

REVOLUTIONARY OR LESS-THAN-REVOLUTIONARY RECOGNITION?

Richard Gunn & Adrian Wilding

In the course of the last twenty years, the term *recognition* has entered the lexicon of mainstream political theory. The present paper takes issue with accounts of recognition which have become influential in these decades. Our criticism of such accounts is twofold: themes explored in Hegel's pioneering account of recognition have been downplayed and, at the same time, the notion of recognition has been prised away from its revolutionary implications.

Discussion in our paper falls into three sections. In the first, influential accounts of recognition given in the last twenty years are considered: more specifically, a comment on Charles Taylor's attempt to link the notion of recognition with multiculturalism is followed by discussion of themes in Axel Honneth's work. In the second, aspects of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* are considered. Our aim is to present the *Phenomenology* as a work whose conception of recognition differs markedly from that of discussions in recent years. In the third section, recognition's claim to be a notion that has revolutionary implications is explored – via provisional discussion of property and power.

The standpoint from which the present paper is written may be briefly indicated. During the twenty years of political theory with which our article is concerned, Left Hegelianism (Marxism included) has undergone a period of eclipse. As part of this eclipse, recognition has been understood in less-than-revolutionary ways. Our article contributes to a Left Hegelian resurgence. It does so by recollecting a perspective on recognition that neoliberal hegemony has all-but-concealed.

1. *Recognition: recent discussions*

The process whereby the term *recognition* acquired academic respectability is, we suggest, one of domestication. In the same movement as it established itself in political theory, the term's revolutionary overtones dimmed. The present section comments on recent discussions of recognition with a view to indicating their limitations.

Before embarking on our comments to this effect, two prefatory notes are needed. The first is that limitations of recent theorising become fully apparent only when the history of 'recognition' as a concept – and, more especially, its place in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* – is seen. The *Phenomenology's* treatment of recognition is explored in section 2 of our article.

The second concerns the claims which the present section makes. Our target is less-

than-revolutionary accounts of recognition which prevail in recent discussion. This is not to say, however, that we regard recent treatments as uniformly conformist. Nor is it to invoke a conception of revolution that is fixed in a monological or *a priori* way. Two points in particular may be noted. One is that we do not intend to close the door on a politics of what Angela Davis terms ‘radical’ (as distinct from ‘conventional’ or ‘superficial’) multiculturalism.¹ The other is that we share Axel Honneth’s view that critical theory turns on the notion of recognition – whilst disagreeing with Honneth about how recognition is to be seen.

The process of recognition’s incorporation into mainstream political theory falls (we propose) into two not-wholly-distinct phases. In the first, recognition is viewed as a term allowing liberal thought to encompass multicultural issues. The second regards recognition as a touchstone in post-Habermasian critical theory. We comment on each of these phases in turn.

(i) *Recognition and multiculturalism*

The first phase of recent discussion opens with the publication, in 1992, of Charles Taylor’s massively influential ‘The Politics of Recognition’. There, Taylor argues that questions about ‘distinct cultural identities’ raise ‘the issue of recognition’.² And he assumes that, conversely, questions about recognition – at any rate, questions about recognition in the ‘public’ (as distinct from ‘intimate’) sphere³ – take the form of multiculturalist questions. A reader of ‘The Politics of Recognition’ is left with the impression that issues of recognition and issues addressed by twentieth-century multiculturalism are one and the same. Can this equation of issues be defended?

A first ground for disquiet lies in turns of phrase which Taylor employs. In the course of his discussion, we learn that recognition is something that may be *given*⁴ or *withheld*⁵ or *demande*⁶; that it may be *lacked*⁷ and (when lacked) *sought for*⁸; and that it may (or may not) be *due*.⁹ In the last of these instances – an instance where it is synonymous with *respect*¹⁰ – recognition is understood as a moral desideratum. In the remainder, it is understood as a resource which may be present or absent. Taylor’s characteristic turns of phrase portray recognition as a sort of entity (or quasi-entity) which *is what it is* and concerning which questions of fair distribution can be raised. In short, his phrases draw the notion of recognition onto the conceptual terrain of

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- 1 A.Y. Davis ‘Radical Multiculturalism’ in her *The Meaning of Freedom* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012) pp. 103-4.
 - 2 C. Taylor ‘The Politics of Recognition’ in A. Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) pp. 52, 63.
 - 3 *Ibid.* p. 37.
 - 4 *Ibid.* pp. 36, 39.
 - 5 *Ibid.* pp. 36, 38.
 - 6 *Ibid.* p. 42, 64.
 - 7 *Ibid.* p. 26.
 - 8 *Ibid.* p. 70.
 - 9 *Ibid.* pp 29, 36, 66.
 - 10 *Ibid.* pp. 42, 70.

“liberal” political theory; moreover, they predispose a reader to conflate recognition-based and multiculturalist issues. Are our critical suggestions justified? We think they are. Their justification becomes evident when it is noted that recognition was by no means always understood as something which *is what it is*, and may or may not be present. As will be argued later, it was viewed as co-present with social existence and subsisting in contradicted or uncontradicted (or “alienated” or “non-alienated”) ways.

To these comments, a note may be added. Taylor presents his claims as liberal in character – but as conflicting with liberalism of a specifically ‘procedural’ kind.¹¹ In the light of the phrases italicised in the preceding paragraph, it is tempting to qualify Taylor’s disclaimer: his quarrel appears to be less with proceduralism’s restriction to issues of fairness than with its failure to regard recognition as a resource which should be distributed in a fair way. Read thus, ‘The Politics of Recognition’ is more closely embedded in current forms of liberal theory than at first sight appears.

A second ground for disquiet is more overtly social and political. It concerns the notion ‘distinct cultural identities’ – in effect, the unit of analysis which multiculturalism employs. We do not deny that, in the existing world, an individual’s sense of identity may be mediated through his or her cultural grouping.¹² Nor do we deny that an individual’s sense of identity is affected if his or her cultural grouping is viewed in a demeaning way. For us, however, the mediation of individual identity through distinct groupings (cultural or otherwise) is, itself, a seed-bed of difficulties. Problems arise not merely when a group or culture is demeaned but when individual identity is seen as membership-based.

Why, it may be asked, should a membership-based view of individual identity be viewed with suspicion? Our aim is not, here, to rehabilitate an abstract or asocial view of the individual. It is, on the contrary, to uphold a view of individuality which is through-and-through recognitive and social.¹³ Not the least of our reservations concerning a membership-based view of individual identity is that it clashes with conceptual and political potentialities which the notion of recognition contains.

Problems with membership-based views of individuality come into focus, we propose, when an individual’s relation to his or her cultural group is considered. Two points especially strike us as significant. One is that a group or culture of which an individual is a member stands *over against* the individual concerned. Whilst penetrating the individual’s mind, and affirming its authority, the group is experienced as a predominant feature – sometimes a nurturing, sometimes a

11 By ‘procedural’ liberalism, Taylor understands the view that ‘a liberal society must remain neutral on [the question of what is to count as] the good life, and restrict itself to ensuring that however they see things, citizens deal fairly with one another and the state deals equally with all’ (ibid. p. 57).

12 Whilst not denying this, we confess ourselves unhappy with the term ‘cultural’ - which strikes us as vague. But we do not pursue this charge of vagueness here.

13 We agree with Taylor that an individual’s identity ‘crucially depends’ on his or her dialogical – indeed, recognitive – ‘relations with others’ (‘Politics of Recognition’ p. 34). In passing, we note that, our various criticisms of Taylor notwithstanding, we find ourselves in broad agreement with his article’s introductory sections.

suffocating feature – of his or her external world. The other point is to the effect that a sense of identity rooted in group-membership is, at best, incomplete. Only part of individuality is acknowledged. As a *something* – as, say, a *man* or *woman* or *christian* or *caucasian* – an individual is recognized under a category which, although it has a specific or determinate content, applies alike to a range of disparate beings. So to say, such an individual is divided into *universal* (and acknowledged) and *particular* (and unacknowledged) aspects. Taken together, our points bring into focus an alienation which is not removed if the group concerned is valued in a positive or even-handed fashion. In order to grapple with this alienation, and move beyond it, what is needed (we claim) is a notion of recognition which thinks beyond a world where groupings of cultures into distinct identities are the order of the day.

Where do these comments leave Taylor's discussion? Passages in 'The Politics of Recognition' which reject the view that cultures *qua* cultures have 'equal worth',¹⁴ and which advocate a 'fused horizon of standards',¹⁵ may be read as calling in question a membership-based conception of individual identity. This said, Taylor's article neither develops the notion of recognition beyond multiculturalism's concerns nor shows awareness of alienations which a membership-based identity may entail. If horizons are fused, in what sense (if any) do 'distinct cultural identities' continue? A reader of 'The Politics of Recognition' remains uncertain about how its argument may proceed.

We turn to the literature on recognition and multiculturalism which emerged in the wake of Taylor's discussion.

In part, we suggest, this literature raises familiar issues. One such issue concerns the terms in which recognition is to be seen. For Emcke and Fraser, for example, recognition is something that may be *claimed*;¹⁶ for Tully, it makes sense to say that it may be *demande*¹⁷ and *sought*.¹⁸ Such turns of phrase – all of which jar on the ears of a reader familiar with Hegelian discussion – hint, as we have suggested, at a transposition of the notion of recognition on to liberal terrain. In later sections of our article, we focus on recognition in its wild (as distinct from domesticated) state.

In further part, the literature introduces fresh considerations. Two points in particular call for comment: (a) multiculturalism is understood in a broad fashion as a 'politics of identity and difference'¹⁹ and (b) attention is given to forms of grouping which

14 'Politics of Recognition' p. 72; see also p. 64.

15 Ibid. p. 70.

16 N. Fraser 'A Rejoinder to Iris Young' *New Left Review* No. 223 (1997) p. 129; C. Emcke 'Between Choice and Coercion: Identities, Injuries and Different Forms of Recognition' *Constellations* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2000) p. 484. See also Fraser's first contribution in N. Fraser and A. Honneth *Redistribution or Recognition?* (London: Verso, 2003) p. 46.

17 J. Tully 'Struggles over Recognition and Distribution' *Constellations* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2000) pp. 473-4; 'Recognition and Dialogue: The Emergence of a New Field' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2004) p. 94.

18 Tully 'Struggles' p. 476.

19 P. Markell *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) p. 9; S. Thompson *The Political*

may be of multiculturalist concern. For Emcke, for example, group-given identity may be ‘chosen’ or ‘imposed’ and must, in both cases, be seen in a ‘historical context’.²⁰ For Tully and Markell, identities rooted in group-membership are transformed by the struggles through which they are upheld;²¹ in effect, both writers insist that social and cultural groupings be viewed in a non-fixed-and-given and, so to say, non-essentialist way.

Do these considerations render our comments on alienation and group-membership inapplicable? We propose that (with a qualification that we shall mention) nothing is changed. Regarding point (a): the significance of a broadening of multiculturalism into a ‘politics of identity and difference’ depends on how the term *difference* is viewed. If the term is taken to mean, merely, *difference between identities*,²² the conceptual situation is unaltered. If, by contrast, difference is seen as *more fundamental* than identity,²³ then an element of ambiguity is introduced. *Either* identity which is vested in groups continues to be important (in the same way as actors on a stage may employ masks) *or* – and here comes our qualification – difference is seen as coming into its own only when notions of group-identity have been set aside. The latter may be Fraser’s meaning when she refers to a ‘shifting field of multiple differences’²⁴ as – in her terms – a *transformative* (as distinct from an *affirmative*) social goal.²⁵ Regarding point (b): the question of whether membership-identity involves alienation and the question of whether a group is (so to say) essentialist or non-essentialist are, we consider, conceptually distinct. Even a group which an individual has chosen to join, and even a group which has no fixed or given essence, is one which stands *over against* the individual. A group which an individual has chosen, and is open to change over time, remains one where membership divides an individual into *what is particular* and *what is universal*. No doubt, the fixed-and-given status of a group may intensify the alienation which membership in it involves. But the source of the alienation lies in the existence of identity-prescribing social groupings.

