

THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION

They have pulled down our forests, cut down our branches, burnt our trunks, but they could not kill our roots.

—The Nahua Banner, Zócalo, Mexico City, Columbus Day 1992



[T]he construction of the false universality . . . infected key concepts and strategies of the analyses and practices of liberalism and Marxism. . . . The new society must be won in the struggle to realize it. The excursion through “difference” involves, potentially, more than a concern on the part of women, peoples of Amer-Indian, African, Hispanic, Asian descents, gays, etc., to tell our own stories and in doing so, to re-affirm ourselves. The important point is *why* the histories and cultures—the modalities of being, the life-worlds—are meaningful and important, *why* they have an integrity worth preserving and struggling for while subjecting them to progressive refinement.

—Lucius T. Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*



“[W]e decided to hold on to separate cultural identities. But we broke the bond between genes and culture, broke it forever. We want there to be no chance of racism again. But we don’t want the melting pot where everybody ends up with thin gruel. We want diversity, for strangeness breeds richness.” “It’s so . . . invented. Artificial. Are there black Irishmen and black Jews and black Italians and black Chinese?”

—Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*



To Habermas’s credit, he has brought existential concerns once again within the legitimate reach of his formal critical and democratic social theory. At the time when I located existential interests in his inno-

vative readings of Kierkegaard, critical theorists did not accentuate this as a major aspect of Habermas's opus. A widely circulated view prevails that Habermas jettisons the methodology of existential phenomenology in the process of adopting the full linguistic-communication turn. Habermas's existential leanings can be, however, traced to his dissertation. Recently he has introduced "ethical-existential discourse" into an architectonic of the linguistic-communication turn. And nowadays, seeking links between autonomy (liberal-moral claims to universal individual rights) and authenticity (communitarian-ethical claims to specific rights of individuals within marginalized groups), or between formal pragmatics and existential philosophy, is a favored undertaking.¹

It is timely to gain from these novel interchanges between existential and critical social theory. Among the key innovations, three important contributions by Habermas's theory stand out. He situates existential categories within an intersubjectivist notion of identity formation. Such categories are expanded through the linguistic-communication turn of philosophical methodology. And they are projected within the regulative ideals of a communication community and a radically democratic republic.²

A novel opening for rejoining existential philosophies of liberation to the ongoing liberal-communitarian debates surfaced, first, with Taylor's "Politics of Recognition" and Habermas's rejoinder, and, second, with Taylor's *Ethics of Authenticity*, Honneth's *Struggle for Recognition*, and Habermas's discourse-theoretical view of moral autonomy. Third, I begin to show how the possibility of dissent marks a distinct existential dimension (with regard to the relations among humans and their finite material resources) of group claims and liberal politics. I will argue for needing to recognize this dimension within local groups and universal procedures alike. New efforts at linking authenticity and autonomy still seem inadequate to articulate this dimension of the need for recognition.³

1. A Discourse-Theoretical Dimension of Recognition

Between Taylor's social ethics (communitarian emphasis) and Habermas's procedural justice (liberal emphasis), there lurks a margin of difference. And this accounts for their two methodological paths to multicultural democracy. On a closer study this disjunction between their communitarian and liberal emphases becomes less significant than their agreements that the monological character of classical liberal individualism is inadequate for an adequate democratic theory. Their communitarian-liberal debate reaches, I hold, a consensus—albeit minimal—on what both do and do not want. With this minimal consensus, democratic theory benefits from Taylor's agreements with Habermas that self-relation is co-orig-

inal with one's communicative competence. It gains from placing Habermas's discursive autonomy and procedural justice in the context of Taylor's view of ethical authenticity as a group claim to contextual justice.

Of interest in this context is Walzer's definition of the difference between "Liberalism 1" and "Liberalism 2." A Liberal 1 employs formal procedures of universal justice. A Liberal 2 adds the criteria of difference which mark contextual justice. The more robust considerations of Liberal 2 provide correctives to the thin Liberal 1. Taylor believes that such correctives get going on the procedural basis provided by "Liberalism 1." Habermas finds "Liberalism 1" likewise wanting. Yet instead of settling with Taylor on *two* principles operating a dialogic tandem between "1" and "2," he reforms "Liberalism 1" by a *single* discourse principle. Habermas disagrees with *any* liberalism insofar as it relies on possessive individualism—its monologicality. Procedural justice is formally liberal; as communicative it needs no ethical correctives. It is at home in the collective identity- and will-formation of discourse ethics. Such features of Habermas's position indicate that to view the Habermas-Taylor exchanges as a genre of the liberal-communitarian debate pure and simple is unhelpful. (E.g., liberals hold out for individual rights and communitarians for the good). Rather, the respective positions of Habermas and Taylor represent two versions of concretion—at times couched by them in existential terms—overcoming classical and modern individualist "Liberalism 1." Taylor's communitarian "Liberalism 2" produces a supplement to "Liberalism 1." Habermas revises *any* liberalism via dialogues of recognition.⁴

My purpose is not to blur their distinct contextualist and procedural views of justice. I wish to show in this first round how Taylor and Habermas share a discourse-theoretical perspective on identity formation, morality and ethics, and politics. My key consists in their agreement on the communicative core of selfhood. Their exchanges on multicultural democracy bring their liberal-communitarian debate and the communicative ethics controversy to a closure.

