

# Recognition and resistance

## Axel Honneth's critical social theory

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Critical theory, by its very nature, opposes reduction to a corpus of historically frozen doctrine. None was more acutely aware than the inner circle of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* that a theory which resists adaptation to the changing nature of society forsakes its critical purpose, turning instead into another form of theoretical dogmatism.<sup>1</sup> Rather than being identified through commitment to a fixed body of ideas, critical theory might be defined by what Horkheimer, in his well-known essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory', termed the 'critical attitude'. This denotes a commitment to social change which is conscious of itself as an intervention whose claim to validity is inextricable from the demands of the historical juncture in which it arises. To do 'critical theory', then, is always to be engaged in a process of reconstruction and reformulation. The work of Axel Honneth constitutes a powerful and ambitious attempt to extend this tradition, by developing a theoretical perspective capable of deciphering the changed logics of social struggle in late modern societies.

Honneth claims that the diverse and fragmentary forms of struggle which occur along the multiple axes of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and class can be brought under the theoretical umbrella of a morally motivated struggle for recognition, in which social actors raise normative claims against social arrangements in which they feel 'disrespected'. Before discussing this project in greater detail, I shall begin by looking at how Honneth has attempted to distinguish the 'critical theory of recognition' from 'first-generation' Frankfurt School theorists (Horkheimer and Adorno), as well as from Habermas. I believe it can be shown that Honneth manages to overcome a number of the most problematic features that have dogged Habermas's theoretical endeavours from the

beginning. Yet, as we shall see, the shortcomings of his own project are also largely due to a continued adherence to the critical framework opened by the 'Kantian turn', of which Habermas remains the chief expositor.

### **Culture and criticism**

In an early essay, entitled 'Communication and Reconciliation: Habermas's Critique of Adorno', Honneth affirmed the necessity of Habermas's efforts to ground a normative framework for critique, as a way out of the allegedly intractable pessimism and negativism which marked Adorno's philosophy, after the Frankfurt School's original interdisciplinary research programme had been rendered obsolete. Essentially, this essay constituted a more or less faithful Habermasian reading of the problems of Adorno's project, charging that, having reduced rationality to instrumental rationality, Adorno was forced to locate the potential for reconciliation in the 'mimetic knowledge' of the artwork.<sup>2</sup> Because Adorno does not distinguish between the normative terms of social interaction and the logic of the appropriation of nature, he is forced to deploy an 'overtaxing', 'theological' model of reconciliation. Thus it is only through endorsing Habermas's distinction between the *praxis* of intersubjective interaction and the *poiesis* of engagement with objects that one can recover the possibility of 'theoretically guided political practice'.<sup>3</sup> Yet also, and importantly, Honneth locates a central failing of Adorno's later work in its inability to formulate any idea of, or theoretical basis for, collective struggle. The immediate penetration into consciousness of the ideological products of the culture industry, together with the (alleged) absolute separation between the mimetic knowledge of the artwork and the instrumental rationality prevalent in society, meant that 'the

experience of oppression', for Adorno, 'can be formulated only on an individual basis'. Adorno no longer expects 'the contradictions of capitalist accumulation' to 'generate class resistance'.<sup>4</sup>

It is the combination of a commitment to a version of Habermas's distinction between the sphere of normative interaction and the sphere of production, with the perceived need to link the perspective of normative critique with forms of opposition and resistance emerging *within* social reality itself, which has defined the direction of Honneth's project. However, the commitment to the first of these ideas means accepting Habermas's break with historical materialism, which consequently renders problematic the second, since the actors within social reality who might be charged with the task of transforming the established order can no longer be identified by their position within the economic structure. Struggle was no longer reducible to *class struggle*. Rather than following Habermas's tendency to bracket the question of critical theory's location within social reality, Honneth has attempted to develop a response to this question in tune with a commitment to the pluralization of the political Left, thereby breaking the exclusive identification of domination with *economic* domination.

The solution to this problem emerges from an account of the cultural sphere as the location of 'practical-critical activity', which Honneth begins to develop in *Critique of Power*.<sup>5</sup> Arguing against Horkheimer's early efforts to develop critical theory within the framework of a Marxist philosophy of history, Honneth seeks to uncover a realm of quasi-autonomous cultural activity which, he argues, is suppressed by the identification of the goals of critical activity with the ends of the production process. Such a conception of cultural activity, Honneth argues, would involve the 'cooperative testing and problematizing of interpretations worked out within the group'. Insight into the injustice of the economic structure *within* the cultural horizon of oppressed groups may then be formulated as an insight which forces group members to 'correct and expand the traditional horizon of interpretation in the face of unmasked reality'. Social struggle may be theorized as the attempt by social groups 'to realize within the normative structures of social life the norms of action acquired in the repeated experience of suffering injustice'.<sup>6</sup> This potentially critical force of cultural praxis, however, is ruled out by Horkheimer's exclusive stress on the *socializing* function of the cultural sphere – its operation as a superstructure that reflects 'the behavioural constraints of the economic system back upon the individual

psyche'.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, Horkheimer is forced to fall back on a determinist philosophy of history in which the potential for transformative praxis emerges from objective contradictions rooted within the economic structure.

A point worth raising here, to which Honneth does not give due consideration, is whether this view of the cultural in Horkheimer is attributable to a theoretical decision, or whether it is a result of what Horkheimer perceives to be the fate of culture within monopoly capitalism. Honneth assumes it is the former, and thus attributes it to Horkheimer's adherence to a 'Marxist functionalism'.<sup>8</sup> But there are passages in 'Traditional and Critical Theory' that lend credence to the latter interpretation. At one point, Horkheimer refers to the changed nature of the 'dependence of the cultural on the economic', suggesting that 'economic factors more directly and consciously determine men', and 'the solidity and relative capacity for resistance of the cultural spheres are disappearing'.<sup>9</sup> Granted that Horkheimer relates this capacity for resistance to a rather crude psychology, stressing the role of the independent bourgeois subject, the question of whether particular structural arrangements incapacitate cultural resistance remains a plausible one which, I shall argue later, Honneth needs to address.

