

# From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age

The 'struggle for recognition' is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict in the late twentieth century. Demands for 'recognition of difference' fuel struggles of groups mobilized under the banners of nationality, ethnicity, 'race', gender, and sexuality. In these 'post-socialist' conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. And cultural recognition displaces socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle.\*

That, of course, is not the whole story. Struggles for recognition occur in a world of exacerbated material inequality—in income and property ownership; in access to paid work, education, health care and leisure time; but also more starkly in caloric intake and exposure to environmental toxicity, hence in life expectancy and rates of morbidity and mortality. Material inequality is on the rise in most of the world's countries—in the United States and in

Haiti, in Sweden and in India, in Russia and in Brazil. It is also increasing globally, most dramatically across the line that divides North from South. How, then, should we view the eclipse of a socialist imaginary centred on terms such as 'interest', 'exploitation', and 'redistribution'? And what should we make of the rise of a new political imaginary centred on notions of 'identity', 'difference', 'cultural domination', and 'recognition'? Does this shift represent a lapse into 'false consciousness'? Or does it, rather, redress the culture-blindness of a materialist paradigm rightfully discredited by the collapse of Soviet Communism?

Neither of those two stances is adequate, in my view. Both are too wholesale and un-nuanced. Instead of simply endorsing or rejecting all of identity politics *simpliciter*, we should see ourselves as presented with a new intellectual and practical task: that of developing a *critical* theory of recognition, one which identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality.

In formulating this project, I assume that justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition. And I propose to examine the relation between them. In part, this means figuring out how to conceptualize cultural recognition and social equality in forms that support rather than undermine one another. (For there are many competing conceptions of both!) It also means theorizing the ways in which economic disadvantage and cultural disrespect are currently entwined with and support one another. Then, too, it requires clarifying the political dilemmas that arise when we try to combat both those injustices simultaneously.

My larger aim is to connect two political problematics that are currently dissociated from one other. For only by articulating recognition and redistribution can we arrive at a critical-theoretical framework that is adequate to the demands of our age. That, however, is far too much to take on here. In what follows, I shall consider only one aspect of the problem. Under what circumstances can a politics of recognition help support a politics of redistribution? And when is it more likely to undermine it? Which of the many varieties of identity politics best synergize with struggles for social equality? And which tend to interfere with the latter?

In addressing these questions, I shall focus on axes of injustice that are simultaneously cultural and socioeconomic, paradigmatically gender and

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<sup>1</sup> This omission is dictated by reasons of space. I believe that the framework elaborated below can fruitfully address both ethnicity and nationality. Insofar as groups mobilized on these lines do not define themselves as sharing a situation of socioeconomic disadvantage and do not make redistributive claims, they can be understood as struggling primarily for recognition. National struggles are peculiar, however, in that the form of recognition they seek is political autonomy, whether in the form of a sovereign state of their own (e.g. the Palestinians) or in the form of more limited provincial sovereignty within a multinational state (e.g. the majority of Québécois). Struggles for ethnic recognition, in contrast, often seek rights of cultural expression within polyethnic nation-states. These distinctions are insightfully discussed in Will Kymlicka, 'Three Forms of Group-Differentiated Citizenship in Canada' (paper presented at the conference on 'Democracy and Difference', Yale University, 1993).

‘race’. (I shall not say much, in contrast, about ethnicity or nationality.<sup>1</sup>) And I must enter one crucial preliminary caveat: in proposing to assess recognition claims from the standpoint of social equality, I assume that varieties of recognition politics that fail to respect human rights are unacceptable even if they promote social equality.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, a word about method: in what follows, I shall propose a set of analytical distinctions, for example, cultural injustices versus economic injustices, recognition versus redistribution. In the real world, of course, culture and political economy are always imbricated with one another; and virtually every struggle against injustice, when properly understood, implies demands for both redistribution and recognition. Nevertheless, for heuristic purposes, analytical distinctions are indispensable. Only by abstracting from the complexities of the real world can we devise a conceptual schema that can illuminate it. Thus, by distinguishing redistribution and recognition analytically, and by exposing their distinctive logics, I aim to clarify—and begin to resolve—some of the central political dilemmas of our age.

My discussion proceeds in four parts. In section one, I conceptualize redistribution and recognition as two analytically distinct paradigms of justice, and I formulate ‘the redistribution–recognition dilemma’. In section two, I distinguish three ideal-typical modes of social collectivity in order to identify those vulnerable to the dilemma. In section three, I distinguish between ‘affirmative’ and ‘transformative’ remedies for injustice, and I examine their respective logics of collectivity. Lastly, I use these distinctions, in section four, to propose a political strategy for integrating recognition claims with redistribution claims with a minimum of mutual interference.

## I. The Redistribution–Recognition Dilemma

Let me begin by noting some complexities of contemporary ‘post-socialist’ political life. With the decentring of class, diverse social movements are mobilized around cross-cutting axes of difference. Contesting a range of injustices, their claims overlap and at times conflict. Demands for cultural change intermingle with demands for economic change, both within and among social movements. Increasingly, however, identity-based claims tend to predominate, as prospects for redistribution appear to recede. The result is a complex political field with little programmatic coherence.

To help clarify this situation and the political prospects it presents, I propose to distinguish two broadly conceived, analytically distinct understandings of injustice. The first is socioeconomic injustice, which is rooted in the political-economic structure of society. Examples include exploitation (having the fruits of one’s labour appropriated for the benefit

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<sup>2</sup> My principal concern in this essay is the relation between the recognition of cultural difference and social equality. I am not directly concerned, therefore, with the relation between recognition of cultural difference and liberalism. However, I assume that no identity politics is acceptable that fails to respect fundamental human rights of the sort usually championed by left-wing liberals.

of others); economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether); and deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living).

Egalitarian theorists have long sought to conceptualize the nature of these socioeconomic injustices. Their accounts include Marx's theory of capitalist exploitation, John Rawls's account of justice as fairness in the distribution of 'primary goods', Amartya Sen's view that justice requires ensuring that people have equal 'capabilities to function', and Ronald Dworkin's view that it requires 'equality of resources'.<sup>3</sup> For my purposes here, however, we need not commit ourselves to any one particular theoretical account. We need only subscribe to a rough and general understanding of socioeconomic injustice informed by a commitment to egalitarianism.

The second kind of injustice is cultural or symbolic. It is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own); nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions).

Some political theorists have recently sought to conceptualize the nature of these cultural or symbolic injustices. Charles Taylor, for example, has drawn on Hegelian notions to argue that:

Nonrecognition or misrecognition . . . can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, Axel Honneth has argued that:

we owe our integrity . . . to the receipt of approval or recognition from other persons. [Negative concepts such as 'insult' or

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Mass. 1971 and subsequent papers; Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*, North-Holland, 1985; and Ronald Dworkin, 'What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 4 (fall 1981). Although I here classify all these writers as theorists of distributive economic justice, it is also true that most of them have some resources for dealing with issues of cultural justice as well. Rawls, for example, treats 'the social bases of self-respect' as a primary good to be fairly distributed, while Sen treats a 'sense of self' as relevant to the capability to function. (I am indebted to Mika Manty for this point.) Nevertheless, as Iris Marion Young has suggested, the primary thrust of their thought leads in the direction of distributive economic justice. (See her *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton 1990.)

<sup>4</sup> Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*, Princeton 1992, p. 25.

‘degradation’] are related to forms of disrespect, to the denial of recognition. [They] are used to characterize a form of behaviour that does not represent an injustice solely because it constrains the subjects in their freedom for action or does them harm. Rather, such behaviour is injurious because it impairs these persons in their positive understanding of self—an understanding acquired by intersubjective means.<sup>5</sup>

Similar conceptions inform the work of many other critical theorists who do not use the term ‘recognition.’<sup>6</sup> Once again, however, it is not necessary here to settle on a particular theoretical account. We need only subscribe to a general and rough understanding of cultural injustice, as distinct from socioeconomic injustice.

Despite the differences between them, both socioeconomic injustice and cultural injustice are pervasive in contemporary societies. Both are rooted in processes and practices that systematically disadvantage some groups of people vis-à-vis others. Both, consequently, should be remedied.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, this distinction between economic injustice and cultural injustice is analytical. In practice, the two are intertwined. Even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms. Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material supports. Thus, far from occupying two airtight separate spheres, economic injustice and cultural injustice are usually interimbriated so as to reinforce one another dialectically. Cultural norms that are unfairly biased against some are institutionalized in the state and the economy; meanwhile, economic disadvantage impedes equal participa-

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<sup>5</sup> Axel Honneth, ‘Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition’, *Political Theory*, vol. 20, no. 2 (May 1992), pp. 188–9. See also his *Kampf um Anerkennung*, Frankfurt 1992; English translation forthcoming from The MIT Press under the title *Struggle for Recognition*. It is no accident that both of the major contemporary theorists of recognition, Honneth and Taylor, are Hegelians.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Patricia J. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Cambridge, Mass. 1991; and Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

<sup>7</sup> Responding to an earlier draft of this paper, Mika Manty posed the question of whether/how a schema focused on classifying justice issues as either cultural or political-economic could accommodate ‘primary political concerns’ such as citizenship and political participation (‘Comments on Fraser’, unpublished typescript presented at the Michigan symposium on ‘Political Liberalism’). My inclination is to follow Jürgen Habermas in viewing such issues bifocally. From one perspective, political institutions (in state-regulated capitalist societies) belong with the economy as part of the ‘system’ that produces distributive socioeconomic injustices; in Rawlsian terms, they are part of ‘the basic structure’ of society. From another perspective, however, such institutions belong with ‘the lifeworld’ as part of the cultural structure that produces injustices of recognition; for example, the array of citizenship entitlements and participation rights conveys powerful implicit and explicit messages about the relative moral worth of various persons. ‘Primary political concerns’ could thus be treated as matters either of economic justice or cultural justice, depending on the context and perspective in play.

tion in the making of culture, in public spheres and in everyday life. The result is often a vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these mutual entwinements, I shall continue to distinguish economic injustice and cultural injustice analytically. And I shall also distinguish two correspondingly distinct kinds of remedy. The remedy for economic injustice is political-economic restructuring of some sort. This might involve redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures. Although these various remedies differ importantly from one another, I shall henceforth refer to the whole group of them by the generic term 'redistribution'.<sup>9</sup> The remedy for cultural injustice, in contrast, is some sort of cultural or symbolic change. This could involve upwardly revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups. It could also involve recognizing and positively valorizing cultural diversity. More radically still, it could involve the wholesale transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation and communication in ways that would change *everybody's* sense of self.<sup>10</sup> Although these remedies differ importantly from one another, I shall henceforth refer to the whole group of them by the generic term 'recognition'.

Once again, this distinction between redistributive remedies and recognition remedies is analytical. Redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying conception of recognition. For example, some proponents of egalitarian socioeconomic redistribution ground their claims on the 'equal moral worth of persons'; thus, they treat economic redistribution as an expression of recognition.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, recognition remedies sometimes presuppose an underlying conception of redistribution. For example, some proponents of multicultural recognition ground their claims on the imperative of a just distribution of the 'primary good' of an 'intact cultural structure'; they therefore treat cultural recognition as a species of redistribution.<sup>12</sup> Such conceptual entwinements notwith-

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<sup>8</sup> For the interimbrication of culture and political economy, see my 'What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender' in Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Oxford 1989; 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' in Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*; and Fraser, 'Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Linguistic Turn', in Benhabib, Butler, Cornell and Fraser, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, New York 1995. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge 1977. For critiques of the cultural meanings implicit in the current US political economy of work and social welfare, see the last two chapters of *Unruly Practices* and the essays in Part 3 of *Justice Interruptus*.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, these remedies stand in some tension with one another, a problem I shall explore in a subsequent section of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> These various cultural remedies stand in some tension with one another. It is one thing to accord recognition to existing identities that are currently undervalued; it is another to transform symbolic structures and thereby alter people's identities. I shall explore the tensions among the various remedies in a subsequent section of the paper.

<sup>11</sup> For a good example of this approach, see Ronald Dworkin, 'Liberalism', in his *A Matter of Principle*, Cambridge, Mass. 1985.

<sup>12</sup> For a good example of this approach, see Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford 1989. The case of Kymlicka suggests that the distinction

standing, I shall leave to one side questions such as, do redistribution and recognition constitute two distinct, irreducible, *sui generis* concepts of justice, or alternatively, can either one of them be reduced to the other?<sup>13</sup> Rather, I shall assume that however we account for it metatheoretically, it will be useful to maintain a working, first-order distinction between socioeconomic injustices and their remedies, on the one hand, and cultural injustices and their remedies, on the other.<sup>14</sup>

With these distinctions in place, I can now pose the following questions: What is the relation between claims for recognition, aimed at remedying cultural injustice, and claims for redistribution, aimed at redressing economic injustice? And what sorts of mutual interferences can arise when both kinds of claims are made simultaneously?

There are good reasons to worry about such mutual interferences. Recognition claims often take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group, and then of affirming the value of that specificity. Thus they tend to promote group differentiation. Redistribution claims, in contrast, often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity. (An example would be feminist demands to abolish the gender division of labour.) Thus they tend to promote group de-differentiation. The upshot is that the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution appear to have mutually contradictory aims. Whereas the first tends to promote group differentiation, the second tends to undermine it. The two kinds of claim thus stand in tension with each other; they can interfere with, or even work against, one another.

Here, then, is a difficult dilemma. I shall henceforth call it the redistribution–recognition dilemma. People who are subject to both cultural injustice and economic injustice need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity. How, if at all, is this possible?

Before taking up this question, let us consider precisely who faces the recognition–redistribution dilemma.

## II. Exploited Classes, Despised Sexualities, and Bivalent Collectivities

Imagine a conceptual spectrum of different kinds of social collectivities. At one extreme are modes of collectivity that fit the redistribution model of justice. At the other extreme are modes of collectivity that fit the recognition model. In between are cases that prove difficult because they fit both models of justice simultaneously.

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between socioeconomic justice and cultural justice need not always map onto the distinction between distributive justice and relational or communicative justice.

<sup>13</sup> Axel Honneth's *Kampf um Anerkennung* represents the most thorough and sophisticated attempt at such a reduction. Honneth argues that recognition is the fundamental concept of justice and can encompass distribution.

<sup>14</sup> Absent such a distinction, we foreclose the possibility of examining conflicts between them. We miss the chance to spot mutual interferences that could arise when redistribution claims and recognition claims are pursued simultaneously.

Consider, first, the redistribution end of the spectrum. At this end let us posit an ideal-typical mode of collectivity whose existence is rooted wholly in the political economy. It will be differentiated as a collectivity, in other words, by virtue of the economic structure, as opposed to the cultural order, of society. Thus any structural injustices its members suffer will be traceable ultimately to the political economy. The root of the injustice, as well as its core, will be socioeconomic maldistribution, while any attendant cultural injustices will derive ultimately from that economic root. At bottom, therefore, the remedy required to redress the injustice will be political-economic redistribution, as opposed to cultural recognition.

In the real world, to be sure, political economy and culture are mutually intertwined, as are injustices of distribution and recognition. Thus we may doubt whether there exist any pure collectivities of this sort. For heuristic purposes, however, it is useful to examine their properties. To do so, let us consider a familiar example that can be interpreted as approximating the ideal type: the Marxian conception of the exploited class, understood in an orthodox and theoretical way.<sup>15</sup> And let us bracket the question of whether this view of class fits the actual historical collectivities that have struggled for justice in the real world in the name of the working class.<sup>16</sup>

In the conception assumed here, class is a mode of social differentiation that is rooted in the political-economic structure of society. A class only exists as a collectivity by virtue of its position in that structure and of its relation to other classes. Thus, the Marxian working class is the body of persons in a capitalist society who must sell their labour-power under arrangements that authorize the capitalist class to appropriate surplus productivity for its private benefit. The injustice of these arrangements, moreover, is quintessentially a matter of distribution. In the capitalist

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<sup>15</sup> In what follows, I conceive class in a highly stylized, orthodox, and theoretical way in order to sharpen the contrast to the other ideal-typical kinds of collectivity discussed below. Of course, this is hardly the only interpretation of the Marxian conception of class. In other contexts and for other purposes, I myself would prefer a less economic interpretation, one that gives more weight to the cultural, historical and discursive dimensions of class emphasized by such writers as E. P. Thompson and Joan Wallach Scott. See Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London 1963; and Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York 1988.

<sup>16</sup> It is doubtful that any collectivities mobilized in the real world today correspond to the notion of class presented below. Certainly, the history of social movements mobilized under the banner of class is more complex than this conception would suggest. Those movements have elaborated class not only as a structural category of political economy but also as a cultural-valuational category of identity—often in forms problematic for women and blacks. Thus, most varieties of socialism have asserted the dignity of labour and the worth of working people, mingling demands for redistribution with demands for recognition. Sometimes, moreover, having failed to abolish capitalism, class movements have adopted reformist strategies of seeking recognition of their ‘difference’ within the system in order to augment their power and support demands for what I below call ‘affirmative redistribution’. In general, then, historical class-based movements may be closer to what I below call ‘bivalent modes of collectivity’ than to the interpretation of class sketched here.

scheme of social reproduction, the proletariat receives an unjustly large share of the burdens and an unjustly small share of the rewards. To be sure, its members also suffer serious cultural injustices, the 'hidden (and not so hidden) injuries of class'. But far from being rooted directly in an autonomously unjust cultural structure, these derive from the political economy, as ideologies of class inferiority proliferate to justify exploitation.<sup>17</sup> The remedy for the injustice, consequently, is redistribution, not recognition. Overcoming class exploitation requires restructuring the political economy so as to alter the class distribution of social burdens and social benefits. In the Marxian conception, such restructuring takes the radical form of abolishing the class structure as such. The task of the proletariat, therefore, is not simply to cut itself a better deal, but 'to abolish itself as a class'. The last thing it needs is recognition of its difference. On the contrary, the only way to remedy the injustice is to put the proletariat out of business as a group.

Now consider the other end of the conceptual spectrum. At this end we may posit an ideal-typical mode of collectivity that fits the recognition model of justice. A collectivity of this type is rooted wholly in culture, as opposed to in political economy. It only exists as a collectivity by virtue of the reigning social patterns of interpretation and evaluation, not by virtue of the division of labour. Thus, any structural injustices its members suffer will be traceable ultimately to the cultural-valuational structure. The root of the injustice, as well as its core, will be cultural misrecognition, while any attendant economic injustices will derive ultimately from that cultural root. At bottom, therefore, the remedy required to redress the injustice will be cultural recognition, as opposed to political-economic redistribution.

Once again, we may doubt whether there exist any pure collectivities of this sort, but it is useful to examine their properties for heuristic purposes. An example that can be interpreted as approximating the ideal type is the conception of a despised sexuality, understood in a specific stylized and theoretical way.<sup>18</sup> Let us consider this conception, while leaving aside the

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<sup>17</sup> This assumption does not require us to reject the view that distributive deficits are often (perhaps even always) accompanied by recognition deficits. But it does entail that the recognition deficits of class, in the sense elaborated here, derive from the political economy. Later, I shall consider other sorts of cases in which collectivities suffer from recognition deficits whose roots are not directly political-economic in this way.