First, both hold an intersubjectivist notion of identity-formation. Taylor's own critique of the monological derivations of self-identity is not unique. It shares much with Habermas's discursive reading of Kant and Hegel. Says Taylor, "there is no such thing as inward generation, monologically understood. In order to understand the close connection between identity and recognition, we have to take into account a crucial feature of the human condition that has been rendered almost invisible by the overwhelmingly monological bent of mainstream modern philosophy."⁵ Taylor parallels Habermas in a recourse to Mead's social psychology of self- and language-formation. Taylor relies on Wittgenstein's critique of a private language:

People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us—what George Herbert Mead called “significant others.” The genesis of the human mind is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical.⁶

In sum, Taylor and Habermas agree that there are no unsocialized selves with private words for I or Self. Such words and our competence for recognizing and communicating them to ourselves and others are generated in one’s individualization through socialization. This process accounts for a discursive basis of self-relation and social recognition. The very notion of the communicatively competent self cannot emerge without a discourse-theoretical perspective.

Secondly, Taylor and Habermas agree that the linguistic-communications turn in philosophical methodology forms now the starting point for practical discourse. This turn remains decisive for Taylor, unlike for MacIntyre, even if both privilege a communitarian legitimation of claims. Such legitimation might seem incompatible with Habermas’s procedural methodology. However, Taylor retrieves all dominant goods from a post-Hegelian angle. He concedes to a critical modernist that in complex pluralist societies *we* can appropriate ethical self-understanding and communal life (*Sittlichkeit*) only via reflectively available historical contexts. Good is not found as a positive given. Ethical goods *for us* are repeated by historical consciousness. What is received historically must be critically sorted out. Modern critics must do this in order to reach a moral point of view (*Moralität*).⁷

Taylor insists on an anthropological or ontological priority of the good over the right. Can this communitarian emphasis be at all consistent with that postmetaphysical thinking which emphasizes a priority of moral autonomy over uncritical ontology? Habermas begins performatively—with communicative competencies of speakers and hearers individualized through socialization—and not by defining first the ontological or anthropological sources of the self. The pragmatics of human evolution teaches humans to rely on communicative competence, performatively justifying all claims, and not on sedimented traditions. All anthropological and ontological categories undergo “linguistification”: contents inherited from culture pass through social evolution. Existentially speaking, contents are not necessarily discarded but return to *us* through repetition. Unquestioned authorities, those holdovers of kings, are deposed by the popular sovereignty of discursive problematization. The turn to language, or “linguistification,” must hold itself self-critically, not as a new monarch. Dialogue provides a sole medium of appeal for the

discursive legitimation of claims. Taylor's turn to language cannot but assume this linguistification of the good. The reflective retrieval of goods admits a discursively performed genealogy, namely, critical ontology or existential anthropology.⁸

A critical repetition of received goods may be said to employ concrete genealogy. I give a qualified yes to this critically genealogical aspect of an otherwise communitarian methodology: even a post-Hegelian priority of the good ("Liberalism 2") cannot bypass a linguistification. Habermas articulates this insight formally under procedural morality. For Taylor, discursively available goods provide a concrete corrective to the procedural priority of individual rights. Dominant goods, and not procedures, define the self. In a complex world, goods become human sources in a critical and existential, i.e., postmetaphysical, manner. This performative concretization of ethical life dramatizes goods on a stage which Taylor cannot but share with Habermas. Within the linguistified public space, Taylor's goods are never dominant lords, but rather modern existential dramas of new epiphanic languages.⁹

Thirdly, communicative competence completes itself in democratic politics. Taylor and Habermas defend the politics of recognition. Habermas requires a complex but single principle of justice. His procedural principle does not define practical discourse and communicative competence on a metalevel—as if from above or below. Justice is neither a metaphysical nor a transcendental nor a metaprinciple. Justice defines the formal procedures of a concrete communication community and, when viewed politically, of a radically democratic republic.