Honneth's reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's 'negativism' as reaching its inevitable conclusion in the abandonment of an emancipatory perspective in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is clearly indebted to Habermas's interpretation, according to which the failure of Horkheimer and Adorno to ground an emancipatory perspective is ascribable to their failure to recognize the autonomy of the sphere of communicative action. Honneth praises Habermas's theorizing of the sphere of communication for providing critical theory with a normative standard, which allows for the construction of a critical perspective on social structures.<sup>10</sup> However, Honneth's adherence to Habermas's theory is tempered by a rejection of Habermas's severance of communicative understanding from a relation to the forms of critical activity rooted within social praxis. Honneth believes that Habermas's abstract reading of communicative understanding produces a false opposition between norm-free power and power-free communication: the sphere of conflict and struggle, and the sphere of discourse.<sup>11</sup> In *Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth attempts to integrate these elements through a theory of *morally motivated* struggle. Before looking at this in greater detail, it is worthwhile briefly examining the specifics of Honneth's critique of Habermas.

## Honneth's critique of Habermas

In an earlier essay, 'Diskursethik und implizites Gerechtigkeitskonzept', which prefigures the attempt in *Struggle for Recognition* to render concrete Habermas's idealized representation of communicative understanding in the form of formal structures of ethical life, Honneth argues that Habermasian discourse ethics must be extended to incorporate a conception of material justice. The basis of this critique is the fact that discourse ethics relies upon a 'dialogue which is to be actually carried out', and as a result, it cannot be indifferent to the conditions which make that dialogue possible. What is at stake here, Honneth argues, is the impossibility of interpreting ethics as a procedure of discursive will-formation while, at the same time, failing to grant moral worth to the social-structural relations which represent the necessary *social conditions* for the putting into effect of those forms of will-formation.<sup>12</sup> Among these conditions are social structures of intersubjective recognition, through which individuals gain a degree of autonomy permitting them freely to take a position on morally disputed norms.<sup>13</sup> Discourse ethics also presupposes a freedom from all forms of institutional and cultural coercion, and an equal access to social information and cultural traditions of education, such that individuals would possess equal means to set forth their convictions in argument in a convincing manner.<sup>14</sup>

Honneth has also been critical of Habermas's reduction of the sphere of work to instrumental action, with regard to the difficulty it generates for forming a critical perspective on the organization of the work process itself.<sup>15</sup> Since he distinguished the instrumental action characteristic of productive activity from the communicative action of social *praxis* in his early essay on Hegel's Jena social philosophy,<sup>16</sup> Habermas has had very little to say about the potential of different arrangements and structurings of the work process to promote or suffocate autonomy, or to render work meaningful or monotonous. In his essay 'Work and Instrumental Action', Honneth argues that cutting the Marxian link between social emancipation and the consciousness-forming potential of social labour does not imply the necessity of doing away with a 'critical concept of work' altogether. Rather, we can make an internal differentiation *within* instrumental action according to whether the work process enables independent activity, initiative, and a minimal degree of external control.<sup>17</sup> Such a distinction would allow for the theorizing of the potential for *moral conflict* within the work process itself. This critique reflects the extent of the influence of the researches of Edward

Thompson and Barrington Moore on Honneth's ideas, each of whom, through the notion of 'moral economy' and the postulation of an implicit 'social contract', respectively, furnished the means for an understanding of the struggle between capital and labour as a form of *moral struggle*.<sup>18</sup> More recently, Honneth has argued that the importance of rendering the labour process accessible to moral categories stems from the fundamental connection between work and 'self-esteem'. Since self-identity is integrally bound to the way the significance of one's labour is constituted socially, it is necessary that the labour process be organized in such a way that it permits the generation and sustaining of a form of self-respect.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most important aspect of Honneth's critique of Habermas has been the charge that Habermas's discourse ethics fails to gain access to the moral claims of underprivileged groups. In his essay 'Moral Consciousness and Class Domination', Honneth argues that Habermas's formulation of moral validity in terms of discursive agreement overlooks class-specific differences in the expression of normative claims. The moral ideals of oppressed groups, Honneth claims, take the form of a 'consciousness of wrong', as a 'highly sensitive sensorium for injuries of moral claims presumed to be just'. Since the everyday experience of oppressed groups does not require normative abstraction, the moral intuitions of these groups remain tied to their emotional engagement in particular situations, in a way which resists the systematization of their moral experiences in formal/abstract norms of action.<sup>20</sup> Habermas's discourse ethics, in seeking to provide a forum for the new-found sensitivity of privileged social groups towards material deprivation, unwittingly *de-moralizes* the normative claims of the oppressed by identifying moral claims with universal validity claims raised in public discourse – an arena and a form of expression which are resisted by the moral intuitions of the oppressed. This gives rise to a subsequent difficulty: through equating the normative potential of social interaction with the 'linguistic conditions of reaching understanding free from domination', Honneth argues, Habermasian critical theory becomes unable to locate a standpoint *within* social reality which corresponds to the normative point of view of the theorist. For the restriction of intuitively mastered rules of language is too far removed from how subjects understand and experience injuries to their moral intuitions to be able to guide, theoretically, experiences of injustice felt by lifeworld actors. Honneth suggests that the everyday experience of injustice should be reconstructed theoretically, *not* as the violation of communicative rules,

but as the ‘violation of identity claims acquired in socialization’.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the normative content of the idea of communicative action can be transferred to the idea of social recognition, and in consequence critical theory becomes capable of giving expression to the everyday experience of injustice. Also worth noting here is that this theory seems capable of dealing far more adequately with the ‘motivational deficit’. A constitutive weakness of Habermas’s critical theory has been the impossibility of communicative rules linking up with the concrete motivations of lifeworld actors. Habermas has, instead, been forced to *instrumentalize* the relation between communicative rules and empirical motivation by conceiving social and institutional structures as a functional complement to normative validity, ensuring the compatibility between the moral point of view and structures of motivation by technocratic means.<sup>22</sup>

We can now see more clearly how Honneth has endeavoured to maintain critical theory’s link with a viewpoint within social reality, whilst accepting the consequence of Habermas’s distinction between the independent logics of communicative and productive activity: namely, that this critical viewpoint can no longer be read off from the location of actors within the production process. The ‘pretheoretical resource’ of critical theory is now to be found in the socially transformative potential of experiences of disrespect which arise when culturally sustained understandings and interpretations of justice are violated.

### Indignation and disrespect

In *Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth has sought to reconstruct critical theory in a way which renders it more concrete and attuned to the moral claims of oppressed social groups, by turning to philosophical anthropology, against Habermas’s attempt to ground critical theory in a theory of language. By this means, Honneth hopes to render substantial the normative presuppositions of communicative action by reconfiguring those presuppositions as *social* conditions necessary for a positive relation to self. Like Habermas, but with different results, Honneth turns to the social theory of the young Hegel to lay the foundations for this reconstruction. Whereas Habermas had focused on how the young Hegel managed to capture the interrelation between the structures of labour and symbolic interaction without subordinating the developmental logic of the one to the other, Honneth turns to Hegel for the social-philosophical basis of a theory of morally motivated struggle. Honneth draws substantially upon Ludwig Siep’s reading of Hegel’s struggle for rec-

ognition as a reworking of the Hobbesian struggle for self-preservation such that, according to Siep, the struggle takes shape as part of the ethical formation (*Bildung*) of individuals, a reading which allows the transition from the state of nature to ethical life to be presented as an ethical development.<sup>23</sup> This gives Honneth the all-important bridge he needs to the theoretical reconstruction of struggle as founded on moral claims.

