methodology includes several aspects among others: realm: independence/persona, formal object: freedom, interests: emancipatory, media: power, approach: reflective, evaluative, method: criticism, a form of activities: enlightenment, language expression: critical analysis, specific characteristics: deconstructive-reconstructive, benchmarks: changes, theoretical reference: critical theory.

Meanwhile, the research method is a procedure to understand the object or subject that becomes the target of the science concerned, to see and analyze a social reality both in terms of meaning and causality. (Ardial, 2014). In phenomenology, methods include conceptual analysis, linguistic analysis, hermeneutic methods, historical-critical methods, philosophy of literature, and formal logic (Engkus, 2009).

4. Analysis

The reality of the phenomenon seems to occur in several conditions that can be said to be unique. Drag queen then appears to be a unique phenomenon among people. It is considered to be unique not only in terms of the reality of this phenomenon, but also coming from individual reality, the stigma of society, and differences of opinion about something good and bad, namely morality. In the end, every difference that occurs instead appears as a contradiction that triggers actions to reject human life and threatens individual actors of drag queen art in their existence and self-actualization.

The researchers presented an explanation in the previous sections that in seeing this phenomenon the researchers used the critical recognition theory of Honneth with the phenomenological method as the basis for the researchers in completing the dissertation that these differences can be resolved by understanding moral pluralism. As for the critical journey and important findings of researchers in this study are Axel Honneth's thoughts which refer to George H Mead about behavioral studies revolve around self-confidence through intersubjective communication, the concept of I and Me, the Concept of Mind, Self & Society with Dewey to see how aspects Self-confidence is built so that each individual can give their best potential in carrying out the process of civil society. Axel Honneth sees the moral infrastructure of Hegel (Love, Legal Order, and Solidarity) as an intersubjective grammar in building self-respect between individuals and social communities. Axel Honneth refines Habermas's study in solving pluralism which has been able to provide a universal paradigm for communication. However, the Habermas Project with its theory of communicative action limits humans only to their dimensions of rationality and forgets other dimensions of human beings, especially aspects of recognition. For that reason, Honneth takes a different critical direction that is compromising on Habermas' theories and refines it by "recognize" which is built through "self-esteem" and solidarity.

Recognition is an interesting dimension in resolving moral pluralism which to this date has only been limited to tolerance. To create a good civilization above multiculturalism, it is important to achieve pluralism and understand the important aspects of it. To see that reality which must focus on self-awareness, communication, and social recognition. Therefore, the researchers conclude based on research questions and research objectives, namely:

1. Insights and history about the art of crossdressers have also come from the history of the world regarding the prohibition of women appearing and performing in public and on stage in Ancient Greek and regarding the status of women being lower than men. Therefore, if women present themselves in front of the public is the same as showing off their body parts which are considered immoral. The 16th and 17th centuries flourished in Sweden, and then other various areas in Europe. In China, it has still become an attractive commodity in traditional arts. Indonesia then has several crossdresser cultures in traditional arts, both from the artistic side to the spiritual. In the modern era, this art began to be modified to become popular and influenced by western culture as "drag queen".
2. Social relations and communicative actions between drag queen in Indonesia and society are still not at the stage of open discussion. The art of cross-dressing or drag queen for some people are still taboo and is stigmatized as immoral so it is not worth watching. However, in the big city, this type of art has begun to be permissive and is seen as entertainment that can bring a new atmosphere in the representation of multiculturalism and pluralism.
3. Axel Honneth refers to George H Mead regarding behaviorism studies on self-confidence through intersubjective communication, the concept of I and Me, the concept of Mind, Self & Society with Dewey to see how aspects of self-confidence are built so that each individual can give their best potential in carrying out the process of civil society. Axel Honneth sees the moral infrastructure of Hegel (Love, Legal Order, and Solidarity) as an intersubjective grammar in building self-respect between individuals and social communities. Axel Honneth refines Habermas's study in solving pluralism which has been able to provide a universal paradigm for communication. However, the Habermas Project with its theory of communicative action limits humans only to their dimensions of rationality and forgets other dimensions of human beings, especially aspects of recognition. For that reason, Honneth takes a different critical direction that is compromising on Habermas' theories and refines it by "recognize" which is built through "self-esteem" and solidarity in creating moral pluralism.

The researchers can conclude that the novelty of this study is that moral pluralism is legal but it cannot be dominated by absolute and dominant moral views. It is only with social recognition and respect for multiculturalism for the nobility of human dignity as a person. In this case, intelligence becomes a moral praxis that needs to be discussed in the context of a multicultural society.

5. Conclusions And Suggestions

This study used the foundation of theoretical critical studies from Axel Honneth through “Recognize” in finding elements that build moral pluralism. The results found that perception can not only in one form of perception on one reality. Moral perception also depends on the viewpoint of relativism. However, moral pluralism through recognition can be a bridge to simplify existing moral conflicts.

Therefore, the recommendations from the researchers for further research can be conducted using other critical theories, especially Fraser’s critical of Honneth in solving the problem of injustice through ethical channels. According to Fraser, it is necessary for full participation from those who experience discrimination to guarantee changes in cultural structures. The researchers also want to suggest to future researchers to conduct research related to other concepts of reality such as the phenomenon of lesbian, transgender, beggar, indigo children, or unique phenomena that can be studied using critical-phenomenology.

In terms of methodology, it can also use various approaches such as the mixed method. It can use quantitative or qualitative methods and can be analyzed using a critical approach. A practical recommendation is to see from a social perspective. The drag queen’s life is socially very complex and they are stigmatized as closely related to LGBT. This is considered very complex, especially for people who have not been able to accept the presence of art as a medium for moral messages or even threaten the survival of the nation’s future. As part of social life, the researchers suggest that in the future, especially for the public and chairman of community institutions and also community leaders to be able to discuss and educate in open discussions about the topic in overcoming moral problems, human rights, differences, multiculturalism, bullying, and most importantly in the family environment to see the basis of the Indonesian nation which is indeed very diverse and full of cultural differences. Problems such as drag queen or things related to LGBT or things about social deviations can be solved using conducive approaches so that it can find a solution to overcome the problems of social deviation. To clarify issues and phenomena in accordance with the corridors, looking at other people advantages and disadvantages, as well as practical self-control for drag queen individuals and us as a member of society.

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