<sup>18</sup> In what follows, I conceive sexuality in a highly stylized theoretical way in order to sharpen the contrast to the other ideal-typical kinds of collectivity discussed here. I treat sexual differentiation as rooted wholly in the cultural structure, as opposed to in the political economy. Of course, this is not the only interpretation of sexuality. Judith Butler (personal communication) has suggested that one might hold that sexuality is inextricable from gender, which, as I argue below, is as much a matter of the division of labour as of the cultural-valuational structure. In that case, sexuality itself might be viewed as a 'bivalent' collectivity, rooted simultaneously in culture and political economy. Then the economic harms encountered by homosexuals might appear economically rooted rather than culturally rooted, as they are in the account I offer here. While this bivalent analysis is certainly possible, to my mind it has serious drawbacks. Yoking gender and sexuality together too tightly, it covers over the important distinction

question of whether this view of sexuality fits the actual historical homosexual collectivities that are struggling for justice in the real world.

Sexuality in this conception is a mode of social differentiation whose roots do not lie in the political economy, as homosexuals are distributed throughout the entire class structure of capitalist society, occupy no distinctive position in the division of labour, and do not constitute an exploited class. Rather, their mode of collectivity is that of a despised sexuality, rooted in the cultural-valuational structure of society. From this perspective, the injustice they suffer is quintessentially a matter of recognition. Gays and lesbians suffer from heterosexism: the authoritative construction of norms that privilege heterosexuality. Along with this goes homophobia: the cultural devaluation of homosexuality. Their sexuality thus disparaged, homosexuals are subject to shaming, harassment, discrimination, and violence, while being denied legal rights and equal protections—all fundamentally denials of recognition. To be sure, gays and lesbians also suffer serious economic injustices; they can be summarily dismissed from work and are denied family-based social-welfare benefits. But far from being rooted directly in the economic structure, these derive instead from an unjust cultural-valuational structure.<sup>19</sup> The remedy for the injustice, consequently, is recognition, not redistribution. Overcoming homophobia and heterosexism requires changing the cultural valuations (as well as their legal and practical

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between a group that occupies a distinct position in the division of labour (and that owes its existence in large part to this fact), on the one hand, and one that occupies no such distinct position, on the other hand. I discuss this distinction below.

<sup>19</sup> An example of an economic injustice rooted directly in the economic structure would be a division of labour that relegates homosexuals to a designated disadvantaged position and exploits them as homosexuals. To deny that this is the situation of homosexuals today is not to deny that they face economic injustices. But it is to trace these to another root. In general, I assume that recognition deficits are often (perhaps even always) accompanied by distribution deficits. But I nevertheless hold that the distribution deficits of sexuality, in the sense elaborated here, derive ultimately from the cultural structure. Later, I shall consider other sorts of cases in which collectivities suffer from recognition deficits whose roots are not (only) directly cultural in this sense. I can perhaps further clarify the point by invoking Oliver Cromwell Cox's contrast between anti-Semitism and white supremacy. Cox suggested that for the anti-Semite, the very existence of the Jew is an abomination; hence the aim is not to exploit the Jew but to eliminate him/her as such, whether by expulsion, forced conversion, or extermination. For the white supremacist, in contrast, the 'Negro' is just fine—in his/her place: as an exploitable supply of cheap, menial labour power; here the preferred aim is exploitation, not elimination. (See Cox's unjustly neglected masterwork, *Caste, Class, and Race*, New York 1970.) Contemporary homophobia appears in this respect to be more like anti-Semitism than white supremacy: it seeks to eliminate, not exploit, homosexuals. Thus, the economic disadvantages of homosexuality are derived effects of the more fundamental denial of cultural recognition. This makes it the mirror image of class, as just discussed, where the 'hidden (and not so hidden) injuries' of misrecognition are derived effects of the more fundamental injustice of exploitation. White supremacy, in contrast, as I shall suggest shortly, is 'bivalent', rooted simultaneously in political economy and culture, inflicting co-original and equally fundamental injustices of distribution and recognition. (On this last point, incidentally, I differ from Cox, who treats white supremacy as effectively reducible to class.)

expressions) that privilege heterosexuality, deny equal respect to gays and lesbians, and refuse to recognize homosexuality as a legitimate way of being sexual. It is to revalue a despised sexuality, to accord positive recognition to gay and lesbian sexual specificity.

Matters are thus fairly straightforward at the two extremes of our conceptual spectrum. When we deal with collectivities that approach the ideal type of the exploited working class, we face distributive injustices requiring redistributive remedies. When we deal with collectivities that approach the ideal type of the despised sexuality, in contrast, we face injustices of misrecognition requiring remedies of recognition. In the first case, the logic of the remedy is to put the group out of business as a group. In the second case, on the contrary, it is to valorize the group's 'groupness' by recognizing its specificity.

Matters become murkier, however, once we move away from these extremes. When we consider collectivities located in the middle of the conceptual spectrum, we encounter hybrid modes that combine features of the exploited class with features of the despised sexuality. These collectivities are 'bivalent'. They are differentiated as collectivities by virtue of *both* the political-economic structure *and* the cultural-valuational structure of society. When disadvantaged, therefore, they may suffer injustices that are traceable to both political economy and culture simultaneously. Bivalent collectivities, in sum, may suffer both socio-economic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition in forms where neither of these injustices is an indirect effect of the other, but where both are primary and co-original. In that case, neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice. Bivalent collectivities need both.

Both gender and 'race' are paradigmatic bivalent collectivities. Although each has peculiarities not shared by the other, both encompass political-economic dimensions and cultural-valuational dimensions. Gender and 'race', therefore, implicate both redistribution and recognition.

Gender, for example, has political-economic dimensions. It is a basic structuring principle of the political economy. On the one hand, gender structures the fundamental division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour, assigning women primary responsibility for the latter. On the other hand, gender also structures the division within paid labour between higher-paid, male-dominated, manufacturing and professional occupations and lower-paid, female-dominated 'pink-collar' and domestic-service occupations. The result is a political-economic structure that generates gender-specific modes of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. This structure constitutes gender as a political-economic differentiation endowed with certain class-like characteristics. When viewed under this aspect, gender injustice appears as a species of distributive injustice that cries out for redistributive redress. Much like class, gender justice requires transforming the political economy so as to eliminate its gender structuring. Eliminating gender-specific exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation requires abolishing the gender division of labour—both the gendered division between paid and unpaid labour and the gender division within paid

labour. The logic of the remedy is akin to the logic with respect to class: it is to put gender out of business as such. If gender were nothing but a political-economic differentiation, in sum, justice would require its abolition.

That, however, is only half the story. In fact, gender is not only a political-economic differentiation, but a cultural-valuational differentiation as well. As such, it also encompasses elements that are more like sexuality than class and bring it squarely within the problematic of recognition. Certainly, a major feature of gender injustice is androcentrism: the authoritative construction of norms that privilege traits associated with masculinity. Along with this goes cultural sexism: the pervasive devaluation and disparagement of things coded as 'feminine', paradigmatically—but not only—women.<sup>20</sup> This devaluation is expressed in a range of harms suffered by women, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and pervasive domestic violence; trivializing, objectifying, and demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media; harassment and disparagement in all spheres of everyday life; subjection to androcentric norms in relation to which women appear lesser or deviant and which work to disadvantage them, even in the absence of any intention to discriminate; attitudinal discrimination; exclusion or marginalization in public spheres and deliberative bodies; and denial of full legal rights and equal protections. These harms are injustices of recognition. They are relatively independent of political economy and are not merely 'superstructural'. Thus they cannot be remedied by political-economic redistribution alone but require additional independent remedies of recognition. Overcoming androcentrism and sexism requires changing the cultural valuations (as well as their legal and practical expressions) that privilege masculinity and deny equal respect to women. It requires decentring androcentric norms and revaluing a despised gender. The logic of the remedy is akin to the logic with respect to sexuality: it is to accord positive recognition to a devalued group specificity.

Gender, in sum, is a bivalent mode of collectivity. It contains a political-economic face that brings it within the ambit of redistribution. Yet it also contains a cultural-valuational face that brings it simultaneously within the ambit of recognition. Of course, the two faces are not neatly separated from one another. Rather, they intertwine to reinforce one another dialectically, as sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalized in the state and the economy, while women's economic disadvantage restricts women's 'voice', impeding equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres, and in everyday life. The result is a vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination. Redressing gender injustice, therefore, requires changing both political economy and culture.

But the bivalent character of gender is the source of a dilemma. Insofar as women suffer at least two analytically distinct kinds of injustice, they necessarily require at least two analytically distinct kinds of remedy—both redistribution and recognition. The two remedies pull in opposite

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<sup>20</sup> Gender disparagement can take many forms, of course, including conservative stereotypes that appear to celebrate, rather than demean, 'femininity'.

directions, however. They are not easily pursued simultaneously. Whereas the logic of redistribution is to put gender out of business as such, the logic of recognition is to valorize gender specificity.<sup>21</sup> Here, then, is the feminist version of the redistribution–recognition dilemma: how can feminists fight simultaneously to abolish gender differentiation and to valorize gender specificity?

An analogous dilemma arises in the struggle against racism. ‘Race’, like gender, is a bivalent mode of collectivity. On the one hand, it resembles class in being a structural principle of political economy. In this aspect, ‘race’ structures the capitalist division of labour. It structures the division within paid work between low-paid, low-status, menial, dirty, and domestic occupations, held disproportionately by people of colour, and higher-paid, higher-status, white-collar, professional, technical and managerial occupations, held disproportionately by ‘whites’.<sup>22</sup> Today’s racial division of paid labour is part of the historic legacy of colonialism and slavery, which elaborated racial categorization to justify brutal new forms of appropriation and exploitation, effectively constituting ‘blacks’ as a political-economic caste. Currently, moreover, ‘race’ also structures access to official labour markets, constituting large segments of the population of colour as a ‘superfluous’, degraded subproletariat or underclass, unworthy even of exploitation and excluded from the productive system altogether. The result is a political-economic structure that generates ‘race’-specific modes of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. This structure constitutes ‘race’ as a political-economic differentiation endowed with certain class-like characteristics. When viewed under this aspect, racial injustice appears as a species of distributive injustice that cries out for redistributive redress. Much like class, racial justice requires transforming the political economy so as to eliminate its racialization. Eliminating ‘race’-specific exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation requires abolishing the racial division of labour—both the racial division between exploitable and superfluous labour and the racial division within paid labour. The logic of the remedy is like the logic with respect to class: it is to put ‘race’ out of business as such. If ‘race’ were nothing but a political-economic differentiation, in sum, justice would require its abolition.

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<sup>21</sup> This helps explain why the history of women’s movements records a pattern of oscillation between integrationist equal-rights feminisms and ‘difference’-oriented ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ feminisms. It would be useful to specify the precise temporal logic that leads bivalent collectivities to shift their principal focus back and forth between redistribution and recognition. For a first attempt, see my ‘Rethinking Difference’ in *Justice Interruptus*.

<sup>22</sup> In addition, ‘race’ is implicitly implicated in the gender division between paid and unpaid labour. That division relies on a normative contrast between a domestic sphere and a sphere of paid work, associated with women and men respectively. Yet the division in the United States (and elsewhere) has always also been racialized in that domesticity has been implicitly a ‘white’ prerogative. African-Americans especially were never permitted the privilege of domesticity either as a (male) private ‘haven’ or a (female) primary or exclusive focus on nurturing one’s own kin. See Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, New York 1985; and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, ‘From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Reproductive Labor’: *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 18, no. 1 (autumn 1992).

However, 'race', like gender, is not only political-economic. It also has cultural-valuational dimensions, which bring it into the universe of recognition. Thus, 'race' too encompasses elements that are more like sexuality than class. A major aspect of racism is Eurocentrism: the authoritative construction of norms that privilege traits associated with 'whiteness'. Along with this goes cultural racism: the pervasive devaluation and disparagement<sup>23</sup> of things coded as 'black', 'brown', and 'yellow', paradigmatically—but not only—people of colour.<sup>24</sup> This depreciation is expressed in a range of harms suffered by people of colour, including demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media as criminal, bestial, primitive, stupid, and so on; violence, harassment, and dissing in all spheres of everyday life; subjection to Eurocentric norms in relation to which people of colour appear lesser or deviant and which work to disadvantage them, even in the absence of any intention to discriminate; attitudinal discrimination; exclusion from and/or marginalization in public spheres and deliberative bodies; and denial of full legal rights and equal protections. As in the case of gender, these harms are injustices of recognition. Thus the logic of their remedy, too, is to accord positive recognition to devalued group specificity.

'Race', too, therefore, is a bivalent mode of collectivity with both a political-economic and a cultural-valuational, face. Its two faces intertwine to reinforce one another dialectically, as racist and Eurocentric cultural norms are institutionalized in the state and the economy, while the economic disadvantage suffered by people of colour restricts their 'voice'. Redressing racial injustice, therefore, requires changing both political economy and culture. And as with gender, the bivalent character of 'race' is the source of a dilemma. Insofar as people of colour suffer at least two analytically distinct kinds of injustice, they necessarily require at least two analytically distinct kinds of remedy, which are not easily pursued simultaneously. Whereas the logic of redistribution is to put 'race' out of business as such, the logic of recognition is to valorize group specificity.<sup>25</sup> Here, then, is the anti-racist version of the redistribution–recognition dilemma: How can anti-racists fight simultaneously to abolish 'race' and to valorize racialized group specificity?

Both gender and 'race', in sum, are dilemmatic modes of collectivity. Unlike class, which occupies one end of the conceptual spectrum, and unlike sexuality, which occupies the other, gender and 'race' are bivalent, implicated simultaneously in both the politics of redistribution and the

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<sup>23</sup> In a previous draft of this paper I used the term 'denigration'. The ironic consequence was that I unintentionally perpetrated the exact sort of harm I aimed to criticize—in the very act of describing it. 'Denigration,' from the Latin *nigrare* (to blacken), figures disparagement as blackening, a racist valuation. I am grateful to the Saint Louis University student who called my attention to this point.

<sup>24</sup> Racial disparagement can take many forms, of course, ranging from the stereotypical depiction of African-Americans as intellectually inferior, but musically and athletically gifted, to the stereotypical depiction of Asian-Americans as a 'model minority'.

<sup>25</sup> This helps explain why the history of black liberation struggle in the United States records a pattern of oscillation between integration and separatism (or black nationalism). As with gender, it would be useful to specify the dynamics of these alternations.

politics of recognition. Both, consequently, face the redistribution–recognition dilemma. Feminists must pursue political-economic remedies that would undermine gender differentiation, while also pursuing cultural-valuational remedies that valorize the specificity of a despised collectivity. Anti-racists, likewise, must pursue political-economic remedies that would undermine ‘racial’ differentiation, while also pursuing cultural-valuational remedies that valorize the specificity of despised collectivities. How can they do both things at once?

### III. Affirmation or Transformation? Revisiting the Question of Remedy

So far I have posed the redistribution–recognition dilemma in a form that appears quite intractable. I have assumed that redistributive remedies for political-economic injustice always de-differentiate social groups. Likewise, I have assumed that recognition remedies for cultural-valuational injustice always enhance social group differentiation. Given these assumptions, it is difficult to see how feminists and anti-racists can pursue redistribution and recognition simultaneously.

Now, however, I want to complicate these assumptions. In this section, I shall examine alternative conceptions of redistribution, on the one hand, and alternative conceptions of recognition, on the other. My aim is to distinguish two broad approaches to remedying injustice that cut across the redistribution–recognition divide. I shall call them ‘affirmation’ and ‘transformation’ respectively. After sketching each of them generically, I shall show how each operates in regard to both redistribution and recognition. On this basis, finally, I shall reformulate the redistribution–recognition dilemma in a form that is more amenable to resolution.

Let me begin by briefly distinguishing affirmation and transformation. By affirmative remedies for injustice I mean remedies aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them. By transformative remedies, in contrast, I mean remedies aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework. The nub of the contrast is end-state outcomes versus the processes that produce them. It is *not* gradual versus apocalyptic change.

This distinction can be applied, first of all, to remedies for cultural injustice. Affirmative remedies for such injustices are currently associated with mainstream multiculturalism.<sup>26</sup> This proposes to redress disrespect by revaluing unjustly devalued group identities, while leaving intact both the contents of those identities and the group differentiations that underlie them. Transformative remedies, by contrast, are currently

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<sup>26</sup> Not all versions of multiculturalism fit the model I describe here. The latter is an ideal-typical reconstruction of what I take to be the majority understanding of multiculturalism. It is also mainstream in the sense of being the version that is usually debated in mainstream public spheres. Other versions are discussed in Linda Nicholson, ‘To Be or Not To Be: Charles Taylor on The Politics of Recognition’, *Constellations* (forthcoming) and in Michael Warner, et al, ‘Critical Multiculturalism’, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 3 (spring 1992).

associated with deconstruction. They would redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure. By destabilizing existing group identities and differentiations, these remedies would not only raise the self-esteem of members of currently disrespected groups. They would change *everyone's* sense of belonging, affiliation, and self.

To illustrate the distinction, let us consider, once again, the case of the despised sexuality.<sup>27</sup> Affirmative remedies for homophobia and heterosexism are currently associated with gay-identity politics, which aims to revalue gay and lesbian Identity.<sup>28</sup> Transformative remedies, in contrast, include the approach of 'queer theory', which would deconstruct the homo–hetero dichotomy. Gay-identity politics treats homosexuality as a substantive, cultural, identificatory positivity, much like an ethnicity.<sup>29</sup> This positivity is assumed to subsist in and of itself and to need only additional recognition. 'Queer theory', in contrast, treats homosexuality as the constructed and devalued correlate of heterosexuality; both are reifications of sexual ambiguity and are co-defined only in virtue of one another.<sup>30</sup> The transformative aim is not to solidify a gay identity, but to deconstruct the homo–hetero dichotomy so as to destabilize all fixed sexual identities. The point is not to dissolve all sexual difference in a single, universal human identity; it is rather to sustain a sexual field of multiple, debinarized, fluid, ever-shifting differences.

Both these approaches have considerable interest as remedies for misrecognition. But there is one crucial difference between them. Whereas gay-identity politics tends to enhance existing sexual group differentiation, queer-theory politics tends to destabilize it—at least ostensibly and in the long run.<sup>31</sup> The point holds for recognition remedies

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<sup>27</sup> Recall that sexuality is here assumed to be a collectivity rooted wholly in the cultural-valuational structure of society; thus, the issues here are unclouded by issues of political-economic structure, and the need is for recognition, not redistribution.

<sup>28</sup> An alternative affirmative approach is gay-rights humanism, which would privatize existing sexualities. For reasons of space, I shall not discuss it here.

<sup>29</sup> For a critical discussion of the tendency in gay-identity politics to tacitly cast sexuality in the mold of ethnicity, see Steven Epstein, 'Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism', *Socialist Review* no. 93/94 (May–August 1987).

<sup>30</sup> The technical term for this in Jacques Derrida's deconstructive philosophy is 'supplement'.

<sup>31</sup> Despite its professed long-term deconstructive goal, queer theory's practical effects may be more ambiguous. Like gay-identity politics, it too seems likely to promote group solidarity in the here and now, even as it sets its sights on the promised land of deconstruction. Perhaps, then, we should distinguish what I below call its 'official recognition commitment' of group de-differentiation from its 'practical recognition effect' of (transitional) group solidarity and even group solidification. The queer-theory recognition strategy thus contains an internal tension: in order eventually to destabilize the homo–hetero dichotomy, it must first mobilize 'queers'. Whether this tension becomes fruitful or debilitating depends on factors too complex to discuss here. In either case, however, the recognition politics of queer theory remains distinct from that of gay identity. Whereas gay-identity politics simply and straightforwardly underlines group differentiation, queer theory does so only indirectly, in the undertow of its

more generally. Whereas affirmative recognition remedies tend to promote existing group differentiations, transformative recognition remedies tend, in the long run, to destabilize them so as to make room for future regroupments. I shall return to this point shortly.