Besides commenting on the circumstance that groups change their nature through multiculturalist struggle, Tully and Markell argue for positions which demonstrate their distance from what in our view counts as a recognition-based approach. Tully urges that ‘agonic democratic games over recognition and distribution’ admit of no definitive resolution; what matters, in his view, is that the ‘games’ (a term he employs in a Wittgensteinian fashion) are freely played.²⁶ At one point in expounding the

Theory of Recognition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006) p. 186.

20 Emcke ‘Between Choice and Coercion’ pp. 485, 487.

21 See Tully ‘Struggles’ pp. 476-9 and P. Markell ‘The Recognition of Politics: A Comment on Emcke and Tully’ *Constellations* Vol. 7, No. 4 (2000) p. 499.

22 When Taylor himself employs the expression ‘politics of difference’ (‘Politics of Recognition’ p. 38), this appears to be the meaning that he has in mind.

23 As in a Derrida-inspired notion of *making a difference*.

24 Fraser in *Redistribution of Recognition?* p. 76; see also p. 106.

25 *Ibid.* pp. 74-5.

26 Tully ‘Struggles’ pp. 469, 474, 477; see also ‘Recognition and Dialogue’ pp. 91, 98.

nature of agonic games, Tully describes it as ‘unfortunate’ that ‘the Hegelian term “recognition” has been used to characterize and study them’: the term suggests that there is an ‘end-state’ where all concerned obtain the ‘form of mutual recognition’ which they ‘demand’ – and the notion of such an end-state is a ‘dangerous illusion’.²⁷ Our response to this passage is twofold. The first concerns Tully’s judgement that multiculturalism’s appropriation of the term *recognition* is ‘unfortunate’: whilst agreeing that it *is* unfortunate, we note that Tully’s reason and our own for considering that this is the case are diametrically opposed. Our own view is that, in such an appropriation, the wings of the term are clipped: recognition, as seen through a multiculturalist lens, makes its peace with an alienated world. Tully’s contrasting view is that agonic struggles promote ‘identification’ with the ‘democratic society which enables them to take place freely’²⁸ – and that this ‘identification’ is a good thing. Thereby, we suggest, he sees agonic struggle in a socially integrative light. Our second response to the passage cited concerns mutual recognition. Mutual recognition in its Hegelian meaning is not, we propose, a resource which may be distributed – whether in a satisfactory or an unsatisfactory fashion. It is a mode of existence linked to the freedom that open interaction brings.

For Markell, the view that multiculturalist struggles change ‘group identities’²⁹ is linked to a stress on the ‘finitude’ of human existence: aspirations to ‘independence and sovereignty’ are futile, and a recognition-based perspective must be understood as a reminder of *dependence on others* as a condition under which all humans exist.³⁰ In Markell’s view, moreover, the notion of recognition is bound up with an ‘ontological misrecognition of the nature and circumstances of our own activity’.³¹ In response to such comments, we neither affirm a socially unreal individual ‘independence’ nor concede, with Markell, that *dependence* (of one sort or another) is all that may be politically achieved. Instead, we turn to a freedom (or ‘independence’) which exists – or may exist – in and through relations with others. Such a view of freedom is, we shall argue, made possible if the notion of recognition is understood in a revolutionary sense.

(ii) *Recognition and critical theory*

In the second phase of recognition’s incorporation into political theory, the focus of discussion shifts: whereas Taylor’s ‘The Politics of Recognition’ linked recognition with multiculturalist issues, Axel Honneth’s *The Struggle for Recognition* (German edition 1992; English translation 1995) made the notion’s relation to critical theory a key theme. By *critical theory*, we understand theorising which – in Horkheimer’s classic formulation – ‘has a concept of man as in conflict with himself until this opposition is removed’.³² When Honneth turns to the notion of recognition, it is in the

27 J. Tully ‘The Agonic Freedom of Citizens’ *Economy and Society* Vol. 28, No. 2 (1999) p. 175.

28 ‘Struggles’ p. 480.

29 Markell ‘Recognition of Politics’ p. 499.

30 Ibid. p. 505, note 12. On the sense in which Markell opposes ‘sovereignty’, see *Bound by Recognition* pp. 10-11.

31 ‘Recognition of Politics’ p. 503.

32 M. Horkheimer ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’ in his *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Seabury

hope that it provides a basis for theorising which is critical in this sense. Is this hope justified? We think it is. Does Honneth's understanding of recognition live up to this expectation? We deny that this is the case.

A critical discussion of "recognition" as a theme in Honneth may have a number of starting points. One is (as in Taylor) the phraseology that it employs. Honneth speaks of recognition as something that may or may not be *justified*,³³ and which can be *withheld*³⁴ or *claimed*:³⁵ in short, his theorising is coloured by assumptions made in recognition's multiculturalist phase. Another is Honneth's relation to the previous critical theory tradition: is that tradition's 'critical edge' not 'blunted' – as Deranty proposes, and as we ourselves agree – in Honneth's later writings?³⁶ A third possibility is to move directly to Honneth's distinction between three *patterns* or *forms* or *spheres* or *fields* of recognition.³⁷ Although (we suggest) any one of the just-mentioned approaches leads to a similar conclusion, we adopt the last mentioned in what follows.

In a wide range of his writings, Honneth draws a 'tripolar'³⁸ distinction between (i) recognition as 'love', (ii) recognition as legal 'respect' and (iii) recognition as 'solidarity' or 'esteem' or 'achievement'.³⁹ Questions can be raised about each of the terms thus distinguished. Regarding (i): can 'love' be regarded as an instance of recognition, as Honneth suggests? On the one hand, recognition is frequently seen as requiring reciprocation – and Honneth appears to agree that this is the case.⁴⁰ On the other hand, object-relation psychoanalysis, to which Honneth appeals, views a mother's love as turning on 'identification of herself with her infant'⁴¹ – and this identification is strictly one way. How should this clash of views be resolved? One way is to concede that love is not an instance of recognition – but, say, a *feeling*. Another is to see love as an instance not of recognition *sans phrase* but of recognition in a contradictory form. Regarding (ii): should legal respect – more fully stated: equal respect for rights that may be enshrined in law – be viewed as an instance of

Press, 1972) p. 210.

33 A. Honneth 'Recognition as Ideology' in B. van den Brink and D. Owen, eds., *Recognition and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 325.

34 Ibid.

35 Honneth in *Redistribution of Recognition?* pp. 133, 134.

36 J.-P. Deranty 'Injustice, Violence and Social Struggle: The Critical Potential of Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition' *Critical Horizons* Vol. 5, No. 1 (2004) p. 298; see also p. 316. Deranty challenges Honneth to live up to the radical promise of critical theory and his own earlier work.

37 A. Honneth 'Between Aristotle and Kant – Sketch for a Morality of Recognition' in W. Edelstein and G. Nunner-Winkler, eds., *Morality in Context* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005); *Struggle for Recognition* p. 92; *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 137, 138, 142, 144, 146, 155, 184, 187; G. Marcelo 'Recognition and Critical Theory Today: An Interview with Axel Honneth' *Philosophy and Social Criticism* (<http://psc.sage.pub.com> [January 2013]) pp. 3, 4. Honneth uses the italicised terms interchangeably.

38 *Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 185.

39 See *Struggle for Recognition* p. 92 (and Ch. 5 generally); *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 138ff., 180; 'Recognition as Ideology' p. 337; 'Between Aristotle and Kant' p. 46. Honneth's love/respect/esteem distinction is used as an organizing principle in Thompson's *Political Theory of Recognition*.

40 See Marcelo 'Interview' p. 10: 'we recognize somebody in the expectation that he or she is recognizing us'.

41 D.W. Winnicott 'The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship' in his *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Karnac Books, 1990) p. 54.

recognition? Evidently, an answer to this question depends on how recognition is seen. Here, we offer only some passing observations. Does not law (whatever its content) stand *over against* an individual who is obliged to follow it? Is not law, traditionally, a “blunt instrument” whose whole point is to address individuals as *universals* – as *citizens*, say, or indeed as *human beings* – and to set all that may be *particular* about them aside? The circumstance that such questions can be raised suggests that – as in the case cultural groupings, as discussed above – the standpoint of legal respect belongs in an alienated world. One way of responding to this suggestion is to say that legal respect is indeed rooted in recognition – but recognition of a contradictory (an alienated) sort. Regarding (iii): here, we propose, difficulties are still more entrenched – and are indicated by Honneth’s shifting terminology. Why should ‘solidarity’ and ‘esteem’ be equivalent ideas? An answer to this question comes into focus if the term ‘achievement’ is introduced – and if ‘achievement’ is understood as ‘the extent of one’s individual contribution to social reproduction’.⁴² The larger the contribution, Honneth seems to suggest, the more socially *esteemed* the individual may be. The difficulty which arises is that a capitalist society – where, we are told, an achievement principle comes into being⁴³ – is one where self-interested behaviour is esteemed and an individual’s ‘contribution to social reproduction’ is slighted. Stating the difficulty still more explicitly: a distinctive and, possibly, unique feature of capitalist society is that it throws the notion of esteem based on ‘contribution to social reproduction’ to the winds.

Although these points strike us as serious, the most controversial features of Honneth’s discussion are general in character. Quite apart from what is said under the headings of ‘love’ and ‘respect’ and ‘esteem’, it may be asked: can recognition be seen (without distortion) as grouped into *spheres*? Our reply to this suggestion is that it cannot. In existing society, let us agree, a grouping which (in outline at least) resembles Honneth’s is present. But the notion of recognition is far from exhausted by such a grouping. Instead, the notion challenges, and points beyond, a world where spheres of recognition obtain.⁴⁴

Why we think of recognition in these terms will become apparent later. Here, we point to difficulties concerning *spheres* which, we consider, the notion of recognition may remedy. The difficulties that we have in mind regarding spheres of recognition run parallel to difficulties, raised earlier, concerning cultural groupings. We have suggested that a cultural grouping stands *over against* an individual who is its member; in the same way, we propose, a sphere or recognition – familial love, legal respect, social esteem – stands *over against* an individual caught up in recognition

42 *Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 263.

43 *Ibid.* p. 144.

44 Amongst critics of Honneth, Emmanuel Renault – see E. Renault ‘The Theory of Recognition and the Critique of Institutions’ in D. Petherbridge *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) – presents arguments that most closely resemble our own position. Renault is, so far as we know, unique in believing (as we do) that spheres of recognition *qua* spheres of recognition involve alienation. We disagree, however, with Renault’s claim that ‘institutions’ should be seen as ‘constitutive of recognitive relations’ (‘Theory of Recognition’ p. 228). Such a claim intensifies the alienation that it is intended to remedy.

which takes the form concerned. We have further suggested that membership in a cultural group divides an individual into *universal* and *particular* aspects. Here, we propose that ‘spheres’ as envisaged by Honneth acknowledge individuals only as *something* – as, say, a *family member* or *legal person* or *citizen* – and thus merely as the bearer of this or that universal social role. In short, spheres of recognition involve alienations similar to those that cultural groupings entail. In discussing cultural groupings, we suggested that a further development of recognition pointed beyond the alienations concerned. Here, in parallel fashion, we propose that the route beyond sphere-specificity is one which the notion of recognition charts.

If these comments on sphere-specificity carry conviction, should we conclude that Honneth sanctions alienations which present-day society contains? For two reasons, such a conclusion may strike a reader as unfair.

First, Honneth draws a distinction between ‘institutional complexes’ and ‘spheres of recognition’.⁴⁵ He criticises Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* – a work which he otherwise admires, and whose architectonic of *family* and *civil society* and *state* is mirrored in his own *love/respect/esteem* thematic – for giving this distinction insufficient weight.⁴⁶ If the terms ‘institutional complexes’ and ‘spheres of recognition’ have different meanings, may it not be misguided to accuse Honneth of sanctioning alienation? To this question, we respond that the difference should not be exaggerated. How might a ‘sphere of recognition’ be pictured, other than as a complex of social relations which stands *over against* the individual? If an individual is caught up in a ‘sphere of recognition’ in the sense that it defines his or her identity, does he or she not confront, simply as a datum of experience, the circumstance that the sphere is one of love or esteem or respect? In short, does the notion of ‘spheres of recognition’ not already *prepare the way* for the reification of recognition into social institutions? This line of thought may, we consider, be carried a step further. If spheres of recognition exist, are individuals not acknowledged as *something* (or as *some things*) in ways where universality and particularity are severed? We have seen above, in our comments on law as a “blunt instrument”, that Honneth’s discussion of legal respect generates difficulties about the relation between an individual’s universal and particular aspects. Here, we suggest that *whether or not the sphere concerned is a legal one* a sphere-specific view of recognition generates a universality/particularity dislocation. The distinction which may be quoted in Honneth’s favour fails to notice problems by which spheres *qua* spheres are beset.

