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*European Journal of Political Theory* 2009; 8; 183

DOI: 10.1177/1474885108100852

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# Rereading Honneth

## Exodus Politics and the Paradox of Recognition

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*European Journal  
of Political Theory*

© SAGE Publications Ltd,  
Los Angeles, London, New Delhi,  
Singapore and Washington DC  
ISSN 1474-8851, 8(2) 183-206  
[DOI: 10.1177/1474885108100852]

**ABSTRACT:** Is Honneth's theory sufficiently sensitive to practices of recognition that have historically emerged? This article answers in the negative by revisiting his ground-breaking study *The Struggle for Recognition*. The first two sections of this article reconstruct the connection he draws between the practices of recognition, the psychological damage experienced in its absence and the motivation for social conflict that results. In doing so, we discover the paradox of recognition: Honneth makes psychological and moral development depend on precisely the 'legally' instantiated system that is the source of disrespect in the first instance. Correspondingly, the paradox of recognition denies other alternative ways oppressed groups have achieved and sustained psychological and moral development. The third section offers the contrasting example of how black Americans used their religious imagination to overcome the effects of slavery. In doing so, they developed structures of mutuality to affirm self and community against misrecognition.

**KEY WORDS:** *autonomy, exodus, Honneth, race, recognition, respect, slavery*

The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House. (Audre Lorde)

To be liberated from the stigma of blackness by embracing it is to cease, forever, one's interior agreement and collaboration with the authors of one's degradation. (James Baldwin)

## Introduction

As political and social theorists maintain, the importance of the legally instantiated practices of recognition cannot be understated with respect to its effects on identity formation.<sup>1</sup> Axel Honneth, in particular, is keen to draw our attention to the fact that in the absence of recognition a collapse of identity would most certainly occur. This is so because for him the formal structures of recognition provide a moral and psychological process through which one's sense of self-

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confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem develops.<sup>2</sup> But unlike most theorists, on Honneth's view, each of these positive self-descriptions originate in a specific medium of recognition: love relationship, legal community, and group solidarity. The positive constitution of the self through these media thus includes emotional and cognitive inoculation against debilitating assaults on one's identity.<sup>3</sup> That one's life is coherent and sound, and that one is recognized as an individual capable of self-determination and self-legislation, hinges on this system of recognition.

In contrast to Charles Taylor's now famous reflections for example, what is compelling about Honneth's account is his attempt to lay out the sociological parameters in which recognition emerges, and then connect that account to the various levels of our psychological and moral well-being. Indeed, he explains more completely what Taylor only gestures to when he says:

Frantz Fanon . . . argued that the major weapon of the colonizers was the imposition of their image of the colonized on the subjugated people. [This] notion that there is a struggle for a changed self-image, which takes place both within the subjugated and against the dominator, has been very widely applied.<sup>4</sup>

Honneth's aim, then, is to give us a richer account of the importance of recognition to identity formation specifically (that is, the changed self-image to which Taylor here refers), and identity claims in the public sphere generally. So forceful is Honneth's account that he has been described as initiating the 'shift from a theory of distributive justice to a theory of recognition in order to understand the moral grammar of different social movements, from feminism to gay rights and multiculturalism'.<sup>5</sup> As Patchen Markell recently observed, the 'most compelling feature of Honneth's work is his commitment to the integration of ethical and political philosophy with the study of actually existing forms of experience, motivation, and social struggle'.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I explore the issue of recognition and autonomy through a detailed engagement with Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition* to disrupt the intellectual excitement that has gathered around his work. First, I explicate the connection he draws between the formal social practices of recognition, the psychological damage experienced in its absence, and the motivation for social conflict that develops from feelings of disrespect. Then I contend that, if the kind of psychological and moral damage that Honneth believes takes place due to the absence of recognition is sustained by individuals or groups, it is unclear how the psyche can rebound to generate the motivation necessary to prompt social conflict and transformation. This is because he privileges a formal system of recognition as the only sufficient basis upon which psychological integrity and moral autonomy can develop.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, he obscures other alternative ways in which individuals and groups have historically created barriers to sustain integrity and affirm their normative self-understanding.

In spelling out this argument, I also trace the worry back to Honneth's brief, but important reliance on the concept of 'social death' as used by the sociologist

Orlando Patterson. In his important study *Slavery and Social Death*, Patterson employs the term in the context of explaining how the institution of slavery obstructed the possibility for the enslaved to achieve psychological integrity and autonomy.<sup>8</sup> In the context of American slavery, he denies that under conditions of misrecognition blacks were able to craft alternative existential armour to hold at bay its adverse effects. The claim is not only historically inaccurate, but more importantly gives short shrift to the approaches black Americans employed to fashion a positive self-understanding that served as the basis for their political claims.

Honneth's reliance on this term carries the same mistake but from a more general standpoint within his theory of recognition, and also provides a clear indication on what, for him, psychological integrity and autonomy depends – namely, recognition in the eyes of the larger political community. Herein lies the paradox of recognition: our moral and psychological development and stability comes to depend too much on precisely those institutions and individuals that are the source of insult and injury. As such, he is unable to seriously consider alternative forms of mutuality, whose success depends on reconstructing the symbols of identity in which one's self-worth develops. If I am on the right track, Honneth ironically leaves excluded groups open to domination rather than providing resources for understanding how they have resisted it.

Third, I explore how black Americans specifically employed their religious imagination to address the existential threat of slavery.<sup>9</sup> Many have written on this theme and so the originality of my claim should not be assessed merely on my use of this example. Notwithstanding, no one has attempted, as far as I am aware, to address Honneth's theory of recognition within the context of the way black Americans have forged their identity and developed a corresponding sense of dignity that was otherwise denied to them. To explore how black Americans employed religion to address the threat of slavery constitutes a historically grounded example of how structures of mutual acknowledgement are created to develop and affirm integrity and the normative understanding of one's self and community against the existential threat of misrecognition. Black Americans transformed Christianity, particularly the story of Exodus, as a means to construct a community of recognition to hold at bay 'social death'. This community of recognition, independent as it was from legal acknowledgment, served as the point of departure for social criticism and political transformation. It should therefore be noted that I do not argue that this is the only approach black Americans have used specifically or that it is the exclusive avenue open to excluded groups more generally. In fact, the benefits of the analysis of the second section is that it encourages us to turn our attention to and explicate the multiple ways marginalized groups have crafted existential armour to develop and affirm their psychological integrity and autonomy. This article seeks to provide only one example.