After filtering this conception through the social psychology of George Herbert Mead, which, Honneth claims, allows for the draining of the residue of idealism from Hegel’s conception, Honneth focuses on a reconstruction of the idea of a struggle for recognition through a critique of sociological theories of conflict, and philosophical conceptions of the moral point of view. The sociological critique concerns the reliance upon a utilitarian model of conflict (the ‘interests model’), which, following Talcott Parsons, Honneth traces back to Hobbes. It is also said to be apparent in Marx’s transition to a ‘reductionist’, ‘quasi-utilitarian’ view in his systematic writings.<sup>24</sup> Such theories are capable of conceiving emancipation solely in *distributive* terms – that is, as a question of economic equality and inequality alone.<sup>25</sup> Social theory’s fixation on interests, Honneth claims, ‘has so thoroughly obscured our view of the societal significance of moral feelings that today recognition-theoretic models of conflict have the duty not only to extend but possibly to correct’.<sup>26</sup>

What characterizes the ‘recognition-theoretic’ model is the claim that motives for social resistance are not reducible to physical needs, but are integrally related to moral feelings of indignation and disrespect, and are formed ‘in the context of moral experiences stemming from the violation of deeply rooted expectations regarding recognition’. These expectations ‘are internally linked to conditions for the formation of personal identity’.<sup>27</sup> Among those who have helped to uncover this ‘moral grammar’ of social conflict, Honneth claims, are Edward Thompson and Barrington Moore, who have shown that motivations for engaging in resistance cannot be related solely to questions concerning levels of economic provision, but must be interpreted in terms of the ‘moral expectations’ which are implicit in a particular social situation. This recognition-theoretic model of struggle is clearly an extension of the notion of ‘practical-critical’ activity originally delineated in opposition to Horkheimer’s understanding of praxis. Feelings of moral disrespect, Honneth argues, become the basis for collective resist-



ance when subjects articulate them within an ‘intersubjective framework of interpretation’.<sup>28</sup>

In the final section of *Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth offers a ‘theoretical justification’ for the ‘normative point of view’ which, he claims, is implicit in the moral claims raised in forms of social struggle. The goal is to render explicit the moral logic implicit in forms of social conflict, which are to be understood as part of a process of moral development. This, the philosophical component of Honneth’s analysis, attempts (all too briefly) a synthesis of the Kantian and Hegelian traditions of political thought through the delineation of what Honneth calls a ‘formal’ conception of ethical life. The key is the idea of social-structural conditions of individual self-realization, through which the universalism of Kantian ethics is rendered substantial in terms of the social and institutional conditions for self-worth, or self-respect, which constitute a prerequisite of individual self-realization. Honneth grounds this analysis in the Hegelian idea of the intersubjective structure of personal identity. He takes this to imply the dependence of a positive relation to self on the ways in which one finds one’s identity confirmed in different forms of recognition constituted through lifeworld structures. The three forms of recognition which, according to Honneth, serve as preconditions of self-realization are love, rights and solidarity, to which correspond three forms of positive self-relation: self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Whereas love concerns recognition as a needy being, rights are secured through legally guaranteed autonomy, and solidarity is sustained through an encompassing value horizon, in terms

of which individuals are valued for their particular abilities and traits.<sup>29</sup>

Honneth claims that it is the injuries to personal integrity which arise from violations of the socially sustained forms of recognition encompassed by rights and solidarity that drive the process of social struggle. These violations occur through a denial of rights or a devaluing of communally sustained forms of self-realization. It is clear that Honneth’s intention is to fit the dynamics of struggle into the philosophical frame of the liberal-communitarian debate. But this gives cause to question what, exactly, is justifying what here. Is the ‘formal’ structure of ethical life being deduced from the logic of social conflict, or is the latter serving simply as empirical support for a Hegelian liberalism? And if, as Honneth claims,<sup>30</sup> the ‘intersubjective prerequisites’ of a ‘successful life’ are historically variable, might it not also be the case that normative claims emerge through forms of struggle which a liberal-communitarian structuring of the conditions of self-realization proves unable to satisfy? Further, might there not be occasions when the cultural understandings through which an oppressed group works out an interpretation of the ground of the disrespect it endures are in systematic conflict with the necessary conditions of its emancipation? If so, the relation between critical activity rooted in culture and emancipatory struggle might not be as straightforward as Honneth implies. Before addressing these questions, it is worthwhile looking briefly at the notion of ‘social pathology’, which Honneth has introduced more recently into this project.



In his introduction to *Pathologien des Sozialen: Die Aufgaben der Sozialphilosophie*, Honneth traces the history of the tradition of ‘social philosophy’ from Rousseau through Marx and the early sociologists. Social philosophy, he suggests, is defined by its concern with historically specific forms of social pathology. The central idea is that particular organizations of social life are analysed in terms of internal, structural distortions that act as barriers to a successful human life. The idea of ‘pathology’ denotes a diagnosis of a social anomaly (*sozialer Mißstand*) that is rooted in certain structural features of a particular process of social development, which undermine the conditions of a successful life.<sup>31</sup> Thus, for example, the sociological theories of Durkheim, Tönnies, Simmel and Weber can be seen as addressing in different ways the problem of the loss of ‘ethical orientation’, related to certain distorting effects on the social lifeworld of the generalized expansion of capitalist economic processes.<sup>32</sup> With Habermas, the determination of social pathology takes the form of a process of ‘colonization’, through which the strategic rationality of systems governed by mechanisms of money and power displace the sphere of communicative consensus. Honneth argues that this rationalist understanding of pathology ought to be replaced with the determination of pathologies of recognition. This calls for ‘research that concerns itself with the empirical state in which the institutional embodiments of [recognition in the form of love/friendship, rights, and self-esteem] are found’.<sup>33</sup> This is a significant development in Honneth’s work, since it signals the intention of retaining important aspects of the substantive social critique found in earlier critical theory in the form of the investigation of ‘social contradictions’. It is clear that Honneth’s own critical project intends something different from and more than the narrow focus of left-Rawlsianism on the normative principles underlying political structures.<sup>34</sup>

### Rethinking resistance

We have seen how, by arguing that cultural resistance has a normative logic, Honneth attempts to mediate Habermas’s Kantianism with a reading of collective struggle located at the cultural level, such that the abstract ‘ought’ of Kantian critique can be reinscribed, in Hegelian fashion, as a form of inner-social transcendence. This perspective allows Honneth to make a decisive break with the ‘theory of manipulation’ central to Adorno’s reading of the effectiveness of the culture industry in generating the unreflective conformity of underprivileged groups. Adorno, as Honneth rightly points out, overlooks the significant

point that ideological messages propagated by the culture industry are always mediated through the sub-cultural horizon of interpretation, which offsets any direct and automatic reproduction of ideological messages in the personality structures of the individual.<sup>35</sup> By overlooking the cultural level, Adorno was led to conceive the individual as a ‘passive victim’ of directed techniques of domination.