Second, Honneth concedes that his *Struggle for Recognition* tends to be phrased as though ‘there are three stable forms of recognition which are universal’; but, he says, his later work tries to ‘historicize the forms and spheres of recognition’.⁴⁷ The point is

45 Ibid. p. 146.

46 Ibid. pp. 145-7. See also A. Honneth *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) pp. 63, 72, where the *Philosophy of Right* is accused of ‘over-institutionalization’.

47 Marcelo ‘Interview’ p. 2.

an important one in the present connection: if the spheres of recognition emphasised by Honneth are specific to capitalism, they may be seen as part of society's problem (rather than the form which a solution must take). So to say, a conceptual space opens where Honneth's discussion may regain what Deranty terms a 'critical edge'.

We doubt whether the historicisation offered by Honneth renews this edge effectively. As a means of explaining these doubts, we set alongside one another two contrasting, and highly schematic, accounts of history. According to one, history's crucial and, so to say, most traumatic transition lies in a passage from alienated to non-alienated existence. For Hegel, who shared this conception, the passage was one from history to post-history – and was marked by the French Revolution.⁴⁸ For Marx, the passage was one from 'prehistory' to history proper, and comes about with the attainment of communism.⁴⁹ According to the other, history's most crucial transition is that from pre-modern society to modernity. If problems concerning modernity exist, and if the notion of a transition from modernity to emancipated existence remains meaningful, such problems are – so the latter account affirms – relatively minor and residual in nature. Prospective changes to the *status quo* are seen as reformist (rather than revolutionary) and ameliorist (rather than fundamental). Rightly or wrongly, we view Habermas – especially the later Habermas – as the second account's chief exponent during recent decades. Our doubt concerning Honneth's invocation of history is that, whereas the historical periodisation employed by Frankfurt School critical theory in the 1930s and 1940s was that of Hegel and Marx, the periodisation associated with Habermas – and, we may add, with Weber – is the starting point of Honneth's claims.

In his recent interview by Goncalo Marcelo, Honneth refers to his 'debate with Nancy Fraser' – that is, *Redistribution or Recognition?* – as a work where the role of history is made especially clear.⁵⁰ What is striking in the present connection is that the most sharply focused historical passage in *Redistribution or Recognition?* concerns the 'differentiation of three spheres of recognition' – a differentiation which marked the transition from the pre-modern (or 'traditional') to the modern (or 'post-traditional') world.⁵¹ The theme of post-traditional 'differentiation' – in contrast to a previously undifferentiated (although estate-specific) notion of 'honour' – is a recurrent one in Honneth's discussion.⁵² Whereas the story told in this and similar passages is conceptually clear, the treatment of ways in which a three-sphere

48 On the significance of the French Revolution in Hegel's thought, see G.W.F. Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 6-7, 355-63; *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) p. 447.

49 K. Marx *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) p. 20. For Hegel, it is true, the French Revolution has already taken place (or has already begun) whereas Marx regards the transition to communism as a task that has still to be accomplished. In the context of the present discussion, this difference is irrelevant.

50 Marcelo 'Interview' p. 3.

51 *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 138, 140.

52 On *honour* in Honneth's discussion, see *ibid.* pp. 139-40. On *differentiation*, see *ibid.* pp. 138, 143, 184-5. Pensky has drawn attention to the circumstance that 'Honneth like Habermas demonstrates his extreme indebtedness to the tradition of German philosophical sociology from Weber to Luhmann, wherein modernity is to be taken primarily as a process of differentiation': see M. Pensky 'Social Solidarity and Intersubjective Recognition: On Axel Honneth's *Struggle for Recognition*' in Petherbridge *Axel Honneth: Critical Essays* p. 138.

recognitive framework might change (and a transition from the *status quo* to an emancipated society might appear on the agenda) is impenetrable to a degree. From the interview just cited, we gather that change in a sphere of recognition may result from a dynamic that is ‘internal’ or from influence exercised by ‘other institutions of recognition’.⁵³ Is this internal/external distinction coherent? In a world where there is more than one sphere of recognition, internal change may open a sphere to external influence and external influence may accompany internal change. In such a world, can a line between *what is internal* and *what is external* be drawn? And where may the source of change (be it internal or external) lie? From the corresponding pages of *Redistribution or Recognition?*,⁵⁴ we gather that attaining a ‘higher degree of individuality’ is a fundamental motive in bringing about change in recognitive relations: this was the case when differentiation into three spheres of recognition took place at the start of the modern period,⁵⁵ as well as when (in the present) ‘new borders between the individual spheres of recognition’ are drawn.⁵⁶ But how is this fundamental motive to be understood? At times, Honneth appears to picture attaining a ‘higher degree of individuality’ as a direct concern of individuals introducing change – say, by re-drawing the boundaries of spheres. When such concern is present, the change inspired may – let us agree for the sake of argument – be change of a revolutionary sort. At other times, however, the emphasis of Honneth’s discussion turns on the notion of what he terms ‘surplus validity’⁵⁷ and it is unclear how, in his view, the themes of surplus validity and an increase in individuality are to be combined.

Let us explain. For Honneth, a sphere of recognition has surplus validity when it allows individuals ‘to make other claims with reference to the same principle’.⁵⁸ For example, the sphere of legal respect may be extended to justify welfare provision. A difficulty with basing demands on the notion of surplus validity is that, as Renault expresses the point, ‘political struggles have to restrict themselves to the achievement of what the actual social order promises us’.⁵⁹ In short, a politics based on the notion of surplus validity merely promises more of the same. When Honneth refers to the notion of ‘surplus validity’, his concern is – we may note – to ensure that critique is immanent. Whilst his concern is, surely, respectable, the way in which he fulfils it elides *immanence* with *continuity*: he fails to notice that terms suggesting a break with a principle (rather than a more consistent application of it) may best articulate a

53 ‘Interview’ pp. 3-4.

54 See *Redistribution or Recognition?* pp. 184-9.

55 When this differentiation took place, ‘members of the new type of society’ became ‘able to experience more aspects of their personality along the different models of recognition’ (ibid. p. 184).

56 Ibid. p. 188. See also p. 189.

57 Ibid. pp. 174, 186. A parallel concept, frequently used in Honneth’s recent book *Das Recht der Freiheit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2011) is that of a ‘promise of freedom’. See Footnote 59, below. For discussion of Honneth’s book see Adrian Wilding’s review, *Marx and Philosophy Review of Books* <http://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviewofbooks/reviews/2012/577>

58 ‘Interview’ p. 3.

59 Renault ‘Theory of Recognition’ p. 216. Renault continues: ‘Social progress can no longer be understood in qualitative terms, in terms of social transformation, but only in quantitative terms, in terms of amelioration’ (ibid). L. Siep takes the same point further, asking if Honneth has ‘perhaps over-estimated the immanent promise in the institutions he analyses’ (L. Siep, ‘Pessimistisches Resümee trennt Honneth von Hegel’, *Die Zeit*, 18.8.2011).

response to what socially and politically exists.⁶⁰ In the light of these comments, we may say that, whereas an appeal to the notion of a ‘higher degree of individuality’ may be revolutionary, a politics which bases itself on the notion of surplus validity is reformist at best. The question of how Honneth proposes to combine the notions is one of political as well as conceptual interest.

Our claim is that, on this politically vital question, Honneth remains ambiguous. If anything, he tends to weigh his discussion on the ‘surplus validity’ side. A case for redrawing the boundaries of recognitive spheres must first, it seems, be made out in terms of surplus validity; ‘only then...in a second step’ may questions of individuality be brought into play.⁶¹ The notion of individuality may help us to ‘pick out morally justified particularities from the multitude of those typically asserted in social struggles’ but – and here Honneth’s exposition is at its murkiest – the ‘particularities’ themselves seem to be ones which the notion of surplus validity has generated.⁶² As it were, Honneth thinks of surplus validity and increased individuality as lexically ordered considerations. Stated differently, issues may be addressed in a revolutionary fashion only when consistent application of existing moral principles has made them count as topics of political concern. Our worry is that such a lexically ordered understanding of the case for revolution makes the notion of far-reaching social change problematic. This worry is intensified when we note Honneth’s addition to the passage under consideration: there will, he tells us, ‘always be a need to maintain the separate spheres’ – and this separation is to be maintained ‘all the moral legitimation for boundary-shifting notwithstanding’.⁶³ The transition from pre-modernity to modernity establishes (it seems) the limits of what is possible in the present-day political world. On Honnethian premises, in other words, the *status quo* is unchanging in its fundamentals – and this circumstance has an implication for how critical theory is seen. For Honneth, the critical theorist must take the horizons of the present as fixed and given and recommend only non-structural improvements or alterations. Our own belief is, by contrast, that a Hegelian rather than a Honnethian understanding of recognition can restore critical theory to its revolutionary roots.

We end our discussion of Honneth by noting a point where (with qualifications) we agree with his claims. On the question of whether issues of redistribution and recognition require a “two-dimensional” conception of justice’ (as Fraser proposes) or whether a “normative monism” of recognition’ is needed,⁶⁴ we ourselves are on Honneth’s side of the debate. This is so because such a stance chimes with the broadly Hegelian position which we explore and defend in our article’s second and third parts. Not the least of the places where we sympathise with Honneth in the Fraser/Honneth exchange is in Honneth’s charge that Fraser’s notion of “participatory

60 Examples of such terms are *refusal*, *inversion*, *rebellion* and *resistance*. See M. Hardt and A. Negri *Declaration* (New York: Argo, 2012) pp. 9, 31.

61 *Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 186.

62 *Ibid.* p. 187.

63 *Ibid.* p. 189.

64 *Ibid.* p. 3.

parity” has roots in liberal political theory. If the notion of “participatory parity” makes sense, Honneth counters, this is because a notion of mutual recognition is already presumed.⁶⁵ In pointing to areas of argument where we feel agreement or sympathy we are not, however, indicating a deep-level endorsement of Honneth’s position. If a recognition-based “monism” is to be affirmed in connection with social issues, the recognition concerned is not to be understood in Honneth’s – or, indeed, in multiculturalism’s – sense. If critical theory is to be defended by basing itself on the notion of recognition, ‘recognition’ as a category must venture beyond a “modernity”-inspired understanding of the term.

2. Recognition in Hegel

Above, we have argued that recent accounts of recognition make peace with an alienated world. They do so by assuming, as a framework of discussion, notions of recognition that are sphere-specific and/or notions of individual identity that are culture-based. In what follows, we turn to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* – a work where, we claim, such notions are neither endorsed nor taken for granted. If the arguments of the *Phenomenology* are brought to bear on recent discussions, Honnethian sphere-specificity and multiculturalist views of identity are seen to be rooted in recognition which has a contradictory form.

Our chief task in the present section is to sketch a reading of the *Phenomenology* which gives weight to the just-mentioned interpretive claim. The reading is one where the contrast between contradicted (or “alienated”) and uncontradicted (or “non-alienated”) recognition has a central place. Before launching on our discussion of Hegel – proverbially, an arduous undertaking – we offer some comment on what this discussion is designed to establish and how it proceeds.

In setting out our reading, we aim – first and foremost – to give a reader a sense of the difference between present-day treatments of recognition and the pioneering account which the *Phenomenology* contains. This difference is, in our view, one of chasm-like significance. Not only does the *Phenomenology* diagnose alienation in social patterns that recent debate is happy to endorse; in addition, this diagnosis articulates a more general and pervasive awareness on Hegel’s part that the *Phenomenology* belongs in a revolutionary age. Our sketch attempts to communicate something of this awareness. It does so by relating the issue of recognition to the *Phenomenology*’s account of history, and to the revolutionary transition with which (we consider) this account of history ends.