The argument here seems to come late in a debate that has undoubtedly moved to other facets of Honneth's social theory. Recent criticism of his work, as well as

his response, has focused (wrongly I believe) on whether his theoretical framework of recognition can respond to distributive injustices.<sup>10</sup> But there is very little evidence that identity politics, as it has played itself out in practice is blind to economic disparities and the way they reflect a deeper insensitivity to and discrimination based upon race, gender, and ethnicity. So focusing on which category is more fundamental – recognition or distribution – in a debate intended to guide political life ironically misses the complexities of historical practical action that presumes the link between these two categories. Moreover, it shifts attention away from other problems with Honneth's account – problems that emerge with his original articulation of a theory of recognition but which have not been addressed with later iterations and amendments. To turn once more then to *The Struggle for Recognition* is not without important merit.<sup>11</sup>

## **Recognition and the Foundation of Social Conflict**

Honneth's theory of recognition engages a specific narrative of disruption that animates the movement toward egalitarianism within modern democracies – namely, the way in which social degradation and disrespect are tied up with individual and group biographies. In the process of forming one's identity, individuals attempt to give their lives coherence, meaning, and affirm a sense of integrity. Such attempts are coextensive with how we cope with and learn to live within a complex social world. Disruptive events, as Gay Becker points out, such as revolutions, the onset of sickness, or periods of enslavement or ostracism, adversely affect individuals such that the psychological resources needed to construct coherent and meaningful lives are *severely* limited or *wholly* prevented.<sup>12</sup> Disruption is thus understood in its broadest sense to cover various levels on which we attempt to build a stable identity but are somehow prevented. Whether such disruptions are total or partial in the context of Honneth's theory will be something we will need to examine.

Honneth's theory of recognition serves as a psychological map that systematically delineates those elements – i.e. self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem – needed to hold at bay a narrative of disruption. The concept of recognition as Honneth describes was first initiated in the German philosophical tradition of Idealism to 'reflect upon the intersubjective formation of individual identities through confrontation and interaction with other(s)'.<sup>13</sup> Although George Herbert Mead took up this concept fruitfully within the American sociological tradition, he was unable, like Hegel before him, to 'identify accurately the social experiences that would generate the pressures under which struggles for recognition would emerge within the historical process'.<sup>14</sup> Honneth's theory of recognition sets out to satisfy this requirement, and in doing so he believes he will ground the moral motivation for social struggle in feelings of disrespect experienced by social actors. An appropriate assessment of Honneth's argument must begin with the three levels of mutuality he delineates.

## Stage 1: Love and Confidence in Self and the World

According to Honneth's account of the tripartite system of recognition, love constitutes the first stage of reciprocal recognition 'because in it subjects mutually confirm each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs and thereby recognize each other as needy creatures'.<sup>15</sup> As used here, 'concrete' is doing some conceptual work; it denotes the irreducibility of one's needs to the needs of others. What is significant for us is that the primary relationship to which love refers, particularly the parent-child relationship, is central to developing the child's capacity to achieve balance between dependence and self-assertion.<sup>16</sup> Although Honneth relies on object relations theory, particularly the evidence obtained by Donald Winnicott that focused on the recognizable objects on which children depend to hold at bay anxiety, it is not necessary to engage in a reconstruction of that evidence. For our part, we need only acknowledge that the various stages of child development allow for the possibility of seeing the mother as 'an entity in its own right'.<sup>17</sup> The process of extricating oneself from a state of symbiosis is a struggle both for the child and the mother; it denotes the intersubjective process through which individuation takes place.

Honneth characterizes the impact of this relationship on the psychological development of the child as such:

If the 'mother's' love is lasting and reliable, the child can simultaneously develop, under the umbrella of her intersubjective reliability, a sense of confidence in the social provision of the needs he or she has, and via the psychological path this opens up, a basic 'capacity to be alone' gradually unfolds in the child. . . . In becoming sure of the 'mother's' love, young children come to trust themselves, which makes it possible for them to be alone without anxiety. . . . This suggestion can be understood as an invitation to identify, in the successful relationship between 'mother' and child, a pattern of interaction whose mature reappearance in adult life is an indication of successful affectional bonds to other people.<sup>18</sup>

Although Honneth speaks of the practical relation-to-self, there is also the practical relation-to-world that this account describes. In the case of the latter, trust develops, grounded in the experiential basis of the constancy of affection provided by a concrete other. In the case of the former, the individual gains self-confidence. 'It is only', writes Honneth, 'because the assurance of care gives the person who is loved the strength to open up to himself or herself in a relaxed relation-to-self that he or she can become an independent subject with whom oneness can be experienced as a mutual dissolution of boundaries.'<sup>19</sup> We come to trust the world around us and this is coextensive with our faith in our bodies as reliable indicators of our needs.

The corresponding form of disrespect that attaches here is located in experiences of physical violation – i.e. rape and torture. Such acts of violence do not simply cause physical pain, but are coupled with the psychological pain of feeling 'defenseless at the mercy of another subject to the point of being deprived of a sense of reality'.<sup>20</sup> As Anthony Giddens writes of this stage, prefiguring Honneth's

analysis: 'Reality here, however, should not be understood simply as a given object-world, but as a set of experiences organized constitutively through the mutuality of infant and caretakers.'<sup>21</sup> These forms of physical violence go to the heart of these initial experiences. They destroy not merely our physical boundaries, but the ontological security and trust upon which it is founded. This cripples one's trust in the world and adversely affects the individual's relationship with others.<sup>22</sup> Honneth speaks of this: '[T]he suffering of torture or rape is always accompanied by a dramatic *breakdown* in one's trust in the reliability of the social world and hence by a collapse in one's own basic self confidence.'<sup>23</sup>

## Stage 2: Rights and Respect as a Self-Legislator Person

When Honneth shifts to the second stage, that having to do with self-respect, his discussion is grounded in a specific account of moral autonomy derived most clearly from the Rousseauian and the Hegelian political traditions. To have self-respect is to see one's 'actions as the universally respected expression' of autonomy.<sup>24</sup> It is to see oneself as a person for whom respect is generated because one is capable of forming a vision of the good life and participating in public deliberation. The first of these – forming a vision of the good life – means that individuals can freely understand, assess and determine what is the best view of human flourishing for them to live. Although such a view is answerable to the communities in which one is located, it is not wholly determined by those communities. The second of these – participating in public deliberation – means that individuals can become subjects of the laws they freely give themselves. There should be no surprise why 'it is only [with] the establishment of universal human rights that this form of self-respect can assume the character associated with talk of moral responsibility'.<sup>25</sup>

For Honneth, legal rights are not merely instrumental to freedom but, as Hegel described in *The Philosophy of Right*, are the very expression of freedom.<sup>26</sup> The specific importance of legal rights to freedom that Honneth underscores and which can be traced to Hegel was first articulated by Rousseau in his *Social Contract*.<sup>27</sup> For Rousseau, the state is more than an external arrangement designed to promote the private freedom – however understood – of individuals. Rather, through participation in the public life of the state, individuals are free from the arbitrary will of others.<sup>28</sup> The absence of arbitrary domination, which constitutes the hallmark of republican political thought, is the primary element in understanding autonomous action.<sup>29</sup> In Honneth we see the same yoking together of legality and moral worth, even though he emphasizes the historical career of the former.<sup>30</sup> To the extent that self-respect depends on this link, it can only come to fruition within a context in which individuals raise and defend claims discursively.<sup>31</sup> As Maeve Cooke recently observed, this understanding of 'the political' within the modern self-understanding is an attempt to avoid epistemological and political authoritarianism.<sup>32</sup>

If I understand Honneth correctly, our political rights are not only an expression of the inviolability of our freedom, but give us access to the political process as well as make legal obligations possible. Taken together they generate self-respect and highlight our autonomy. After all, 'what gives rights the power to enable the development of self-respect is the public character that rights possess'.<sup>33</sup> The exact importance of this connection between rights and self-respect lies in our capacity to engage as citizens in determining the direction of our common lives. The denial of these rights, often the result of structural and legal exclusion, is taken as an affront to a person's moral standing – their expectation of being acknowledged as a person capable of 'reaching moral judgments'.<sup>34</sup>

### Stage 3: Solidarity and Esteem as Valuable Uniqueness

Whereas self-respect involves relation-to-oneself in one's abstract universality, self-esteem underscores the recognition of one's particularity and the value it holds within society that distinguishes self from others. When an individual is affirmed within the context of social solidarity, they are recognized as a source of valuable particularity; their traits and abilities are treated as positively contributing to the shared projects of that community. 'To the extent', writes Honneth, 'every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of a state of societal solidarity'.<sup>35</sup> Through this process the relationship-to-self is a positive outlook on one's concrete traits and abilities.