The worth of Honneth’s analysis as a critique of the simplistic model of the stifling of resistance in the work of ‘first-generation’ theorists is unquestionable, and chimes with the insights of social reproduction theorists into the autonomous logic of the cultural. Exemplary among the latter works is Paul Willis’s landmark ethnographic study *Learning to Labour*, which demonstrates convincingly that the structural forces bearing upon individuals at the lower end of the class structure are always and necessarily mediated through the meanings and attitudes sustained through cultural practices, which are *potentially* capable of sustaining forms of contestation and resistance. Willis calls this process ‘cultural production’.<sup>36</sup> Thus the consent of individuals to live under conditions of structurally induced oppression can only be understood through an account of *how* and *why* they come to accept their situation in terms of the meanings and interpretations sustained at the cultural level.

So far as it goes, then, Honneth’s critique of earlier critical theorists would seem to be legitimate. The question I want to raise here is the following: is Honneth’s reading of the connection between the production of cultural meaning and the capacity of the cultural level to serve as the focal point for resistance against dominant norms as unproblematic as his analysis seems to imply? For to claim that domination is always understood through the mediation of group-specific interpretations leaves open the question of the conditions under which ‘cultural production’ would be capable of constructing interpretations that might serve as the basis for social resistance.<sup>37</sup> All too often, in fact, the potential of cultural resistance gets stuck between the ‘rock’ of a neutralizing assimilation to dominant interpretations of liberal individualism and the ‘hard place’ of an outright *rejection* of the dominant value system. In neither of these cases can culture form the basis for the constructive critique of dominant norms, which Honneth’s account of the moral logic of social resistance requires. A good example of outright rejection would be the complex cultural construct that Philippe Bourgois has termed ‘inner-city street culture’.<sup>38</sup> Definitive of ‘street culture’, which is characteristically a construct of racial/ethnic minorities

under conditions of intense economic exclusion and ubiquitous racism, is adherence to a set of rebellious practices which often function by *inverting* the dominant, white middle-class value system in a way that permits the pain and humiliation of social exclusion to be lived, at least in the short term, as a form of culturally defined superiority. Clearly, an effect of this will be to prevent the experience of disrespect from functioning as a spur to morally motivated resistance by *redefining* the parameters of personal respect.<sup>39</sup>

Honneth, in fact, is well aware of the specific mechanisms of this process of the deflection of opposition, in which cultural reinterpretations offset resistance by redefining 'respect'. He suggests that we focus on how 'a moral culture could be so constituted as to give those affected, disrespected and ostracized the individual strength to articulate their experiences in the democratic public sphere, rather than living them out in the countercultures of violence'.<sup>40</sup> However, presenting the problem in this way is indicative of an untenable 'Habermasian' faith in the capacity of the 'democratic public sphere' to sustain the expression of genuine cultural resistance, which overlooks the extent to which oppositional subcultures can be understood as a *reaction* to patterns of social exclusion whose very existence is *denied* within the democratic public sphere itself. This point connects with the second way of deflecting opposition mentioned above: namely, the neutralizing assimilation of the oppositional force of forms of culturally based resistance. It is this process which causes the most problems for Honneth's theory.

What I have in mind here, broadly, is the claim that the 'cultural' is articulated, politicized and constructed within the public sphere of late capitalism in such a way that a genuine oppositional stance is effectively excluded. Wendy Brown has argued that this takes place through the transformation of cultural opposition into 'identity politics', a conversion which 'recasts politicized identity's substantive (and often deconstructive) cultural claims and critiques as generic claims of particularism endemic to universalist political culture'.<sup>59</sup> By this means, cultural resistance can be deflected from a critique of capitalist economic structures and from a critique of bourgeois cultural values. By converting cultural opposition into claims to the affirmation of cultural particularity, the link is effectively broken between oppression and the reproduction of socio-economic structures – that is to say, between 'cultural' exclusion and material exclusion. Thus, for example, the construal within the public sphere of the political

claims of gay and lesbian groups as identity politics prevents the question of 'cultural affirmation' from functioning as a critique of the way in which social and economic structures reproduce heterosexuality as the norm.<sup>42</sup>

Honneth's account, I suggest, places too much faith in the ability of the 'moral doctrines and ideas' of the wider society to sustain a platform for effective resistance.<sup>43</sup> This causes him to miss the connection between these 'moral doctrines and ideas' and a form of liberal individualist ideology which separates cultural affirmation from operations of oppression and exclusion rooted in social and economic structures.<sup>44</sup> The very paradox of cultural opposition seems to be that constructive engagement can only be engendered by forfeiting the possibility of effective resistance (assimilation through identity politics), whereas concerted resistance can only be maintained by forsaking the possibility of constructive engagement (the value-inversions of excluded subcultures). To account for this, we would need to focus on the way that the conditions – stated and unstated – of participation in the 'democratic public sphere' effectively offset and defuse the possibility of resistance by requiring of oppressed groups adherence to a liberal-individualist belief-system which is central to the reproduction of the structures that dominate them. It is this which, for example, leads to the defusing of claims to sexual liberation through transforming them into claims to the freedom of a private sexual identity. Accounting for the barriers to effective cultural resistance would also mean that we would need to recover a concept which is entirely missing from Honneth's account – namely, ideology. Honneth's portrayal of how 'hurt feelings' become the basis for collective resistance, through being articulated in an 'intersubjective framework of interpretation' that shows them to be 'typical for an entire group',<sup>45</sup> relies upon an idealized notion of cultural autonomy, and consequently entirely overlooks how the pressure of liberal ideology, which continually reinforces the tendency of individuals to view their situation in *individualistic* terms, is in many cases precisely what prevents this type of oppositional group formation from taking place.<sup>46</sup> This is likely to be especially prevalent where the oppression in question concerns, or indirectly intersects with, class. The autonomous, sovereign subject of liberalism is constructed precisely through diverting attention from domination rooted in the economic structure and portraying the distribution and positioning of individuals within this structure as the outcome of *individual* effort, thus reinforcing the notion that individuals *as*

*individuals* are responsible for a failure to achieve, and blocking their awareness of the structures which dominate them as a group.<sup>47</sup> It is perhaps the predominance of a liberal individualist ideology which, more than anything, forces excluded groups towards an explicit rejection of the dominant value system by implicitly denying the existence of forms of structural oppression subordinating individuals *as* a (racial, ethnic, sexual, class or gender-based) group.