Another way of stating this aim is to say that we want to exhibit the *Phenomenology* as a work which presents a revolutionary (as distinct from less-than-revolutionary) view. However, our intention goes beyond this expository goal. We aim to suggest

65 Ibid. pp. 176, 261-2.

that, if revolutionary thought is to focus on recognition,⁶⁶ the *Phenomenology* is a place where discussion can usefully begin. Evidently, such a suggestion requires not merely textual but practical and political argument. Discussion of practical and political issues is not attempted in the present article – although section 3, below, offers pointers to the shape which such discussion may take.

How, in the present connection, should a discussion of Hegel's *Phenomenology* proceed? The question calls for an answer because an uncontroversially valid interpretation of Hegel's writings does not exist. In addition, the *Phenomenology* presents itself as a work whose overall structure is important: the totality of discussion is the context in which specific issues are to be seen.⁶⁷ There can be no question, in other words, of detaching Hegel's account of recognition from more general themes. This being so, we comment briefly on the *Phenomenology's* conceptions of theory and practice and of history before offering thoughts on how contradicted and uncontradicted theory may be seen. And, rather than relying on an unreal and controversy-free consensus, we present an outline which strikes us as faithful to Hegel's text.

A note regarding this outline is in order. What we say about the *Phenomenology's* conception of history may seem to a reader unacceptably "Kojèveian" in tone. Currently, Kojève is – we concede – an unfashionable Hegel commentator.⁶⁸ However, this unfashionability is linked to lack of sympathy with all things "Left Hegelian" and leaves untouched the question of whether Kojève highlights the challenge that the *Phenomenology* presents. If our comments on history have a "Kojèveian" ring, this is far from accidental – although what we say makes no attempt to mirror Kojève's views.⁶⁹

As in section 1, the present section is subdivided. Discussion opens with an outline account of the *Phenomenology's* conceptual structure, and this is followed by comment on how the notions of contradicted and uncontradicted recognition may be understood. A closing note offers thoughts on recognition in relation to Hegel's later work.

66 Why should revolutionary thought focus on recognition? What might such a focus mean? These questions are addressed in R. Gunn and A. Wilding 'Recognition Contradicted', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, forthcoming 2013.

67 In the well-known words of Hegel's Preface: 'the true is the whole' (*Phenomenology* p. 11). Of course, controversy breaks out about which 'whole [*Ganze*]' – or wholes – Hegel has in mind. In the last instance, we suggest, Hegel is thinking about the 'whole' of a mutually recognitive community: science (truthful theory) exists when, and only when, mutual recognition obtains. But Hegel is also referring to the 'whole' of the *Phenomenology's* pattern of argument. And it is in this (relatively uncontroversial) sense that his words are quoted here.

68 See, for example, R.R. Williams *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) pp. 10-3, 366-71. The most common objection to Kojève's reading of Hegel is that it is, as Williams claims, overly 'anthropological'. This strikes us as a rather weak criticism, since it is clear that Hegel – particularly in the Master-Slave passage, as in many other parts of the *Phenomenology* – deliberately addresses themes of historical and political (i.e. human and anthropological) concern. The complaint about 'anthropological' readings, we suggest, merely plays off against one another the *Phenomenology's* theoretical and practical aspects. By contrast, our own reading attempts to combine the two.

69 A significant point of disagreement with Kojève is indicated in note 84, below.

(i) *Hegel's Phenomenology: a conceptual outline*

In the text of the *Phenomenology*, the term ‘recognition [*Anerkennung*]’ appears as part of a larger discussion. We comment on this larger discussion before turning to recognition and related themes.

The overarching question addressed in the *Phenomenology* is, we propose, that of how theory and practice are related. Sections of the *Phenomenology* contribute, in various ways, to an understanding of how the theory-practice relation is to be seen. At the core of Hegel’s discussion lies a conception of the *unity of theory and practice*, and this conception underpins the *Phenomenology*’s most far-reaching claims.

A useful point of departure for comment on our proposal is a remark by the editors of a recent volume on Hegel: Moyar and Quante find it a ‘source of puzzlement’ that the *Phenomenology* deals with ‘both theoretical and practical stances’.⁷⁰ One way of removing this puzzlement is, we suggest, to see the unity of theory and practice as the *Phenomenology*’s pivotal theme. If this view is adopted, it is unsurprising that some chapters – for example, chapters I-III – describe standpoints from which theory seems practice-independent. (The purpose of such chapters is, we submit, to demonstrate that theory which sees itself in abstraction from practice generates insuperable difficulties.) And it is unsurprising that other chapters – for example, chapters IV and VI – address practical topics.

A further way of elaborating on a theory-and-practice approach is to ask how specific passages in the *Phenomenology* are to be understood. One such passage is the frequently-discussed transition from chapter III (the third of three chapters on “theoretical” topics) to chapter IV (where “practical” topics are introduced). Do the “practical” topics of chapter IV count as a fresh beginning in the *Phenomenology*’s argument? Or is chapter IV a continuation (despite appearances) of chapter III’s “theoretical” themes? If, as we suggest, the *Phenomenology* seeks to unite theory with practice such questions are needless: whereas chapters I-III explore the aporias of supposedly practice-independent theory, or theory that understands itself as a realm of its own,⁷¹ chapter IV begins discussion of practice as the terrain on which theoretical problems may be addressed.⁷² We stress the word *begins* in the preceding sentence: chapter IV is by no means the last word in Hegel’s discussion. On the contrary, the exploration of practice comes to a conclusion only when

70 D. Moyar and M. Quante, eds., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. xiv.

71 Compare Marx in *The German Ideology*: thought, we are told, is not ‘a realm of its own [*ein eignes Reich*]’ but a manifestation of actual (and thereby practical) life. See K. Marx and F. Engels *Collected Works* Vol. 5 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976) p. 447. In stressing the issue of theory and practice, we are in effect suggesting that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and Marx’s *German Ideology* are closely related works.

72 The questions that we claim to be ‘needless’ are highlighted in R.B. Pippin ‘On Hegel’s Claim that Self-Consciousness is “Desire in General”’ in H. Ikaheimo and A. Laitinen, eds., *Recognition and Social Ontology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) pp. 55-6. Our suggested view of the chapter III/chapter IV transition is, in effect, an alternative to Pippin’s neo-Kantian approach.

Phenomenology chapter VIII (headed ‘Absolute Knowing’) is reached. And the ‘Absolute Knowing’ chapter is, we suggest, the second place where discussion of a theory-and-practice approach may pause. How should Hegelian Absolute Knowing (or ‘science’) be pictured? Our suggestion is that chapter VIII points to a form of theory which, at last, grasps its unity with practice. And this suggestion leads to others. Is such a form of theory possible, in Hegel’s view, only when the end of history (or the end of historical practice) has been reached?⁷³ Does the *Phenomenology* tell us (despite its longstanding reputation for “idealism”) that truthful theory, or ‘science’, comes into its own when – as a deeply practical condition – uncontradicted recognition obtains?

Our discussion does not pursue these questions (fascinating though they may be) but places recognition – and freedom, to which recognition is linked – in the context that we have sketched. The notions of recognition and freedom are, we suggest, fundamental to the account of “practice” that the *Phenomenology* presents. In the *Phenomenology*, practical themes are explored through a discussion of history⁷⁴ – and it is to the *Phenomenology*’s conception of history that we now turn.

For the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, we propose, history is a history of recognition. That is to say, it is a history of forms (or patterns) which, over time, recognition takes. Such a history *begins* when recognition comes into existence – or, at least, when recognition becomes an issue which human action may address. Such history *ends* either when recognition vanishes from the face of the earth or (less disastrously) history’s narrative culminates in recognition that is uncontradicted. In the *Phenomenology*, history is a passage of ‘doubt’ and ‘despair’⁷⁵ which, against expectations, ends in the latter of the above-mentioned ways. More: it ends in Hegel’s own lifetime, in French Revolutionary years. With the *Phenomenology*, ‘philosophy’ (or love of wisdom) is raised to the level of ‘science’ (or actual wisdom), and this is possible because it is written in the light of the French Revolutionary ‘sunburst’ – a sunburst which illuminates the features of a ‘new world’.⁷⁶

Still at the level of general comment, some observations may be added about the course which (we consider) history as seen by the *Phenomenology* takes. Between the *beginning* and the *end* of Hegelian history, there obtain numerous patterns of

73 In chapter VIII, Hegel declares that ‘until spirit has...completed itself as world-spirit, it cannot reach its consummation as *self-conscious* spirit’ (*Phenomenology* p. 488). Hegel’s term ‘spirit’ is commented upon below.

74 The main discussion of history in the *Phenomenology* occurs in chapter VI (headed ‘Spirit’), which comments on the Ancient Greek *polis*, on Ancient Rome and on Europe from the decline of Rome until the French Revolution; the chapter’s final section explores forms of thought in Hegel’s own post-French Revolutionary day. We suggest, however, that history is already the subject-matter of chapter IV’s sections on (first) Master and Slave and (second) the Unhappy Consciousness. We read the Unhappy Consciousness as an account of the longing for otherworldly eternity that is voiced in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (written in the first quarter of the sixth century AD). Read thus, the Unhappy Consciousness section overlaps with chapter VI’s brief discussion of emergent Christianity’s belief in an otherworldly ‘beyond’ (*Phenomenology* p. 295). In effect, the Unhappy Consciousness section in chapter IV partly fills the “gap” in chapter VI’s historical narrative between the end of the decline of the Classical world and the Renaissance.

75 *Phenomenology* p. 49.

76 *Ibid.* pp. 3-4, 7.

contradictory recognition – or “misrecognition” – and, at the risk of imposing unity on an intrinsically untidy and uncertain process, history is for the *Phenomenology* a “work” which transforms contradictory recognition into recognition of an uncontradicted (or “non-alienated”) sort. The very first pattern of recognition which exists in history is, for Hegel, the ‘one-sided and unequal’ recognition that is characteristic of a Master-Slave relation:⁷⁷ *one-sided and unequal recognition* is one of two contradictory forms of recognition which prevail throughout history’s course. (The other historically prevalent form of contradictory recognition will concern us in a moment.) Because the first pattern of recognition in Hegelian history is that between Master and Slave, and because Hegelian history ends when uncontradicted recognition is achieved, the “work” of history can be summarised as a lengthy (two-thousand-year long), unsteady, vertiginous and uncertain transformation of *one-sided and unequal* into *mutual* recognition.

To the above general observations on recognition and history, comments on the related theme of *freedom* need to be added. This is so because, for Hegel, the notions of recognition and freedom presuppose one another; in the *Phenomenology*’s understanding of history, freedom and recognition are conjoint themes. Freedom – which, for the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, signifies *self-determination*⁷⁸ – subsists through recognition and *vice versa*: an individual’s capacity to determine him or herself is contradicted unless it is recognized, and recognition is contradicted unless it is free. What this means is that freedom and recognition flourish *only together*. If one is impaired or contradicted or alienated, so must the other. When either freedom or recognition comes into its own, and exists on its own terms in a “non-alienated” fashion, so too must the other: if uncontradicted freedom or uncontradicted recognition is to be possible, a terrain of what the *Phenomenology* thinks of as *mutual recognition* must obtain. Standing back, we may map these reflections on to what has been said about the course of history and history’s end. This mapping is (a reader may be relieved to learn) extremely straightforward. The picture which, we suggest, a reader needs to hold in mind takes the form of a time-line: throughout the course of history, freedom (understood as self-determination) and freedom are, alike, alienated and contradicted. At the end of history, freedom and recognition flourish together in a mutually recognitive ‘new world’.⁷⁹

Our comments on freedom and recognition as historical themes conclude our sketch of the *Phenomenology*’s conceptual structure. In effect, we have suggested that recognition and freedom are fundamental determinants of “practice”, in Hegel’s sense; and we have indicated the view of the theory-practice relation which, we consider, the *Phenomenology* presents. Our remarks on history and on the theory-practice relation may be brought together by noting Hegel’s view of his own place in

77 Ibid. 116.

78 In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel claims that absolute (free) being ‘is essentially a *result*’ (ibid. p. 11). This claim makes sense only if *freedom* and *self-determination* are equated.