Analogous distinctions hold for the remedies for economic injustice. Affirmative remedies for such injustices have been associated historically with the liberal welfare state.<sup>32</sup> They seek to redress end-state maldistribution, while leaving intact much of the underlying political-economic structure. Thus they would increase the consumption share of economically disadvantaged groups, without otherwise restructuring the system of production. Transformative remedies, in contrast, have been historically associated with socialism. They would redress unjust distribution by transforming the underlying political-economic structure. By restructuring the relations of production, these remedies would not only alter the end-state distribution of consumption shares; they would also change the social division of labour and thus the conditions of existence for everyone.<sup>33</sup>

Let us consider, once again, the case of the exploited class.<sup>34</sup> Affirmative redistributive remedies for class injustices typically include income

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principal de-differentiating thrust. Accordingly, the two approaches construct qualitatively different kinds of groups. Whereas gay-identity politics mobilizes self-identified homosexuals qua homosexuals to vindicate a putatively determinate sexuality, queer theory mobilizes 'queers' to demand liberation from determinate sexual identity. 'Queers', of course, are not an identity group in the same sense as gays; they are better understood as an anti-identity group, one that can encompass the entire spectrum of sexual behaviours, from gay to straight to bi. (For a hilarious—and insightful—account of the difference, as well as for a sophisticated rendition of queer politics, see Lisa Duggan, 'Queering the State', *Social Text*, no. 39, Summer 1994.) Complications aside, then, we can and should distinguish the (directly) differentiating effects of affirmative gay recognition from the (more) de-differentiating (albeit complex) effects of transformative queer recognition.

<sup>32</sup> By 'liberal welfare state', I mean the sort of regime established in the US in the aftermath of the New Deal. It has been usefully distinguished from the social-democratic welfare state and the conservative-corporatist welfare state by Gøsta Esping-Andersen in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Today, of course, many specific features of socialism of the 'really existing' variety appear problematic. Virtually no one continues to defend a pure 'command' economy in which there is little place for markets. Nor is there agreement concerning the place and extent of public ownership in a democratic socialist society. For my purposes here, however, it is not necessary to assign a precise content to the socialist idea. It is sufficient, rather, to invoke the general conception of redressing distributive injustice by deep political-economic restructuring, as opposed to surface reallocations. In this light, incidentally, social democracy appears as a hybrid case that combines affirmative and transformative remedies; it can also be seen as a 'middle position', which involves a moderate extent of economic restructuring, more than in the liberal welfare state but less than in socialism.

<sup>34</sup> Recall that class, in the sense defined above, is a collectivity wholly rooted in the political-economic structure of society; the issues here are thus unclouded by issues of cultural-valuational structure; and the remedies required are those of redistribution, not recognition.

transfers of two distinct kinds: social-insurance programmes share some of the costs of social reproduction for the stably employed, the so-called 'primary' sectors of the working class; public-assistance programmes provide means-tested, 'targeted' aid to the 'reserve army' of the unemployed and underemployed. Far from abolishing class differentiation per se, these affirmative remedies support it and shape it. Their general effect is to shift attention from the class division between workers and capitalists to the division between employed and nonemployed fractions of the working class. Public-assistance programmes 'target' the poor, not only for aid but for hostility. Such remedies, to be sure, provide needed material aid. But they also create strongly cathected, antagonistic group differentiations.

The logic here applies to affirmative redistribution in general. Although this approach aims to redress economic injustice, it leaves intact the deep structures that generate class disadvantage. Thus it must make surface reallocations time and again. The result is to mark the most disadvantaged class as inherently deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time such a class can even come to appear privileged, the recipient of special treatment and undeserved largesse. An approach aimed at redressing injustices of distribution can thus end up creating injustices of recognition.

In a sense, this approach is self-contradictory. Affirmative redistribution generally presupposes a universalist conception of recognition, the equal moral worth of persons. Let us call this its 'official recognition commitment'. Yet the practice of affirmative redistribution, as iterated over time, tends to set in motion a second—stigmatizing—recognition dynamic, which contradicts universalism. This second dynamic can be understood as the 'practical recognition-effect' of affirmative redistribution.<sup>35</sup> It conflicts with its official recognition commitment.<sup>36</sup>

Now contrast this logic with transformative remedies for distributive injustices of class. Transformative remedies typically combine universalist social-welfare programmes, steeply progressive taxation, macro-economic policies aimed at creating full employment, a large non-market public sector, significant public and/or collective ownership, and democratic decision-making about basic socioeconomic priorities. They try to assure access to employment for all, while also tending to de-link basic consumption shares from employment. Hence their tendency is to undermine class differentiation. Transformative remedies reduce social inequality without, however, creating stigmatized classes of vulnerable people perceived as beneficiaries of special largesse.<sup>37</sup> They tend therefore

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<sup>35</sup> In some contexts, such as the United States today, the practical recognition-effect of affirmative redistribution can utterly swamp its official recognition commitment.

<sup>36</sup> My terminology here is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's distinction, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, between 'official kinship' and 'practical kinship'.

<sup>37</sup> I have deliberately sketched a picture that is ambiguous between socialism and robust social democracy. The classic account of the latter remains T. H. Marshall's 'Citizenship and Social Class', in *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall*, ed. Martin Lipset, Chicago 1964. There Marshall argues that a universalist social-democratic regime of 'social citizenship' undermines class differentiation, even in the absence of full-scale socialism.

to promote reciprocity and solidarity in the relations of recognition. Thus an approach aimed at redressing injustices of distribution can help redress (some) injustices of recognition as well.<sup>38</sup>

This approach is self-consistent. Like affirmative redistribution, transformative redistribution generally presupposes a universalist conception of recognition, the equal moral worth of persons. Unlike affirmative redistribution, however, its practice tends not to undermine this conception. Thus, the two approaches generate different logics of group differentiation. Whereas affirmative remedies can have the perverse effect of promoting class differentiation, transformative remedies tend to blur it. In addition, the two approaches generate different subliminal dynamics of recognition. Affirmative redistribution can stigmatize the disadvantaged, adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation. Transformative redistribution, in contrast, can promote solidarity, helping to redress some forms of misrecognition.

What, then, should we conclude from this discussion? In this section, we have considered only the 'pure' ideal-typical cases at the two extremes of the conceptual spectrum. We have contrasted the divergent effects of affirmative and transformative remedies for the economically rooted distributive injustices of class, on the one hand, and for the culturally rooted recognition injustices of sexuality, on the other. We saw that affirmative remedies tend generally to promote group differentiation, while transformative remedies tend to destabilize or blur it. We also saw that affirmative redistribution remedies can generate a backlash of misrecognition, while transformative redistribution remedies can help redress some forms of misrecognition.

All this suggests a way of reformulating the redistribution–recognition dilemma. We might ask: for groups who are subject to injustices of both types, what combinations of remedies work best to minimize, if not altogether to eliminate, the mutual interferences that can arise when both redistribution and recognition are pursued simultaneously?

#### IV. Finessing the Dilemma: Revisiting Gender and 'Race'

Imagine a four-celled matrix. The horizontal axis comprises the two general kinds of remedy we have just examined, namely, affirmation and transformation. The vertical axis comprises the two aspects of justice we have been considering, namely, redistribution and recognition. On this matrix we can locate the four political orientations just discussed. In the first cell, where redistribution and affirmation intersect, is the project of the liberal welfare state; centered on surface reallocations of distributive shares among existing groups, it tends to support group differentiation; it can also generate backlash misrecognition. In the second cell, where redistribution and transformation intersect, is the project of socialism;

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<sup>38</sup> To be more precise: transformative redistribution can help redress those forms of misrecognition that derive from the political-economic structure. Redressing misrecognition rooted in the cultural structure, in contrast, requires additional independent recognition remedies.

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	Affirmation	Transformation
<b>Redistribution</b>	<i>the liberal welfare state</i> surface reallocations of existing goods to existing groups; supports group differentiation; can generate misrecognition	<i>socialism</i> deep restructuring of relations of production; blurs group differentiation; can help remedy some forms of misrecognition
<b>Recognition</b>	<i>mainstream multiculturalism</i> surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiation	<i>deconstruction</i> deep restructuring of relations of recognition; blurs group differentiation

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aimed at deep restructuring of the relations of production, it tends to blur group differentiation; it can also help redress some forms of misrecognition. In the third cell, where recognition and affirmation intersect, is the project of mainstream multiculturalism; focused on surface reallocations of respect among existing groups, it tends to support group differentiation. In the fourth cell, where recognition and transformation intersect, is the project of deconstruction; aimed at deep restructuring of the relations of recognition, it tends to destabilize group differentiations.

This matrix casts mainstream multiculturalism as the cultural analogue of the liberal welfare state, while casting deconstruction as the cultural analogue of socialism. It thereby it allows us to make some preliminary assessments of the mutual compatibility of various remedial strategies. We can gauge the extent to which pairs of remedies would work at cross-purposes with one another if they were pursued simultaneously. We can identify pairs that seem to land us squarely on the horns of the redistribution-recognition dilemma. We can also identify pairs that hold out the promise of enabling us to finesse it.

*Prima facie* at least, two pairs of remedies seem especially unpromising. The affirmative redistribution politics of the liberal welfare state seems at

odds with the transformative recognition politics of deconstruction; whereas the first tends to promote group differentiation, the second tends rather to destabilize it. Similarly, the transformative redistribution politics of socialism seems at odds with the affirmative recognition politics of mainstream multiculturalism; whereas the first tends to undermine group differentiation, the second tends rather to promote it.

Conversely, two pairs of remedies seem comparatively promising. The affirmative redistribution politics of the liberal welfare state seems compatible with the affirmative recognition politics of mainstream multiculturalism; both tend to promote group differentiation. Similarly, the transformative redistribution politics of socialism seems compatible with the transformative recognition politics of deconstruction; both tend to undermine existing group differentiations.

To test these hypotheses, let us revisit gender and 'race'. Recall that these are bivalent differentiations, axes of both economic and cultural injustice. Thus people subordinated by gender and/or 'race' need both redistribution and recognition. They are the paradigmatic subjects of the redistribution–recognition dilemma. What happens in their cases, then, when various pairs of injustice remedies are pursued simultaneously? Are there pairs of remedies that permit feminists and anti-racists to finesse, if not wholly to dispel, the redistribution–recognition dilemma?

Consider, first, the case of gender.<sup>39</sup> Recall that redressing gender injustice requires changing both political economy and culture, so as to undo the vicious circle of economic and cultural subordination. As we saw, the changes in question can take either of two forms, affirmation or transformation.<sup>40</sup> Let us consider, first, the *prima facie* promising case in

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<sup>39</sup> Recall that gender, qua political-economic differentiation, structures the division of labour in ways that give rise to gender-specific forms of exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation. Recall, moreover, that qua cultural-valuational differentiation, gender also structures the relations of recognition in ways that give rise to androcentrism and cultural sexism. Recall, too, that for gender, as for all bivalent group differentiations, economic injustices and cultural injustices are not neatly separated from one another; rather they intertwine to reinforce one another dialectically, as sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalized in the economy, while economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture, both in everyday life and in public spheres.

<sup>40</sup> I shall leave aside the *prima facie* unpromising cases. Let me simply stipulate that a cultural-feminist recognition politics aimed at revaluing femininity is hard to combine with a socialist-feminist redistributive politics aimed at degendering the political economy. The incompatibility is overt when we treat the recognition of 'women's difference' as a long-term feminist goal. Of course, some feminists conceive the struggle for such recognition not as an end in itself but as a stage in a process they envision as leading eventually to degenderization. Here, perhaps, there is no formal contradiction with socialism. At the same time, however, there remains a practical contradiction, or at least a practical difficulty: can a stress on women's difference in the here and now really end up dissolving gender difference in the by and by? The converse argument holds for the case of the liberal-feminist welfare state plus deconstructive feminism. Affirmative action for women is usually seen as a transitional remedy aimed at achieving the long-term goal of 'a sex-blind society'. Here, again, there is perhaps no formal contradiction with deconstruction. But there remains nevertheless a practical contradiction, or at

which affirmative redistribution is combined with affirmative recognition. As the name suggests, affirmative redistribution to redress gender injustice in the economy includes affirmative action, the effort to assure women their fair share of existing jobs and educational places, while leaving unchanged the nature and number of those jobs and places. Affirmative recognition to redress gender injustice in the culture includes cultural feminism, the effort to assure women respect by revaluing femininity, while leaving unchanged the binary gender code that gives the latter its sense. Thus, the scenario in question combines the socioeconomic politics of liberal feminism with the cultural politics of cultural feminism. Does this combination really finesse the redistribution–recognition dilemma?

Despite its initial appearance of promise, this scenario is problematic. Affirmative redistribution fails to engage the deep level at which the political economy is gendered. Aimed primarily at combating attitudinal discrimination, it does not attack the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour, nor the gendered division of masculine and feminine occupations within paid labour. Leaving intact the deep structures that generate gender disadvantage, it must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is not only to underline gender differentiation. It is also to mark women as deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time women can even come to appear privileged, recipients of special treatment and undeserved largesse. Thus an approach aimed at redressing injustices of distribution can end up fuelling backlash injustices of recognition.

This problem is exacerbated when we add the affirmative recognition strategy of cultural feminism. That approach insistently calls attention to, if it does not performatively create, women's putative cultural specificity or difference. In some contexts, such an approach can make progress toward decentring androcentric norms. In this context, however, it is more likely to have the effect of pouring oil onto the flames of resentment against affirmative action. Read through that lens, the cultural politics of affirming women's difference appears as an affront to the liberal welfare state's official commitment to the equal moral worth of persons.

The other route with a *prima facie* promise is that which combines transformative redistribution with transformative recognition. Transformative redistribution to redress gender injustice in the economy consists in some form of socialist feminism or feminist social democracy. And transformative recognition to redress gender injustice in the culture consists in feminist deconstruction aimed at dismantling androcentrism by destabilizing gender dichotomies. Thus the scenario in question combines the socioeconomic politics of socialist feminism with the cultural politics of deconstructive feminism. Does this combination really finesse the redistribution–recognition dilemma?

This scenario is far less problematic. The long-term goal of deconstructive feminism is a culture in which hierarchical gender dichotomies are

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least a practical difficulty: can liberal-feminist affirmative action in the here and now really help lead us to the deconstruction of gender in the by and by?

replaced by networks of multiple intersecting differences that are demassified and shifting. This goal is consistent with transformative socialist-feminist redistribution. Deconstruction opposes the sort of sedimentation or congealing of gender difference that occurs in an unjustly gendered political economy. Its utopian image of a culture in which ever new constructions of identity and difference are freely elaborated and then swiftly deconstructed is only possible, after all, on the basis of rough social equality.

As a transitional strategy, moreover, this combination avoids fanning the flames of resentment.<sup>41</sup> If it has a drawback, it is rather that both deconstructive-feminist cultural politics and socialist-feminist economic politics are far removed from the immediate interests and identities of most women, as these are currently culturally constructed.

Analogous results arise for 'race', where the changes can again take either of two forms, affirmation or transformation.<sup>42</sup> In the first *prima facie* promising case, affirmative action is paired with affirmative recognition. Affirmative redistribution to redress racial injustice in the economy includes affirmative action, the effort to assure people of colour their fair share of existing jobs and educational places, while leaving unchanged the nature and number of those jobs and places. And affirmative recognition to redress racial injustice in the culture includes cultural nationalism, the effort to assure people of colour respect by revaluing 'blackness', while leaving unchanged the binary black-white code that gives the latter its sense. The scenario in question thus combines the socioeconomic politics of liberal anti-racism with the cultural politics of black nationalism or black power. Does this combination really finesse the redistribution-recognition dilemma?

Such a scenario is again problematic. As in the case of gender, here affirmative redistribution fails to engage the deep level at which the political economy is racialized. It does not attack the racialized division of exploitable and surplus labour, nor the racialized division of menial and non-menial occupations within paid labour. Leaving intact the deep structures that generate racial disadvantage, it must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is not only to underline racial differentiation. It is also to mark people of colour as deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. Thus they too can be cast as privileged recipients of special treatment. The problem is exacerbated when we add the affirmative recognition strategy of cultural nationalism. In some contexts, such an approach can make progress toward decentring

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<sup>41</sup> Here I am assuming that the internal complexities of transformative recognition remedies, as discussed in note 31 above, do not generate perverse effects. If, however, the practical recognition effect of deconstructive feminist cultural politics is strongly gender-differentiating, despite the latter's official recognition commitment to gender de-differentiation, perverse effects could indeed arise. In that case, there could be interferences between socialist-feminist redistribution and deconstructive-feminist recognition. But these would probably be less debilitating than those associated with the other scenarios examined here.

<sup>42</sup> The same can be said about 'race' here as about gender in notes 39 and 40.

Eurocentric norms, but in this context the cultural politics of affirming black difference equally appears as an affront to the liberal welfare state. Fuelling the resentment against affirmative action, it can elicit intense backlash misrecognition.

In the alternative route, transformative redistribution is combined with transformative recognition. Transformative redistribution to redress racial injustice in the economy consists in some form of anti-racist democratic socialism or anti-racist social democracy. And transformative recognition to redress racial injustice in the culture consists in anti-racist deconstruction aimed at dismantling Eurocentrism by destabilizing racial dichotomies. Thus, the scenario in question combines the socioeconomic politics of socialist anti-racism with the cultural politics of deconstructive anti-racism or critical 'race' theory. As with the analogous approach to gender, this scenario is far less problematic. The long-term goal of deconstructive anti-racism is a culture in which hierarchical racial dichotomies are replaced by demassified and shifting networks of multiple intersecting differences. This goal, once again, is consistent with transformative socialist redistribution. Even as a transitional strategy, this combination avoids fanning the flames of resentment.<sup>43</sup> Its principal drawback, again, is that both deconstructive–anti-racist cultural politics and socialist–anti-racist economic politics are far removed from the immediate interests and identities of most people of colour, as these are currently culturally constructed.<sup>44</sup>

What, then, should we conclude from this discussion? For both gender and 'race', the scenario that best finesses the redistribution–recognition dilemma is socialism in the economy plus deconstruction in the culture.<sup>45</sup> But for this scenario to be psychologically and politically feasible requires that people be weaned from their attachment to current cultural constructions of their interests and identities.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See note 31 above on the possible perverse effects of transformative recognition remedies.

<sup>44</sup> Ted Koditschek (personal communication) has suggested to me that this scenario may have another serious drawback: 'The deconstructive option may be less available to African-Americans in the current situation. Where the structural exclusion of [many] black people from full economic citizenship pushes "race" more and more into the forefront as a cultural category through which one is attacked, self-respecting people cannot help but aggressively affirm and embrace it as a source of pride.' Koditschek goes on to suggest that Jews, in contrast, 'have much more elbow room for negotiating a healthier balance between ethnic affirmation, self-criticism, and cosmopolitan universalism—not because we are better deconstructionists (or more inherently disposed toward socialism) but because we have more space to make these moves'.

<sup>45</sup> Whether this conclusion holds as well for nationality and ethnicity remains a question. Certainly bivalent collectivities of indigenous peoples do not seek to put themselves out of business as groups.

<sup>46</sup> This has always been the problem with socialism. Although cognitively compelling, it is experientially remote. The addition of deconstruction seems to exacerbate the problem. It could turn out to be too negative and reactive, i.e. too *deconstructive*, to inspire struggles on behalf of subordinated collectivities attached to their existing identities.

## V. Conclusion

The redistribution–recognition dilemma is real. There is no neat theoretical move by which it can be wholly dissolved or resolved. The best we can do is try to soften the dilemma by finding approaches that minimize conflicts between redistribution and recognition in cases where both must be pursued simultaneously.