Honneth represents the autonomy of the liberal subject in terms of legal recognition, which provides for the possibility of ‘symmetrical esteem among legally autonomous citizens’.<sup>48</sup> Thus within the mutuality of law, through which subjects are constituted as autonomous, the claims of self-realization appear as claims for the recognition of particularity. But does this not simply rewrite in the terms of ‘culture’ the representation of the political as a boundary point of private egoism? And consequently, by reading culturally based claims as private assertion, might not the result of this construction be simply to disguise structural inequality by *depoliticizing* cultural claims? The way in which gender domination is reproduced in economic structures, for example, cannot be addressed merely by reasserting the value of the feminine. We should recall here Honneth’s wavering on the relation between recognition and interests. Honneth follows a line of theorists who have sought to integrate cultural claims into the notion of social justice.<sup>49</sup> But what is lacking from his work thus far is an account of the relation between the denial of recognition and structurally reproduced forms of material exclusion. This problem becomes doubly acute when we take account of the Foucauldian insight that subjects must be understood as partial *effects* of their subjugation by particular structures of social power. In these circumstances, to seek emancipation through recognition of cultural particularity, say (to give one overworked example) the re-valorization of the role of women as private ‘carers’, only serves to *re-legitimize* the structures of economic domination which forced women into the subordinate role of providing care to men.<sup>50</sup> This process can only obscure how cultural claims are always already marked by structurally produced domination. Treating claims to recognition as identity claims seems to rest upon the untenable notion that oppression can be overcome without political, social and economic transformation merely by writing class-blindness, gender-blindness, sex-blindness and colour-blindness into the state – in the form of the autonomous legal subject. What happens, in fact, is that by allowing the abstract legal recognition which constitutes autonomous personhood

to condition and delimit the sphere of articulation left to cultural self-expression, Honneth’s account prevents the transfiguration of identity in an expanded politics by *naturalizing* that identity as a form of private interest.

What this argument suggests is that the turn to culture as the site of the critical potential of the present does not provide for the sort of unproblematic link-up between the critique of current society and the anticipation of an emancipated future which Honneth’s account implies. The ease with which dominant norms appear able to subsume forms of opposition *as* particularistic identity claims – neutralizing their political force through naturalizing them – might in fact appear as a vindication of Adorno’s scepticism concerning the openness and transformability of the modern social order. Adorno’s argument, in his essay ‘Society’, that human beings are constituted by the exchange system indicates precisely the relation between identity claims and structures of power that renders problematic any attempt to treat those claims as immediately constituting the basis for a transformative politics. Without a transfiguration of those identities, Adorno believes, cultural resistance can only, on each occasion, reinforce the ‘triumph of integration’ which reconciles human beings to the structures that dominate them.<sup>51</sup> One must ask whether a similar false integration is also produced through the granting of a legal autonomy that works through privatizing cultural difference, such that the structural basis of cultural opposition is obscured. I do not intend here, however, to affirm a picture of the individual as a ‘passive victim’ of techniques of domination. Honneth is surely right to criticize the thesis of the internalization of ideology of earlier critical theory, according to which the demands of system reproduction are directly replicated in the personality structure of the individual. But in no sense does it follow from this that individual or collective action does *not* occur under conditions of severe structural constraint and the ubiquitous (but in no sense all-powerful and all-determining) operation of liberal ideology.<sup>52</sup> What is problematic in Honneth’s recent work, and particularly surprising given the central position accorded to Foucault in the history of critical theory in *Critique of Power*, is the absence of anything like an adequate theoretical account of the capacity of power and ideology to block the transformative potential of struggles for recognition. Accounting for the operation of power and ideology requires a reformulation of the concept of recognition itself.



## Rethinking recognition

The absence of an adequate account of power and ideology is reflected in the way that Honneth deploys the concept of recognition as a normative principle. This is particularly apparent in his delineation of the sphere of law as a harmonious sphere of mutuality with a universalistic dynamic, through which individuals gain recognition as autonomous subjects. What is altogether missing in this account is any consideration of the productive power of recognition – that is, its necessarily *performative* character, which destabilizes the attempt to portray social discourses and institutions in terms of the ‘neutral’ confirmation of claims emanating from concrete subjects. The concept of recognition implies a dependence on the other in the sense of both self-confirmation and self-constitution. We depend upon the other for confirmation, in the sense of reflecting who we take ourselves to be, yet who we are is always already co-determined by the performative force of social discourse. Recognition is thus eternally suspended between confirmation and performance, witnessing and constituting.<sup>53</sup> Judith Butler has argued that the constituting dimension of recognition can be captured in terms of Althusser’s notion of interpellation, outlined in his ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’. Recognition’s performative power can be understood in linguistic terms as the effect of the way it is regulated, allocated and refused as part of ‘larger social rituals of interpellation’, the ‘call of recognition which solicits existence’, and produces subjects *as* subjects of a certain kind.<sup>54</sup>

Attention to the performative or constituting dimension of recognition allows us to theorize the operation of ideology and power, which is absent in Honneth’s account. Honneth’s neglect of the problems posed by the performative dimension of recognition is thus the corollary of the failure adequately to theorize the ever-present possibility of the struggle for recognition being blocked by power, and its emancipatory potential undermined by dominant social interests. I want to look at two particular dimensions of the operation of power that the notion of performance or constitution allows us to theorize, which suggest the need for an alternative model of critical or oppositional activity within the frame of a struggle for recognition.