Taylor argues that Habermas's generalized *procedural justice* could benefit from a complement and a corrective by concrete *differential justice*. As I further elaborate in chapters six and nine, this argument presents a variation of Benhabib's distinction between the generalized and the concrete other as well as the critical gender and race theories, such as Young's, Outlaw's, or West's. Taylor wants us to attend differentially to the concrete others, viz., identity needs of certain groups. This proffers that politics of recognition by which *authentic* needs and rights of concrete others are recognized. Minorities are often assimilated by successful and dominant majorities. An oversight and marginalization of minority positions can occur. Universal rights insufficiently recognize these concrete minority needs.¹⁰

Habermas has come to learn a great deal from gender and race theorists (I say this even though in the following chapters I am critical of what Habermas did not learn). He acknowledges dangers of homogenization and imperialism vis-à-vis marginalized group rights. Such dangers come from any hegemonic, however otherwise legitimate, consensus on global human rights. He implicitly admits as much to his critics: there

might have been such an oversight in his prior, proceduralist, evaluation of the U.N.-sponsored and consensually justified allied intervention in the Persian Gulf War. Procedural justice can be parochially partial to *our* national interests, though these are cloaked by the veneer of cosmopolitan, democratic universalism.

Eurocentrism and the hegemony of Western culture are in the last analysis catchwords for a struggle for recognition on the international level. The Gulf War made us aware of this. Under the shadow of a colonial history that is still vivid in people's minds, the allied intervention was regarded by religiously motivated masses and secularized intellectuals alike as a failure to respect identity and autonomy of the Arabic-Islamic world. The historical relationship between the Occident and the Orient, and especially the relationship of the First to the former Third World, continues to bear the marks of a denial of recognition.¹¹

I do not find Taylor ambiguous on the discursive basis of the politics of recognition. He depicts recognition from an intersubjective, not a possessively individualistic, standpoint. Habermas's suspicion of Taylor's communitarian advocacy of collective minority rights would benefit from beginning with this mutual agreement: Taylor employs a proceduralist basis exactly when he raises ethical claims to group rights. Procedural justice is in no way devalued by this differential justice. From an opposite side, Taylor's critique of "Liberalism 1" only gains by meeting in Habermas's discourse model an ally, not a foe of multicultural democracy. The discourse model of democracy is better fit to collaborate with differential justice than "Liberalism 1." On this point there remains little to separate Habermas from Taylor. Communicative competencies, when institutionalized in democratic procedures, allow for advocacy on behalf of minority rights. Differential justice is not necessarily some principle over, above, or against procedural justice. Cogent reasons for collective rights can be heard precisely when communicative competencies are employed within communicative democracy.¹²

On all three points, I conclude in this first round that there is less ground for fundamental disagreements between Taylor and Habermas than assumed by the received communitarian-liberal debate. Minimally, disagreements should not be sought in what both do or do not want but in how they go about it. Both strive for a degree of critical and concrete multicultural justice found in neither "Liberalism 1" nor uncritically communitarian traditionalism. Within their shared discourse-theoretical view of selfhood, practical philosophy, and politics, one meets two versions of making "Liberalism 1" *Copyrighted Material* in multicultural societies.

Rounds two and three pass beyond the communitarian-liberal debate: what counts as a sufficiently critical practical discourse? What counts as a concretely critical justice both in the group claims to authenticity and in the liberal notions of moral autonomy and procedural politics? What admits dissent both from consensual and ethically or group-anchored forms of recognition?

2. The Need for Authenticity or Autonomy?

How do collectives—struggling for identity and group rights—negotiate their regional claims to ethical authenticity in relation to one another? (Do not conflicting local narratives achieve only a highly contested validity?) How does anyone's universal point of view recognize the generalized claims to moral autonomy in relation to multicultural differences? (Does not proceduralism achieve only a highly formal universal validity?) Posing these questions together: how should one recognize communicative competence—whether under the rubric of authenticity or of autonomy—in existing? The sum question aims at critical justice in its local (individual and group) and universal (autonomous and political) dimensions.

It appears that starting with *authentic* group rights would make one more receptive to local needs than beginning with universal procedures. On this reading, Taylor is the one who elaborates the more concrete sources of selfhood. His communicative version of authenticity can no longer be identified with a nonrational, antisocial, decisionist freedom of a certain *existentialist* or classical liberal individualism. This authenticity may not be identified with one's monological being in the world—a being first safeguarded at an acommunicative outer border of fallen sociality and then delivered to a nationalist destiny. Authenticity must emerge within a critically valued sociality. Taylor expands a communicative selfhood into the politics of recognizing specific identities and multicultural differences. A critical politics of identity and difference relies on the dialogically available sources of selfhood. Authenticity stands for claims by marginalized collectives, not by a solitary self or a heroic nation. Need for authenticity encodes an intersubjective, ethical, and democratic claim to a wholesome form of life of various peoples struggling for justice within multicultural society.¹³