I have argued here that socialist economics combined with deconstructive cultural politics works best to finesse the dilemma for the bivalent collectivities of gender and ‘race’—at least when they are considered separately. The next step would be to show that this combination also works for our larger sociocultural configuration. After all, gender and ‘race’ are not neatly cordoned off from one another. Nor are they neatly cordoned off from sexuality and class. Rather, all these axes of injustice intersect one another in ways that affect everyone’s interests and identities. No one is a member of only one such collectivity. And people who are subordinated along one axis of social division may well be dominant along another.<sup>47</sup>

The task then is to figure out how to finesse the redistribution–recognition dilemma when we situate the problem in this larger field of multiple, intersecting struggles against multiple, intersecting injustices. Although I cannot make the full argument task here, I will venture three reasons for expecting that the combination of socialism and deconstruction will again prove superior to the other alternatives.

First, the arguments pursued here for gender and ‘race’ hold for all bivalent collectivities. Thus, insofar as real-world collectivities mobilized under the banners of sexuality and class turn out to be more bivalent than the ideal-typical constructs posited above, they too should prefer socialism plus deconstruction. And that doubly transformative approach should become the orientation of choice for a broad range of disadvantaged groups.

Second, the redistribution–recognition dilemma does not only arise endogenously, as it were, within a single bivalent collectivity. It also

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<sup>47</sup> Much recent work has been devoted to the ‘intersection’ of the various axes of subordination that I have treated separately in this essay for heuristic purposes. A lot of this work concerns the dimension of recognition; it aims to demonstrate that various collective identifications and identity categories have been mutually co-constituted or co-constructed. Joan Scott, for example, has argued (in *Gender and the Politics of History*) that French working-class identities have been discursively constructed through gender-coded symbolization; and David R. Roediger has argued (in *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Verso, London 1991) that US working-class identities have been racially coded. Meanwhile, many feminists of colour have argued both that gender identities have been racially coded and that racialized identities have been gender-coded. I myself have argued, with Linda Gordon, that gender, ‘race’, and class ideologies have intersected to construct current US understandings of ‘welfare dependency’ and ‘the underclass’. (See Fraser and Gordon, ‘A Genealogy of “Dependency”: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 19, no. 2, winter 1994.)

arises exogenously, so to speak, across intersecting collectivities. Thus, anyone who is both gay and working-class will face a version of the dilemma, regardless of whether or not we interpret sexuality and class as bivalent. And anyone who is also female and black will encounter it in a multilayered and acute form. In general, then, as soon as we acknowledge that axes of injustice cut across one another, we must acknowledge cross-cutting forms of the redistribution–recognition dilemma. And these forms are, if anything, even more resistant to resolution by combinations of affirmative remedies than the forms we considered above. For affirmative remedies work additively and are often at cross purposes with one another. Thus, the intersection of class, ‘race’, gender, and sexuality intensifies the need for transformative solutions, making the combination of socialism and deconstruction more attractive still.

Third, that combination best promotes the task of coalition building. This task is especially pressing today, given the multiplication of social antagonisms, the fissuring of social movements, and the growing appeal of the Right in the United States. In this context, the project of transforming the deep structures of both political economy and culture appears to be the one over-arching programmatic orientation capable of doing justice to *all* current struggles against injustice. It alone does not assume a zero-sum game.

If that is right, then, we can begin to see how badly off track is the current US political scene. We are currently stuck in the vicious circles of mutually reinforcing cultural and economic subordination. Our best efforts to redress these injustices via the combination of the liberal welfare state plus mainstream multiculturalism are generating perverse effects. Only by looking to alternative conceptions of redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice for all.

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\* This article is a slightly revised version of a lecture presented at the University of Michigan in March 1995 at the Philosophy Department’s symposium on ‘Political Liberalism’. A longer version will appear in my forthcoming book, *Justice Interruptus: Rethinking Key Concepts of a ‘Postsocialist’ Age*. For generous research support, I thank the Bohem Foundation, the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna, the Humanities Research Institute of the University of California at Irvine, the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University, and the Dean of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. For helpful comments, I thank Robin Blackburn, Judith Butler, Angela Harris, Randall Kennedy, Ted Koditschek, Jane Mansbridge, Mika Manty, Linda Nicholson, Eli Zaretsky, and the members of the ‘Feminism and the Discourses of Power’ work group at the Humanities Research Institute of the University of California, Irvine.

## Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Dual Systems Theory

Have theorists of justice forgotten about political economy?\* Have we traced the most important injustices to cultural roots? Is it time for critical social theory to reassert a basic distinction between the material processes of political economy and the symbolic processes of culture? In two recent essays, Nancy Fraser answers these questions in the affirmative.<sup>1</sup> She claims that some recent political theory and practice privilege the recognition of social groups, and that they tend to ignore the distribution of goods and the division of labour.

Demands for 'recognition of difference' fuel struggles of groups mobilized under the banners of nationality, ethnicity, 'race', gender, and sexuality. In these 'post-socialist' conflicts, group identity supplants class interest as the chief medium of political mobilization. Cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. And cultural recognition displaces socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle.<sup>2</sup>

Fraser proposes to correct these problems by constructing an analytic framework that conceptually opposes culture and political economy, and then locates the oppressions of various groups on a continuum between them. With a clear distinction between those issues of justice that concern economic issues and those that concern cultural issues, she suggests, we can restore political economy to its rightful place in critical theory, and evaluate which politics of recognition are compatible with transformative responses to economically based injustice.

Fraser's essays call our attention to an important issue. Certain recent political theories of multiculturalism and nationalism do indeed highlight respect for distinct cultural values as primary questions of justice,

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\* I am grateful to David Alexander, Robin Blackburn, Martin Matustick and Bill Scheuermann for comments on an earlier version of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'Recognition or Redistribution? A Critical Reading of Iris Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference*', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 3, no. 2, (1995), pp. 166-80; 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age', *NLR* 212, pp. 68-93.

<sup>2</sup> Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', p. 68.

and many seem to ignore questions of the distribution of wealth and resources and the organization of labour. Fraser cites Charles Taylor's much discussed work, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*,<sup>3</sup> as an example of this one-sided attention to recognition at the expense of redistribution, and I think she is right. Even the paradigmatic theorist of distributive justice, John Rawls, now emphasizes cultural and value differences and plays down conflict over scarce resources.<sup>4</sup> Some activist expressions of multiculturalism, moreover, especially in schools and universities, tend to focus on the representation of groups in books and curricula as an end in itself, losing sight of the issues of equality and disadvantage that have generated these movements.<sup>5</sup> Some recent theoretical writing by feminists or gay men and lesbians has pondered questions of group identity abstracted from social relations of economic privilege and oppression.

Nevertheless, I think that Fraser, like some other recent left critics of multiculturalism, exaggerates the degree to which a politics of recognition retreats from economic struggles. The so-called 'culture wars' have been fought on the primarily cultural turf of schools and universities. I see little evidence, however, that feminist or anti-racist activists, as a rule, ignore issues of economic disadvantage and control. Many who promote the cultivation of African-American identity, for example, do so on the grounds that self-organization and solidarity in predominantly African-American neighbourhoods will improve the material lives of those who live there by providing services and jobs.

To the degree they exist, Fraser is right to be critical of tendencies for a politics of recognition to supplant concerns for economic justice. But her proposed solution, namely to reassert a category of political economy entirely opposed to culture, is worse than the disease. Her dichotomy between political economy and culture leads her to misrepresent feminist, anti-racist and gay liberation movements as calling for recognition as an end in itself, when they are better understood as conceiving cultural recognition as a means to economic and political justice. She suggests that feminist and anti-racist movements in particular are caught in self-defeating dilemmas which I find to be a construction of her abstract framework rather than concrete problems of political strategies. The same framework makes working-class or queer politics appear more one-dimensional than they actually are.

Fraser's opposition of redistribution and recognition, moreover, constitutes a retreat from the New Left theorizing which has insisted that the material effects of political economy are inextricably bound to culture. Some of Nancy Fraser's own earlier essays stand as significant contributions to this insistence that Marxism is also cultural studies. Rather than oppose political economy to culture, I shall argue, it is both theoretically

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton 1992.

<sup>4</sup> See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York 1993; I have commented on this shift in a review essay of this book in *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 3, no. 2, (1995) pp. 181-90.

<sup>5</sup> Todd Gitlin tells stories of such a focus on recognition as an end itself in school board battles in California. See *Twilight of Common Dreams*, New York 1995. I do not think that such stories of excess in the politics of difference warrant his blanket inference that all attention to group difference has been destructive of left politics in the US.

and politically more productive to pluralize categories and understand them as differently related to particular social groups and issues. Thus the purpose of this essay is primarily to raise questions about what theoretical strategies are most useful to politics, and to criticize Fraser for adopting a polarizing strategy. The goal of strong coalitions of resistance to dominant economic forces and political rhetoric, I suggest, is not well served by an analysis that opposes cultural politics to economic politics. Specifying political struggles and issues in more fine-tuned and potentially compatible terms better identifies issues of possible conflict and alliance.

## 1. Redistribution Versus Recognition

According to Fraser, there are two primary kinds of injustice. The first, socio-economic injustice, is 'rooted' in the political and economic structure of society. Exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation of basic goods are the primary forms of such injustice. The second kind of injustice is cultural or symbolic. It is 'rooted' in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Such injustice includes being subject to an alien culture, being rendered invisible in one's cultural specificity, and being subject to deprecating stereotypes and cultural representations. Corresponding to these two irreducible roots of injustice are two different remedies. Redistribution produces political and economic changes that result in greater economic equality. Recognition redresses the harms of disrespect, stereotyping and cultural imperialism.

Fraser asserts that in the real world the structures of political economy and the meanings of cultural representation are inseparable: 'Even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms. Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material supports.'<sup>6</sup> The distinction between redistribution and recognition is, therefore, entirely theoretical, an analytical distinction necessary for the construction of an account. Fraser claims that this categorical opposition is useful and even necessary in order to understand how the political aims of oppressed groups are sometimes contradictory.

To demonstrate this tension, Fraser constructs a continuum for classifying the forms of injustice that groups suffer. At one end of the continuum are groups that suffer a 'pure' form of political economic injustice. Since the redistribution-recognition distinction is ideal and not real, such a group must also be an ideal type. Class oppression considered by itself approximates this ideal type. On the other end of the continuum are groups that suffer 'pure' cultural oppression. Injustice suffered by gay men and lesbians approximates this ideal type, inasmuch as their oppression, considered by itself, has its roots only in cultural values that despise their sexual practices.

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<sup>6</sup> Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', p. 72.

Remedies for injustice at each of these extremes come in reformist and revolutionary varieties, which Fraser respectively terms 'affirmative' and 'transformative'. The affirmative remedy for class oppression is a welfare-state liberalism that redistributes goods, services and income while leaving the underlying economic structure undisturbed. A transformative remedy for class injustice, on the other hand, changes the basic economic structure and thereby eliminates the proletariat. An affirmative remedy for sexual oppression seeks to solidify a specific gay or lesbian identity in the face of deprecating stereotypes, whereas a transformative cultural politics deconstructs the very categories of sexual identity.

The main trouble comes with groups that lie in the middle of the continuum, subject both to political economic and cultural injustices. The oppressions of gender and race lie here, according to Fraser. As subject to two different and potentially opposing forms of injustice, the political struggles of women and people of colour are also potentially contradictory. From the point of view of political economy, the radically transformative struggles of women and people of colour ought to have the aim of eliminating the gender or racial group as a distinct position in the division of labour. This goal of eliminating the structured position of the group, however, comes into conflict with a 'politics of identity'. In the latter, women or people of colour wish to affirm the group's specific values and affinity with one another in the face of deprecating stereotypes and cultural representation. Affirmative politics of recognition, according to Fraser, conflicts with transformative politics of redistribution because the latter requires eliminating the group as a group while the former affirms the group identity. This conflict shows the error of such an affirmative politics of recognition, and the need instead for a transformative cultural politics that deconstructs identities.

## 2. Why Theorize with a Dichotomy?

Fraser recommends a 'deconstructive' approach to a politics of recognition, which unsettles clear and oppositional categories of identity. Yet her theorizing in these essays is brazenly dichotomous. Injustices to all groups are reducible to two, and only two, mutually exclusive categories. The remedies for these injustices also come in two mutually exclusive categories, with each further divisible into a reformist and radical version. All social processes that impact on oppression can be conceptualized on one or the other side of this dichotomy or as a product of their intersection. Thus redistribution and recognition are not only exclusive categories, but together they comprehend everything relevant to oppression and justice.

As I have already noted, Fraser denies that this dichotomy describes reality. What, then, justifies its use in theory? Fraser answers that an analytical framework requires concepts through which to analyze reality, and it must be able to distinguish among these concepts. This is certainly true. Such a justification does not explain, however, why a critical social theory should rely on only two categories. Why adopt an analytical strategy, furthermore, that aims to reduce more plural categorizations of social phenomena to this 'bifocal' categorization?

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, I explicate a plural categorization of oppression. I distinguish five ‘faces’ of oppression—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.<sup>7</sup> Many concrete instances of oppression should be described using several of these categories, though most descriptions will not use all. The purpose of elaborating a plural but limited categorization of oppression is to accommodate the variations in oppressive structures that position individuals and groups, and thus to resist the tendency to reduce oppression to one or two structures with ‘primacy.’

In her essay criticizing this book, Fraser performs just such a reduction.<sup>8</sup> These five forms of oppression are ‘really’ reducible to two: a political economic injustice of maldistribution (exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness) and a cultural injustice of misrecognition (cultural imperialism and violence). Fraser neither justifies this reduction of five to two, nor does she notice that the description of at least one of the categories she allocates to the ‘redistributive’ side—namely powerlessness—is explicitly described *both* in terms of the division of labour and in terms of norms of respect. My point is not to argue for the particular framework I have developed, but to ask why the imposition of two categories is not arbitrary.

In her later essay, ‘From Recognition to Redistribution?’, Fraser raises an objection to her claim that the categories of political economy and culture exhaust description of social structures and injustice: this categorization appears to have no place for a third, political, aspect to social reality, concerning institutions and practices of law, citizenship, administration, and political participation. Rather than taking this objection seriously, Fraser sets to work reducing these political phenomena to the dichotomous framework of political economy and culture. She appeals to Habermas to do so:

My inclination is to follow Jürgen Habermas in viewing such issues bifocally. From one perspective, political institutions (in state-regulated capitalist societies) belong with the economy as part of the ‘system’ that produces distributive socio-economic injustices; in Rawlsian terms, they are part of the ‘basic structure’ of society. From another perspective, however, such institutions belong with ‘the lifeworld’ as part of the cultural structure that produces injustices of recognition; for example, the array of citizenship entitlements and participation rights conveys powerful implicit and explicit messages about the relative moral worth of various persons.<sup>9</sup>

In an earlier essay, ‘What’s Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender’,<sup>10</sup> Fraser fashioned an important and persuasive critique of dichotomous thinking in general, and of this particular dichotomy between ‘system’ and ‘lifeworld’. She argued that Habermas’s categorical opposition between system and lifeworld eclipses more nuanced concepts in his theory. She showed how this dichotomy obscures

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<sup>7</sup> I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton 1990, ch. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Fraser, ‘Recognition or Redistribution?’

<sup>9</sup> Fraser, ‘From Redistribution to Recognition?’, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> In *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis 1989.

the contribution of women's domestic labour to a reproduction of state and economic systems, while reinforcing a gendered opposition between public (system) and private (the lifeworld in which people appear as cared-for individuals). She argued that Habermas's dichotomy wrongly separates cultural norms from the social processes that reproduce bureaucratic and corporate institutions. For this reason, she suggested, Habermas's dichotomous theory cannot ground the conditions for the possibility of communicative democratization within those state and corporate institutions. Contrary to her reduction of the political to system and lifeworld in the above quotation, in 'What's Critical about Critical Theory?', Fraser invoked a category of political action and struggle as additional to, and upsetting, the neat dichotomy of system and lifeworld. While in that essay, Fraser suggested that dichotomous theorizing tends to devalue and obscure the phenomena that do not easily fit the categories, and to distort those that are conceptualized in its terms, I think a similar argument can be applied to her own theoretical strategy in these more recent essays.

### Distinctions in Theory and Reality

Fraser's stated reason for constructing a dichotomy is that a mutually exclusive opposition best enables the theorist to identify contradictions in reality. With the dichotomy between political economy and culture, redistribution and recognition, Fraser wants to highlight the contradiction between various political goals. Feminist and anti-racist movements, she aims to show, cannot take as ends both the affirmation of their group identities and the elimination of their gender- or race-specific positions in the division of labour. Because she conceptualizes transformative redistribution as incompatible with affirmative recognition, Fraser succeeds in constructing an account in which the goals of feminist and anti-racist movements appear internally contradictory. If the dichotomous categorization of redistribution and recognition does not correspond to reality, however, but is merely heuristic, how do we know that the tension is not merely an artefact of the theoretical dichotomy? Why should we accept Fraser's claim that the dichotomy reveals a fundamental political tension, rather than a superficial or even imagined one? Shortly I will argue that this categorization fails to understand that, for most social movements, what Fraser calls 'recognition' is a means to the economic and social equality and freedom that she brings under the category of redistribution.

The injustices of political economy, according to Fraser's account, include exploitation, marginalization and deprivation. The remedy for any economic injustice is some sort of political-economic restructuring: 'This might involve redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures. Although these various remedies differ importantly from one another, I shall henceforth refer to the whole group of them by the generic term "redistribution".'<sup>11</sup> But one can surely ask why such diverse social processes should all be categorized as redistribution, especially since Fraser herself wishes to reintro-

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<sup>11</sup> Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', p. 73.

duce distinctions into that category. Fraser believes, and I agree with her, that redistributive remedies for economic injustice, typical of the public provision of goods and services for needy people, do not change the conditions that produce this injustice and, in some ways, tend to reinforce those conditions. She thus recommends those remedies which transform the basic economic structure: 'By restructuring the relations of production, these remedies would not only alter the end-state distribution of consumption shares; they would also change the social division of labour and thus the conditions of existence for everyone.'<sup>12</sup> Fraser calls these remedies 'transformative redistribution', as distinct from the 'affirmative redistributive' remedies which leave the basic structure intact. But why bring them both under the same general category at all? Why not choose plural categories to distinguish and reflect those issues of justice that concern the patterns of the distribution of goods from those that concern the division of labour or the organization of decision-making power?

In earlier work, I proposed just such distinctions in order to show that many theories of justice wrongly collapse all issues of justice into those of distribution, and thereby often wrongly identify the remedies for injustice with the redistribution of goods. I criticize this distributive paradigm for just the reasons that Fraser distinguishes affirmative and transformative redistributive remedies: to emphasize that end-state distributions are usually rooted in social and economic structures that organize the division of labour and decision-making power about investment, the organization of production, pricing, and so on. For evaluating the justice of social institutions, I propose a four-fold categorization. Societies and institutions should certainly be evaluated according to the patterns of distribution of resources and goods they exhibit; but, no less important, they should be evaluated according to their division of labour, the way they organize decision-making power, and whether their cultural meanings enhance the self-respect and self-expression of all society's members.<sup>13</sup> Structures of the division of labour and decision-making power are no more reducible to the distribution of goods than are cultural meanings. They both involve practices that condition actions and the relations among actors in different social locations; these serve as the context within which income, goods, services, and resources are distributed. If we begin with distinctions among distribution, division of labour, and decision-making power in our analytic framework, then we do not need later to uncover a confusion between remedies that 'merely' redistribute and those that transform the basic structure.