The first dimension of power can be gleaned from the fact that oppressed groups, which raise claims to recognition in the process of struggle, cannot simply be said to have been denied access to social recognition, but must rather be understood as groups that have been *constituted as excluded* by the ‘call of recognition’ that constitutes them as other, as unfit

to participate in the social universal. The danger is, then, that interpreting the claims to recognition of excluded groups as identity claims may simply have the effect of constituting a group or class *as* a victim class, which simultaneously takes away its power positively to rework and transform its injured identity.<sup>55</sup> Honneth fails to see this because he reduces the struggle for recognition to its *affirmative* aspect and neglects its *transformative* dimension. Oppositional groups engaged in resistance against their exclusion do not demand merely recognition of who they are, *as* they have been constituted by exclusionary practices. This turns political claims into claims for the mere affirmation of a private identity. Rather, what is demanded is a transformation of prevailing ideals, in the process of which oppositional identities are *themselves* transfigured through the overcoming of the derogatory recognitions which constituted them as excluded. It is precisely this transformative demand that is expressed in queer politics, for example, where the solidifying of a gay or lesbian identity is exactly what is avoided in order to destabilize fixed sexual identities, and the ‘homo–hetero’ dichotomy which constitutes them.<sup>56</sup> By conceiving legal discourse as the site where subjects are constituted as autonomous, Honneth’s account seriously underrates the importance of critical agency in *transforming* disfigured identities produced through derogatory recognitions. The appeal to the law to amend the injuries of subordination and exclusion solidifies the identity of the injured as a victim class in need of protection, and thus blocks the struggle for repositioning and transformation.<sup>57</sup> The struggle for recognition, this argument suggests, would seem to be eternally beset by the ‘performative contradiction’ which, Drucilla Cornell argues, marks the political struggle of feminism.<sup>58</sup> What one wants to be recognized *as* in the struggle – in this case, the recognition of the ‘feminine within sexual difference’ – is precisely what is *not* (yet) *there*, what is *refused* by gender hierarchy. Thus the struggle must embody the paradox of a claim for both affirmation and transformation.

This brings us to the second dimension of the operation of power. The emphasis here is not on the way that power is already at work in constituting identities prior to struggle, but rather on the way that power works within social institutions to subvert, deflect or undermine emancipatory claims raised in social struggle. This can be expressed theoretically in terms of the *reciprocal operation of confirmation and constitution* in the granting of recognition to previously excluded groups. It is because constitution (the

identity that is *produced*) is never reducible to confirmation (the identity that is *demand*ed) that power and domination are able to get a foothold. To put this more explicitly, the effects of subject constitution are always prone to manipulation by dominant interests, such that existing power structures are effectively untouched, even though a particular demand for recognition appears to have been met. A valuable illustration of how the reciprocal



workings of confirmation and constitution in social recognition might undermine emancipatory struggle has recently been given by Mark Neocleous in his account of the incorporation of the English working class by the state in the nineteenth century. Neocleous persuasively argues that when the working class gained legal recognition (i.e. 'confirmation') in the nineteenth century as a 'subject of rights', it was simultaneously *constituted* by the state as an 'object of administration'.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the state was able to develop a 'law-and-administration continuum', by means of which the emancipatory claims raised in working-class struggle were transformed into regulated and administered disputes through which class antagonism could, in effect, be domesticated and controlled.

An example of this was the growing use of industrial tribunals to administer disputes between legal subjects concerning the labour contract. The same process was at work, Neocleous argues, in the recognition of trade unions as the 'legal subjectivity of the working class'. Legal recognition of trade unions did not merely represent the confirmation of certain freedoms of the working class, such as the freedom to strike, but actually constituted the working class in a particular form congenial to the stability of existing power structures. Hence, a whole series of administrative mechanisms were now put in place which established trade unions in a stabilizing and conciliatory role, and which were implicitly premised on discouraging the idea that the purpose of unions was to strike. The constitution of trade unions through administrative mechanisms was exemplified by the increasing prominence of procedures of collective bargaining, which set unions in a mediating role between the state and the worker

and thereby effectively subsumed class conflict under administration.<sup>60</sup> If it is the case that dominant social interests are potentially able to undermine emancipatory claims at the point of subject constitution in this way, then, I suggest, Honneth would have to give up the rather idealistic portrayal of social institutions, in which they figure merely in the benign role of confirming and institutionalizing normative claims raised by collective actors. It is the performative or constituting dimension of recognition – absent on Honneth's account – which allows us to theorize the operations of power and domination within social institutions, and consequently, brings into sharp relief the shortcomings of Honneth's idealistic portrayal of social recognition as an identitarian relation between self and social structures.

The operation of power and domination which becomes apparent when social recognition is understood as encompassing both performance and witnessing – constitution and confirmation – suggests the need for a revised conception of critical agency. For if dominant social interests can always potentially deploy forms of subject constitution to defuse emancipatory claims, what is necessary, in the first instance, is to locate a space outside subject constitution which marks the failure of that constitution to be total and all-encompassing – that is, of fully incorporating the residue of 'nonidentity'. I want to suggest that it is the necessary tension between (emancipatory) claim and constitution, or between 'recognizer' and 'recognized', that is presupposed by the transformative ambitions of critical agency, since what that agency requires is the *nonidentity* between the subject and the way it is socially constituted. Hence, although social recognition precedes and conditions the formation of the subject,

the impossibility of full recognition, of a recognition that is simply re-cognition, implies the instability and incompleteness of subject formation.<sup>61</sup> Further, only by understanding critical agency in *this* sense does it become possible to overturn the ruse of power implicit in 'identity politics', whereby the very oppressive structure which produces exclusion is then called upon to protect identities thus formed by reifying them. If we read the nature of resistance in terms of Adorno's dialectic of nonidentity, the remainder which oppressive forms of social constitution cannot exhaust appears as 'possibility' – 'the possibility of which their reality has cheated the objects'. The dependence of identity on nonidentity, which marks the failure of totalization, is the ground of resistance, of 'the resistance (*Widerstand*) of the other against identity'.<sup>62</sup>