We need to proceed with care at precisely this juncture. This is because solidarity is indexed to a specific understanding of society that opens space for the worry I advance in the next section. Here it is helpful to make use of a passage in Joel Anderson's introduction to Honneth's book:

Honneth's position here [referring to this third stage] may be usefully compared to the culturally oriented views of subaltern groups that have influenced recent debates over multiculturalism, feminism, and gay and lesbian identity. Like defenders of the politics of difference, he regards struggles for recognition in which the dimension of esteem is central as attempts to end social patterns of denigration in order to make possible new forms of distinctive identity. But for Honneth, esteem is accorded on the basis of an individual's contribution to a shared project; thus, elimination of demeaning cultural images of, say, racial minorities does not provide esteem directly but rather establishes the conditions under which members of those groups can then build self-esteem by contribution to the community. . . . Honneth insists that the point of reference for esteeming each individual is the evaluative framework accepted by the entire community and not just one subculture.<sup>36</sup>

As I understand Anderson's reading of Honneth, it is not sufficient to say that esteem can come from the solidarity generated by a non-legally recognized group within the demos. For example, the psychological barrier of self-affirmation contained in the utterance 'black is beautiful' during the Black Power movement would be insufficient, on Honneth's view, to develop self-esteem. This is precisely why the absence of recognition, usually through denigration and insults from the



wider community in which subaltern groups exist, is interpreted as the denial of esteem, the recognition that my particularity is significant for 'shared praxis'.<sup>37</sup> But this means that the conceptual and practical development of self-esteem is fundamentally tied to the 'evaluative framework accepted by the entire community and not just one subculture'.<sup>38</sup>

It should not be assumed that I am substituting Anderson's reading of Honneth for what Honneth actually says. Indeed, he affirms Anderson's interpretation when he writes: 'The more successful social movements are at drawing the public sphere's attention to the neglected significance of the traits and abilities they collectively represent, the better their chances of raising the social worth or, indeed, the standing of their members.'<sup>39</sup> The development and maintenance of self-esteem thus becomes impossible in the face of a community's systematic denigration and insult, making the connection between legality and moral worth of the second stage indispensable to the development of the third. This is precisely why Honneth says that the 'only way in which individuals are constituted as persons is by learning to refer to themselves, from the perspective of an approving or encouraging other, as beings with certain positive traits and abilities'.<sup>40</sup> But he is quite clear that 'the scope of such traits – and hence the extent of one's positive relation-to-self – increases with each new form of recognition that individuals are able to apply to themselves as subjects'.<sup>41</sup> Having shown what Honneth takes the insufficiency of the first stage to be and the inability to achieve the third stage within the narrow framework of one subculture, we are left only with the fundamental importance of the second stage to one's psychological integrity and moral standing.

I will return to the precise connection between this claim and my specific worry. Let me first identify the forms of disrespect that Honneth views as stimulating social conflict and transformation. Such forms of disrespect provide the basis for explaining the fact of social change – that is, impulses toward inclusion through the expansion of recognition. The lack of self-confidence experienced because of the absence of mutuality developed through love relationships cannot stimulate social conflict. This is because the 'goals and desires connected with this *cannot be generalized beyond the circle of primary relationships, at least not in a way that would make them matters of public concern*'.<sup>42</sup> Yet he is quite clear that the forms of recognition associated with respect and social esteem, 'by contrast, do represent a moral context for societal conflict, if only because they rely on socially generalized criteria in order to function'.<sup>43</sup> The socially generalized criteria denote the infusion of the concept of law and moral worth which structures the meaning of political legitimacy. The emergence of social movements hinge on a conceptual semantic that enable the identification of personal experiences of denigration and insult to be interpreted as something shared. The drive toward an unencumbered relation-to-self, most clearly seen in the desire for self-respect and self-esteem, entails a normative impetus to struggle for recognition in the eyes of the larger legal community.

## The Paradox of Recognition

Honneth encourages us to believe that the absence of recognition serves as a motivation for social conflict and transformation. On my reading, there is a paradox to this account which we should find problematic. As Christopher Zurn highlights, '[f]or Honneth, it is important to realize that these three forms of relation-to-self – self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem – are ontogenetically fulfilled in a developmental hierarchy with a directional logic'.<sup>44</sup> But if this is so, any sustained disruptions in a person's social world that undermines the developmental hierarchy would not only seriously distort the psychological and moral structures of the person, but in fact would wholly prevent their construction. Is this an accurate assessment of Honneth's argument? And what exactly hangs on the distinction I am drawing between *distorting* one's psychological and moral formation, on the one hand, and *wholly preventing* its formation, on the other?

What is at stake is the possibility of circumnavigating the psychological and moral effect that is experienced by the forms of disrespect Honneth delineates so as to cultivate barriers of resistance. By barriers of resistance I mean not simply speech acts, but a variety of social practices that occur off the legally recognized public stage in response to domination and which serve as the normative site for cultivating a robust sense of self-worth by any subordinate group. But given the tight connection Honneth draws between the practices of recognition and psychological and moral formation, it is unclear how such alternative social sites could be created. Or to say it in bell hooks's language, how do we 'separate useful knowledge that [one] might get from the dominating group from participation in ways of knowing that would lead to estrangement, alienation, and worse – assimilation and co-optation'?<sup>45</sup> In this section, I want to first characterize the problem of which hooks's language is expressive. I will then demonstrate how this problem figures in Honneth's account of recognition and how it is most clearly captured in his reliance on the concept of social death that he derives from the work of Orlando Patterson. The point is not to say that if he jettisons the concept he can respond to the worry, but rather that his use of the concept is merely emblematic of a much larger problem with his theory.