Fraser's desire to dichotomize issues of justice between economy and culture produces categories that are too stark. A more plural categorization better guides action because it shows how struggles can be directed at different kinds of goals or policies. For example, distinguishing issues of justice about decision-making power from those concerning distribution can show that struggles about environmental justice cannot simply be about the placement of hazardous sites, a distributive issue, but must more importantly be about the processes through which such placements

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, ch. 1.

are decided.<sup>14</sup> Changes in the division of labour, furthermore, do not amount merely to 'redistributing' tasks, as Fraser's dichotomy suggests, but often in redefining the cultural meaning and value of different kinds of work. The gender division of labour that allocates primary responsibility for care work to women outside the paid economy, for example, will not change without greater recognition of the nature and value of this work.

With a more plural categorization of issues of justice, furthermore, we can more clearly see the variables that must come together to constitute just institutions, as well as the tensions among them that can occur. Just as a plural categorization diffuses the starkness of redistribution, moreover, it demotes culture to one among several of such variables to be combined with others in analysis of social justice.

### 3. An Alternative: Fraser's Materialist Cultural Theorizing

Fraser introduces the dichotomy between redistribution and recognition to correct what she perceives as a tendency in multiculturalism and identity politics to ignore issues of political economy. While I agree that this characterization is sometimes accurate, the remedy for such a failing does not consist in setting up a category of political economy alongside, and in opposition to, culture. A more appropriate theoretical remedy would be to conceptualize issues of justice involving recognition and identity as having inevitably material economic sources and consequences, without thereby being reducible to market dynamics or economic exploitation and deprivation.

As I understand it, this has been the project of the best of what is called 'cultural studies': to demonstrate that political economy, as Marxists think of it, is through and through cultural without ceasing to be material, and to demonstrate that what students of literature and art call 'culture' is economic, not as base to superstructure, but in its production, distribution and effects, including effects on reproducing class relations. Political economy is cultural, and culture is economic.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu well exemplifies this mutual effect of culture and political economy. In several of his works, Bourdieu demonstrates that acquiring or maintaining positions in privileged economic strata depends partly on cultural factors of education, taste and social connection. Access to such enculturation processes, however, crucially depends on having economic resources and the relative leisure that accompanies economic comfort.<sup>15</sup> In his remarkable book, *Encountering Development*, Arturo Escobar similarly argues for the mutual effect of cultural and material survival issues of access to resources in the struggles of

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<sup>14</sup> Christian Hunold and Iris Marion Young, 'Justice, Democracy and Hazardous Siting,' paper submitted to *Political Studies*.

<sup>15</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Pure Taste*, Cambridge, Mass. 1979. Also 'What makes a Social Class?', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 32, 1988, pp. 1-18; Craig Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History and the Challenge of Difference*, Oxford 1995, ch. 5.

oppressed peasants. Many Latin American peasants, who often come from indigenous cultures which have been neither eliminated nor assimilated by the dominant Latin culture, are struggling against repressive governments and international finance giants to obtain a barely decent life. Such peasant resistance, says Escobar, 'reflects more than the struggle for land and living conditions; it is above all a struggle for symbols and meaning, a cultural struggle.'<sup>16</sup> Latin American peasants struggle with World Bank representatives, local government officials and well-intentioned NGO leaders over the cultural interpretation of the most basic terms of political economy: land, natural resources, property, tools, labour, health, food. We should not mistake this claim for a 'reduction' of political economy to culture. On the contrary, in this case, struggle about cultural meaning and identity has life and death consequences.

The struggle over representation and for cultural affirmation must be carried out in conjunction with the struggle against the exploitation and domination over the conditions of local, regional, and global political economies. The two projects are one and the same. Capitalist regimes undermine the reproduction of socially valued forms of identity; by destroying existing cultural practices, development projects destroy elements necessary for cultural affirmation.<sup>17</sup>

With such a materialist cultural-political theory one can, for example, problematize the apparently simple call for an economic system that meets needs. With Amartya Sen, we can ask just *what* is to be equalized when we call for equality.<sup>18</sup> A materialist cultural approach understands that needs are contextualized in political struggle over who gets to define whose needs for what purpose. This is the approach that Nancy Fraser herself takes in an earlier paper, 'Struggle Over Needs', where she argues that needs are always subject to struggle and interpretation, and that the inequalities in the struggling parties are structured simultaneously by access to material resources and discursive resources: 'Needs talk appears as a site of struggle where groups with unequal discursive and non-discursive resources compete to establish as hegemonic their respective interpretations of legitimate social needs.'<sup>19</sup> With a materialist cultural analysis, we can notice that, under circumstances of unjust social and economic inequality, the mobilization of communication in official publics often reflects and reproduces social and economic inequalities. In another earlier essay, Nancy Fraser argues that the best recourse that economically subordinated groups have is to form subaltern counter-publics as 'discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of identities, interests and needs.'<sup>20</sup> Any struggle against oppres-

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<sup>16</sup> Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development*, Princeton 1995, p. 168.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

<sup>18</sup> In 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', Fraser incorrectly identifies Sen as a pure theorist of political economy. In fact, Sen is acutely sensitive to variations in cultural meaning and the implications of human needs and the cultural meaning of goods and social networks within which needs are to be met. See *Re-examining Inequality*, Cambridge, Mass. 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Fraser, 'Struggle over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late Capitalist Political Culture,' in *Unruly Practices*, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Mass. 1992, p. 123.

sion, Fraser suggests in that essay, is simultaneously a struggle against cultural and economic domination, because the cultural styles of subordinated groups are devalued and silenced, and the political economy of the bourgeois public sphere ensures that subordinated groups lack equal access to the material means of equal participation.

Thus the Nancy Fraser of 'From Redistribution to Recognition' appears as nearly the contrary of the Nancy Fraser of at least three earlier papers I have cited. Where the earlier Nancy Fraser theorized discursive cultural processes of group identification and of needs and interests from its own point of view, as a process of political context to produce change in economic structures, the more recent Fraser separates culture from economy, and argues that they tend to pull against each other in movements against injustice. I recommend the position of the earlier Fraser over the later. The earlier articles consider a politics of recognition as a means of struggle toward the end of material, social and economic equality and well-being. In the most recent work, however, Fraser takes recognition as an end in itself, politically disconnected from redistribution.

#### 4. Recognition for the Sake of Redistribution

In her critique of multiculturalism and the politics of identity, Fraser writes as though the politics of recognition is an end in itself for movements of subordinated groups. Sometimes it is. The separatist movement of the Québécois, on which Taylor models his politics of difference, arguably takes recognition of the Québécois as a distinct people as a political end in itself, and the same is sometimes true of other nationalist movements. Interest in multiculturalism in education, to take a different sort of example, sometimes considers attention to and recognition of previously excluded groups as an end in itself.

When recognition is taken as a political end in itself, it is usually disconnected from economic issues of distribution and division of labour. I agree with Fraser that a political focus on recognition disconnected from injustices of exploitation, deprivation or control over work is a problem. The remedy, however, is to reconnect issues of political economy with issues of recognition. We should show how recognition is a means to, or an element in, economic and political equality.

In 'From Redistribution to Recognition' Fraser does just the reverse of this. She treats all instances of group-based claims to cultural specificity and recognition as though recognition is an end in itself. For the movements that Fraser is most concerned with, however—namely, women's movements, movements of people of colour, gay and lesbian movements, movements of poor and working-class people—a politics of recognition functions more as a means to, or element in, broader ends of social and economic equality, rather than as a distinct goal of justice.

Fraser constructs gay and lesbian liberation as a 'pure' case of the politics of recognition. In this ideal type, the 'root' of injustice to gay men and lesbians is entirely cultural. Gays and lesbians suffer injustice because of the cultural construction of heterosexism and homophobia. Although

the images of gays and lesbians as despicable and unnatural has distributive consequences, because the root of the oppression is culture, the remedy must also be cultural: the recognition of gay and lesbian life styles and practices as normal and valuable, and the giving of equal respect to persons identified with those practices.

Although arguments could be mounted that historically marriage is largely an economic institution, I will not quarrel here with the claim that heterosexism and homophobia are cultural. Nevertheless, the claim that, even as an ideal type, oppression through sexuality is purely cultural trivializes the politics of those oppressed because of sexuality. Whatever the 'roots' of heterosexism, and I would theorize them as multiple, this harm matters because those on the wrong side of the heterosexual matrix experience systematic limits to their freedom, constant risk of abuse, violence and death, and unjustly limited access to resources and opportunities. Among the primary political goals of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual or queer activists are material, economic and political equality: and end to discrimination in employment, housing, health care; equal protection by police and courts; equal freedom to partner and raise children. Precisely because the source of inequality in this case is cultural imagery that demonizes those who transgress heterosexual norms, a politics of difference is a crucial means for achieving the material goals of equal protection and equal opportunity. For example, positive and playful images of the possibilities of sexuality aim to undermine the monolithic construction of norm and deviant, which is a necessary condition of respect and freedom.

The polarization of political economy and culture, redistribution and recognition, I have argued, distorts the plurality and complexity of social reality and politics. Fraser's account of anti-racist and feminist politics reveals such distortions. Race and gender, Fraser argues, are 'dilemmatic' modes of collectivity. The injustices of race and gender consist in a dialectical combination of two analytically distinct modes of oppression, distributive injustice and lack of recognition, for which there are two distinct kinds of remedy, redistribution and recognition. But these two forms of remedy are often contradictory, according to Fraser. The radical, transformative goal of redistributive justice for women or people of colour should consist in eliminating the structures in the division of labour that allocate certain kinds of devalued work to white women and women of colour, and which keep them—especially people of colour—in a marginalized underclass 'reserve army'. Insofar as gender and race are defined by this division of labour and structural marginalization, the goal of redistribution should be to eliminate the oppressed gender or race as a group, just as the goal of working-class movements must be the elimination of the proletariat as a group.

According to Fraser, however, the politics of recognition when applied to gender or race pulls the other way. The goal of such cultural politics is to affirm the specific difference of women or African Americans or Chicanos or Navajos, to develop pride in women's relational orientation, or the moral qualities generated by musical, religious and storytelling legacies. Thus a politics of recognition seeks to affirm the group as a good, which contradicts and undermines the transformative goal of redistribution:

Insofar as people of colour suffer at least two analytically distinct kinds of injustice, they necessarily require at least two analytically distinct kinds of remedy, which are not easily pursued simultaneously. Whereas the logic of redistribution is to put 'race' out of business as such, the logic of recognition is to valorize group specificity...How can anti-racists fight simultaneously to abolish 'race' and to valorize racialized group specificity?<sup>21</sup>

Here Fraser imposes dichotomous categories on a more complex reality and, by doing so, finds contradiction where none exists. She suggests that culturally affirming movements of people of colour aim to abolish 'race' by affirming 'race'. But this is a distortion of, for example, most Black cultural politics. The purpose of affirming the cultural and social specificity of African Americans or First Nations or North African Muslim immigrants is precisely to puncture the naturalized construction of these groups as 'raced'. These groups affirm cultural specificity in order to deny the essentialism of 'race' and encourage the solidarity of the members of the group against deprecating stereotypes. Fraser's position seems similar to that of conservative opponents of anti-racist politics who refuse to distinguish the affirmation of specific economic, political and cultural institutions of solidarity and empowerment for oppressed people of colour from the discriminatory and racist institutions of white exclusion.

### The Material and the Cultural Entwined

Fraser finds these movements internally contradictory, moreover, because she assumes that their politics of recognition is an end in itself. It may be true that some activities and writings of culturally affirming movements of people of colour treat cultural empowerment and recognition as itself the substance of liberation. More often, however, those affirming cultural pride and identity for people of colour understand such recognition as a means of economic justice and social equality. Most African Americans who support culturally based African-American schools and universities, for example, believe that the schools will best enable African-American young people to develop the skills and self-confidence to confront white society, and collectively help transform it to be more hospitable to African-American success.

Movements of indigenous peoples, to take another example, certainly consider recognition of their cultural distinctness an end in itself. They also see it as a crucial means to economic development. They assert claims to land for the sake of building an economic base for collective development and for achieving the effective redistribution of the fruits of white colonial exploitation. Many also believe that the recovery of traditional indigenous cultural values provides vision for forms of economic interaction and the protection of nature whose wider institutionalization would confront capitalism with transformative possibilities.

Fraser's claim of internal contradiction may have a bit more force in respect to struggles against gender oppression. The infamous 'equality versus difference' debate poses a genuine dilemma for feminist politics. Ought feminists to affirm gender blindness in the policies of employers,

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<sup>20</sup> Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', p. 81.

for example, in the allocation of health benefits, leave, promotion criteria, and working hours? Or should they demand that employers explicitly take into account the position of many women as primary caretakers of children or elderly relatives in deliberations about just allocations? Opting for the latter strategy risks solidifying a sexual division of labour that most feminists agree is unjust and ought to be eliminated. Opting for the former, however, allows employers to continue privileging men under the banner of equality.

Notice, however, that this feminist dilemma is not between a redistributive strategy and a strategy of recognition, but rather between two different redistributive strategies. By Fraser's own criteria, moreover, it could be argued that the second strategy has more transformative possibilities, because it takes the gender division of labour explicitly into account, whereas the first ignores this basic structure. Be that as it may, it is difficult to see how a feminist politics of recognition 'pulls against' a feminist politics of redistribution. To the extent that undermining the misogyny that makes women victims of violence and degradation entails affirming the specific gendered humanity of women, this would seem also to contribute to women's economic revaluation. To affirm the normative and human value of the work that women do outside the labour force, moreover, is to contribute to a redistributive restructuring that takes account of the hidden social costs of markets and social policies.

Feminists discuss these issues in counter-publics where they encourage one another to speak for themselves, from their own experience. In these counter-publics, they form images and interests with which to speak to a larger public that ignores or distorts women's concerns. Such solidarity forming identity politics need not reduce women to some common culture or set of concerns. While some feminist discourse constructs and celebrates a 'women's culture' for its own sake, more often claims to attention for gender-specific experience and position occur in the context of struggles about economic and political opportunity.

I conclude, then, that Fraser is wrong to conceptualize struggles for recognition of cultural specificity as contradicting struggles for radical transformation of economic structures. So long as the cultural denigration of groups produces or reinforces structural economic oppressions, the two struggles are continuous. If a politics of difference disconnects culture from its role in producing material oppressions and deprivations, and asserts cultural expression as an end in itself, then such politics may obscure complex social connections of oppression and liberation. If Muslims were to focus only on their freedom to send their girls to school in headscarves, or Native Americans were to limit their struggles to religious freedom and the recovery of cultural property, then their politics would be superficial. Set in the context of a larger claim that people should not suffer material disadvantage and deprivation because they are culturally different, however, even such issues as these become radical.

## Conclusion

Fraser is right to insist that radicals renew attention to material issues of the division of labour, access to resources, the meeting of needs, and the

social transformations required to bring about a society in which everyone can be free to develop and exercise their capacities, associate with others and express themselves under conditions of material comfort. Her polarization of redistribution versus recognition, however, leads her to exaggerate the extent to which some groups and movements claiming recognition ignore such issues. To the degree such a tendency exists, I have argued, the cure is to reconnect issues of symbols and discourse to their consequences in the material organization of labour, access to resources, and decision-making power, rather than to solidify a dichotomy between them. I have suggested that a better theoretical approach is to pluralize concepts of injustice and oppression so that culture becomes one of several sites of struggle interacting with others.

Despite Fraser's claim to value recognition as much as redistribution, her criticisms of what she calls an affirmative politics of recognition seem pragmatically similar to other recent left critiques of the so-called politics of identity. On these accounts, the politics of difference influential among progressives in the last twenty years has been a big mistake. Feminist, gay and lesbian, African-American, Native-American, and other such movements have only produced divisiveness and backlash, and have diverted radical politics from confronting economic power.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, when capitalist hegemony is served by a discourse of 'family values', when affirmative action, reproductive rights, voting rights for people of colour, and indigenous sovereignty are all seriously under attack, suggesting that gender- or race-specific struggles are divisive or merely reformist does not promote solidarity. Instead, it helps fuel a right-wing agenda and further marginalizes some of the most economically disadvantaged people. A strong anti-capitalist progressive movement requires a coalition politics that recognizes the differing modalities of oppression that people experience and affirms their culturally specific networks and organizations.

The world of political ends and principles Fraser presents is eerily empty of action. She calls for a 'deconstructive' rather than an 'affirmative' approach to culture and identity, but I do not know what this means for the conduct of activism on the ground. From Zapatista challengers to the Mexican government, to Ojibwa defenders of fishing rights, to African-American leaders demanding that banks invest in their neighbourhoods, to unions trying to organize a Labor Party, to those sheltering battered women, resistance has many sites and is often specific to a group without naming or affirming a group essence. Most of these struggles self-consciously involve issues of cultural recognition and economic deprivation, but not constituted as totalizing ends. None of them alone is 'transformative,' but, if linked together, they can be deeply subversive. Coalition politics can only be built and sustained if each grouping recognizes and respects the specific perspective and circumstances of the others, and works with them in fluid counter-publics. I do not think that such a coalition politics is promoted by a theoretical framework that opposes culture and economy.

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<sup>22</sup> See James Weinstein, report on independent politics, *In These Times*, 18 February 1996, pp. 18-21; Gitlin, *Twilight of Common Dreams*.

## *A Rejoinder to Iris Young*

Iris Young and I seem to inhabit different worlds.<sup>1</sup> In her world, there are no divisions between the social Left and the cultural Left. Proponents of cultural politics work cooperatively with proponents of social politics, linking claims for the recognition of difference with claims for the redistribution of wealth. Virtually no practitioners of identity politics are essentialist, moreover, let alone authoritarian or chauvinist. Claims for the recognition of difference are only rarely advanced, finally, as ends in themselves; nearly all are put forward as transitional socialist demands. According to Young, therefore, the divisions that inspired my article are artefacts of my 'dichotomous framework,' figments of my imagination.

In fact, of course, it was not I but 'post-socialist' political culture that has conjured up these divisions. I did not fantasize a match on Washington of a million black men in which not a single socio-economic demand was raised. Nor did I imagine the widespread gloating on the US social Left over the *Social Text* hoax, which was thought to discredit the 'phoney leftism' of cultural studies. What I *did* do was construct a framework for analyzing existing splits between class politics and identity politics, socialist or social-democratic politics and multiculturalist politics. My aim was to show that these splits rest on false antitheses. 'Post-socialist' ideology notwithstanding, we do not in reality face an either/or choice between social politics and cultural politics, redistribution and recognition. It is possible in principle to have both.

Recall the context my essay addressed: increased marketization and sharply rising inequality world-wide; the apparent delegitimation of socialist ideals; the growing salience of claims for the recognition of difference and the relative eclipse of claims for egalitarian redistribution: the decoupling of the cultural Left from the social Left; and the seeming absence of any credible vision of a comprehensive alternative to the present order. In my diagnosis, unlike that of Todd Gitlin and James Weinstein, and unlike that of Young, who is on this point their mirror opposite, the split in the Left is *not* between class struggles, on the one hand, and gender, 'race', and sex struggles, on the other. Rather, it cuts across those movements, each of which is internally divided between cultural currents and

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<sup>1</sup> See Iris Marion Young, 'Unruly Categories: A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Dual Systems Theory', *NLR* 222, pp. 147-160.

social currents, between currents oriented to redistribution and currents oriented to recognition. In my diagnosis, moreover, the split does not reflect a genuine antinomy. Rather, it is possible in principle to combine an egalitarian politics of redistribution with an emancipatory politics of recognition.

Thus, far from dichotomizing culture and political economy, I diagnosed their current decoupling in 'post-socialist' ideology. Far from championing class politics against identity politics, I refuted the view that we must make an either/or choice between them. Far from manufacturing non-existent contradictions, I provided a framework for transcending political divisions that exist. Far from trashing movements against sexism, racism, and heterosexism, I distinguished affirmative from transformative currents within those movements in order to show how claims for redistribution and recognition could be integrated with one another in a comprehensive political project.