79 See our remark on periodisation and Hegelian history at note 48 above. For Hegel’s reference to a ‘new world’, see note 76.

the history that the *Phenomenology* has related. His reflexive understanding is that, following the French Revolution, mutual recognition has been attained (or begun) and that *on this basis* – on this *practical* basis – ‘scientific’ theorising is propitious. The *Phenomenology* itself becomes conceivable, in other words, as a work in which a mutually recognitive audience or ‘public’⁸⁰ is addressed.

To our conceptual outline of what we take to be Hegel’s most challenging work, two notes may be added.

One concerns the *Phenomenology*’s Master-Slave section⁸¹ – to which we have already referred and which we regard as Hegel’s account of how history begins. We comment on this section here because the notion of a *struggle for recognition* – a notion invoked by Honneth and employed by multiculturalist theorists – is frequently seen as pivotal in this section of Hegelian text. Thompson expresses a widespread view when he suggests that struggle for recognition – or the notion that ‘recognition is something that must be struggled for’ – ‘made its first appearance in Hegel’s account of the dialectic of master and slave in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*’.⁸² In fact, despite its use by generations of Hegel-scholars, the notion of a struggle for recognition is not a central theme in the Master-Slave section – and the phrase itself does not appear in the *Phenomenology*’s version of the Master-Slave dialectic.⁸³ The struggle to which the Master-Slave section refers is a struggle for ‘life’ (and for the ‘death of the other’) – rather than a struggle for recognition.⁸⁴ It does, indeed, involve risk (or a staking of life) – but *any* struggle to the death involves risk, and there is no need to conclude (as do numerous commentators) that considerations of honour and recognition are uppermost in combatants’ minds. Our own preferred interpretation of the passage in question is to see the struggle as one entered into for reasons of survival – but from which issues of recognition result. Interpreted thus, the struggle may be seen as the action which brings a history of recognition into being. It brings a *history* of recognition into being because the recognition which immediately results from the *Phenomenology*’s struggle is the ‘one-sided and unequal’ relation of Master and Slave. When the struggle ends with submission, the “work” of transforming contradicted recognition into uncontradicted (or mutual) recognition begins.⁸⁵

80 *Phenomenology* p. 44.

81 *Ibid.* pp. 111-9.

82 *Political Theory of Recognition* p. 159.

83 Note Renault’s observation that ‘in the *Encyclopedia*... there are three instances of *Kampf des Anerkennens*, only one for *Kampf um Anerkennung*; the two expressions are absent from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*’ (E. Renault ‘Taking on the Inheritance of Critical Theory: Saving Marx by Recognition?’ in H.C. Schmidt am Busch and C. Zurn, eds., *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010) p. 255).

84 *Phenomenology* pp. 113-4. (It is on this score – see note 69, above – that our major disagreement with Kojève occurs. For Kojève, the struggle with which history begins – and to which the Master-Slave section refers – is emphatically a *struggle for recognition*: see A. Kojève *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books, 1969) pp. 7, 11-2. In our view, this is not the case. Indeed, it *cannot* be the case because a struggle to obtain recognition would presuppose that recognition was already a human issue. It would presuppose the history whose origin it was supposed to show).

85 For more on the “Master-Slave dialectic”, see R. Gunn ‘Notes on Master and Slave in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*’ (<http://richard-gunn.com>).

The second note concerns the notion of history as a history of recognition. A critic of what we have suggested may be quick to point out that ‘recognition’ is a category of *Phenomenology* chapter IV whereas history is explored by Hegel in chapter VI (on ‘spirit’): are we not running two parts of Hegel’s discussion together? Our answer is that an understanding of ‘spirit’ in terms of recognition seems to us defensible. Not only are deflationary understandings of ‘spirit’ increasingly common in Hegel literature,⁸⁶ but ‘shapes [*Gestalten*]’ of spirit – a notion which Hegel introduces at the start of chapter IV⁸⁷ – signify (in the words of a recent commentator) ‘form[s] of being-in-the-world’.⁸⁸ How may the notion of ‘being-in-the-world’ be understood? How other than in terms of recognition? A strength of our reading is, we protest, that it views the *Phenomenology* as presenting a connected argument. Seemingly different themes – theory and practice, freedom and recognition, recognition and spirit – are, in our outline, combined.

(ii) *Contradicted and uncontradicted recognition*

Our outline account of the *Phenomenology* has underlined the notions of contradicted and uncontradicted recognition but not, so far, explained them. Here, we offer brief clarifications. We start with recognition that is uncontradicted – and then introduce contradictions.

First, a prefatory comment: when we refer to uncontradicted or non-alienated recognition, we do not mean to imply that such recognition is contradiction-free. On the contrary, we picture a situation of uncontradicted recognition as one where, at last, the contradiction *in which freedom consists*⁸⁹ is unblocked or undistorted and able to unfold in an untrammelled and self-determining way. If recognition is uncontradicted, it is because a *contradiction to contradiction* has been removed.

From preface we turn to substance: by uncontradicted or non-alienated recognition, we understand (with the *Phenomenology* in mind) *mutual recognition*. The Hegelian notion of mutual recognition can, we suggest, be introduced in two steps – and then the position of the notion in the *Phenomenology* can be considered. First, we can note

86 According to Ikaheimo, ‘new readings of Hegel by leading contemporary Hegelians writing in English...now understand the word “spirit” as standing for the realm of the “normative”’ (H. Ikaheimo ‘Nature in Spirit: A New Direction for Hegel-studies and Hegelian philosophy’ *Critical Horizons* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2012)). And again: ‘on the more recent readings Hegel’s central term “spirit” does not stand for an ethereal entity or cosmic principle determining human affairs, but rather for the historically developing concrete practices, psychological, social and institutional structures, and the realm of cultural representations of the human life-form as an interconnected whole’ (H. Ikaheimo and A. Laitinen ‘Recognition and Social Ontology’: An Introduction’ in their edited volume *Recognition and Social Ontology*, Leiden: Brill 2011, p. 6). Whilst welcoming a deflationary understanding of ‘spirit’, we do not go along with the neo-Wittgensteinian ontology and enthusiasm for analytical philosophy that Ikaheimo and Laitinen appear to share.

87 *Phenomenology* p. 265.

88 T. Pinkard ‘What is a “shape of spirit”?’ in Moyar and Quante *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* p. 115.

89 Freedom *consists in a contradiction*, we propose, because it involves self-determination. When being determines itself, it *is* (*qua* actor) what it *is not* (*qua* acted upon) – and *is not* (*qua* actor) what it *is* (*qua* acted upon). Stated differently: free and, thereby, self-determining being is being which does not coincide with itself.

that *what* is recognized (for recognition to be ‘recognition’ in Hegel’s sense) is *freedom*: more specifically, it is the freedom of the recognized individual. We have already suggested that, for Hegel, *freedom* is *self-determination*: and the freedom which is recognized in an individual is the freedom inherent in his or her self-determining actions. Second, we can note that recognition, if it is to be self-consistent, must be reciprocal or mutual: in Hegel’s expression, ‘each [each individual] does what it demands of the other’.⁹⁰ In recognizing the other’s self-determining freedom, each (it follows) must recognize the recognition which the other freely gives. In Hegel’s words: ‘They [the individuals who recognize] *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another’.⁹¹ An implication of the comments just given is that recognition is self-consistent only if it is mutual. Anything short of *mutual* recognition is recognition in a truncated or contradicted (or “alienated”) form. A further implication is that mutual recognition is unreservedly *universal* (and not merely in the formal sense typical of liberal universalism): it is open-ended, and no one, on pain of self-contradiction, may be excluded from it.

From the two steps which, we consider, help to elucidate the notion of mutual recognition we turn to its associations in the *Phenomenology*’s argument. These associations begin to become apparent when Hegel refers to a situation where there is an ‘I that is We and We that is I’: such a situation – in effect, a situation of mutual recognition – involves a ‘unity’ wherein individuals ‘enjoy perfect freedom and independence’.⁹² How should we understand this formulation? We suggest that it refers to a unity which is maintained dynamically and through human interaction. We suggest, further, that the ‘independence’ concerned involves freedom (and freedom in the sense of self-determination) – but a reader of the passage must be careful to understand this freedom in a specific way. If freedom is understood as the freedom of an abstract or “atomic” individual, the passage becomes incoherent: a notion of “atomic” freedom (or “atomic” self-determination) is inconsistent with ‘unity’ – that is, with the notion that free self-consciousness ‘exists only in being recognized’.⁹³ For the passage to make sense, freedom (or self-determination) must be seen as existing *through other individuals*, and the individual who is thus free must be seen in an intrinsically interactive (rather than “atomic”) way.⁹⁴

Although the associations of mutual recognition begin to emerge in the ‘I that is We’ passage, the significance of the theme becomes clear only when its place in Hegelian history is seen. Seen in the context of a history which *begins* with the struggle that results in Mastery and Slavery and *ends* with the ‘sunburst’ of the French Revolution, it is striking that Hegel reverts to mutual recognition in the section of chapter VI where post-Revolutionary (and thereby post-historical) schools of thought are under

90 *Phenomenology* p. 112.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *Ibid.* p. 110.

93 *Ibid.* p.111.

94 It is, we think, because individuality continues to be seen in “atomic” terms that Markell sees recognition as involving *dependence* (see text at note 30, above.)

review.⁹⁵ In this section, his suggestion seems to be that mutually recognitive practice relaxes the mental cramp in which practice-independent theory is gripped. Be this as it may, mutual recognition is seen by Hegel as a fruit of the revolutionary crisis which allows the author of the *Phenomenology* to live and see. The roots of mutually recognitive existence in French Revolutionary freedom are made evident when Hegel's reference (in chapter IV) to an 'I that is We and We that is I' is set alongside his description (in chapter VI) of revolutionary crowd activity: on the streets of Revolutionary Paris, we learn, 'each, undivided from the whole, always does everything, and what appears to be done by the whole is the direct and conscious deed of each'.⁹⁶ A comparison between these passages makes it evident, we consider, that for Hegel the themes of revolution and recognition are linked.

From uncontradicted recognition we turn to alienated or contradicted recognition. A first point to mention in this connection is that *contradicted* recognition is not to be thought of as *absent* or *literally non-existent* recognition: on the contrary, it is recognition which exists but in a contradictory – an inconsistent or incomplete or impaired or distorted – form. It is recognition existing in a mode where recognition is denied. A second point is that, if *mutual* recognition flourishes at the *end* history, contradicted recognition is coeval with the course of historical time. If Hegelian history is (as we have claimed) a history of recognition, it is *contradicted* recognition that our claim has in mind.

If contradicted recognition endures throughout the span of history, the forms taken by such recognition are as diverse as historically-extant societies themselves. This said, there are two forms of contradicted (or contradictory) recognition which are, according to the *Phenomenology*, deep-seated and of especial historical importance. Such recognition may be (a) one-sided and unequal and/or it may be (b) institution-based. We comment on each historically prevalent form of contradictory recognition in turn.

(a) The notion of 'one-sided and unequal' recognition has already been referred to: such recognition is, we have said, typified in the relation between Master and Slave.⁹⁷ Such recognition contradicts the requirement – referred to above⁹⁸ – that recognition, in order to count as such, must be reciprocal or mutual. Famously, for Hegel, recognitive relations between Master and Slave trip themselves up: a Master depends on recognition by a Slave but, in a Master's eyes, recognition given by a Slave is worthless. Recognition ceases to trip itself up only when equality and reciprocity come into play.