Commencing with *autonomy* and formal justice evinces a strong relativization of strictly communitarian legitimations. On this reading, one must negotiate the debate between Hegelian and Kantian views. Habermas expands a post-Hegelian, communicatively competent category of autonomy into a procedural politics of democratic recognition. As a Kantian, he emphasizes individual rights, albeit safeguarded in democratic

procedures and institutions. As a Hegelian, he defines autonomy by the reciprocal recognition of communicative competencies. Yet claims to autonomy cannot safeguard an uncritical preservation of any cultural species as such.¹⁴

Beginning from these two starting points, Taylor emerges as someone who stresses authenticity, self-realization, and the *eudaimonistic* sources of the self. And Habermas comes to be regarded as someone who privileges moral autonomy and procedural self-determination. This is the crossroad reached by the received view of their communitarian-liberal debate. Yet this contrast now seems a bit simplistic. Both thinkers root communicative competence and justice in degrees of concretion found neither among "Liberals 1" nor among classically oriented, premodern, or uncritical communitarians. Authenticity, freed up from the individualistic and narcissistic culture of authenticity, invites a social complement in postconventional group ethics. This postconventional ethic (*Sittlichkeit*) of authenticity calls for a multicultural form of life well suited for our modern, and perhaps postmodern, cultures.¹⁵

Why not adopt a more dialectical reading of the ethic of authentic self-realization and the morality of autonomous self-determination as found, e.g., more recently in Honneth and Willett? For Honneth, autonomy and authenticity represent two orientations toward shared intersubjective expectations. If groups violate autonomy (moral liberalism), they harm shared intersubjectivity. Still, some deviations from generalized moral norms may be essential (read: ethically authentic) to individual or group self-realization. Life-forms are not always and in all senses conformable to general normative expectations. An ethical perspective on self-esteem (an intersubjective recognition of talents, contributions, one's worthiness) might legitimate an authentic priority of concrete individuals or groups over certain established or dominant figures of autonomy or self-respect (an intersubjective and contextual recognition of a set of moral rights). Significantly, deviations from generalized moral norms can be validated communicatively. They are at times *ethically* essential to our vulnerable and feeling selves. And this ethics complements the primordial material needs, which Willett finds to be crucial to one's tactile sense of social and individualized integrity, and which Honneth identifies as essential to nurturing bodily confidence. Recognizing needs for tactile sociality and bodily integrity, just as recognizing multicultural ethical needs, is necessary for sustaining individual or group identity in difference.¹⁶

Honneth builds from recognizing the need for confident bodily integrity to recognizing the need for ethical self-esteem and moral self-respect; he sees these needs as three distinct intersubjective dimensions of social recognition. Willett, on the other hand, stipulates the need for

tactile sociality at all three levels. For her, there is a degree of a/symmetry from day one of human lives. She draws on the cutting-edge child development research into “correspondences between infant and adult, between face and face.” Even if these correspondences cannot be given direct discursive formulae of something humans share in common, she explains, there is a sense of tactile bonding, e.g., between the mother, who touches or sings to the infant, and the infant, who displays mood-responses to particular tones and touches. Babies are not self-aware, developed, intentional, and existential selves. Yet they exhibit from day one both “a spirited expression of preferences” and “a dislike for what the adult is doing,” i.e., both relationality and “spirited resistance.” In my rejoinder, then, any recognition of the need for ethical self-realization and moral autonomy of adults, and any politics of identity-in-difference, will require harnessing this primordial existentially social situation of the one-day-old. This is so because even as a self-choosing existential individual an adult carries within oneself this tactile and vulnerable layer of social self-in-another. Willett’s “tactile sociality” marks an ontogenetically primordial dimension in infant and adult forms of social recognition. Inspired by this articulation, I redefine and employ throughout the ‘existential’ as a locus of spirited (tactile) a/symmetrical correspondences of refusal-in-relation to others; this locus becomes an adult site for communicatively competent—social yet dissenting—individuals.¹⁷

Now Taylor’s ethics calls, first, for substantive ties to others and, second, to “*other* issues of significance beyond self-choice.”¹⁸ A communicative reading of authenticity already disproves monologism, decisionism, or a quasi-mystical, culturally laden recourse to myths of the folk. Yet Taylor, unlike Honneth, does not think that in modernity one can reconcile self-determining autonomy with self-realizing authenticity. He, thus, needs to retrieve various sources of the self *eudaimonistically*. He yokes the narcissistic culture of authenticity with a *phronetic* horizon of group-authenticity, not with an existential repetition of this horizon. This narcissistic culture, he holds, emerges *ex nihilo*, in an illusion of being wholly self-created. It is the culture of “Liberals 1” or of voluntarist existentialists. Both types engender fragmentary and subjectivist individualities. Taylor’s transcendental critique of this culture meets Habermas’s pragmatic-communicative critique of it only half way:

[A]uthenticity can’t be defended in ways that collapse horizons of significance. . . . Horizons are given. . . . I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. . . . Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands.¹⁹

If one can affirm a shared ground with Habermas and Honneth, it cannot lie in Taylor's stress on self-transcendence beyond human tasks. This 'beyond' bespeaks an emphatically metaphysical aim which is not easily harnessed into the linguistification of uncritical claims to transcendence. I propose to join instead these positions in the discourse-theoretic and existential demand assumed by authenticity: "the need for recognition." And for Taylor authenticity qualitatively conditions one's links to others. These links are facilitated through an ethical recognition, not in a privacy of asocial existence. The competence for authenticity presupposes the communicative self and vice versa. Taylor, thus, reformulates atomistic claims to authenticity: in 'the *ethics of authenticity*' both terms mean something inherently social.²⁰

Taylor is not unique in revising the methodologically subject-centered treatment of authenticity. I reiterate: to Habermas's credit, he retrieved issues of existential self-realization for his communications-theoretic framework. That he does not get very excited about reintroducing methods of existential and social phenomenology within this framework is a moot point. Others have shown how abandoning that authenticity which can be traced to a Cartesian strand of phenomenology or to Heidegger's overcoming of Cartesianism cannot disqualify a critical social theory conceived of as dialectical phenomenology.²¹

Taylor's ethics of authenticity and "individualism as a moral principle" engender the politics of difference. Anchored in a phenomenology of culture, race, and gender, this politics can only further enhance the still merely formal frame of discourse ethics:

[T]he ideal of authenticity incorporates some notions of society, or at least of how people ought to live together. Authenticity is a facet of modern individualism, and it is a feature of all forms of individualism that they don't just emphasize the freedom of the individual but also propose models of society.²²

Taylor raises to himself a question which should also concern Habermas: "we have to ask what is involved in truly recognizing difference." Multicultural society, based on equal recognition of differences, concretizes formal proceduralism. The ethics of authenticity solicits a "substantive agreement" on what constitutes recognition. "Recognizing difference, like self-choosing, enforces a horizon of significance, in this case a shared one." This shared context does not require a homogenization of complexity into some premodern *polis* or modern instrumental melting pot or postmodern pastiche. Multicultural democracy calls for a concrete, embodied, and participatory politics of recognition. "The demands of recognizing difference themselves take us beyond procedural justice."²³

It is less interesting to contrast Habermas and Taylor following Habermas's outline:

On closer examination, however, Taylor's reading [of the democratic constitutional state, for which Michael Walzer provides the terms Liberalism 1 and Liberalism 2] attacks the [liberal] principles themselves and calls into question the individualistic core of the modern conception of freedom.²⁴

I say this with confidence since Taylor rejects only the subjectivist individualism of the culture of authenticity. And he defends another individualism, viz., the one armed with a pragmatic-social sense of the moral principle. The more interesting matter for a comparative reading is, then, the issue that the very same rejection and defense are true for Habermas.

Habermas's objections to Taylor are also raised against Habermas's communications theory: i.e., that it tilts towards collectivist criteria. Discourse ethics waters down—so some Kantian, Aristotelian, and existential critics of it argue—the individual core of moral autonomy or *phronesis* or self-choice. I do not find Taylor's communicatively tailored authenticity to be any more or less individualistic than Habermas's communicatively grasped autonomy. Both build upon a post-Hegelian integration of self-realization and self-determination. They espouse intersubjectivist views of identity, morality, and the politics of recognition.²⁵

The contrast between Taylor's category of authenticity and Habermas's of autonomy must lie, then, in how they reform the modern individualist, viz., the "Liberal 1." This, rather than arguments for the primacy of authenticity or autonomy, explains better their selective emphases. Again, the proper measure of contrast between them are not the now familiar rounds of the communitarian-liberal debate but rather two versions of concretely critical justice.²⁶

Taylor appeals to individualism as a moral principle. The 'moral' differs here from procedural principles. Taylor's principle is really no principle at all but an ethical form of life. Ethical life-forms gather shared contexts of meaning and value. The individual character of Taylor's communitarianism consists, however, not primarily in a neo-Hegelian demand that we anchor the Kantian moral subject in concrete ethical life. Rather, Taylor's defense of the ethics, as opposed to the culture, of authenticity harbors a sort of group-claims-based individualism. This ethics, just as in Outlaw's elaboration of Du Bois's claim on behalf of the conservation of races, pertains to recognizing authentic claims of specific community, culture, or group. Taylor argues that the ethics of authenticity gives us more than a society of fragmented individual atoms. This 'more' projects functional equivalents to a community of shared meaning

and value. The politics of recognition emerging from the latter grounds democracy in the ethically authenticated sociality. Ethical democracy becomes authenticated via political recognition of different, multicultural groups. Taylor's self-realizing, authentic individual (in a pragmatically social expansion of individualism) bespeaks its communal equivalents in group self-realization. Such equivalents secure one's communicative competence in shared forms of life. Moral individualism is expressive of this intersubjective (not subjectivist) ethics. This concrete justice, says Taylor, allows democracy to recognize specific differences politically.²⁷