Young, however, systematically distorts my argument. In a discussion that is more tendentious than analytical, she conflates three different levels of analysis: the philosophical, the socio-theoretical, and the political.

On the philosophical level, my starting point was the current dissociation of two distinct paradigms of justice. One of these, the distributive paradigm, has supplied the chief approach for analyzing justice claims for at least 150 years; in the 1970s and 1980s especially, it was subject to intense and often brilliant philosophical elaboration. The other paradigm is, in contrast, much newer; centred on the normative concept of recognition, it is currently being developed by philosophers such as Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor, largely in response to the recognition politics of the 1980s and 1990s. Both paradigms are normatively powerful; each succeeds in identifying an important set of justice claims and in accounting for their moral force. Yet the two paradigms of justice do not communicate. They are mutually dissociated in moral philosophy today and need to be articulated with one another.

Contra Young, I did not invent these paradigms, nor did I contrive their dissociation. Still less did I advocate a theory of justice divided into 'two mutually exclusive categories.' On the contrary, I posed the philosophical question of how we should understand their relation to one another. One possibility is that one of the paradigms can be conceptually reduced to the other; but no one has managed to do this, and I doubt that in fact it can be done. Short of that, the most philosophically satisfying approach is to develop a more general overarching conception of justice that can encompass both distribution and recognition. This is the approach pursued in my NLR essay.<sup>2</sup>

On the social-theoretical level, I did not treat the material processes of political economy as 'entirely opposed' to the symbolic processes of culture. Rather, I began where capitalism has placed us, in a social formation that differentiates specialized economic arenas and institutions from

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<sup>2</sup> For a further elaboration of this approach, see my 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 18, Salt Lake City 1997.

other arenas and institutions, including some that are designated as cultural, and from the larger background that Karl Polanyi called 'society'. To illuminate this social formation, one must account both for the historical fact of capitalist economic/cultural differentiation and also for the underlying reality of their thorough interpenetration. To that end, I invoked the culture/economy distinction in a specific—analytical—guise. Contra Young, I did not mark out two substantive institutional domains, economy and culture, assigning redistribution to the first and recognition to the second. Rather, I distinguished two analytical perspectives that can be trained upon any domain. Refuting the view that culture and economy constitute two separate mutually insulated spheres, I revealed their interpenetration by tracing the unintended effects of cultural and economic claims. The entire thrust of my essay was to demonstrate that cultural claims have distributive implications, that economic claims carry recognition subtexts, and that we ignore their mutual impingement at our peril. Thus, what Young labels a 'dichotomy' is actually a perspectival duality.<sup>3</sup>

This approach is consistent, moreover, with my earlier work, including my 1985 essay on Habermas. There, I took what had been presented as a substantive institutional distinction (system and lifeworld) and reinterpreted it as an analytical distinction of perspectives (the system perspective and the lifeworld perspective). Contra Young, I did not simply reject the distinction; nor did I criticize dichotomous thinking in general. Rather, I criticized the conflation of an important analytical methodological distinction with a substantive institutional distinction. (The identical perspectival dualist view is clearly stated, incidentally, in the passage on politics Young cites from page 72 of my NLR essay; there I claim that political phenomena can be viewed from both the lifeworld and the system perspectives.) Thus, the two Nancy Frasers are really one.

Throughout her discussion, Young erroneously assumes that to draw a two-fold distinction is to dichotomize. Hence her insistence, at odds with scientific parsimony, that five is better than two. (One is tempted to say that she is 'brazenly' pentagonist, an ominously militarist stance.) The real issue, of course, is not the number of categories but their epistemic status and explanatory power.<sup>4</sup> But in these terms Young's objections do not convince. She gives us no good reasons to reject, for example, my contrast between affirmative remedies for injustice, which alter end-state patterns of distribution and recognition without disturbing the underlying framework, and transformative ones; this contrast is illuminating in two respects. First, it permits us to preserve the essential form of the idea of socialism, as distinct from the liberal welfare state, even when we are no longer clear about how to fill in socialism's substantive content. Second, it reveals otherwise hidden connections between socialism

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<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Here Young's own approach is deficient. The five-fold 'plural' schema she proposes to characterize 'group oppressions' is ad hoc and under-theorized. Indiscriminately mixing items from different regions of conceptual space, it contains nothing that cannot be analyzed from the standpoints of redistribution, recognition, or both. See 'Culture, Political Economy, and Difference', in my *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, London 1997.

and deconstruction, on the one hand, and between the liberal, welfare state and mainstream multiculturalism, on the other.

This brings me, finally, to the level of politics. Contra Young, the existing splits between proponents of recognition and proponents of redistribution are not simply a matter of false consciousness. Rather, they give expression in distorted form to genuine tensions among multiple aims that must be pursued simultaneously in struggles for social justice. Theorists can help illuminate these tensions, provided that they eschew cheer-leading and think critically about the social movements they support. To deny or minimize the difficulties is to bury one's head in the sand. Nor does it suffice to point out that some who press claims for the recognition of cultural differences hope thereby to promote economic restructuring; rather, one must go on to ask whether such hopes are well-founded or whether they are likely to run aground. Nor, finally, is it helpful to adopt the Pollyannaish view that the tensions within and among progressive social movements will somehow be automatically resolved in some all-encompassing 'coalition' whose basis and content need not be specified.

My essay defended the project of integrating the best of socialist politics with the best of multicultural politics, while frankly acknowledging its genuine difficulties. I did not claim, contra Young, that redistribution conflicts with recognition. I argued, rather, that in the current historical context, the tensions between various group-differentiating and group de-differentiating claims assume the guise of a single contradiction, which I called 'the redistribution/recognition dilemma.' In this context, demands for economic justice seem to conflict necessarily with demands for cultural justice. But the appearance, I sought to demonstrate, is misleading. Once we distinguish affirmative approaches from transformative approaches, what looked like an ineluctable contradiction gives way to a plurality of possible strategies from which we must reflectively choose. Some kinds of recognition claims, especially the 'deconstructive' kind, are better suited than others to synergizing with claims for socio-economic equality.

Young rejects this last conclusion, of course, having written what is in essence a brief for the politics of affirmative recognition. In the end, however, she offers no good reasons for thinking that such a politics can promote transformative redistribution. I continue to believe it cannot.

## Merely Cultural

I propose to consider two different kinds of claims that have circulated recently, representing a culmination of sentiment that has been building for some time.<sup>1</sup> One has to do with an explicitly Marxist objection to the reduction of Marxist scholarship and activism to the study of culture, sometimes understood as the reduction of Marxism to cultural studies. The second has to do with the tendency to relegate new social movements to the sphere of the cultural, indeed, to dismiss them as being preoccupied with what is called the ‘merely’ cultural, and then to construe this cultural politics as factionalizing, identitarian, and particularistic. If I fail to give the names of those I take to hold these views, I hope that I will be forgiven. The active cultural presumption of this essay is that we utter and hear such views, that they form some part of the debates that populate the intellectual landscape within progressive intellectual circles. I presume as well that to link individuals to such views runs the risk of deflecting attention from the meaning and effect of such views to the pettier politics of who said what, and who said what back—a form of cultural politics that, for the moment, I want to resist.

These are some of the forms that this kind of argument has taken in the last year: that the cultural focus of left politics has abandoned the materialist project of Marxism, that it fails to address questions of economic equity and redistribution, that it fails as well to situate culture in terms of a systematic understanding of social and economic modes of production; that the cultural focus of left politics has splintered the Left into identitarian sects, that we have lost a set of common ideals and goals, a sense of a common history, a common set of values, a common language and even an objective and universal mode of rationality; that the cultural focus of left politics substitutes a self-centred and trivial form of politics that focuses on transient events, practices, and objects rather than offering a more robust, serious and comprehensive vision of the systematic interrelatedness of social and economic conditions.

Clearly, one more or less implicit presumption in some of these arguments is the notion that poststructuralism has thwarted Marxism, and that any ability to offer *systematic* accounts of social life or to assert norms of rationality—whether objective, universal, or both—is now seriously hampered by a poststructuralism that has entered the field of cultural politics, where that poststructuralism is construed as destructive, relativistic and politically paralyzing.

### Parody as a Form of Identification

Perhaps you are already wondering how it is that I might take the time to rehearse these arguments in this way, giving them air-time, as it were, and perhaps you are also wondering whether or not I am already parodying these positions. Do I think that they are worthless, or do I think that they are important, deserving of a response? If I were parodying these positions, that might imply that I think that they are ridiculous, hollow, formulaic, that they have a generalizability and currency as discourse that allows for them to be taken up by almost anyone and to sound convincing, even if delivered by the most improbable person.

But what if my rehearsal involves a temporary identification with them, even as I myself participate in the cultural politics under attack? Is that temporary identification that I perform, the one that raises the question of whether I am involved in a parody of these positions, not precisely a moment in which, for better or worse, they become my position?

It is, I would argue, impossible to perform a convincing parody of an intellectual position without having a prior affiliation with what one parodies, without having and wanting an intimacy with the position one takes in or on as the object of parody. Parody requires a certain ability to identify, approximate, and draw near; it engages an intimacy with the position it appropriates that troubles the voice, the bearing, the perform-

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally given as a lecture for the plenary panel on 'Locations of Power' at the Rethinking Marxism conference in Amherst, Massachusetts in December 1996. It has been revised for publication here. We are grateful to Duke University Press for permission to publish this essay. It was previously published in *Social Text*, nos. 52-3, Fall/Winter 1997, which also carried a reply by Nancy Fraser, 'Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler'.

ativity of the subject such that the audience or the reader does not quite know where it is you stand, whether you have gone over to the other side, whether you remain on your side, whether you can rehearse that other position without falling prey to it in the midst of the performance. You might conclude, she is not being serious at all, or you might conclude that this is some sort of deconstructive play, and resolve to look elsewhere to find a serious discussion. But I would invite you to enter into this apparent wavering of mine, if you will, because I think that it actually serves the purposes of overcoming unnecessary divisions on the Left, and that is part of my purpose here.

I want to suggest that the recent efforts to parody the cultural Left could not have happened if there were not this prior affiliation and intimacy, and that to enter into parody is to enter into a relationship of both desire and ambivalence. In the hoax of last year, we saw a peculiar form of identification at work, one in which the one who performs the parody aspires, quite literally, to occupy the place of the one parodied, not only to expose the cultural icons of the cultural Left, *but to acquire and appropriate that very iconicity*, and, hence, to open oneself happily to public exposure as the one who performed the exposure, thus occupying both positions in the parody, territorializing the position of that other and acquiring temporary cultural fame.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it cannot be said that the purpose of the parody is not to denounce the way in which left politics had become media-driven or media-centred, degraded by the popular and the cultural, but, rather, precisely to enter into and drive the media, to become popular, and to triumph in the very cultural terms that have been acquired by those one seeks to demean, thus reconfirming and embodying the values of popularity and media success that goad the critique to begin with. Consider the thrilling sadism, the release of pent-up resentment at the moment of occupying the popular field that is apparently deplored as an object of analysis, paying tribute to the power of one's opponent, thus reinvigorating the very idealization that one sought to dismantle.

Thus, the result of parody is paradoxical: the gleeful sense of triumph indulged by the avatars of an ostensibly more serious Marxism about their moment in the cultural limelight exemplifies and symptomatizes precisely the cultural object of critique they oppose; the sense of triumph over this enemy, which cannot take place without in some eerie way taking the very place of the enemy, raises the question of whether the aims and goals of this more serious Marxism have not become hopelessly displaced onto a cultural domain, producing *a transient* object of media attention in the place of a more systematic analysis of economic and social relations. This sense of triumph reinscribes *a factionalization* within the Left at the very moment in which welfare rights are being abolished in this country, class differentials are intensifying across the globe, and the right wing in this country has successfully gained the ground of the 'middle' effectively making the Left itself invisible within the media. When does it appear on the front page of the *New York Times*, except on

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<sup>2</sup> The hoax referred to is Alan D. Sokal, 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity', *Social Text*, nos. 46-7, Spring/Summer 1996, pp. 217-52.

that rare occasion in which one part of the Left swipes at another, producing a spectacle of the Left for mainstream liberal and conservative press consumption which is all too happy to discount every and any faction of the Left within the political process, much less honour the Left of any kind as a strong force in the service of radical social change?

Is the attempt to separate Marxism from the study of culture and to rescue critical knowledge from the shoals of cultural specificity simply a turf war between left cultural studies and more orthodox forms of Marxism? How is this attempted separation related to the claim that new social movements have split the Left, deprived us of common ideals, factionalized the field of knowledge and political activism, reducing political activism to the mere assertion and affirmation of cultural identity? The charge that new social movements are 'merely cultural', that a unified and progressive Marxism must return to a materialism based in an objective analysis of class, itself presumes that the distinction between material and cultural life is a stable one. And this recourse to an apparently stable distinction between material and cultural life is clearly the resurgence of a theoretical anachronism, one that discounts the contributions to Marxist theory since Althusser's displacement of the base-superstructure model, as well as various forms of cultural materialism—for instance, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Indeed, the untimely resurgence of that distinction is in the service of a tactic which seeks to identify new social movements with the merely cultural, and the cultural with the derivative and secondary, thus embracing an anachronistic materialism as the banner for a new orthodoxy.

### Orthodox Unity

This resurgence of left orthodoxy calls for a 'unity' that would, paradoxically, redivide the Left in precisely the way that orthodoxy purports to lament. Indeed, one way of producing this division becomes clear when we ask which movements, and for what reasons, get relegated to the sphere of the merely cultural, and how that very division between the material and the cultural becomes tactically invoked for the purposes of marginalizing certain forms of political activism? And how does the new orthodoxy on the Left work in tandem with a social and sexual conservatism that seeks to make questions of race and sexuality secondary to the 'real' business of politics, producing a new and eerie political formation of neo-conservative Marxisms.

On what principles of exclusion or subordination has this ostensible unity been erected? How quickly we forget that new social movements based on democratic principles became articulated against a hegemonic Left as well as a complicitous liberal centre and a truly threatening right wing? Have the historical reasons for the development of semi-autonomous new social movements ever really been taken into account by those who now lament their emergence and credit them with narrow identitarian interests? Is this situation not simply reproduced in the recent efforts to restore the universal through fiat, whether through the imaginary finesse of Habermasian rationality or notions of the common good that prioritize a racially cleansed notion of class? Is the point of the new rhetorics of unity not simply to 'include' through domestication and

subordination precisely those movements that formed in part in opposition to such domestication and subordination, showing that the proponents of the 'common good' have failed to read the history that has made this conflict possible?

What the resurgent orthodoxy may resent about new social movements is precisely the vitality that such movement are enjoying. Paradoxically, the very movements that continue to keep the Left alive are credited with its paralysis. Although I would agree that a narrowly identitarian construal of such movements leads to a narrowing of the political field, *there is no reason to assume that such social movements are reducible to their identitarian formations*. The problem of unity or, more modestly, of solidarity cannot be resolved through the transcendence or obliteration of this field, and certainly not through the vain promise of retrieving a unity wrought through exclusions, one that reinstates subordination as the condition of its own possibility. The only possible unity will not be the synthesis of a set of conflicts, but will be *a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways*, a practice of contestation that demands that these movements articulate their goals under the pressure of each other without therefore exactly becoming each other.

This is not quite the chain of equivalence proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, although it does sustain important relations to it.<sup>3</sup> New political formations do not stand in an analogical relation with one another, as if they were discrete and differentiated entities. They are overlapping, mutually determining, and convergent fields of politicization. In fact, most promising are those moments in which one social movement comes to find its condition of possibility in another. Here difference is not simply the *external* differences between movements, understood as that which differentiates them from one another but, rather, *the self-difference of movement itself*, a constitutive rupture that makes movements possible on non-identitarian grounds, that installs a certain mobilizing conflict as the basis of politicization. Factionalization, understood as the process whereby one identity excludes another in order to fortify its own unity and coherence, makes the mistake of locating the problem of difference as that which emerges *between* one identity and another; but difference is the condition of possibility of identity or, rather, its constitutive limit: what makes its articulation possible at the same time what makes any final or closed articulation possible.

Within the academy, the effort to separate race studies from sexuality studies from gender studies marks various needs for autonomous articulation, but it also invariably produces a set of important, painful, and promising confrontations that expose the ultimate limits to any such autonomy: the politics of sexuality within African-American studies, the politics of race within queer studies, within the study of class, within feminism, the question of misogyny within any of the above, the question of homophobia within feminism, to name a few. This may seem to be precisely the tedium of identitarian struggles that a new, more inclusive Left hopes to transcend. And yet, for a politics of 'inclusion' to mean

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<sup>3</sup> See my dialogue on equality with Ernesto Laclau, in *Diacritics*, no. 27, Spring 1997, pp. 3-12.

something other than the redomestication and resubordination of such differences, it will have to develop a sense of alliance in the course of a new form of conflictual encounter. When new social movements are cast as so many 'particularisms' in search of an overarching universal, it will be necessary to ask how the rubric of a universal itself only became possible through the erasure of the prior workings of social power. This is not to say that universals are impossible, but rather that they become possible only through an abstraction from its location in power that will always be falsifying and territorializing, and calls to be resisted at every level. Whatever universal becomes possible—and it may be that universals only become possible for a time, 'flashing up' in Benjamin's sense—will be the result of a difficult labour of translation in which social movements offer up their points of convergence against a background of ongoing social contestation.

To fault new social movements for their vitality, as some have done, is precisely to refuse to understand that any future for the Left will have to build on the basis of movements that compel democratic participation, and that any effort to impose unity upon such movements from the outside will be rejected once again as a form of vanguardism dedicated to the production of hierarchy and dissension, producing the very factionalization that it asserts is coming from outside itself.

### Queer Politics and the Disparagement of the Cultural

The nostalgia for a false and exclusionary unity is linked to the disparagement of the cultural, and with a renewed sexual and social conservatism on the Left. Sometimes this takes the form of trying to resubordinate race to class, failing to consider what Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall have argued, that race may be one modality in which class is lived. In this way, race and class are rendered distinct analytically only to realize that the analysis of the one cannot proceed without the analysis of the other. A different dynamic is at work in relation to sexuality, and I propose to concentrate the rest of this essay to that issue. Considered inessential to what is most pressing in material life, *queer politics is regularly figured by the orthodoxy as the cultural extreme of politicization.*

Whereas class and race struggles are understood as pervasively economic, and feminist struggles to be sometimes economic and sometimes cultural, queer struggles are understood not only to be cultural struggles, but to typify the 'merely cultural' form that contemporary social movements have assumed. Consider the recent work of a colleague, Nancy Fraser, whose views are in no way orthodox, and who has, on the contrary, sought to find ways to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the interlocking relationship of emancipatory struggles of various kinds. I turn to her work in part because the assumption I worry about can be found there, and because she and I have a history of friendly argumentation, one which I trust will continue from here as a productive exchange—which is also the reason why she remains the only person I agree to name in this essay.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser, eds, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, New York 1994.