This reading of resistance requires that we radicalize Honneth's notion of recognition. On Honneth's view, the struggle for recognition is conceived in terms of the development of self-relations, as social institutions are constructively modified such that the subject acquires a positive relation-to-self through the way that it is recognized within them.<sup>63</sup> This reading evidently owes much to Ludwig Siep's deployment of the concept of recognition, in which political and social institutions function as conditions for the formation of self-consciousness.<sup>64</sup> It is their role in a formative process through the development of patterns of recognition that, according to Siep, provides a standard of critical judgement vis-à-vis social institutions. Although this account has undoubtedly proved invaluable in rejuvenating Hegel's concept of recognition as a critical concept in social philosophy, it risks underestimating the subversive potential of recognition. The Honneth–Siep account stresses the role of recognition in the confirmation of identity, and neglects that this can only occur through the splitting of identity through the priority of *relation*. That is to say, recognition is not merely a mode of individual self-confirmation, but also a mode of community formation which at the same time decentres, and thus destabilizes that community. Recognition therefore only secures identity by rendering it dependent on, in community with, *what it is not*, on what is nonidentical with it. This reading allows us to capture the transformative element of a claim to recognition, which renders it irreducible to self-confirmation. According to García Düttman's account, the transformative element within the demand for recognition, which goes beyond a claim to inclusion, becomes apparent as a breach (*Unterbrechung*) of a dominant identity, which destabilizes that identity by rendering it relational, thereby undermining its capac-

ity to assimilate by inclusion.<sup>65</sup> I want to suggest that we read this breach in Adorno's terms, as the 'shock of the open', the feeling of 'dizziness' which occurs when identity is confronted with what it tries to suppress. Within the 'covered', and the 'never-changing', Adorno claims, that shock will appear as the 'negative'. It is 'untruth only for the untrue'. The *telos* of philosophy itself, Adorno tells us, is to turn thinking towards 'the open and uncovered', which destabilizes the totalizing claims of identity.<sup>66</sup>

The problems in Honneth's account are perhaps symptomatic of the tendencies towards idealization of the Kantian turn in critical theory, which have led to a turning away from the task of demonstrating the 'negativity of the whole', which, of course, is how Adorno sought to keep the critical project alive. The danger, when critical theory becomes idealizing construction, as Honneth's work shows, is that the critical impulse becomes diluted through assimilation to existing norms and ideals. In spite of these difficulties, however, it is clear that Honneth's efforts both to render critical theory more substantive and to ground it more deeply in the concrete pathologies of the lifeworld are a bold step in the right direction, away from the stultifying formalism of Habermas's communication theory. What is now required is a more constructive engagement with 'first-generation' theorists. The degree of distance from Habermas, which Honneth's work has now established, makes this possible.

## Notes

I am grateful to Axel Honneth for the opportunity to discuss these issues on numerous occasions, and to the reviewers of *Radical Philosophy* for their comments and criticisms.

1. This is clearly stated in Horkheimer's preface to the republished collection of his essays from the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, in *Critical Theory*, trans. M.J. O'Connell et al., Continuum, New York, 1972, especially p. 5; as well as the 1969 preface, co-signed by Adorno, to the republished edition of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming, Verso, London, 1979, p. ix.
2. 'Communication and Reconciliation', *Telos* 39, 1979, p. 50. Honneth repeats this charge in *Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1990, p. 68.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 56.
5. This term was used by Horkheimer in 'Traditional and Critical Theory', but it originates in Thesis One of Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Die Frühschriften*, Alfred Kröner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1953, p. 339.
6. *Critique of Power*, p. 29.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 27. This idea of culture is particularly prominent in Horkheimer's essay 'Authority and the Family', in *Critical Theory*, pp. 47–128.
8. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of

- Critical Theory Today', *Constellations* 1, 1994, p. 257.
9. *Critical Theory*, p. 237.
  10. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect', p. 259.
  11. Béla Kerékgyártó, 'Auf dem Weg zu einem formalen Konzept der Sittlichkeit? Die Reinterpretation der Hegelschen Anerkennungstheorie bei Axel Honneth', *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1996, p. 203. In *Critique of Power*, Honneth develops this idea through a comparison between Habermas and Foucault.
  12. 'Diskursethik und implizites Gerechtigkeitskonzept', in *Moralität und Sittlichkeit*, edited by W. Kühmann, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, pp. 189, 187.
  13. This condition is not reducible to what Habermas calls 'personality', since, according to Honneth, it requires that social structures are arranged in such a way that individuals possess the necessary degree of self-respect to be able to engage in dialogue as free and equal partners.
  14. 'Diskursethik und implizites Gerechtigkeitskonzept', p. 191.
  15. This has become a familiar refrain in Habermas criticism. See, in particular, Stanley Aronowitz, *The Crisis in Historical Materialism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1981, pp. 58–68; Hans-Ernst Schiller, 'Habermas und die Kritische Theorie', in G. Bolte, ed., *Unkritische Theorie: Gegen Habermas*, zu Klampen, Lüneburg, 1989; Ben Agger, *The Discourse of Domination*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 1992, ch. 10.
  16. Reprinted in Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel, Beacon Press, Boston MA, 1973.
  17. 'Work and Instrumental Action', trans. M.G. Ash, *New German Critique* 26, 1982, pp. 52–3.
  18. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Vintage, New York, 1966; Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, M.E. Sharpe, White Plains NY, 1978. In the essay in question, however, Honneth draws more directly on the findings of industrial sociology.
  19. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect', p. 266. In effect, this might be understood as a 'middle way' between Marcuse's discernment of the liberatory potential of work through its erotization, and Habermas's exclusion of work from the sphere of emancipatory praxis altogether. Although agreeing with Habermas that Marcuse's idea of the transformation of work into 'play' is untenable, Honneth wants work to be open to normative critique. On Marcuse's view of work, see Uri Zilbersheid, *Die Marxsche Idee der Aufhebung der Arbeit und ihre Rezeption bei Fromm und Marcuse*, P. Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1986. See also Ben Agger, *The Discourse of Domination*, chs 10 and 11.
  20. 'Moral Consciousness and Class Domination', in Axel Honneth, *The Fragmented World of the Social*, State University of New York Press, Albany NY, 1995, pp. 205–19.
  21. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect', p. 261.
  22. See Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Lenhardt and Nicholsen, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1990, p. 207. This technocratic solution has been justly criticized by Honneth. See his 'The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism', trans. J. Farrell, in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 305.
  23. Ludwig Siep, 'The Struggle for Recognition: Hegel's Dispute with Hobbes in the Jena Writings', trans. C. Dudas, in John O'Neill, ed., *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition*, State University of New York Press, Albany NY, 1996. This essay was originally published in 1974.
  24. *Struggle for Recognition*, trans. J. Anderson, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 161, 147–9.
  25. See the discussion in J. Alexander and M. Pia Lara, 'Honneth's New Critical Theory of Recognition', *New Left Review* 220, 1996, pp. 126–36.
  26. *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 166. The qualifier 'possibly' is here significant. As we shall see, Honneth has yet to formulate a coherent account of the relation between an interests model of conflict and a 'recognition-theoretic' model. See Peter Osborne, 'A Paradigm too Far?', *RP* 80, pp. 34–7.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
  28. *Ibid.*, pp. 166–7, 163.
  29. *Ibid.*, pp. 171–8.
  30. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
  31. A. Honneth, ed., *Pathologien des Sozialen: Die Aufgaben der Sozialphilosophie*, Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, pp. 49–51.
  32. *Ibid.*, pp. 28ff.
  33. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect', p. 266.
  34. In this regard, see the debate between Honneth and Critchley in *Radical Philosophy* 89, May–June 1998, pp. 27–39.
  35. See *Critique of Power*, ch. 3. It is evident that the capacity of ideology to reach immediately into the instinctual structure of individuals is also presupposed in Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, Boston MA, 1964. Hence, 'false needs' are described as a form of 'introjection' producing the 'immediate identification' of the individual with society (p. 10).
  36. See *Learning to Labour*, Saxon House, Westmead, 1977, ch. 8. In his *Common Culture* (Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1990), Paul Willis outlines the process of what he calls 'symbolic work', which is based on the presumption that the cultural commodities supplied by the commercial culture industry are not consumed passively by duped individuals, but are used as catalysts for an active process of symbolic creativity. See especially, *Common Culture*, pp. 17ff. If Willis is right, then clearly Adorno's account of how the culture industry enforces a false integration is insufficient as it stands.
  37. Paul Willis's claim was that the anti-school culture of working-class boys itself pushes them towards compliance with structures of domination through its valorizing of patriarchy and its devaluing of mental labour as 'feminine'. Angela McRobbie argued that the same complicity of culture with social control can be seen in the construction of an 'ideology of romance' among working-class girls, which valorizes marriage, family life and beauty. See her 'Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity', in Women Studies Group, ed., *Women Take Issue*, Hutchinson, London, 1978.
  38. In his *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 8.
  39. Bourgois's study traces the contours of a form of 'street-defined dignity' developed in conditions of immense structural oppression tinged with racism among young Puerto Ricans in East Harlem. The same logic, whereby social exclusion plus racism produces a cultural form centred upon an outright rejection of dominant, white middle-class norms is analysed in Herman Tertilt's study