### Characterizing the Problem

In his classic reflection on double-consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois nicely captures the paradox with which Hooks's question is concerned: 'It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and piety.'<sup>46</sup> So the paradox of recognition envisions the construction of one's subjectivity through the vocabulary of those in power. The oppressed is obligated to and thus empowers their oppressors as legitimate authorities for conferring self-worth. As Franz Fanon similarly

observed in his critique of colonialism, the logic of recognition ironically implicates victims in the very oppression they seek to undermine.<sup>47</sup> They become active participants in their own domination, alienating themselves from their capacity of constructing the symbols through which they understand themselves. Indeed, only one paragraph earlier in his account, Du Bois makes it clear that, unlike the 'other black boys', whose 'youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy' precisely because of this paradox, he would live 'above [the veil] in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows'.<sup>48</sup> To be clear, Du Bois does not believe that one can escape the imposition of the social world. For him, living 'above' denotes the necessity of cultivating a sense of self-worth that is not indexed to the source of oppression. The Negro Spirituals or 'sorrow songs' as Du Bois calls them represent precisely this kind of cultivation – the way enslaved blacks penetrated their circumstances through the construction of symbols that held out hope for transformation in the world but which simultaneously presupposed their agency. The sorrow songs, Frank Kirkland explains, 'enable [blacks] to conceive of themselves as breaking the repetition of unfulfilled expectations regarding what counts as good and just in their future-oriented present'.<sup>49</sup>

As these reflections from Du Bois and Fanon capture, theories of recognition must be especially sensitive to the ontological status of one's identity. When connected to identity, ontology denotes the ways in which our most basic orientation toward the world and our moral standing therein is configured through relationships of dependence. The issue is not that we depend on others, but how to conceive of dependency such that it enables rather than stifles affirmative gestures regarding one's self-understanding. Dependency always implicates us in relationships of authority to be sure, but that need not imply that such relationships are authoritarian and thus domineering. Part of being dependent means that individuals are merely co-authors of their identity, and so cannot exercise total sovereignty over their self-understanding. This much Honneth would not deny. But there is a deeper claim here as well. From the perspective of a social theory sensitive to the formation of resistance by marginalized groups, this means that we must be especially attuned to the way an account of recognition authorizes those other contributors to one's narrative, especially if those contributors look on, as Du Bois well knew, in amused contempt and pity.<sup>50</sup>

### **Locating the Problem in Honneth**

On an initial reading of Honneth, one might argue that his view can accommodate this description. After all, he is clear that his aim is to connect the emergence of social movements to the experiences of disrespect. In the penultimate chapter of his book, he argues that the experiences of disrespect are the motivational force that stimulates collective resistance and so provides the basis for group solidarity. The starting point of his social theory, he argues, is to excavate the utterances that refer to the moral reactions and feelings of everyday interaction that point to the vio-

lence exacted on identity formation.<sup>51</sup> On the face of it, this takes into consideration rather than ignores precisely the resistance demonstrated by black Americans specifically and marginalized groups more generally. In fact, it seemingly provides the basis for a non-essentialist notion of racial or cultural solidarity in the face of denigration and exclusion, which has been defended elsewhere and in different ways by Lucius Outlaw, Will Kymlicka, Eddie Glaude, and Tommie Shelby.<sup>52</sup>

The overlap, however, between Honneth and these thinkers is specious. The domination that excluded groups experience is not simply prior to a reflexive form of resistance in his theory; rather, his account conceptually undermines the cultivation of what James Scott refers to as a 'hidden transcript', a social space of positive reciprocity that forms behind the workings of the power-holders.<sup>53</sup> It forecloses on alternative ways marginalized groups have historically created barriers to sustain integrity and affirm their normative self-understanding. Scott's aim, which I share, in his perceptive study of the arts of social and political struggle is to get us to see the ways in which hegemonic power relations potentially conceal a transformative undercurrent on the part of those oppressed that constitutes resistance to complete domination. But this is not the standard claim that oppression will always encounter resistance. More specifically, domination is never total because, as Nancy Fraser rightly observes, 'parallel discursive arenas [form] where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs'.<sup>54</sup> Domination becomes not merely an impetus for resistance, a kind of passive orientation toward power. Rather, it becomes a catalyst for a reflexive and therefore active process within marginalized groups for reimagining their own self-understanding and how it ought to be displayed in specific practices of resistance.

We can elucidate more precisely the way Honneth's account obscures these parallel arenas by focusing on the concept of 'social death' that he attaches to the psychological impact of disrespect, particularly in his discussions of self-respect and self-esteem. The aim is to establish more firmly how the paradox of recognition is operating in Honneth's theory, thus leaving inexplicable the emergence of social conflict and transformation. This prepares the way for the discussion we will take up in the next section, since the concept of 'social death' has been used in understanding the effects of slavery.

Honneth's use of social death comes in a context where he discusses the psychological after-effects of exclusion and torture. And he announces, somewhat boldly, the following: 'In research concerned with how victims of slavery collectively cope with the denial of rights and exclusion from society, the concept of social death is now well established.'<sup>55</sup> In an earlier work he gives more specificity to his point:

These metaphorical allusions to physical suffering and death express the fact that the various forms of disrespect for psychological integrity take on the same negative role that organic diseases play in the context of body processes. . . . If there is any truth in this link

suggested by the conventions of our language, it follows that our survey of the various forms of disrespect should also enable us to draw conclusions as to the factors that foster what may be termed psychological 'health' or human integrity. Seen in this light, the preventive treatment of illnesses would correspond to the social guarantee of relations of recognition that are capable of providing the subject with the greatest possible protection from an experience of disrespect.<sup>56</sup>

But if I have understood his argument correctly thus far, preventive treatment seems to be bound up with the source of the disease. I take it that most political theorists have not been able to register the concern with which I am interested because they are not attentive to the problems surrounding the use of 'social death' in the literature on African American slavery. The result of this oversight is that we do not clearly see the ways in which the legal formalism of Honneth's theory ironically undermines what he is up to from the outset.

When he employs the term 'social death' he is referring to the way in which Patterson uses it in his now famous *Slavery and Social Death*.<sup>57</sup> In Patterson's view, 'in [the slave's] powerlessness [he] became an extension of his master's power. He was a human surrogate, recreated by his master' and only through his master did he become socialized.<sup>58</sup> The processes by which the slave was integrated into society, and came to understand herself in the context of a larger system of norms, laws, and cultural artifacts depended on the master's authority. Precisely for this reason, Patterson argues, the slave was a social non-person – that is, she had no recognition in the eyes of others.<sup>59</sup> 'The slave', he writes, 'came to obey [her master] not only out of fear, but out of the basic need to exist as a quasi-person, however marginal and vicarious that existence might be.'<sup>60</sup>

As Patterson maintains, this state of social death was more thoroughgoing than we might think, for it penetrated to the cultural norms that individuals would otherwise create as mechanisms to cope with the world and understand themselves. The very symbolic instruments that would otherwise be used as cultural buffers against a frightening world were controlled. This much Patterson argues: 'Alienated from all "rights" or claims of birth, [the slave] ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order.'<sup>61</sup> He acknowledges that slaves formed communal bonds and developed social relations, however fleeting. But the significant point he maintains is that the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of those communities and relations rested with their masters and so robbed them of the ability to achieve integrity and autonomy. This is precisely why the slaves were unable, on Patterson's view, to appropriate any of the master's customs, political or spiritual ideologies for purposes of providing ontological security and trust. So for him, the impact of the American institution of slavery on the psyche of black Americans was total – a formulation that already gestures to the inescapable problem that Honneth's theory must face as currently constructed: '[The slave] *could never be brought to life again* as such since, in spite of some specious examples (themselves most instructive) of fictive rebirth, the slave will remain forever an unborn being.'<sup>62</sup> The concept of social death, which, as Honneth says, is so well

established, provides a strong indicator on what psychological integrity and autonomy depends – namely, the recognition in the eyes of the larger political community. But it is precisely this community that is the source of disrespect.