In Fraser's recent book, *Justice Interruptus*, she rightly notes that 'in the United States today, the expression 'identity politics' is increasingly used as a derogatory term for feminism, anti-racism, and anti-heterosexism.'<sup>5</sup> She insists that such movements have everything to do with social justice, and argues that any left movement must respond to their challenges. Nevertheless, she reproduces the division that locates certain oppressions as part of political economy, and relegates others to the exclusively cultural sphere. Positing a spectrum that spans political economy and culture, she situates lesbian and gay struggles at the cultural end of this political spectrum. Homophobia, she argues, has no roots in political economy, because homosexuals occupy no distinctive position in the division of labour, are distributed throughout the class structure, and do not constitute an exploited class: 'the injustice they suffer is quintessentially a matter of recognition', thus making their struggles into a matter of cultural recognition, rather than a material oppression.<sup>6</sup>

Why would a movement concerned to criticize and transform the ways in which sexuality is socially regulated not be understood as central to the functioning of political economy? Indeed, that this critique and transformation is central to the project of materialism was the trenchant point made by socialist feminists and those interested in the convergence of Marxism and psychoanalysis in the 1970s and 1980s, and was clearly inaugurated by Engels and Marx with their own insistence that 'mode of production' needed to include forms of social association. In *The German Ideology* (1846), Marx famously wrote, 'men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*.'<sup>7</sup> Although Marx vacillates between regarding procreation as a natural and a social relationship, he makes clear not only that a mode of production is always combined with a mode of cooperation, but that, importantly, 'a mode of production is itself a "productive force".'<sup>8</sup> Engels clearly expands upon this argument in *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), and offers there a formulation that became, for a time, perhaps the most widely cited quotation in socialist-feminist scholarship:

According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, many of the feminist arguments during that time sought not

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<sup>5</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interrupts*, London 1997.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18; for another statement of these views, see Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age', *NLR* 212, July-August 1995, pp. 68-93.

<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York 1978, p. 157.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Engels, 'Preface to the First Edition', *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, New York 1981, pp. 71-2. Engels continues in this paragraph to note how societies develop from a stage in which they are dominated by kinship to ones in which

only to identify the family as part of the mode of production, but to show how the very production of gender had to be understood as part of the 'production of human beings themselves,' according to norms that reproduced the heterosexually normative family. Thus, psychoanalysis entered as one way of showing how kinship operated to reproduce persons in social forms that served the interest of capital. Although some participants in those debates ceded the territory of kinship to Lévi-Strauss and to that theory's Lacanian successors, still others maintained that a specifically social account of the family was needed to explain the sexual division of labour and the gendered reproduction of the worker. Essential to the socialist-feminist position of the time was precisely the view that the family is not a natural given, and that as a specific social arrangement of kin functions, it remained historically contingent and, in principle, transformable. The scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s sought to establish the sphere of sexual reproduction as part of the material conditions of life, a proper and constitutive feature of political economy. It also sought to show how the reproduction of gendered persons, of 'men' and 'women' depended on the social regulation of the family and, indeed, on the reproduction of the heterosexual family as a site for the reproduction of heterosexual persons, fit for entry into the family as social form. Indeed, the presumption became, in the work of Gayle Rubin and others, that the normative reproduction of gender was essential to the reproduction of heterosexuality and the family. Thus, the sexual division of labour could not be understood apart from the reproduction of gendered persons, and psychoanalysis usually entered as a way of understanding the psychic trace of that social organization, and the ways in which that regulation appeared in sexual desires. Thus, the regulation of sexuality was systematically tied to *the mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy.

### Material Exclusion

Note that both 'gender' and 'sexuality' become part of 'material life' not only because of the way in which it serves the sexual division of labour, but also because normative gender serves the reproduction of the normative family. The point here is that, contra Fraser, struggles to transform the social field of sexuality do not become central to political economy to the extent that they can be directly tied to questions of unpaid and exploited labour, but also because they cannot be understood without an expansion of the 'economic' sphere itself to include both the reproduction of goods as well as the social reproduction of persons. Given the socialist-feminist effort to understand how the reproduction of persons and the social regulation of sexuality were part of the very

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they are dominated by the state, and in this latter development, kinship becomes subsumed by the state. It is interesting to note the convergence of this argument with Foucault's remarks in *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1* (trans. Robert Hurley, New York 1978), where he argues the following: 'Particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, Western societies created and deployed a new apparatus which was superimposed upon the previous one.' (p. 106) Kinship determines sexuality in the ostensibly earlier form, one which Foucault characterizes as 'a system of alliance' (p. 107), and continues to support a newer organization of 'sexuality' even as the latter maintains some autonomy from that earlier one. For an extended discussion of this relation, see the interview I conducted with Gayle Rubin, 'Sexual Traffic', in *differences*, vol. 6, nos. 2-3, Summer-Fall 1994, pp. 62-97.

process of production and, hence, part of the ‘materialist conception’ of political economy, how is it that suddenly when the focus of critical analysis turns from the question of how normative sexuality is reproduced to the queer question of how that very normativity is confounded by the non-normative sexualities it harbours within its own terms—as well as the sexualities that thrive and suffer outside those terms—that the link between such an analysis and the mode of production is suddenly dropped? Is it only a matter of cultural recognition when non-normative sexualities are marginalized and debased? And is it possible to distinguish, even analytically, between a lack of cultural recognition and a material oppression, when the very definition of legal ‘personhood’ is rigorously circumscribed by cultural norms that are indissociable from their material effects? For example, in those instances in which lesbians and gays are excluded from state-sanctioned notions of the family (which is, according to both tax and property law, an economic unit); stopped at the border, deemed inadmissible to citizenship; selectively denied the status of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; are denied the right (as members of the military) to speak his or her desire; or are deauthorized by law to make emergency medical decisions about one’s dying lover, to receive the property of one’s dead lover, to receive from the hospital the body of one’s dead lover—do not these examples mark the ‘holy family’ once again constraining the routes by which property interests are regulated and distributed? Is this simply the circulation of vilifying cultural attitudes or do such disenfranchisements mark a specific operation of the sexual and gendered distribution of legal and economic entitlements?

If one continues to take the mode of production as the defining structure of political economy, then surely it would make no sense for feminists to dismiss the hard-won insight that sexuality must be understood as part of that mode of production. But even if one takes the ‘redistribution’ of rights and goods as the defining moment of political economy, as Fraser does, how is it we might fail to recognize how these operations of homophobia are central to the functioning of political economy? Given the distribution of health care in this country, is it really possible to say that gay people do not constitute a differential ‘class’, considering how the profit-driven organization of health care and pharmaceuticals impose differential burdens on those who live with HIV and AIDS? How are we to understand the production of the HIV population as a class of permanent debtors? Do poverty rates among lesbians not call to be thought in relation to the normative heterosexuality of the economy?

### The Mode of Sexual Production

In *Justice Interrupts*, although Fraser acknowledges that ‘gender’ is ‘a basic structuring principle of the political economy’, the reason she offers is that it structures unpaid reproductive work.<sup>10</sup> Although she makes very clear her support for lesbian and gay emancipatory struggles, and her opposition to homophobia, she does not pursue radically enough the implications of this support for the conceptualization she offers. She does not ask how the sphere of reproduction that guarantees the place of ‘gen-

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<sup>10</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, p. 19.

der' within political economy is circumscribed by sexual regulation, that is, through what mandatory exclusions the sphere of reproduction becomes delineated and naturalized. Is there any way to analyze how normative heterosexuality and its 'genders' are produced within the sphere of reproduction without noting the compulsory ways in which homosexuality and bisexuality, as well as transgender, are *produced* as the sexually 'abject', and extending the mode of production to account for precisely this social mechanism of regulation? It would be a mistake to understand such productions as 'merely cultural' if they are essential to the functioning of the sexual order of political economy, that is, constituting a fundamental threat to its very workability. The economic, tied to the reproductive, is necessarily linked to the reproduction of heterosexuality. It is not that non-heterosexual forms of sexuality are simply left out, but that their suppression is essential to the operation of that prior normativity. This is not simply a question of certain people suffering a lack of cultural recognition by others but, rather, a specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalization of the family.<sup>11</sup>

Why, then, considering this fundamental place for sexuality in the thinking of production and distribution, would sexuality emerge as the exemplary figure for the 'cultural' within recent forms of Marxist and neo-Marxist argument?<sup>12</sup> How quickly—and sometimes unwittingly—the distinction between the material and the cultural is remanufactured when it assists in the drawing of the lines that jettison sexuality from the sphere of fundamental political structure! This suggests that the distinction is not a conceptual foundation, for it rests on a selective amnesia of the history of Marxism itself. After all, in addition to the structuralist supplementation of Marx, one finds the distinction between culture and material life entered into crisis from any number of different quarters. Marx himself argued that pre-capitalist economic formations could not be fully extricated from the cultural and symbolic worlds in which they were embedded, and this thesis has driven the important work in economic anthropology—Marshall Sahlins, Karl Polanyi, Henry Pearson. This work expands and refines Marx's thesis in *Precapitalist Economic Formations* that seeks to explain how the cultural and the economic themselves became established as separable spheres—indeed, how the institution of the economic as a separate sphere is the consequence of an operation of abstraction initiated by capital. Marx himself was aware that such distinctions are the effect and culmination of the division of labour, and cannot, therefore, be excluded from its structure: in *The German Ideology*, he writes, for example, that 'the division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears.'<sup>13</sup> This in part drives Althusser's effort to rethink the division of labour in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in

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<sup>11</sup> Moreover, although Fraser distinguishes between matters of cultural recognition and political economy, it is important to remember that only by entering into exchange does one become 'recognizable' and that recognition itself is a form and precondition of exchange.

<sup>12</sup> The place of sexuality in 'exchange' has been the focus of much of the work that sought to reconcile Lévi-Strauss's notion of kinship, based on normative accounts of heterosexual exchange within exogamic social structure, with Marxist notions of exchange.

<sup>13</sup> Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 51.

terms of the reproduction of labour power and, most saliently, ‘the forms of ideological subjection that [provide] for the reproduction of the skills of labour power’.<sup>14</sup> This salience of the ideological in the reproduction of persons culminates in Althusser’s groundbreaking argument that ‘an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.’<sup>15</sup> Thus, even if homophobia were conceived only as a cultural attitude, that attitude should still be located in the apparatus and practice of its institutionalization.

### Cultural and Material Gifts

Within feminist theory, the turn to Lévi-Strauss imported the analysis of the exchange of women into the Marxist critique of the family, and assumed for a time a paradigmatic status for the thinking of both gender and sexuality. Moreover, it was this important and problematic move that unsettled the stability of the distinction between cultural and material life. If women were a ‘gift’, according to Lévi-Strauss, then they entered into the process of exchange in ways that could be reduced to neither a cultural or a material sphere. According to Marcel Mauss, whose theory of the gift was appropriated by Lévi-Strauss, the gift establishes the limits of materialism. For Mauss, the economic is only one part of an exchange that assumes various cultural forms, and the relation between economic and cultural spheres is not as distinct as they have come to be. Although Mauss does not credit capitalism with the distinction between cultural and material life, he does offer an analysis that faults current forms of exchange for forms of brute materialism: ‘originally the *res* need not have been the crude, merely tangible thing, the simple, passive object of transaction that it has become.’<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, the *res* is understood to be the site for the convergence of a set of relationships. Similarly, the ‘person’ is not primarily separable from his or her ‘objects’: exchange consolidates or threatens social bonds.

Lévi-Strauss showed that this relation of exchange was not only cultural and economic at once, but made the distinction inappropriate and unstable: exchange produces a set of social relations, communicates a cultural or symbolic value—the coupling of which becomes salient for Lacanian departures from Lévi-Strauss—and secures routes of distribution and consumption. If the regulation of sexual exchange makes the distinction between the cultural and the economic difficult, if not impossible, to draw, then what are the consequences for a radical transformation of the lines of those exchange as they exceed and confound the ostensibly elementary structures of kinship? Would the distinction between the economic and the cultural become any easier to make if non-normative and counter-normative sexual exchange come to constitute the excessive circuitry of the gift in relation to kinship? The question is not whether sexual politics thus belong to the cultural or to the economic, but how the very practices of sexual exchange confound the distinction between the two spheres.

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, New York 1971, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>16</sup> Marcel Mauss, *An Essay on the Gift*, trans. W.D. Halls, New York 1990, p. 50.

Indeed, queer studies and lesbian and gay studies in their overlapping efforts have sought to challenge the presumed link between kinship and sexual reproduction, as well as the link between sexual reproduction, and sexuality. One might see in queer studies an important return to the Marxist critique of the family, based on a mobilizing insight into a *socially contingent and socially transformable account of kinship*, which takes its distance from the universalizing pathos of the Lévi-Straussian and Lacanian schemes that become paradigmatic for some forms of feminist theorizing. Although Lévi-Strauss's theory helped to show how heterosexual normativity produced gender in the service of its own self-augmentation, it could not provide the critical tools to show a way out of its impasses. The compulsory model of sexual exchange reproduces not only a sexuality constrained by reproduction, but a naturalized notion of 'sex' for which the role in reproduction is central. To the extent that naturalized sexes function to secure the heterosexual dyad as the holy structure of sexuality, they continue to underwrite kinship, legal and economic entitlement, and those practices that delimit what will be a socially recognizable person. To insist that the social forms of sexuality cannot only exceed but confound heterosexual kinship arrangements as well as reproduction is also to argue that what qualifies as a person and a sex will be radically altered—an argument that is not merely cultural, but which confirms the place of sexual regulation as a mode of producing the subject.

Are we perhaps witnessing a scholarly effort to ameliorate the political force of queer struggles by refusing to see the fundamental shift in the conceptualizing and institutionalizing of social relations that they demand? Is the association of the sexual with the cultural, and the concomitant effort to render autonomous and degrade the cultural sphere, the unthinking response to a sexual degradation perceived to be happening within the cultural sphere, an effort to colonize and contain homosexuality in and as the cultural itself?

The neoconservatism within the Left that seeks to discount the cultural can only always be another cultural intervention, whatever else it is. And yet the tactical manipulation of the distinction between cultural and economic to reinstitute the discredited notion of secondary oppression will only reprove the resistance to the imposition of unity, strengthening the suspicion that unity is only purchased through violent excision. Indeed, I would add that the understanding of this violence has compelled the affiliation with poststructuralism on the Left, that is, a way of reading that lets us understand what must be cut out from a concept of unity in order for it to gain the appearance of necessity and coherence, and to insist that difference remain constitutive of any struggle. This refusal to become resubordinated to a unity that caricatures, demeans, and domesticates difference becomes the basis for a more expansive and dynamic political impulse. This resistance to 'unity' carries with it the cipher of democratic promise on the Left.

## *Heterosexism, Misrecognition and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler*

Judith Butler's essay is welcome on several counts.<sup>1</sup> It returns us to deep and important questions in social theory that have gone undiscussed for some time. And it links a reflection on such questions to a diagnosis of the troubled state of the Left in the current political conjuncture. Most important, however, is Butler's commitment in this essay to identifying, and retrieving, the genuinely valuable aspects of Marxism and the socialist feminism of the 1970s, which current intellectual and political fashions conspire to repress. Also exemplary is her interest in integrating the best insights of those paradigms with defensible strands of more recent paradigms, including discourse analysis, cultural studies, and poststructuralism, in order to understand contemporary capitalism. These are commitments I wholeheartedly share.

Nevertheless, Butler and I disagree. Our most important disagreements—and the most fruitful for discussion—turn on how precisely to realize this shared project of reclamation and integration. We hold divergent views of what precisely constitutes the enduring legacy of Marxism and the still relevant insights of socialist feminism. We also diverge in our respective assessments of the merits of various poststructuralist currents and in our respective views of how these can best inform social theorizing that retains a materialist dimension. Finally, we disagree about the nature of contemporary capitalism.

In order to clear the way for a fruitful discussion of these issues, I want to begin by disposing quickly of what I take to be the red herrings. Butler conjoins her discussion of my book, *Justice Interruptus*, to a critique of a group of unnamed interlocutors whom she calls 'neoconservative Marxists'. Whatever the merits of her critique of this group—a question I shall return to later—her strategy of using it to frame a discussion of my work is unfortunate. Despite her disclaimers to the contrary, readers could draw the erroneous conclusion that I share the 'neoconservative Marxist' dismissal of the oppression of gays and lesbians as 'merely cultural', hence as secondary, derivative, or even trivial. They might assume that I see sexual oppression as less fundamental, material, and real than

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for helpful comments from Laura Kipnis, Linda Nicholson, and Eli Zaretsky. This essay was originally published in *Social Text*, nos. 52–53, Fall/Winter 1997, pp. 279–89. It is a reply to Judith Butler's essay, 'Merely Cultural', published in *Social Text* and in *NLR* 227.

class oppression and that I wish to subordinate struggles against heterosexism to struggles against workers' exploitation. Finding me thus lumped together with 'sexually conservative orthodox' Marxists, readers could even conclude that I view gay and lesbian movements as unjustified particularisms that have split the Left and on whom I wish forcibly to impose left unity.

I, of course, believe nothing of the sort. On the contrary, in *Justice Interruptus* I have analyzed the current decoupling of so-called identity politics from class politics, the cultural Left from the social Left, as a constitutive feature of the 'postsocialist' condition.<sup>2</sup> Seeking to overcome these splits and to articulate the basis for a united front of the Left, I have proposed a theoretical framework that eschews orthodox distinctions between 'base' and 'superstructure', 'primary' and 'secondary' oppressions, and that challenges the primacy of the economic. In the process, I have posited both the conceptual irreducibility of heterosexist oppression and the moral legitimacy of gay and lesbian claims.

## Two Kinds of Harm

Central to my framework is a normative distinction between injustices of distribution and injustices of recognition. Far from derogating the latter as 'merely cultural', the point is to conceptualize two equally primary, serious, and real kinds of harm that any morally defensible social order must eradicate. To be misrecognized, in my view, is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a *full partner* in social interaction and prevented from *participating as a peer* in social life—not as a consequence of a distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one's fair share of resources or 'primary goods'), but rather as a consequence of *institutionalized* patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. When such patterns of disrespect and disesteem are institutionalized, for example, in law, social welfare, medicine, and/or popular culture, they impede parity of participation, just as surely as do distributive inequities. The resulting harm is in either case all too real.

In my conception, therefore, misrecognition is an institutionalized social relation, not a psychological state. In essence a status injury, it is analytically distinct from, and conceptually irreducible to, the injustice of maldistribution, although it *may* be accompanied by the latter. Whether misrecognition converts into maldistribution, and vice versa, depends on the nature of the social formation in question. In pre-capitalist, pre-state societies, for example, where status simply *is* the overarching principle of distribution and where the status order and the class hierarchy are therefore fused, misrecognition simply entails maldistribution. In capitalist societies, in contrast, where the institutionalization of specialized economic relations permits the relative uncoupling of economic distribu-

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<sup>2</sup> See especially the introduction and chapter 1, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Postsocialist" Age', in Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, New York 1997. 'From Redistribution to Recognition?' was also published in NLR 212.

tion from structures of prestige, and where status and class can therefore diverge, misrecognition and maldistribution are not fully mutually convertible. Whether and to what extent they coincide today is a question I shall consider below.

Normatively, however, the key point is this: misrecognition constitutes a fundamental injustice, whether accompanied by maldistribution or not. And the point has political consequences. It is not necessary to show that a given instance of misrecognition brings with it maldistribution in order to certify the claim to redress it as a genuine claim for social justice. The point holds for heterosexist misrecognition, which involves the institutionalization of sexual norms and interpretations that deny participatory parity to gays and lesbians. Opponents of heterosexism need not labour to translate claims of sexual status injury into claims of class deprivation in order to vindicate the former. Nor need they show that their struggles threaten capitalism in order to prove they are just.

In my account, then, injustices of misrecognition are fully as serious as distributive injustices. And they cannot be reduced to the latter. Thus, far from claiming that cultural harms are superstructural reflections of economic harms, I have proposed an analysis in which the two sorts of harms are co-fundamental and conceptually irreducible. From my perspective, therefore, it makes no sense to say that heterosexist misrecognition is 'merely cultural'. That locution presupposes the very sort of base-superstructure model, the very sort of economic monism, that my framework aims to displace.