(b) The form of contradictory recognition that we have, here, referred to as

95 See *Phenomenology* pp. 388, 392, 394, 396-7, 405, 408.

96 Ibid. p. 359. See, for background, G. Rude *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

97 See text at note 77, above.

98 At notes 90 and 91.

institution-based has not so far been mentioned in the present section. A reader who has followed our argument has already encountered it, however: institution-based misrecognition – or institution-based contradictory recognition – is at the core of the alienation which, in section 1, we said cultural groupings and spheres of recognition entail. The notion of institution-based misrecognition is introduced by the *Phenomenology* in a passage which, at first sight, appears to endorse nature-mysticism: the ‘universal elements of Air, Water, Fire and Earth’ are said to be a model for what Hegel calls ‘spiritual masses [*geistige Massen*]’.⁹⁹ What does Hegel understand by ‘spiritual masses’? The significance of the passage becomes clear, we suggest, and the appearance of nature-mysticism vanishes, if *spiritual masses* are seen as *social institutions*. And the point of comparing spiritual masses with the natural masses of Air and Water and Fire and Earth becomes evident, once social institutions are seen as possessing a nature-like inertia and momentum in which *alienation* is inscribed. A reader of our discussion will recollect our claim, in section 1, that spheres or cultural groupings stand *over against* individuals whose identity they claim to define. Hegel’s phrase ‘spiritual masses’ captures, metaphorically, something of the *over againstness* that institution-based social existence entails.¹⁰⁰

A further step in discussion of ‘spiritual masses’ helps to link comments on less-than-revolutionary recognition with our sketch of the *Phenomenology*. In a social institution, we may note, this or that set of *role-definitions* is inscribed. Social institutions presuppose role-definitions and, usually, role-definitions presuppose institutions. Here, our suggestion is that, if an individual’s identity is specified through the role or roles which he or she bears, that individual is recognized only in a partial and incomplete way. Only the *universal* part of the individual is recognized – say, the part which makes an individual (like a number of other individuals) a *student* or a *worker* – and whatever is unique or particular to the individual concerned is left out of account. In section 1, we suggested that a view of individual identity which turns on the idea of cultural membership acknowledges only *universality* and divides an individual in and against himself or herself. Here, we propose that our criticisms of multiculturalism’s notion of identity have Hegelian roots.

To these brief observations concerning institution-based misrecognition, a final point may be added. It concerns the nature of the contradiction which institution-based alienation involves. Earlier, we said that recognition which is one-sided contradicts recognition’s requirement of reciprocity and equality. Here, we add that recognition which is institution-based contradicts the freedom which recognition entails. In free and self-determining action, we suggest, “the whole man moves together” (Lichtenberg); this totalizing movement is undermined if a division – say, a division

99 *Phenomenology* p. 300.

100 The issue of *over againstness* is neatly illustrated in a recent exchange between John Holloway and Michael Hardt. To Hardt’s proposal that ‘we can develop the structures and institutions of a society of doing’, Holloway responds: ‘no, I do not agree with that... The repeated social practice slips easily into a bureaucratic structure... Institutionalisation leads easily into a state-centred politics’ – M. Hardt and J. Holloway ‘Creating Common Wealth and Cracking Capitalism: A cross-reading (Part I)’ *Shift Magazine* Issue 14 (2012) pp. 3-4. We share (and, in effect, claim that the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* shares) Holloway’s misgivings.

between *universal* and *particular* aspects – is introduced. In the context of the present article, the suggestion that *institution-based misrecognition alienates freedom* has an importance that may be underlined: in multiculturalist discussions, recognition of identity tends to be emphasised – in ways which allow recognition of freedom to be missed.

Standing back, we acknowledge that our brief comments on *one-sided and unequal recognition* and *institution-based recognition* give rise to a host of questions. Some are internal to the *Phenomenology*. For example: how do the two forms of contradictory recognition that we have mentioned relate to specific periods of history (or patterns of recognition) that the *Phenomenology* explores? Without attempting to address this question in detail, we suggest that both forms of contradiction are present (with qualifications) in all the social forms discussed. In a Master-Slave society, one-sided and unequal recognition is (of course) present – but so too are “Mastery” and “Slavery” as social roles. In the Greek *polis*, where Hegel stresses the role definitions of “Man” and “Woman” (inscribed, respectively, in the Human Law of the political realm and the Divine Law of the family) – but one-sided and unequal recognition is at issue in the relation between Creon and Antigone. In Ancient Rome, individuality is specified through the role-definition of legal personality – and the social world has, for the individual, ‘the character of being something external’.¹⁰¹ In the lengthy period of ‘culture [*Bildung*]', spiritual masses are explicitly present – but so too is one-sidedness and inequality.¹⁰² Hegel underlines the significance of institution-based misrecognition when he tells us that, in the French Revolution, self-consciousness grasps that it, itself, is ‘the essence of all the spiritual masses or spheres, of the real as well as the supersensible world’.¹⁰³ For Hegel, the French Revolution is more than a re-arranging of roles: the world is turned upside down.

Further questions concerning forms of contradictory recognition are more open-ended. Are one-sided and unequal recognition and institution-based recognition the sole forms that contradictory recognition may take? Or may other forms be specified? And what may these forms or others tell us about recognition in the present day? Rather than tackle these questions systematically, we offer a suggestion. In our view, there is no reason why contradictory recognition should not take irreducibly different forms. So far as present-day discussions are concerned, liberal conceptions of recognition as a thing-like resource (see section 1) point, perhaps, not merely to new forms of reification but to contradictory recognition of a new sort.

101 *Phenomenology* p. 294.

102 In suggesting that *one-sidedness and inequality* is present in *spiritual masses*, we follow a hint in Renault’s discussion of institutions. In the course of his discussion, Renault refers to institutional situations where ‘two roles’ play a part: he gives the example of *teacher* and *student* in an educational institution (E. Renault ‘Theory of Recognition and Critique of Institutions’ in Petherbridge *Axel Honneth* p. 224). The point which we borrow from Renault is that one-sidedness and inequality in an institution become increasingly visible when more than a single role-definition is discussed.

103 *Phenomenology*, p. 356. (The reference to ‘real’ and ‘supersensible’ spiritual masses is explained by Christianity’s distinction between this world – the world of practice – and a heavenly “beyond”. See, for discussion of Christianity’s worlds as a world ‘that is double, divided and self-opposed’, *ibid.* p. 295.)

(iii) *A note on recognition in Hegel's later work*

In the neoliberal decades in which a less-than-revolutionary notion of recognition has been foregrounded, a distinctive interpretation of Hegel has developed. It is one where the notion of recognition is seen as crucial not merely to Hegel's earlier writings (including the *Phenomenology* of 1806-7) but also to his later 1821 *Philosophy of Right*.¹⁰⁴

Does it make sense (a reader of Hegel may ask) to interpret the *Philosophy of Right* in a recognition-based way? Can recognition be regarded not merely as a theme in Hegel's later writings but as a fundamental concern of Hegel's later years? Our initial reaction to these questions is to hesitate: an answer depends on the sense in which the term 'recognition' is understood. What is undeniable is that the term is employed in the *Philosophy of Right* on a number of occasions,¹⁰⁵ although the nuances of meaning intended by Hegel are not always clear.¹⁰⁶ Our reaction becomes less hesitant when the question is sharpened. If it is asked whether recognition as understood by the *Phenomenology* serves as a basis of the *Philosophy of Right's* arguments, our answer is a decided No.

Our reasons for answering "No" mirror our dissatisfactions with less-than-revolutionary recognition. Multiculturalist and Honnethian views of recognition pretend (so we have suggested) that institution-based recognition is not a form of alienation. Viewed from the *Phenomenology's* standpoint, cultural groupings and cognitive spheres presume recognition which takes a contradictory form. Viewed from the same standpoint, the *Philosophy of Right's* division of 'ethical life' into *family* and *civil society* and *state*¹⁰⁷ perpetuates recognition which denies itself. In the introductory paragraphs of its 'Ethical Life' section, the *Philosophy of Right* tells its reader that 'ethical substance and its laws and powers are on the one hand an object [*Gegenstand*]... On the other hand, they are not something *alien* to the subject'.¹⁰⁸ If what we have termed institution-based recognition is indeed contradictory, as the *Phenomenology* believes, this "on the one hand"/"on the other" formulation is

104 R.R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Part Two; R.B. Pippin 'What Is the Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer?' *European Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2000) pp. 155, 164-7; Honneth in *Recognition or Redistribution?* pp. 143-6; Honneth *Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, esp. p. 50; A. Honneth *The I in We* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012) Ch. 2; S.C. Anderson *Hegel's Theory of Recognition* (New York: Continuum, 2009) Ch. 6.

105 E.g. G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 87, 103, 117.

106 In a famous passage, Hegel describes property as 'the *existence* [*Dasien*] of personality' – and then goes on to add that the '*existence* which my willing thereby attains' includes 'its ability to be recognized [*Erkennbarkeit*] by others' (ibid. p. 81). Why *Erkennbarkeit* rather than *Anerkennarbeit*? If the term were *Anerkennarbeit*, Hegel's claim might be that property has a *social* existence – and has a normative force only when it is recognized. Since the term used is *Erkennbarkeit*, Hegel (the Hegel of the *Philosophy of Right*) may mean that, on the contrary, society has a *proprietary* existence – and that recognition is valid only if rights enshrined in possessive individualism are fulfilled. The quoted passage strikes us as pointing in incompatible ways.

107 Ibid., Part Three. Honneth replicates (in updated form) this tri-partite distinction in his *Das Recht der Freiheit*.

108 Ibid. pp. 190-1.

without conceptual foundation. A social reality of which the *Philosophy of Right* approves stands over against an individual subject, and spiritual masses – however rightful¹⁰⁹ – continue their alienating rule.¹¹⁰

Why (a reader of our discussion may wonder) does it greatly matter whether a specific text by Hegel should be interpreted in a recognition-based way? Is our note regarding the *Philosophy of Right* of interest only in a scholarly sense? In order to provide a sense of why the interpretation of *Philosophy of Right* is important, we reverse the terms of our initial question. Instead of asking whether recognition is the key which unlocks the *Philosophy of Right*, we ask whether the *Philosophy of Right* supplies a criterion by which the notion of recognition may be measured. And we suggest that an understanding of recognition derived from a reading of the *Philosophy of Right* is an understanding which shifts discussion on to less-than-revolutionary ground.¹¹¹ Such an understanding (unlike the understanding that becomes available through the *Phenomenology*) countenances a situation where spheres that stand *over against* the individual obtain.

In the present section of our discussion, we have exhibited Hegel – or, more precisely, the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* – as a theorist whose work on recognition transcends a less-than-revolutionary stance. Although literature on recognition frequently refers to the *Phenomenology* as a classic of the genre, it is evident that much has changed if Hegel's text of 1806-7 is set alongside discussions of recognition in recent years. Most dramatically, the entire dimension of what we have termed institution-based recognition (or institution-based misrecognition) has dropped out of consideration. And the cost of its dropping out of consideration is that theories of recognition take their bearing from a still-alienated world. It is far from accidental, we suggest, that the Hegel which Honneth refers to most frequently is the Hegel not of the *Phenomenology* but of the *Philosophy of Right*.¹¹²

109 The word 'rightful' calls for explanation. For the *Philosophy of Right*, and for equivalent passages in Hegel's earlier writing, a social order is (we consider) rightful when all important virtues and all important knowledge is inscribed within it. Such a society may – according to the Hegel of the *Philosophy of Right* and the Hegel of the Jena philosophy of spirit (see L. Rauch *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A translation of the Jena lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6)* [Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1983]) – be one which is class-divided and premised on a social division of labour. Our worry is that an individual member of such a society will have access to only *some* of the virtues (and *part* of the knowledge that is possessed by society overall. Our worry is that such an individual lives out a life where institution-based contradiction predominates – and where, in a word, alienation prevails.

110 Might it not be objected to our line of argument is that, in the institutions which the *Philosophy of Right* endorse are (especially the state) ones which *embody freedom*? And does not the notion of institutions which *embody freedom* undermine our claims? But an institution which *embodies* anything whatever stands over against the individual. And if what the institution *embodies* is freedom, the freedom is one which contradicts itself.

111 Note that our evident suspicion of the *Philosophy of Right* is not based on a suggestion that the later Hegel is a died-in-the-wool conservative. On the contrary, we are here in sympathy with the 'consensus of contemporary scholarship' as Beiser describes it: 'The consensus of contemporary scholarship is that Hegel was a liberal reformer, and the reactionary interpretation has now been so discredited that it has virtually attained the status of a myth' (F. Beiser *Hegel* [London: Routledge, 2005] pp. 216-7; see also pp. 222-3). Our worry is that the standpoint of a 'liberal reformer' itself makes its peace with an alienated world and contains a conformist tinge.