There are several points to observe about Patterson's argument and its link to Honneth's theory. First, similar to Honneth's account, Patterson also emphasizes the social-psychological dimension of our development that is central to psychological integrity and moral autonomy. This partly explains why Honneth finds Patterson's outlook so congenial to his own. Second, Patterson also connects our development to a formalized practice of recognition, which, because of systematic exclusion, essentially renders the excluded (in this case the slave) socially unborn. That the slave is not *alive* to his social standing is meant to apply to his place within the larger legally recognized community, but also among similarly marginalized persons. This is precisely why the slave cannot positively appropriate any of the master's ideologies or develop communal resources that serve as existential armour. For Patterson, and this is why Honneth is drawn to his account, it is a formal system of recognition that gives us life in a social sense. In fact, Honneth is quite clear in this regard that 'self-realization is dependent on the social prerequisite of legally guaranteed autonomy' not simply because it protects us from the intrusion of others, but more dramatically because 'only with its help can subjects come to *conceive* of themselves as persons who can deliberate about their own desires'.<sup>63</sup>

In drawing the link between Patterson and Honneth as I do, we should notice an unraveling of the latter's project. Psychological integrity and autonomy depend for their formation on intersubjective recognition. But the specific 'others' from whom recognition is sought is of great importance in this case; for Honneth it must come from those members who exist as part of the larger legal community. Recall from our earlier reconstruction, only in a legal community can one develop a sense of self-respect derived from the exercise of autonomy. And while it is possible to exist as part of a group defined by social solidarity, it cannot sufficiently serve as the matrix through which self-esteem is developed because the evaluative framework is disconnected from the entire community.

This raises a fundamental problem for Honneth's account. Devoid of the formative moments that he believes are essential to one's self-understanding, how is it possible for the individual ever to know what to struggle for? For it seems more likely, given the social-psychological bent of Honneth's argument, that such individuals would interpret those moments of denigration and disrespect as *normal* states of their existence to be reconciled to rather than overcome. In Patterson's graphic language, such individuals will be unborn beings – that is, where psychological and moral development is tied to a legally structured system of recognition. So there must first develop an external sense of self-respect and self-esteem that serves as the point of departure to engage in critical appraisal of the political community. But this is precisely what the conceptual structure of Honneth's theory precludes, given that the argument is tilted toward formal recognition.<sup>64</sup>

Both theoretical and historical mistakes emerge if we follow Honneth in tying psychological integrity and autonomy to those social practices that are responsible for insult and injury in the first instance. The theoretical mistake comes from assuming that alternative modes of reciprocal acknowledgment of social respect among members of marginalized groups are not sufficient to provide the formative processes through which self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem are made possible. From a historical standpoint, this undercuts the creative processes subaltern groups have generated in the contexts of humiliation and denigration that allow them to cope, and at times, overcome these damaging sources of disrespect. If we do not take seriously these creative processes, especially in the context of the history of the struggle of black Americans to take just one example, individuals such as Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Anna Julia Cooper, and Frederick Douglass will inevitably seem like moral and political aberrations. On my reading, when we focus, with oppressed groups in mind, on the questions of 'recognition from whom?' and 'for what reason?' we invariably encounter the limitations of Honneth's account.<sup>65</sup>

If, however, we drop a theory of recognition that is heavily tilted toward legal acknowledgment, we are better positioned to see that, despite relationships of domination, acts of resistance are made possible by transforming the very elements of the relationship that is the source of oppression. As a result what emerge are *counter-communities* that are culturally defined, and in their most politically active phases, *counter-publics*.<sup>66</sup> This becomes the conceptual framework in which we render intelligible these individuals, although such an approach can easily extend beyond my focus on one marginalized group. It is particularly troubling that Honneth, who draws some of his resources from John Dewey and Mead, overlooks this insight of pragmatism's social theory. As Dewey makes clear, publics 'consist of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for'.<sup>67</sup> In the first instance, such publics guide efforts in fashioning existential armour, and, in the second instance, provide practical negotiation of social and political life that mitigate the damage to the quality of one's psychological health. To quote Scott once more: '[R]esistance to ideological domination requires a counterideology – a negation – that will effectively provide a general normative form to the host of resistant practices invented in self-defense by any subordinate group.'<sup>68</sup>

Still, a careful reader of Honneth might worry that this argument overplays the social-psychological and underplays the moral sources of recognition. After all, his argument seems to be that the moral norms and principles implicit if not evident in contemporary states are egalitarian and liberal. That is to say, these norms are not mere local empirical manifestations in communities, but can in fact provide motivational-moral resources for persons struggling for recognition. You might say, then, that slavery, and in fact, any systematic exclusion from the political and economic institutions that affects one's life chances, offends

the moral ideal of free and equal citizenship implicit in norms for us here today.

But even if one grants this point, it cannot be the case that our apprehension of these moral norms (past and present) is based on some kind of intuitionism. Honneth would not argue from this standpoint and this is precisely why he pursues a social-psychological route in laying out his theory of recognition. He is specifically concerned to avoid the philosophy of consciousness that plagues Kant's conception of freedom and to shift the discussion, via Hegel and Mead, to a social-psychological framework mediated by language. But on my reading, there must be a prior space however poorly formed in which seeing oneself as the subject of moral norms begins to take shape. It is this space which, as I have argued, Honneth conceptually excludes from his theory, leading to the theoretical and historical mistakes identified.

The upshot of this exclusion is that it also creates a gap between parts II and III of Honneth's book whereby he attempts to connect the patterns of recognition, their psychological and moral impact, and corresponding forms of disrespect on the one hand, to social conflict and transformation on the other. On my reading, the connection is inexplicable in Honneth's terms. If the gap is to be bridged, however, we must prevent legal acknowledgment from pushing everything else out of the picture, making it difficult to see the normative and transformative function that subaltern groups have historically served in developing self-respect and self-esteem for their members.<sup>69</sup>

In fairness, I do not deny the importance of the formal dimension of recognition. But my reasons for that have less to do with the psychological primacy Honneth attaches to it and more with the distributive benefits that follow.<sup>70</sup> But even in this context the link that we draw between formal recognition and distribution does not exhaust the importance we should accord a community of reciprocal acknowledgment that enhances the quality of its members' self-description. It is this latter description within marginalized groups, as I have argued, that is missing in Honneth's theory, given the centrality he attaches to legal acknowledgement. It will be enough for our part to provide at least one example of an alternative mode of building integrity and normative self-understanding that does not depend on the process described by Honneth. I suspect more can be said regarding these creative processes were one to include other historical excluded groups. This is simply beyond the scope of this article. Notwithstanding, I hope we will begin to scratch our heads at the ease with which we have been impressed by his arguments.