Habermas anchors individualism in communicative competencies to raise, accept, or reject validity claims. These are shared by socialized individuals. Even if historically traditional forms of socialization have become fragmented, anomie does not rob humans of communicative competence. They have now nothing but a recourse to this competence. Insofar as their competencies are intersubjectively shared—define the very communicative sense of moral autonomy—Habermas puts "Liberalism 1" aside. Morality in discourse ethics is a group and not a monologically individualist competence. For this reason, Habermas rejects the minimalist view of rights of "a truncated Liberalism 1" but does not adopt a new "model that introduces a notion of collective rights that is alien to the system." He democratizes the actualization of private and civil rights in public policies. If basic rights are not only formally universalized but contain the need of their differentiated democratic realization, then one does not need Taylor's added quasi-principle of collective rights, Habermas concludes.²⁸

What about the objection some raise against Habermas or Honneth and which the former raises to Taylor: is a group perspective superimposed over the individual capacity to judge? Taylor holds out for ethical individualism within "Liberalism 2" and Habermas for moral individualism in discourse ethics. Both recognize the need for shared intersubjective grounds in order to socially integrate the morally autonomous and the ethically authenticated individuals.

To sum up, Habermas's moral individualism of rights enshrines a procedural principle of social integration, and it differs from Taylor's individualism as a moral principle. The latter's individualism requires a shared lifeworld. This is significant for evaluating what constitutes a genuine politics of recognizing cultural, gender, or racialized differences. So to blur Taylor's ethical, group-claims-based individualism with Habermas's moral principle as such is misleading. Yet to characterize Taylor's position as does Habermas, namely as a retreat from individual freedom and rights, is also unhelpful. Learning from the nuanced models of bodily, ethical, and moral levels of social recognition (as in Honneth and Willett), we fare better by differentiating Habermas and Taylor two views

of how to reform liberalism, two communicative individualisms, and two dimensions of social integration. In concluding round two of this discussion, I put aside disagreements on whether or not in genuine multicultural democracy only procedural morality possesses the status of moral principle. Habermas agrees at the end of the day that ethics permeates morality. This position preserves a modicum of hope in recognizing the need for a productive complementarity between these two validity domains of communicative ethics: ethical authenticity (the need for an intersubjective recognition of self-esteem in personal and group identities, in turn building from recognizing the need for bodily integrity and tactile sociality) and moral autonomy (the need for an intersubjective recognition of self-respect and a determinate set of rights). If spirited resistance marks a distinct dimension (distinct from correspondences between adults and infants) within tactile relations of one-day olds to their social world, should not dissent mark a distinct dimension in ethical and moral recognition?

3. An Existential Politics of Recognition

Habermas's "ethical neutrality of law and politics" in the constitutional state is problematized by multigendered, multiracial, and generally multicultural dimensions of democracy. These dimensions become apparent when one scrutinizes the strict analytic separation of ethics and morality. The permeation of procedural justice by ethical justice surfaces socially and discursively, not, therefore, because communitarian theoreticians thought this out. The degrees and variable nature of this separation pertain to one's primordial experience of bodily integrity and tactile sociality and to the ethical needs for recognition as persons and groups; they also comprise the concrete, i.e., lived contents of discourse ethics.²⁹

Let me assume an agreement with Habermas and disagreement with Taylor: in this case no other practical principle besides the formal-pragmatics of discourse ethics is needed. But, then, I consent to agree only if Habermas concedes to continue debating the permeable borders between ethics and morality, the particular and the universal. The razor-edge borders hold analytically for the benefit of traditional theory. Is not critical theory more concrete? Practical discourse concerned with multigendered, multiracial, and multicultural dimensions of democracy places this split on the table. Formal justice is still learning how to live with concrete multicultural justice, so one could argue after reading critical race and gender theorists such as Outlaw or Willett. Honneth's dialectical model of recognition drives home that the latter justice learns how to defend authentic group claims in complex cultures with the aid of the former.³⁰