112 See notes 46, 104 and 107, above.

We end the present section with a general observation: the *Phenomenology* counts as a revolutionary text because it understands recognition in terms of the to-and-fro flow of unfettered interaction.¹¹³ If uncontradicted recognition is structured, its structure must be one that unfettered interaction gives to itself. Such a view of recognition dovetails, we suggest, with a view of revolution which does more than replace one set of social frameworks (or social roles) with another. It dovetails with revolution which calls social organisation into question and with revolutionary action which affirms self-determination. The final section of our article suggests ways in which, with reference to recognition, the notion of revolution as self-determination may be thought through.

3. Recognition and revolution

In the first section of our paper, we explored recent discussions of recognition and concluded that the phrase “less-than-revolutionary” captures their political stance. In the second, we exhibited an account of recognition – that in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* – where the description “revolutionary” is deserved. Can the “revolutionary” view of recognition championed by Hegel do service not merely within the *Phenomenology* but in the practical world? Can the concepts of the *Phenomenology* do revolutionary work here and now, at a time when *geistigen Massen* adopt a neoliberal guise? There is, of course, no reason to suppose that the social structures of Hegel’s day and those of the present are unchanged. This said, however, we consider that features of Hegel’s discussion have application today. In a word, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* may be read not merely as a philosophical classic but as a revolutionary resource. The third section of our paper suggests ways in which this is the case.

Before turning to specific issues, we relate our comments to positions held in recent discussion. On the one hand, it is sometimes held that only some aspects of social existence may be analysed in terms of recognition – the remainder (perhaps the most important) lying beyond recognition’s conceptual and political reach. Of the aspects of society allegedly not amenable to discussion in terms of recognition, the two most often mentioned are *property* and *power*. For example, Markell points to histories of power ‘within and among and, as it were, behind groups’ and emphasises ‘the deep relations of power that generate and sustain misrecognition’.¹¹⁴ And Fraser’s “‘perspectival dualism’ of redistribution and recognition’¹¹⁵ suggests a view where issues of private property cannot be handled in a solely recognition-based way. At the other extreme, Honneth’s “‘normative monism’ of recognition’ stresses the recognition-based character of social existence *per se*.¹¹⁶

Where do we ourselves stand in relation to this division of opinion? We endorse Honneth’s notion of a monism of recognition – whilst, at the same time, refusing to

113 See text at notes 92-94, above.

114 Markell ‘Recognition of Politics’ pp. 500-1.

115 *Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 3; see also pp. 51, 63, 217.

116 *Ibid.* p. 3.

understand the term ‘recognition’ in Honneth’s sense. Our claim is, indeed, that a monism of recognition is defensible if and only if a less-than-revolutionary conception of recognition is rescinded and a revolutionary view – so to say, a *Phenomenology*-style view – put in its place. And our claim is more exact than is suggested by this general observation: the two main forms of contradiction identified by Hegel – ‘one sided and unequal’ recognition and ‘institution-based recognition’ – serve as keys to an understanding of power and property respectively. Stating our point differently: it is owing to aspects of Hegel’s discussion *which are slighted by recent discussion* that the notion of a monism of recognition may be sustained.

To these remarks on our line of argument, a note may be added. The aim of the note is to clarify our political stance. Elsewhere, we have suggested that revolutionary thought must develop (or redevelop) a focus on recognition.¹¹⁷ Here, we have suggested that even the most apparently recognition-resistant aspects of social existence may be understood in a recognition-based way. These points are, we propose, aspects of one another. It is because revolution can thematise recognition that structures can, without remainder, be called into question. And it is because a revolutionary theory of recognition can be developed that revolution may invoke interaction’s white and molten heat.

The present section consists of two brief discussions. The first outlines a recognition-based approach to the notion of property. The second suggests how issues of power may be seen.

(i) *Recognition and property*

In a world where, frequently, recognition is property-based a recognition-based conception of property represents a fundamental conceptual reversal. In order to give a sense of how fundamental the reversal is, a quick and highly schematic reference to the history of ideas is helpful.

In the seventeenth-century, the notion of property was inscribed at the core of the modern natural law tradition. (It was in this tradition, we note, that “bourgeois individualism” was forged.) Founding texts in this tradition defend the notion of property rights¹¹⁸ and see the origins of property and society itself as conjoined.¹¹⁹ What is striking in the present connection is not merely the prevalence of property as a category in bourgeois thought but the extent to which both *private* and *public* property fell within natural law’s conceptual net. In Pufendorf’s massively influential *Law of Nature and Nations* (1672), private and public property were seen as rooted in rival conceptions of a state of nature.¹²⁰ It is tempting, perhaps, to view Pufendorf’s

117 See note 66, above.

118 H. Grotius *The Rights of War and Peace* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005) pp. 86, 438; *Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006) pp. 23, 500.

119 *Rights of War and Peace* pp.420-7. See also H. Grotius *The Free Sea* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004) pp. 20-4.

120 In one – where, in Pufendorf’s terminology, a ‘negative’ community of goods obtains – objects are seen as

distinction between conceptions of a state of nature as the point in the history of ideas where “rightist” and “leftist” modes of theorising about property diverge. But such a view is (we warn) an oversimplification. What is certainly the case is that nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialism operated in terms of a private property *versus* public property distinction: so to say, it reversed Pufendorf’s order of preference (see note 120) but continued to play off one form of property against another. Such a project had its limits, however. A critique of property *qua* property is (together with an ending of natural law entanglements) essential if the ‘narrow horizon of bourgeois rights’¹²¹ is to be crossed.

A recognition-based conception of property is, we claim, one where a critical attitude to property *qua* property may be sustained. If recognition is understood in the “revolutionary”, or “Hegelian”, sense unfolded in section 2, a conceptual space allowing critical detachment from property-grounded thinking (and from the natural law tradition) appears. The property *system* – from artifacts and commodities to markets and international finance – presents itself as an institution, or set of institutions; more, it stands over against an individual who seeks to survive in a proprietorial society.¹²² At the centre of any system of property stands the figure of the *proprietor* – a proprietor who, as Pufendorf notes, may consist of a single human subject or a group.¹²³ And with the figure of the proprietor, the problematic notion of *role definitions* is introduced. This notion is problematic because, as was suggested earlier,¹²⁴ a situation where an individual is seen in terms of his or her role definition (or role definitions) is one which divides *universal* and *particular* aspects of individuality against themselves. In short, within the ‘narrow horizon of bourgeois right’ property *qua* property obtains and a contradictory form of recognition rules.

How may we mark, in theory, the magnitude of the reversal that a view of property in terms of recognition represents? We propose that a standard term in political theory be employed in a non-standard way. In the 1960s and 1970s, C.B. Macpherson familiarised a generation of political theorists with the suggestion that ‘possessive individualism’ – or, in other words, a property-based conception of the individual – became current in at least some natural law.¹²⁵ Here, we carry this suggestion a stage further by reversing the order of concepts that it employs. Instead of basing the term

unowned but may be individually appropriated: thus, private property originates. In the other – where a ‘positive’ community of goods obtains – objects are seen as belonging ‘to many Persons together’ so that (in effect) unpermitted individual appropriation is theft. See S. Pufendorf *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* (London 1729) p. 362. Pufendorf, and the natural law tradition as a whole, prefers a private over a public conception of property.

121 Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 615.

122 Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger* – the only novel by Hamsun which Lenin admired – stands as a vivid documentation of the *over againstness* that market relations entail.

123 O. Geirke *Natural Law and the Theory of Society 1500-1800* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957) has emphasised the extent to which a group or an association may, for legal purposes, count as a single individual.

124 In our discussion of contradicted and uncontradicted recognition, above.

125 See, famously, C.B. Macpherson *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). In the introductory chapter of this work, Macpherson links possessive individualism to a ‘conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor his own person or capacities’ (ibid p. 3). In our view, this stipulation is unrealistically narrow: by no means all property-based thought turns on the notion of self-ownership. It is to the more general overtones of Macpherson’s discussion that our use of the term ‘possessive individualism’ appeals.

‘possessive individualism’ upon the notion of an infection of thought by the idea of property, we base the term ‘property’ on the notion of individuals who are recognized in a specific – here, a ‘possessive’ – way. That is, we see property (whether public or private) as based on contradictory recognition.

What may be the implications for theory of seeing property in terms of recognition rather than recognition in terms of property? What may be the implications if possessive individualism (a form of individualism constituted through contradictory recognition) is seen as the key to the notion of property rather than the reverse? In the space of the present article, a thoroughgoing discussion of these questions is impossible. However, the most striking implication can be indicated in a general way. Very frequently, in political theory, discussions of property home in on the question of how property – and, more generally, resources – should be distributed.¹²⁶ One effect of the reversal that we recommend is that the limitations of such discussion is clearly seen. If wealth in capitalist society ‘appears as “an immense collection of commodities,”’¹²⁷ and if commodity-wealth is divisible into units, then individuals seen as possessors of commodity-wealth are themselves bounded and delimited in an alienating way. Such individuals have, at most, a circumscribed freedom and – to employ a terminology introduced earlier¹²⁸ – their mutually recognitive freedom *in and through other individuals* remains unattained. In short, our proposed reversal involves a change in theory’s priorities: without denying the importance of distributional issues, it evaluates property relations in the light of the forms of recognition that they entail.

To what practical and political attitudes may the reversal we recommend lead? Although, once again, the present brief discussion does not attempt an adequate answer, a clarificatory note is to the point. Whereas a “socialist” revolution might, for a range of reasons, aim at conquest of state power, a revolution which aims at mutual recognition and the surpassing of property *per se* has a grassroots quality. This grassroots quality is essential because a revolution which aims at a change in recognitive relations is one which must start as it intends to go on. Let us be very precise on this fundamental issue: we are *not* saying that issues of property distribution are unimportant or that it scarcely matters whether public or private property is preferred. Far from it. It matters enormously that that the notion of public property is championed and defended – not least because a situation where property is public is one where proprietorial divisions are beginning to be blurred. To this extent and in this sense, we count ourselves as socialists. However, changes in patterns of ownership and distribution are important insofar as they contribute to changes in recognition – rather than the reverse. And they may contribute to changes in recognition only when, from the start, communism – communalism,

126 John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* is a semi-recent instance of such thinking.

127 K. Marx *Capital* Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976) p. 125. We are indebted, here, to a draft article by John Holloway with the working title ‘Read Capital: The First Sentence’.

128 See text at note 94, above.

communalising – begins.¹²⁹

(ii) *Recognition and power*

We now turn to another topic where we believe the concept of recognition can prove fertile, namely *power*. Though less-than-revolutionary approaches to recognition touch on the issue of power, their ability to treat it *critically* must, we suggest, remain questionable. To this extent we agree with Emmanuel Renault when he argues that power is a blind spot in Honneth's institution-oriented recognition theory.¹³⁰

Renault's criticism of Honneth is worth exploring in a little more detail, because its strengths and weaknesses are relevant to our topic. Central to Renault's argument is that viewing institutions as embodiments of norms (such as recognition) may be misguided because institutions are at root often about something else: the sheer exercise of power. Drawing on Michel Foucault's ideas, Renault argues that it is power as much as (if not more than) recognition which defines institutions. Quoting a famous line from Foucault about the prison – 'The institution of the prison is for many an iceberg. The visible part, that is justification. The hidden part, that's what is really important, the most fearsome part'¹³¹ – he suggests that it may be precisely through norms that power conceals and legitimates itself. Appeals to institutional norms may thus prove futile for fighting deeper forms of oppression: 'there are types of experiences of injustice in which individuals experience their own situation as unjust without being able to express it as unjust in the normative grammar of institutional principles'.¹³²

The argument here is one we broadly endorse – Renault's laudable aim is to give voice to the perspective of those for whom the normative discourse surrounding institutions is often little more than an ideological gloss. And though his example of the prison may seem specific or exceptional, he (like Foucault) understands the point to apply to institutions more generally.