## Respect and Esteem through Spiritual Resistance

A number of scholars working in the area of African American religious studies underscore the centrality of the story of Exodus as a mechanism through which blacks grappled with and sustained themselves in the context of slavery. As Albert Raboteau notes, black people 'found a theology of history that helped them to



make sense of their enslavement'.<sup>71</sup> Eddie Glaude deepens the meaning of this story when he writes: 'The journey in the Exodus story also provided a crucial source for the construction of a national identity for African Americans. The story concerns not only heroic individuals who escaped the persecution of Pharaoh but also the people of Israel as they journeyed toward moral renewal and self-determination.'<sup>72</sup> The story, indicated by Glaude's language of moral renewal and self-determination, became a framework through which black Americans were able to relocate the 'other' from which recognition was sought. Thus Lawrence Levine notes: '[I]t was not the masters and mistresses but God and Jesus and the entire pantheon of Old Testament figures who set the standards, established the precedents, and defined the values; who, in short, constituted the significant others.'<sup>73</sup> Although our 'post-metaphysical' commitments may bristle at the use of a religious example, we cannot deny that this provides a different and viable account of how self-respect and self-esteem are created so as to uphold psychological integrity and make moral autonomy possible.

In appealing to this one, albeit very important, example I do not mean to deny or obscure the diversity and complexity that inhered in how black resistance was expressed. That enslaved blacks broke tools, poisoned their white masters, stole food, instigated work slowdowns are all instances of resistance that belies 'social death' as a helpful explanatory device. Additionally, this class of resistance was only one of two ways that counter-communities responded under slavery; it was a form of everyday resistance that did not necessarily get enshrined in or shape collective memory. However, Exodus politics, as I will suggest in a moment, registered the second level of response that placed emphasis on forming a normative site of resistance – the social source of one's moral self-understanding. Both are forms of fugitive or transgressive conduct, and will often be connected, but they are not the same. In the second of these two forms, to appropriate Scott's formulation, 'I believe, we will typically find the social and normative basis for practical forms of resistance . . . as well as the values that might . . . sustain more dramatic forms of rebellion.'<sup>74</sup>

We should begin with the following question: how precisely does the use of the story of Exodus capture moral autonomy? After all, when we think of moral autonomy, especially how Honneth uses it, we are speaking of the extent to which individuals are self-determining and self-legislating. In other words, their vision of themselves is not wholly at the mercy of another; rather, they are active participants in a construction of themselves and the standards that guide them. Here the inner life of individuals displays itself on the external landscape. If we are to make sense of the kind of resistance displayed by black Americans, Honneth's account must be broadened to include the way in which the inner life of individuals potentially transforms the symbols that are seemingly used as part and parcel of their oppression. For such transformations constitute outward acts of defiance, however cloaked, and point inwardly to individuals' ability to shape the contours of their identity. This account mitigates our sense of how devastating oppression will

be on the psyche from the outset. This makes the term 'social death' a rather dubious conceptual tool.

On closer inspection something of this is precisely taking place in the metaphorical use of the story of Exodus. As Glaude writes of the story:

The journey transforms the community of Israel; the men and women who leave Egypt are not the same as those who arrive at the banks of the Jordan. The narrative structure of the story accounts for this transformation, for its subject is not a disparate group of individuals but the people of Israel. Exodus, then, is not only the story of these people but their history – a political history about slavery and freedom, law and rebellion. And like the march, this political history has a determinate aim: to continuously retell the story of bondage, the march toward liberation, and the discipline necessary to remain free.<sup>75</sup>

What Glaude captures in his account is the figurative power of the story. In their use of Exodus, black Americans viewed the sacred and secular movements of time as one and the same; the reality in which the slaves existed extended outward before them as a normative ideal, opening up new vistas to be explored. They were propelled forward by their own imaginative reconstruction to reach and explore that uncharted territory, and this was coextensive with struggling against those obstacles that would block them from reaching their destination. In the push forward and concomitant resistance, the metaphor itself became the site in which they re-invented themselves and redefined their relationship to those on a similar journey. 'Each section of the narrative', writes Raboteau, 'the bondage in Egypt, the rescue at the Red Sea, the wandering in the wilderness, and the entrance into the Promised Land – provided a typological map to reconnoiter the moral terrain of American society.'<sup>76</sup> Or as he says later: 'Exodus functions as an archetypal myth for the slaves. The sacred history of God's liberation of his people would be or was being enacted in the American south.'<sup>77</sup> Autonomy was forged through and revealed in the very act of resistance. The display of social action *proper*, rather than its connection to legal structures as such, was the expression of one's autonomy.

It is important, however, that we do not interpret the 'Promised Land' to simply be otherworldly. To be sure, otherworldly faith functioned vertically, and so provided the metaphysical horizon in which one was situated. But there was also a horizontal – that is, political – dimension. As Raboteau explains: although the 'Exodus story . . . mainly nurtured internal resistance, and not external revolution among the slaves', it did provide in a secondary sense – to borrow from Iris Murdoch – 'the genetic background of action'.<sup>78</sup> This means that the Exodus story was a figuration of action-as-resistance, whose full meaning depended on the unfolding of the drama in time. It denoted a posture toward the world that stipulated the necessity of working and reworking on the world so as to make freedom possible. This was so because, 'although Jesus was ubiquitous in the spirituals; it was not invariably the Jesus of the New Testament of whom the slaves sang, but frequently a Jesus transformed into an Old Testament warrior whose victories were temporal as well as spiritual'.<sup>79</sup> Hence the Negro Spirituals implied not only suffering, but a reconstitution of the suffering subject into a free agent. And so

here the slaves were not passive receptacles of their 'Master's Religion' as the concept of social death suggest. Rather, they were active interpreters of scripture in an effort to forge meaning and resistance that was resilient in the face of white proscription: 'By obeying the commands of God, even when they contradicted the commands of men, slaves developed and treasured a sense of moral superiority and actual moral authority over their masters.'<sup>80</sup> Moral superiority and authority is appropriate in this instance precisely because the description of autonomy escaped the paradox of recognition – that is, reliance on those who undermine human worth – and so provided an opportunity, however fleeting, to refashion one's self-understanding.

Discussing spiritual resistance in this way may seem to obscure the distinct ways Honneth uses terms such as self-respect and self-esteem, and the precise connection between them and how black Americans employed the story of Exodus. We should not conclude too quickly on this note. We have already seen how it maps on to the concept of self-respect, which is tied to moral autonomy. And we can now see that it stipulates a reformulation of self-esteem because it disconnects the development of that concept from dependence on those institutions that are the source of insult and injury in the first instance. Thus, referring to our earlier example of the utterance 'black is beautiful' that achieved currency during the 1960s, we are able to see how the phrase contained the normative and cognitive resources to denote affirmation and confer self-esteem. The practical result of the locution was to remove from view, among other things, the obstacle of racial discrimination that prevented the acknowledgment of one's particularity and its place in the larger well-being of the community. More immediately, however, if the story of Exodus worked as historians and others have described, then the corresponding sense of people-hood provided precisely the vision of worth that each individual searched for. It indicated their importance by virtue of the similar journey they shared. They were esteemed in light of their struggle and allegiance to God.