### Disentangling Theory and Politics

Butler, in sum, has mistaken what is actually a quasi-Weberian dualism of status and class for an orthodox Marxian economic monism. Erroneously assuming that to distinguish redistribution from recognition is necessarily to devalue recognition, she treats my normative distinction as a 'tactic' aimed at derogating gay and lesbian struggles and imposing a new 'orthodoxy'. Contra Butler, I mean to defend the distinction, while disclaiming the tactic. To get at the real issues between us, therefore, requires decoupling two questions that are too closely identified in her discussion. The first is a political question concerning the depth and seriousness of heterosexist oppression; on this, I have argued, we do not disagree. The second is a theoretical question concerning the conceptual status of what Butler misleadingly calls 'the material/cultural distinction' as it relates to the analysis of heterosexism and the nature of capitalist society; here lie our real disagreements.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In what follows I shall leave aside a problem with Butler's rendition of the argument of *Justice Interruptus*. She presents me as arguing categorically that heterosexism is a pure injustice of misrecognition, unalloyed by maldistribution. In fact, I discussed the issue hypothetically in the mode of a thought experiment. Aiming to disclose the distinctive logics of redistribution claims and recognition claims respectively, I invited readers to imagine a conceptual spectrum of oppressed collectivities, ranging from ideal-typical victims of pure maldistribution at one end to ideal-typical victims of pure misrecognition at the other end, with hybrid or 'bivalent' cases in the middle. In this hypothetical spirit, I sketched a conception of a 'despised sexuality' as a concrete approximation of the ideal type at the misrecognition end of the spectrum, while explicitly noting that this conception of sexuality was controversial and while leaving open the question of whether and

Let me begin unpacking these real disagreements by schematically recapping Butler's critique. As I read it, she offers three principal theoretical arguments against my redistribution/recognition framework. First, she contends that because gays and lesbians suffer material, economic harms, their oppression is not properly categorized as misrecognition. Second, invoking the important 1970s socialist-feminist insight that the family is part of the mode of production, she contends that the heteronormative regulation of sexuality is 'central to the functioning of the political economy' and that contemporary struggles against that regulation 'threaten the workability' of the capitalist system. Third, after revisiting anthropological accounts of pre-capitalist exchange, she contends that the distinction between the material and the cultural is 'unstable', a 'theoretical anachronism' to be eschewed in social theory. None of these arguments is persuasive, in my view, largely because none affords an adequately differentiated and historically situated view of modern capitalist society. Let me consider the three arguments in turn.

Butler's first argument appeals to some indisputable facts about the harms currently suffered by gays and lesbians. Far from being 'merely symbolic', these harms include serious economic disadvantages with undeniable material effects. In the United States today, for example, gays and lesbians can be summarily dismissed from civilian employment and military service, are denied a broad range of family-based social welfare benefits, are disproportionately burdened with medical costs, and are disadvantaged in tax and inheritance law. Equally material are the effects of the fact that homosexuals lack the full range of constitutional rights and protections enjoyed by heterosexuals. In many jurisdictions, they can be prosecuted for consensual sex; and in many more, they can be assaulted with impunity. It follows, claims Butler, from the economic and material character of these liabilities, that the 'misrecognition' analysis of heterosexism is mistaken.

Butler's premise is true, of course, but her conclusion does not follow. She assumes that injustices of misrecognition must be immaterial and non-economic. Leaving aside for the moment her conflation of the material with the economic, her assumption is on both counts mistaken. Consider first the issue of materiality. In my conception, injustices of misrecognition are just as material as injustices of maldistribution. To be sure, the first are rooted in social patterns of interpretation, evaluation,

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how closely it corresponded to the actually existing homosexual collectivities struggling for justice in the real world. Thus, my 'misrecognition' analysis of heterosexism in *Justice Interruptus* is far more qualified than Butler lets on. Recently, moreover, I have argued that for practical purposes virtually all real-world oppressed collectivities are 'bivalent'. Virtually all, that is, have both an economic and a status component; virtually all, therefore, suffer both maldistribution and misrecognition in forms where neither of these injustices is a mere indirect effect of the other, but where each has some independent weight. Nevertheless, not all are bivalent in the same way, nor to the same degree. Some axes of oppression tilt more heavily toward the distribution end of the spectrum, others incline more to the recognition end, while still others cluster closer to the centre. On this account, heterosexism, while consisting in part in maldistribution, consists primarily in injustices of misrecognition and is rooted predominantly in a status order that constructs homosexuality as devalued and that institutes it as a despised sexuality. For the original argument, see *Justice Interruptus*, ch. 1. For the subsequent refinement, see Nancy Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics. Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 18, Salt Lake City, forthcoming.

and communication, hence, if you like, in the symbolic order. But this does not mean they are 'merely' symbolic. On the contrary, the norms, significations, and constructions of personhood that impede women, racialized peoples, and/or gays and lesbians from parity of participation in social life are materially instantiated—in institutions and social practices, in social action and embodied habitus, and yes, in ideological state apparatuses. Far from occupying some wispy, ethereal realm, they are material in their existence and effects.

From my perspective, therefore, the material harms cited by Butler constitute paradigmatic cases of misrecognition. They reflect the institutionalization of heterosexist meanings, norms, and constructions of personhood in such arenas as constitutional law, medicine, immigration and naturalization policy, federal and state tax codes, social welfare and employment policy, equal opportunity legislation, and the like. What is institutionalized, moreover, as Butler herself notes, are cultural constructions of entitlement and personhood that produce homosexual subjects as abjects. This, to repeat, is the essence of misrecognition: the *material* construction through the institutionalization of cultural norms of a class of devalued persons who are impeded from participatory parity.

### Identifying the Primary Harm

If the harms arising from misrecognition can thus be material, can they also be economic? It is true, as Butler notes, and as I myself expressly noted in *Justice Interruptus*, that some forms of heterosexism inflict economic harms on gays and lesbians. The question is how to interpret them.<sup>4</sup> One possibility is to see these economic harms as direct expressions of the economic structure of society—much like Marxists see the exploitation of workers. In this interpretation, which Butler appears to endorse, the economic liabilities of homosexuals would be hard-wired in the relations of production. To remedy them would require transforming those relations. Another possibility, favoured by me, is to see the economic harms of heterosexism as indirect (mal)distributive consequences of the more fundamental injustice of misrecognition. In this interpretation, which I proposed in *Justice Interruptus*, the roots of economic heterosexism would be the 'relations of recognition': an institutionalized pattern of interpretation and valuation that constructs heterosexuality as normative and homosexuality as deviant, thereby denying participatory parity to gays and lesbians. Change the relations of recognition and the maldistribution would disappear.

This conflict of interpretations raises deep and difficult questions. Is it necessary to transform the economic structure of contemporary capitalism in order to redress the economic liabilities of homosexuals? What precisely is meant by the 'economic structure'? Should one conceive the heteronormative regulation of sexuality as belonging directly to the

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<sup>4</sup> In general, one should distinguish several questions here: 1) the nature of the injustices in question, 2) their ultimate causes, 3) the contemporary causal mechanisms that reproduce them, and 4) their remedies. I am grateful to Erik Olin Wright for this point (private communication, 1997).

capitalist economy? Or is it better seen as belonging to a status order that is differentiated from, and complexly related to, the economic structure? More generally, do the relations of recognition in late-capitalist society coincide with economic relations? Or do the institutional differentiations of modern capitalism introduce gaps between status and class?

To pursue these questions, let us examine Butler's second argument. Here she invokes the 1970s socialist-feminist insight that the family is part of the mode of production to support the thesis that the heteronormative regulation of sexuality is 'central to the functioning of the political economy'. It follows, claims Butler, that contemporary struggles against that regulation 'threaten the workability' of the capitalist system.

Actually, two different variants of the argument are discernible here, one definitional, the other functionalist. According to the first variant, (hetero)sexual regulation belongs by definition to the economic structure. The economic structure simply *is* the entire set of social mechanisms and institutions that (re)produce persons and goods. By definition, then, the family is part of this structure, being the primary site for the reproduction of persons. So, by extension, is the gender order, which standardizes the family's 'products' to conform to one of two—and only two—mutually exclusive, seemingly natural kinds of persons: men and women. The gender order, in turn, is held to presuppose a mode of sexual regulation that produces and naturalizes heterosexuality, while simultaneously producing homosexuality as abject. The conclusion drawn by Butler is that the heteronormative regulation of sexuality is part of the economic structure by definition, *despite the fact that it structures neither the social division of labour nor the mode of exploitation of labour-power in capitalist society.*

## Sexuality and Surplus Value

This definitional argument has an air of Olympian indifference to history. As a result, it risks accomplishing too much. Stipulating that the mode of sexual regulation belongs to the economic structure by definition—even in the absence of any discernible impact on the division of labour or the mode of exploitation—threatens to dehistoricize the idea of the economic structure and drain it of conceptual force. What gets lost is the specificity of capitalist society as a distinctive and highly peculiar form of social organization. This organization creates an order of specialized economic relations that are relatively decoupled from relations of kinship and political authority. Thus, in capitalist society, the link between the mode of sexual regulation, on the one hand, and an order of specialized economic relations whose *raison d'être* is the accumulation of surplus value, on the other, is attenuated. It is far more attenuated, certainly, than in pre-capitalist, pre-state societies, where economic relations are largely adumbrated through the mechanisms of kinship and directly imbricated with sexuality. In the late capitalist society of the twentieth century, moreover, the links between sexuality and surplus-value accumulation have been still further attenuated by the rise of what Eli Zaretsky has called 'personal life': a space of intimate relations, including sexuality, friendship, and love, that can no longer be identified with the family and that is lived as disconnected from the

imperatives of production and reproduction.<sup>5</sup> In general, then, contemporary capitalist society contains ‘gaps’; between the economic order and the kinship order; between the family and personal life; and between the status order and the class hierarchy. In this sort of highly differentiated society, it does not make sense to me to conceive the mode of sexual regulation as simply a part of the economic structure. Nor to conceive queer demands for the recognition of difference as misplaced demands for redistribution.

In another sense, moreover, the definitional argument accomplishes very little. Butler wants to conclude that struggles over sexuality are economic, but that conclusion has been rendered tautologous. If sexual struggles are economic by definition, then they are not economic in the same sense as are struggles over the rate of exploitation. Simply calling both sorts of struggles ‘economic’ risks collapsing the differences, creating the misleading impression that they will synergize automatically and blunting our capacity to pose, and answer, hard but pressing political questions as to how they can be made to synergize when in fact they diverge or conflict.<sup>6</sup>

This brings me to the functionalist variant of Butler’s second argument. Here the claim is that the heteronormative regulation of sexuality is economic—not by definition, but because it is functional to the expansion of surplus value. Capitalism, in other words, ‘needs’ or benefits from compulsory heterosexuality. It follows, according to Butler, that gay and lesbian struggles against heterosexism threaten the ‘workability’ of the capitalist system.

Like all functionalist arguments, this one stands or falls with the empirical relations of cause and effect. Empirically, however, it is highly implausible that gay and lesbian struggles threaten capitalism in its actually existing historical form. That might be the case if homosexuals were constructed as an inferior but useful class of menial labourers whose exploitation was central to the workings of the economy, as African Americans, for example, have been. Then one could say that capital’s interests are served by keeping them ‘in their place’. In fact, however, homosexuals are more often constructed as a group whose very existence is an abomination, much like the Nazi construction of Jews; they should have no ‘place’ in society at all. No wonder, then, that the principal opponents of gay and lesbian rights today are not multinational corporations, but religious and cultural conservatives, whose obsession is status, not profits. In fact, some multinationals—notably American Airlines, Apple Computer and Disney—have elicited the wrath of such conservatives by instituting gay-friendly policies, such as domestic partnership benefits. They apparently see advantages in accommodating gays,

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<sup>5</sup> Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, New York 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, the definitional argument merely pushes the need for distinctions to another level. One might of course say that a political claim can be economic in either of two ways: first, by contesting the production and distribution of economic value, including surplus value; and second, by contesting the production and reproduction of norms, significations, and constructions of personhood, including those concerning sexuality. But I fail to see how this improves on my simpler strategy of restricting the term economic to its capitalist meaning and distinguishing claims for recognition from claims for redistribution.

provided they are not subject to boycotts or else are big enough to withstand them if they are.

Empirically, therefore, contemporary capitalism seems not to require heterosexism. With its gaps between the economic order and the kinship order, and between the family and personal life, capitalist society now permits significant numbers of individuals to live through wage labour outside of heterosexual families. It could permit many more to do so—provided the relations of recognition were changed. Thus we can now answer one of the questions posed earlier: the economic disabilities of homosexuals are better understood as effects of heterosexism in the relations of recognition than as hardwired in the structure of capitalism. The good news is that we do not need to overthrow capitalism in order to remedy those disabilities—although we may well need to overthrow it for other reasons. The bad news is that we need to transform the existing status order and restructure the relations of recognition.

### Functionalism and Theoretical Anachronism

With her functionalist argument, Butler has resurrected what is in my view one of the worst aspects of 1970s Marxism and socialist feminism: the over-totalized view of capitalist society as a monolithic ‘system’ of interlocking structures of oppression that seamlessly reinforce one another. This view misses the ‘gaps’. It has been resoundingly and persuasively subjected to critique from many directions, including the poststructuralist paradigm that Butler endorses and the Weberian one adapted by me. Functionalism systems theory is one strand of 1970s thought that is better forgotten.

The question of what should replace functionalism bears on Butler’s third argument against my redistribution/recognition framework. This argument is deconstructive. Far from insisting that the roots of heterosexism are economic as opposed to ‘merely cultural’, its point is to deconstruct the ‘material/cultural distinction’. That distinction, claims Butler, is ‘unstable’. Important currents of neo-Marxian thought, ranging from Raymond Williams to Althusser, have irretrievably thrown it into ‘crisis’. The knockdown argument comes from the anthropologists, however, notably Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Their respective accounts of ‘the gift’ and ‘the exchange of women’ reveal that ‘primitive’ processes of exchange cannot be assigned to one side or the other of the material/cultural divide. Being both at once, such processes ‘destabilize’ the very distinction. Thus, in invoking the material/cultural distinction today, Butler contends, I have lapsed into a ‘theoretical anachronism’.

This argument is unconvincing for several reasons, the first of which is that it conflates ‘the economic’ with ‘the material’. Butler assumes that my normative distinction between redistribution and recognition rests on an ontological distinction between the material and the cultural. She therefore assumes that to deconstruct the latter distinction is to pull the rug out from under the former. In fact, however, this assumption does not hold. As I noted earlier, injustices of misrecognition are, from my perspective, just as material as injustices of maldistribution. Thus, my normative distinction rests on no ground of ontological difference. What

it does correlate with, in capitalist societies, is a distinction between the economic and the cultural. This, however, is not an ontological distinction but a social-theoretical distinction. The economic/cultural distinction, not the material/cultural distinction, is the real bone of contention between Butler and me, the distinction whose status is at issue.

What, then, is the conceptual status of the economic/cultural distinction? The anthropological arguments do shed light on this matter, in my view, but not in a way that supports Butler's position. As I read them, both Mauss and Lévi-Strauss analyzed processes of exchange in pre-state, pre-capitalist societies, where the master idiom of social relations was kinship. In their accounts, kinship organized not only marriage and sexual relations, but also the labour process and the distribution of goods; relations of authority, reciprocity, and obligation; and symbolic hierarchies of status and prestige. Neither distinctively economic relations nor distinctively cultural relations existed; hence, the economic/cultural distinction was presumably not available to the members of those societies. It does not follow, however, that the distinction is senseless or useless. On the contrary, it can be meaningfully and usefully applied to capitalist societies, which unlike so-called 'primitive' societies *do* contain the social-structural differentiations in question.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it can also be applied by us to societies that lack these differentiations in order to indicate how they differ from ours. One can say, for example, as I just did, that in such societies a single order of social relations handles both economic integration and cultural integration, matters that are relatively decoupled in capitalist society. This, moreover, is precisely the spirit in which I understand Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Whatever their intentions regarding 'the economic' and 'the cultural', we gain less from reading them as having 'destabilized' the distinction than from reading them as having historicized it. The point, in other words, is to historicize a distinction central to modern capitalism—and with it modern capitalism itself—by situating both in the larger anthropological context and thereby revealing their historical specificity.

### The Importance of Historicization

Thus, Butler's 'destabilization' argument goes astray at two crucial points. First, it illegitimately generalizes to capitalist societies a feature specific to pre-capitalist societies: namely, the absence of a social-structural economic/cultural differentiation. Second, it erroneously assumes that to historicize a distinction is to render it nugatory and useless in social theory. In fact, historicization does the contrary. Far from rendering distinctions unstable, it renders their usage more precise.

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<sup>7</sup> In this brief essay I cannot take up the important but difficult question of how the economic/cultural distinction is best applied to the critical theory of contemporary capitalist society. In 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics', however, I discuss this question at length. Rejecting the view of economy and culture as separate spheres, I propose a critical approach that reveals the hidden connections between them. The point, in other words, is to use the distinction against the grain, making visible, and subject to critique, both the cultural subtexts of apparently economic processes and the economic subtexts of apparently cultural processes. Such a 'perspectival dualism' is only possible, of course, once we have the economic/cultural distinction.

From my perspective, then, historicization represents a better approach to social theory than destabilization or deconstruction.<sup>8</sup> It allows us to appreciate the social-structurally differentiated and historically specific character of contemporary capitalist society. In so doing, it also enables us to locate the anti-functionalist moment and possibilities of counter-systemic ‘agency’ and social change. These appear not in an abstract trans-historical property of language, such as ‘resignification’ or ‘performativity’, but rather in the actual contradictory character of specific social relations. With a historically specific, differentiated view of contemporary capitalist society, we can locate the gaps, the non-isomorphisms of status and class, the multiple contradictory interpellations of social subjects, and the multiple complex *moral imperatives* that motivate struggles for social justice.

Seen from this sort of perspective, moreover, the current political conjuncture is not adequately grasped by a diagnosis centred on the putative resurgence of orthodox Marxism. It is better grasped, rather, by one that forthrightly acknowledges, and seeks to overcome, splits in the Left between socialist/social-democratic currents oriented to the politics of redistribution, on the one hand, and multiculturalist currents oriented to the politics of recognition, on the other. The indispensable starting point for such an analysis must be a principled acknowledgement that *both sides have legitimate claims*, which must somehow be harmonized programmatically and made to synergize politically. Social justice today, in sum, requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition; neither alone will suffice.

On this last point, I feel certain, Butler and I agree. Despite her reluctance to invoke the language of social justice, and despite our theoretical disagreements, both of us are committed to reclaiming the best elements of socialist politics and to integrating them with the best elements of the politics of the ‘new social movements’. Likewise, we are both committed to retrieving the genuinely valuable strands of the neo-Marxian critique of capitalism and to integrating them with the most insightful strands of post-Marxian critical theorizing. It is the merit of Butler’s essay and, I would hope, of my own book as well, to have put this project on the agenda once again.

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<sup>8</sup> At another level, however, I mean to endorse deconstruction. It represents an approach to the politics of recognition that is often superior in my view to standard identity politics. A deconstructive politics of recognition is transformative, not affirmative, of existing group identities and differentiations. In this respect, it has affinities with socialism, which I understand as a transformative, as opposed to affirmative, approach to the politics of redistribution. (For an elaboration of this argument, see *Justice Interruptus*, chapter 1.) Nevertheless, I do not find deconstruction useful at the level on which Butler invokes it here: namely, the level of social theory.