But while Renault's argument is a valuable one, a problem arises. It seems – and this becomes graphic in Foucault's iceberg metaphor – to make a stark distinction between power and norms while leaving the relation between the two unclear. Norms such as recognition are presented as mere surface phenomena (something visible) and power as the deeper (hidden) basis of society.¹³³ Can the relation between recognition

129 Hardt and Negri make a similar point when discussing apparently antithetical struggles over 'public property' and 'the common' (*Declaration*, p. 78-80).

130 Renault 'The Theory of Recognition and Critique of Institutions' p. 221-2. It is interesting that despite Honneth's own lengthy engagement with Foucault (in the early book *Critique of Power* [London: MIT Press, 1993]), he seems never to address the relation between power and recognition in a sustained way. Our comments in this section are intended as a brief essay (in the original meaning of the term) on this relation.

131 Foucault cited in Renault, 'Theory of Recognition' p. 221.

132 Renault, 'Theory of Recognition' pp. 221-2

133 In Hegelian terms it divides the visible *for-us* of norms from the invisible *in-itself* of power, as if the normative is a mere appearance and power the reality. Such a dualism of *for-us* and *in-itself* doesn't pass Hegelian muster. See e.g. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, op. cit., pp. 53-57.

and power be characterised in this way?

We believe not, but suggest there is a way of defending Renault's criticism of Honneth (and Foucault's compelling iceberg metaphor) while avoiding the problem pointed to above. It is as follows. We need to see that society is *recognitive all the way down*,¹³⁴ that the deeper one delves into society one finds not so much power without norms but contradictory recognition. Our claim is that *power itself involves contradictory recognition*, specifically, one-sided and unequal recognition. Power involves *one-sided* recognition in that a power relation is one where an individual is treated as an object rather than a full subject; it involves *unequal* recognition because an asymmetry exists between a subject wielding power and the object of that power. This asymmetry is indeed heightened in the power of institutions. Renault and Foucault are correct that the actions of institutions *are* often enactments of power but they overlook that power itself is also about recognition, namely recognition's contradictorily non-mutual and unequal forms.¹³⁵

Any dualism of "power" versus "norms" falls away once one sees that *every* part of society, from individual interaction to the actions of institutions, can involve contradictory recognition, that is, one-sided and unequal recognition, or – put another way – recognition riddled with power. Put in Hegelian terms, society's "appearance" and "essence" are no longer conceptually divided once it is seen that social existence *is* recognition, and that recognition typically (though not necessarily) takes on contradictory forms. Such a synthesising or monistic approach has the benefit, we suggest, not only of clarifying the relation between norms and power but also of rescuing a critical and potentially revolutionary perspective on institutions which is lost when they are viewed as straightforward embodiments of recognized freedom. In this context we ask ourselves whether Honneth, despite his own avowed 'normative monism', ever really pursues this non-dualistic, Hegelian and – we suggest – radical line of thought.¹³⁶

Here we must pause, though, because a reader who has followed Renault's Foucault-inspired critique of Honneth thus far, may well object to the conclusion we have reached. Surely, the reader may object, we have misconstrued what Foucault meant by 'power' if we assimilate it to a Hegelian recognition-based approach. What Foucault objected to in existing concepts of power is the assumption that power is exerted in a top-down or "repressive" way. It seems that in the Hegelian account of

134 Our phrase adapts a famous line in Robert Brandom's *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 144): "it's norms all the way down", without implying endorsement of Brandom's wider project of an analytic Hegelianism.

135 The other form of contradictory recognition typical of institutions which we have drawn attention to is role definitions.

136 Honneth's description of his own approach as a 'normative monism' (*Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 3) is rightly directed against the dualism he finds in Nancy Fraser's belief that recognition needs to be supplemented by a theory of redistribution. We agree with Honneth that no supplement is necessary but disagree on what a monism of recognition actually entails. For us it implies that society is *recognitive without remainder*, but with the important proviso: that recognition today typically takes fundamentally one-sided and unequal forms.

the one-sided and unequal recognition between Master and Slave we have an archetype of power as domination, as power-over, as repression. For Foucault, so a reader may object, power is something very different: it is not wielded by anyone but is diffuse and productive, it is constitutive and all-pervasive.

Does our view that power involves one-sided and unequal recognition rely upon the top-down or repressive model Foucault rejects? We suggest that it need not be construed in this way. While Hegel's master-slave dialectic certainly gives us an account of power as domination or repression, it also gives us an account of power's constitutive capacity,¹³⁷ i.e. the same capacity to which Foucault draws attention.¹³⁸ And by thinking of power as involving contradictory – that is, alienated – recognition, grounds are provided for a *critical* approach to power relations. Indeed our reader's objection can be turned around: can an account of power which *dispenses with* notions of repression and domination (and of recognition) and sees power as productive and all-pervasive adequately tell us what is *wrong* with power?

Our argument in this section is an admittedly speculative and provisional one, but one worth pursuing: it is that power can be seen as recognition in another guise, specifically recognition existing against itself and in contradictory and alienated form. Power is a mode of existence of contradictory recognition. Though our comments here are consciously essayistic we emphasise the value of construing power and recognition as internally related concepts. Above all, we suggest, such an approach keeps alive the idea of *critiquing* power relations.

Drawing together the threads of the discussion in section 3 it can be seen that both the phenomenon of property and the phenomenon of power involve *contradictory recognition*: property involves recognition where social roles and institutions are the order of the day; power involves recognition which is one-sided and unequal. In the everyday world of capitalism, however, property and power are often intertwined. The forms of contradictory recognition involved are intermeshed, and the alienation correspondingly intensified.

* * *

Throughout our article we have attempted to show just how central to any social ontology the notion of recognition must be. Thinking through to its logical conclusion what a 'monism' of recognition entails leads, so we have argued, beyond the limitations of both the multiculturalism debate and Honneth's sphere-based approach.

137 For Hegel on recognition as constitutive see particularly *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 119-138. These passages, which follow directly the discussion of Master and Slave show Hegel expound 'stoicism' and what he calls 'the Unhappy Consciousness' as forms of subjectivity or worldviews generated by unequal relations of recognition, of power. Hegel's discussion would prove influential for later left-Hegelian thought. See for example Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of the Odysseus myth in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Sartre's arguments in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and Simone's de Beauvoir's analysis of gender in *The Second Sex*.

138 For Foucault on power as constitutive see e.g. *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) pp. 139-142.

Though Honneth is right that recognition can provide the normative basis for a critical theory, we suggest that, properly understood, recognition can help ground a critical theory in its *original* sense – the revolutionary sense intended by the early Frankfurt School and which seems missing from later Frankfurt School theorising.

Contrasting the less-than-revolutionary discourse on recognition with the original Hegelian concept has brought to light the latter’s political implications. In the different strands of the less-than-revolutionary discourse on recognition we have seen common themes, such as a failure to appreciate that recognition can take alienated or fundamentally contradictory forms – forms such as those which Hegel’s *Phenomenology* identifies and critiques. It is no coincidence that the alienating aspect of human identities based on culture- or group-membership goes relatively unnoticed in Taylor’s work while the alienated character of institutions and social spheres goes largely uncriticised in Honneth’s: this is, we suggest, the high price paid for severing recognition from its original Hegelian meaning.¹³⁹

If our project here can be linked to the founding spirit of Frankfurt School critical theory it can also be situated within an older tradition of Left Hegelianism, a tradition out of which Marxism also arose. Our defence of a revolutionary notion of recognition revives a Left Hegelianism which in recent decades has been all but eclipsed. No doubt there are historical reasons for this eclipse. The birth of Left Hegelianism and Marxism in the mid-19th Century coincided with a period of revolutionary ferment which spread like wildfire across Europe, a period followed by a harsh political reaction and the restoration of traditional institutions of authority.¹⁴⁰ Arguably, the rise of neo-liberalism in the last decades of the 20th Century involved a similar “restoration”, one which – like its forbear – took its toll on revolutionary theory.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, however, in an era of global uprisings and renewed struggles, theory has little excuse for being out of step with the radical spirit of the times. Space has allowed only a sketch of a politics which might flow from a revolutionary (as opposed to a less-than-revolutionary) notion of recognition – we

139 Our reference to *political implications* gives us a chance to anticipate a possible objection. We have left the objection until a late point because this ordering corresponds to our understanding of where, in discussion, it may usefully addressed. The objection takes as its starting point the claim, raised by Habermas and subsequent Frankfurt School writers, that even in an emancipated society social institutions – most notably *law* and the attendant notion of *legal respect* – must obtain. In the light of this claim, is our own invocation of ‘revolutionary’ recognition tinged with romanticism? Our response is that such an objection is wrong-headed. If social institutions are first introduced, uncontradicted recognition – or mutual recognition – cannot possibly be introduced at a later stage: such an attempt falls over its own feet. If, by contrast, mutual recognition is established as a priority and a *sine qua non* of emancipated existence, communities and individuals may address situations and exigencies as they (the communalising individuals) see fit. As a limiting case, lead gauntlets may be donned to handle the radioactive material of social institutions but, unless mutual recognition is an absolute commitment, the overwhelming likelihood is that the gauntlets will never be taken off. The claim raised by Habermasian and post-Habermasian theorising is grounded, we suggest, not in maturity of judgement but in conformity with the ways of a far-from-emancipated world.

140 For more on the history of Left Hegelianism see Emmanuel Renault, ‘The Early Marx and Hegel: the Young-Hegelian Mediation’, unpublished MS, available online.

saw its radical implications for thinking about such phenomena as property and power – but if one is to look for the resonance of our ideas in the contemporary world one might well observe the recent global uprisings, the ‘Occupy’ movement and the various prefigurative and mutualist social experiments which have followed it.¹⁴¹ Common to the various movements which have risen to prominence in the last two years is that they not only refuse an unjust, unfree and unsustainable social world but also attempt – through their forms of participation and ways of thinking – to bring into existence an entirely new one. In the various occupations of public and private space, in the development of ‘horizontal’ forms of decision-making, in the experiments with not-for-profit education, in the various mutualist networks set up as alternatives to austerity, these movements have not only said ‘no’ to an unfree, unequal and exploitative form of life but developed amongst themselves social relations of equality, democracy and freedom. For these movements it is as if the desired future of self-determination can exist – in however marginalised and interstitial form – in the here and now.

Recent uprisings exemplify, in our opinion, what we find in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*: contradicted and alienated recognition striving to become mutual recognition. However tentative and interstitial, the new politics visible in movements such as ‘Occupy’ are themselves living examples of mutually recognitive interaction, islands of mutual recognition in an alienated social world.¹⁴² It is no coincidence that these movements eschew institutions and particular cultural allegiances. A politics of recognition, specifically a politics which acknowledges the revolutionary implications of Hegel’s notion of mutual recognition, is therefore uniquely equipped to make sense of the current historical conjuncture and to see why it offers renewed hope for the future.

* Adrian Wilding is currently a visiting scholar at the Institut für Philosophie, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. He also teaches at the Großbritannien-Zentrum, Humboldt-Universität Berlin.

*Richard Gunn lectured on political theory at the University of Edinburgh from 1975 to 2011. Between 1987 and 1997, he was a member of the Common Sense editorial collective. He currently writes and researches on an independent basis.

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141 For discussion of recent uprisings, see D. Hancox, ed., *Fight Back! A Reader on the Winter of Protest* (London: OpenDemocracy, 2011); A. Lunghi and S. Wheeler, eds., *Occupy Everything: Reflections on Why It’s Kicking off Everywhere* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2012); L. Oikonomakis and J. Roos “‘Que No Nos Representan’: The Crisis of Representation and the Resonance of the Real Democracy Movement from the Indignados to Occupy’, Paper presented at the conference on Street Politics in the Age of Austerity, University of Montreal, Feb. 2013; D. Graeber *The Democracy Project: A History, A Crisis, A Movement* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); J. Roos ‘Autonomy: An Idea whose Time Has Come’ *ROAR Magazine* (23 June 2013).

142 This topic is only gestured towards here. It is dealt with at greater length in Richard Gunn and Adrian Wilding, ‘Recognition Contradicted’ (as cited in note 66, above).