We should not obscure, however, the personal and perhaps more individually directed quality of the relationship between the slaves and God that extends beyond the story of Exodus. After all, it was in the nature of Protestant evangelicism to emphasize the personal relationship between the individual and God.<sup>81</sup> This is an insight of the Reformation that de-emphasized mediation by the clergy. Rather, salvation and freedom were *subjectivized*. The individual inevitably turned inward to understand the working of God's Spirit, his demands on the self, and what those demands entailed in one's relation-to-oneself and others. To say it differently, one's relationship to others was expressed through one's commitment to God and instantiated through *solidarity* aimed toward *universal justice*. Indeed, the aspiration toward universal justice, which would later serve as the basis for the Civil Rights movement, had as its reference point a discursive arena among black Americans that ran parallel with the larger evaluative structure from which they were excluded but to which they oriented their political grievances and demands.

While there is seemingly a philosophy of consciousness underneath as critical theorists will quickly assert, that reading would obscure the fact that God was conceived also as embodied and an external subject with whom an intersubjective relationship was possible. But on its current terms, this is something that Honneth's theory is unable to accommodate.

## Conclusion

Honneth has given us a very informative and revealing description of recognition and the various psychological elements upon which it depends if the identity of the individual is to be sustained. He has also suggested that the absence of recognition and the feelings of disrespect it prompts serve as the motivation for inclusion into the larger political community. That I find his account instructive does not, however, mean that I find it convincing. In his theory, our psychological stability and moral development come to depend too much on precisely the formal structures of recognition that are the source of insult and injury, revealing its troubling paradox. I have argued for the accuracy of this claim through Honneth's use of the term social death. As such, the result of the narrative of disruption contained in specific insults and injuries aimed at identity formation would be too exacting for social conflict to be stimulated. In reading Honneth, we discover that disruption is always present in the life of the individual, so much so that it undermines the very formative processes needed to render self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem intelligible. We are forced to wonder how the feelings of disrespect that follow could ever be recognized so as to stimulate social conflict. And so Honneth opens rather than closes the gap between those feelings of disrespect on the one hand, and the way they serve as motivation for social conflict on the other. But if my explication of the spiritual resistance displayed by black Americans during slavery is correct, then I have identified an alternative way by which individuals have built a community of mutual acknowledgement that makes possible and sustains psychological integrity and moral autonomy outside of the formal structure of recognition. Indeed, this alternative approach enabled black Americans to forge a coherent vision of themselves and the political community in which we now partly stand and continue to enjoy.

## Notes

1. See Will Kymlicka (1989) *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. New York: Clarendon Press. Kymlicka (1996) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press. Iris Marion Young (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Young (1998) 'Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Dual Systems Theory', in Cynthia Willett (ed.) *Theorizing Multiculturalism: A Guide to the Current Debate*, pp. 50–72. . Malden, MA: Blackwell Press. Charles Taylor (1991) *The Ethics of Authenticity*, ch. 5. Cambridge, MA: Harvard

- University Press. Taylor (1994) 'The Politics of Recognition', in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, pp. 25–75. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Patricia J. Williams (1991) *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Axel Honneth (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, tr. Joel Anderson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Anne Phillips (1995) *The Politics of Presence: The Political Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Race*. New York: Oxford University Press. Lucius T. Outlaw Jr. (1996) *On Race and Philosophy*, chs 6–7. New York: Routledge. James Tully (2000) 'Struggles Over Recognition and Distribution', *Constellations* 7 (Dec.): 469–82. Seyla Benhabib (2002) *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Patchen Markell (2003) *Bound By Recognition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
2. Honneth (n. 1), chs 5–6.
  3. Ibid. pp. 136–7; cf. Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*, ch. 2. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Gay Becker (1997) *Disrupted Lives: How People Create Meaning in a Chaotic World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
  4. Taylor (1994, in n. 1) p. 65.
  5. James Bohman (2007) 'Beyond Distributive Justice and Struggles for Recognition: Freedom, Democracy, and Critical Theory', *European Journal of Political Theory* 6: 267.
  6. Patchen Markell (2007) 'The Potential and the Actual: Mead, Honneth, and the "I"', in Bert Van Den Brink and David Owen (eds) *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, p. 100. New York: Cambridge University Press.
  7. Interestingly enough, Anthony Appiah raises this worry in passing regarding Charles Taylor's account of recognition when he writes: 'If, in understanding myself as African-American, I see myself as resisting white norms, mainstream American conventions, the racism (and, perhaps, the materialism or individualism) of "white culture," why should I at the same time seek recognition from these white others? There is, in other words, at least an irony in the way in which an ideal – you will recognize it if I call it the bohemian ideal – in which authenticity requires us to reject much that is conventional in our society is turned around and made the basis of "politics of recognition.'" See Appiah and Amy Gutmann (1996) *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race*, p. 94. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Cf. Kelly Oliver (2001) *Witnessing Beyond Recognition*, pp. 44–6. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
  8. Orlando Patterson (1982) *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
  9. When I use the term 'imagination' I mean it in a Deweyan sense. For Dewey, the imagination reconstructs and extends experience, thus giving a more complete representation of ends than are suggested by the environment in which we find ourselves. The reconstruction is not merely on discreet happenings – the present situation – but more dramatically, the funded nature of the present so that the end-product of the imagination has a career both in the present and in what precedes it. The cognitive work of the imagination implicitly acknowledges that the possibilities of identity and context are unrealized in reality, but nonetheless contain the power to provoke action. On this point see John Dewey (1934/1987) 'Art as Experience', in *The Later Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 10, pp. 273–6. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
  10. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003) *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Verso. Christopher Zurn (2003) 'Identity or Status? Struggles over "Recognition" in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor', *Constellations* 10: 519–37. Zurn (2005) 'Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory', *European Journal of Philosophy* 13: 89–126.

11. The argument that has the closest affinity with my own is Oliver (n. 7). I should say, however, Oliver does not attend, as I do here, to the textual unfolding of Honneth's argument. As such, I'm not completely clear how the worry maps on, except in some stylized sense.
12. See generally, Becker (n. 3).
13. Benhabib (n. 1), p. 50; cf. Honneth (n. 1), pt 1.
14. Honneth (n. 1), p. 93.
15. Ibid. p. 95.
16. Ibid. p. 98.
17. Ibid. p. 100. It should be noted that the term 'Mother', as Honneth uses it, is to be understood as caretaker broadly conceived and therefore need not imply the biological mother.
18. Ibid. p. 104.
19. Ibid. p. 105.
20. Ibid. p. 190.
21. Giddens (n. 3), p. 38.
22. Honneth (1992) 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition', *Political Theory* 20: 187–201, at 190.
23. Honneth (n. 1), p. 133. Emphasis added.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. p. 119.
26. G. W. F. Hegel (1821/1967) *The Philosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox. New York: Oxford University Press. For helpful analysis on this point see Paul Franco (1999) *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*, ch. 5. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
27. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1997) *The Social Contract*, ed. Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press.
28. Ibid. bk. 1, chap. 6.
29. This theme has been revived by contemporary republicans. See Philip Pettit (1997) *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. New York: Oxford University Press. Cf. Quentin Skinner (1998) *Liberty Before Liberalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
30. Honneth (n. 1), pp. 109–12.
31. Ibid. p. 119.
32. Maeve Cooke (2006) *Re-Presenting the Good Society*, intro.–ch. 1. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
33. Honneth (n. 1), p. 120.
34. Ibid. p. 133.
35. Ibid. p. 129.
36. Joel Anderson (ed.), 'Introduction' in Honneth (n. 1), pp. x–xxi, at p. xviii.
37. Honneth (n. 1), p. 129.
38. Anderson (n. 36), p. xviii. Emphasis added.
39. Honneth (n. 1), p. 127.
40. Ibid. p. 173.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid. p. 162; cf. 107. Emphasis added.
43. Ibid. p. 162.
44. Zurn (2000) 'Anthropology and Normativity: A Critique of Axel Honneth's "Formal Conception of Ethical Life"', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26: 115–24, at 117.
45. bell hooks (1990) *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, p. 150, cf. pp. 15–22. Boston, MA: South End Press.