Someone might still wonder, is there any difference in positions

between Taylor and Habermas? Maybe this is not the most pressing topic to decide for a new generation of critically traditional and critically post/modern theorists. Here is an urgent issue: neither a politics of authentic group difference nor a politics of procedural recognition may be fully competent to sustain various communities of meaning and value where distortions due to racism, patriarchy, and the lack of economic democracy are to greater or lesser degrees involved. This suspicion about sorely lacking sufficient critical competencies indicates the dangers of imperial oversights in certain communitarianism and liberalism alike.³¹

Critical theorists doubt that even a socially situated authenticity could make its projected modern ethics a reliable basis for public criticism. Would moral agency evaluating the available goods fare better? Note Outlaw's suspicion: "Neither the full nature and extent of our oppression, nor our historical-cultural being as African and African-descended peoples, has been comprehended adequately by the concepts and logics involved in Marxian and liberal analyses and programs for the projects of modernity in societies in Europe and Euro-America." Many a race and gender theorist suspect proceduralism of requiring valuative criteria that are too strong. A high price is being paid for formal autonomy and its consensual procedures: racially or gender-blind laws uphold civic, state, and international constitutions. These procedures exhibit crippling blindspots. Life-forms are not insular vis-à-vis one another. Democratic states, even when entering into international leagues, can be hegemonically partial in their purported neutrality vis-à-vis gender, race, or particular life-forms. Do not the projects of authenticity and autonomy under our present discussion fail in equal senses the critical test they require *qua* cornerstones of radical multicultural democracy?³²

My core question turns now not on whether to opt for authenticity or for autonomy in the two communicative ways under discussion. I have already settled (with Habermas, Honneth, and Taylor) on needing to recognize a collaboration of both. But how can life-forms resist uncritical insularity or domination by problematic racialized, gender, and class constructs—whether these are deployed systemically or through ongoing attitudes? How can dominant or ascendant group identities sustain authentic (i.e., sober) coexistence with genuine difference? Which group claims are legitimate? When does liberating one life-form oppress others?



Answers might be less ambiguous in Taylor's examples of the French Quebecois rights within the dominant Anglo culture of Canada.³³ Answers are not so obvious concerning struggles by native American cultures or in the Yugoslav and post-Soviet quagmires. Ascending groups tend to collapse the politics of dif-

ference for which their group claims were invoked in the first place. If French Canada did split off from English Canada, would it allow authentic group-rights to native Canadian Americans? Consider Chechnya or Afghan group-claims against previous Russian imperialism: these are hardly disputable, but East European post-1989 liberation is shot through with problematic anti-Roma, anti-Vietnamese, and generally anti-Black homogenizations of social identities. Finally, what about the relations among race and gender and class? Do some collective claims (e.g., by gay men) take preference in cases of complex struggles (e.g., by women)? Forms of life do not carry markers for adding or subtracting identity and difference in politically recognizable, relevant, and normative ways. Taylor's and even Honneth's liberal-communitarian defense of group claims is underdetermined to address these queries from within its ethics of authenticity.



The marginalized voice has an urgent need to limit harmful consensual assimilations of group differences. But a high price is paid for setting such limits via emphatic communitarian models. Habermas would question uncriticizable fundamentalist forms of life. Can they easily immigrate into international life with pluralistic and complex modern societies? Minimally, projects of open society could check and balance various, often competing claims to group difference. We do not get open societies from a form of life (*Sittlichkeit*) as such.³⁴

My questioning of Habermas comes thus from an opposite angle: how can even the pluralistic and tolerant constitutional state and the procedurally based international law sustain a justly pluralist coexistence of different forms of life? Is not there a danger that consensual procedures lead to a top down cultural or other imperialism? It matters little whether or not openness is something by which only the modern Euro-American culture gifted the globe (this dubious claim is the *locus classicus* of the missionary complex of the West inscribed now in the secular Eurocentric export of liberal democracy) or something emerging in various forms and in different cultures and at different times. In either case, radical openness and honesty can live only in those life-forms which allow for their critical sobriety vis-à-vis others. The Eurocentric exceptionalist attitude fails any concrete sobriety test, however much it toasts universalism. When Euro-American civilizations no longer listen to voices of difference within or without established institutional structures, then racist, patriarchal, or socioeconomic imperialism arrives through the back door of even highly developed proceduralism. As systematic yet personally anchored attitudes, these lifeworld distortions infect our rational conversations *from within*.