- of a young Turkish gang in Frankfurt am Main, Germany (*Turkish Power Boys*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1996). These studies demonstrate convincingly how cultural forms can block the move from oppression to resistance by *redefining* self-respect through a rejection *tout court* of the norms of the wider society and its dominant groups.
40. 'The Social Dynamics of Disrespect', p. 269.
  41. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1995, p. 59.
  42. See Judith Butler's essay 'Merely Cultural', in *New Left Review* 227, 1998, pp. 33–44.
  43. *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 164; also, p. 162: 'The forms of recognition associated with rights and social esteem ... represent a moral context for societal conflict, if only because they rely on *socially generalized criteria* in order to function' (my emphasis).
  44. This point can also be said to apply to the practice of 'consciousness-raising' in early Second Wave feminism, which would otherwise seem to be a form of oppositional group formation to which Honneth's model of collective resistance corresponds quite closely. Consciousness-raising deliberately set out to ignore, or deny, the dominant conceptions of equality and impartial respect, developing a standpoint of *partiality* centred on women's experience. Thus the important task was to break free from the ideological neutrality of liberal personhood, which disguised a masculine world-view. See Jeffrey Gauthier, *Hegel and Feminist Social Criticism*, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 1997, ch. 4.
  45. *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 163.
  46. Lois Weis stresses the tendency to stick with individualistic/private solutions rather than collective action and collective struggle in her account of the emerging feminist identity of working-class girls. The girls in Weis's study, although developing an identity which seemingly points towards the need for collective resistance, 'are not conscious of their shared political sexual class identity even though the glimmerings of such consciousness are there'. Weis stresses that it is only through seeing their problems as shared and as needing collective action that these girls could truly press for substantive change. See Lois Weis, *Working Class Without Work: High School Students in a De-industrializing Economy*, Routledge, New York, 1990, p. 206.
  47. Jay MacLeod, in his study of two groups of working-class youths in the USA, provides an excellent account of how the 'achievement ideology' and the rhetoric of equality of opportunity effectively block collective insight into the constraining structural forces bearing upon working-class youths as a group and produces instead a feeling of *personal* responsibility. Arguing against Paul Willis's optimism about the possibility of 'penetrations' of liberal ideology, MacLeod suggests: 'insightful opinions are of little use in isolation; there needs to be an ideological perspective and a cultural context in which their insights can be applied that leads to *positive* and potentially transformative rituals, symbols, territories and political strategies' (*Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low Income Neighbourhood*, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1995, p. 249).
  48. *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 178.
  49. Other theorists working within this framework are Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1990; and Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the 'Politics of Recognition'*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1992.
  50. See Wendy Brown's insightful critique of identity politics in *States of Injury*, chs 2 and 3.
  51. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Society', trans. F. Jameson, in S. Bronner and D. Kellner, eds, *Critical Theory and Society*, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 271, 274.
  52. My argument here was prompted by the suggestions of Peter Dews on an earlier draft of this paper.
  53. Alexander García Düttman, *Zwischen den Kulturen*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 10. See also his 'The Culture of Polemic: Misrecognizing Recognition', *Radical Philosophy* 81, January–February 1997, pp. 27–34.
  54. See Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 24–8. Butler is, however, rightly critical of the totalizing implications of Althusser's reading of interpellation.
  55. That Honneth *does* read claims to recognition as identity claims is strongly suggested by the explicit reference to 'identity claims' as constitutive of Hegel's account of social struggle, in *Struggle for Recognition*, p. 23.
  56. See Nancy Fraser's distinction between 'affirmative' and 'transformative' recognition in her *Justice Interruptus*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 23ff. See also García Düttman, *Zwischen den Kulturen*, pp. 107–24.
  57. See Brown, *States of Injury*, p. 27.
  58. See her *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, p. 142.
  59. *Administering Civil Society: Towards a Theory of State Power*, Macmillan and St. Martins Press, London and New York, 1996, pp. 69, 111, 163–4. Central to Neocleous's account is a critique of the idea that the working class was already fully formed before the state 'acted' upon it. Thus the very idea of the 'making' of the English working class necessitates an account of its *constitution*, through its subsumption by power and dominant social interests (*ibid.*, pp. 105–7).
  60. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 140ff.
  61. See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, pp. 225–6.
  62. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton, Continuum, New York, 1973, pp. 52, 160–61 (translation altered).
  63. See, for example, the recent essay 'Anerkennung und moralische Verpflichtung', in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 51, 1997, p. 38.
  64. See his 'Recht und Anerkennung', in *Selbstbehauptung und Anerkennung*, edited by H. Girndt, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin, 1990, especially pp. 172ff.
  65. See his *Zwischen den Kulturen*, pp. 117–18.
  66. *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 33, 20 (translation altered).