46. Du Bois (1903/1999) *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, pp. 10–11. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
47. Frantz Fanon (1967) *Black Skin, White Masks*, tr. Charles Lam Markmann, pp. 217–22. New York: Gorge Press.
48. Du Bois (n. 46), p. 10.
49. Frank M. Kirkland (1992–3) ‘Modernity and Intellectual Life in Black’, *Philosophical Forum* 34: 158.
50. My thoughts here are owed, in different ways, to Oliver and Markell. See Oliver (n. 7), pts 1, 3; Markel (n. 1), ch. 1.
51. Honneth (1994) ‘The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today’, *Constellations* 1: 254–69, at 261. Cf. Honneth (1991) *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, tr. Kenneth Baynes, pp. 302–3. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
52. For this account of solidarity see Kymlicka (1996, in n. 1), ch. 3. Kymlicka (1989, in n. 1), ch. 6. Eddie Glaude (2000) *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Glaude (2006) *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America*, ch. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Tommie Shelby (2005) *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. I will not argue the point here, but this is clearly a very different account of solidarity from what we find in Charles Taylor. Critics are thus right to point out that his language of ‘authenticity’ presupposes a kind of essentialism, but here too, the arguments of the thinkers above sidestep this problem. For this specific critique of Taylor see Appiah (1994) ‘Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction’, in Amy Gutmann (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, pp. 149–63. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
53. James C. Scott (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, specifically, chs 1, 5 and 7. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990. Cf. Robin D. G. Kelley (1994) *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*, pt 1, New York: Free Press.
54. Nancy Fraser (1997) *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the ‘PostSocialist’ Condition*, p. 81. New York: Routledge Original emphasis.
55. Honneth (n. 1), p. 135.
56. Honneth (n. 22), p. 192.
57. Patterson (n. 8); cf. Honneth (n. 1), p. 195 n. 4, and (n. 22), p. 192.
58. Patterson (n. 8), p. 4, cf. ch. 2.
59. Ibid. ch. 2.
60. Ibid. p. 46.
61. Ibid. p. 10; cf. pp. 39–45.
62. Ibid. p. 39. Emphasis added.
63. Honneth (n. 1), p. 177.
64. Most recently Honneth has included a fourth principle of recognition for cultural minorities. The place of identity conflicts, he says, ‘means considering the possibility of the emergence of a new fourth principle of recognition with the normative infrastructure of capitalist societies’ (Fraser and Honneth (n. 10), p. 161). The language seems inviting given the concerns being raised. The problem, however, and why this principle does not receive more sustained attention here is that Honneth never specifically explains where this principle fits in the ontogenetic structure of his original account. His aim, moreover, seems to be directed toward assessing whether ‘these newly emerged – or better, “construed” – collectivities’ are merely struggling ‘for the recognition of their culturally

defined independence' (ibid. p. 163). But this still leaves inexplicable how to account for such identities in the first place.

65. The formulations are taken from Lawrence Blum's insightful essay, although he seems to be in agreement with Honneth. See Blum, 'Recognition, Value, and Equality: A Critique of Charles Taylor's and Nancy Fraser's Accounts of Multiculturalism', in Willett (n. 1), pp. 73–99, at 77.
66. Cf. Scott (n. 53), ch. 5; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880–1920*, esp. pp. 7–13. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Houston A. Baker Jr. (1995) 'The Black Public Sphere', in The Black Public Sphere Collective (ed.), *The Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, pp. 5–37. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Michael C. Dawson, 'A Black Counterpublic?: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agenda(s), and Black Politics', in *The Public Sphere*, pp. 199–227.
67. John Dewey (1927) *The Public and its Problems*, pp. 15–16. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
68. Scott (n. 53), p. 118.
69. Honneth's use of Dewey may respond to my worry. His interest in the domain of work constitutes a prepolitical domain that serves as a paradigm in which solidarity and problem-solving emerge. The analogical derivative of this concept potentially points to communities that do precisely the work of cultivating self-esteem and self-respect which I believe Honneth's theory needs to account for independent of a juridical framework. But it is unclear if this is what he intends. See Honneth (1998) 'Democracy as a Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today', *Political Theory* 26: 763–83.
70. On this point see Young (1990, in n. 1), chs 1–2, 6; cf. Fraser (n. 54), pp. 11–41. In a recent account, Honneth argues that the issue of economic inequality is secondary in a phenomenological sense when compared to the primacy of political recognition, and therefore the latter is already sensitive to the claims of the former. Thus he writes:
 

The bestowal of social rights, i.e. above all economic safeguards for the individual in case of need through no fault of one's own, is gauged primarily according to the idea of affording every member of a society the measure of social recognition that makes him or her a full citizen. If we further consider that such recognition also comprises the citizen's incorporation in the process of social cooperation, the resulting conclusion is that programmes of minimal economic safeguarding do not suffice; rather, state welfare is then subject to the requirement that every individual be given the chance to participate in an elementary manner in the cooperative context of society by making his or her own contribution. It is only then, such would be the conclusion, that every individual is in a position to grasp his or her self as a full member of a society.
- (Honneth (2004) 'Recognition and Justice: Outlines of a Plural Theory of Justice', *Acta Sociologica* 47: 351–64, at 352.
71. Albert Raboteau (1994) 'African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel' in Paul Johnson (ed.) *African American Christianity: Essays in History*, pp. 1–18, at 1. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Cf. Raboteau (1978) *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*, chs 4–5. New York: Oxford University Press.
72. Glaude (2000, in n. 52), p. 6.
73. Lawrence Levine (1977) *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, p. 37. New York: Oxford University Press.
74. Scott (n. 53) p. 20.
75. Glaude (2000, in n. 52), P. 5.



76. Raboteau (1994, in n. 71), pp. 9–10.

77. Ibid. p. 13.

78. Ibid. p. 12; Iris Murdoch (1970) *The Sovereignty of the Good*, p. 83. New York: Routledge.

79. Levine (n. 73), p. 43.

80. Raboteau (1978, in n. 71), p. 318; cf. pp. 126–7.

81. Ibid. p. 177.