The membership of the Security Council of the U.N. encodes its generalized other as a generalized arrogance of dominant civilizations. Can the council represent either ethical authenticity or moral autonomy for all concerned? It is doubtful that its present liberal definition of justice would remain the same should all concerned (e.g., the Mayans from Chiapas) be heard. I cannot avert a suspicion that these voices of difference, when heard at our conferences on critical and democratic theory or in our journals and political institutions, would affect also our well-cherished and established liberal (in fact emphatically communitarian?) consensus.³⁵



It cannot hurt to examine the *material content* of the ethics of authenticity: what claims and whose group warrant a just difference within universal justice? It would do no harm if proceduralists were to interrogate the *lived form* or the attitudes one deploys via moral autonomy and formal justice: how do existential and political economies affect *our* universality? How can *we* resist trends to homogeneity and imperial hegemonomies of consensual procedures? Communitarianism and liberalism in the two communicative versions under discussion represent an advance. Yet they seem insufficient to carry out this dual, existentially material hermeneutics of suspicion on their own. In avoiding badly circular reasoning—from a group ethic of authenticity to moral autonomy, or in reverse—an *existentially material view of the need for recognition aims to provide a missing key*. I articulate this key throughout in various specters of liberation. I mean by it the concrete historical manifestations of the human need to undo all unjust distribution of scarcity and to invent the coalitional and even solidary bonds of recognition for emancipatory practices of radical existential and multicultural democracy.³⁶

But what can an existential perspective add to ethical authenticity (i.e., the need of self-esteem of individuals and groups) and moral autonomy (i.e., the need for self-respect)? If one is to hold onto existential categories as even fruitful for critical social theory and practice, these cannot be identifiable with the possessive and psychoanalytically naïve individualism of "Liberal 1." Neither can they seek legitimation by uncritical and equally psychoanalytically naïve communitarians. These two restrictions ward off the extremes of positing unsituated, unmotivated self-choice and a decisionist political *existentialism*—whether left- or right-wing. Such methodological restrictions and psychoanalytical sobriety about identity formation of individuals and groups do not yet exhaust the existential attitude—its irony—as such.³⁷

*My elaboration of a critical social theory of recognition learns from East Central European political humor, which is imbued with an existentially material and psychoanalytical sense of the tragic. And because this sense of the tragic (e.g., in Žižek's narrations of "Eastern Europe's Republics of Gilead," the rape of the nations is carried out in the name of the Nation-Thing) is a form of humorous warding off, one acquires a sense of sobriety. Had Central Europeans lost their capacity to laugh—in the midst of the conquering armies and gas chambers—they would have perished a long time ago. Some call this communicative competence for irony and humor a mark of the Slavic Soul, but this trait is rather distinctive of Jewish stories and Romany songs in that part of the world—take your pick of folk myths. One feature is common to them all, tragic humor can neither befriend cynicism nor can it confuse the historical shapes of human abjection with an ontologically psychic structure of being human. To be able to laugh, one cannot be simply a dupe of history or innate instincts. That's why I speak of an existentially material and psychoanalytical sense of the tragic. Kundera's *Book of Laughter and Forgetting* distinguishes between the tired grins of the tragic hero and the lighthearted smirks of the romantic, each with their pernicious underside only badly mimicking a liberating laughter. Kundera indirectly indicates how to forget those grins and smirks, how to laugh for liberation. With Jaroslav Hašek, Bohumil Hrabal, Franz Kafka, or Václav Havel, one may discover that when you and I laugh, we already resist stupidity or naked aggression. Laughter is most insubordinate since its outburst cannot be contained, indeed, it can be as contagious as fire.*

In an example that I remember, street and poster humor kept the Soviet invaders of Czechoslovakia in 1968 on their toes for several months. After that self-defensive carnival, Prague became a sad, humorless city under a spell until the velvet days of 1989, which brought the capacity for unselfish joy back. And with joyous irony breaking out from under the silence created by the bloody suppression of the student march on November 17, 1989, hated power crumbled as if in a historical instant. In the 1970s, Havel's "Power of the Powerless" tried to remember irony (we forget those empowering moments so quickly, we get preoccupied with the new Thing, badly serious, so readily!). This dangerous memory leads to a greengrocer's Velvet Revolution from below: when the totalitarian Thing one day ceased to cast its oppressive and repressive spell, the greengrocer no longer felt compelled to display the silly Party commercials in the shop window. (Such an existentially material freedom to become insubordinate even while powerless in totality would have an equivalent in the act of the ordinary "Television Man" if he or she turned off the TV—and its democratic marketing of stupidity—even for a day and maybe a week and maybe for a very long time. Imagine the worldwide panic: "This is CNN"—and nobody is/will be watching!³⁸)

Revolutions often begin with such ironical protests when the world-order-Thing is no longer It (again, as in "Coke is IT"). I.e., it is neither neurotically enjoyable nor nostalgically sought-out as a purportedly stolen/promised Heaven

(one never had IT/will never have IT). And thus comes a day when the known IT becomes a tragically comic (simply stupid, i.e., laughable) reality known to all as a denuded emperor. Facing this crisis, one may either poorly imitate laughter and get despondent with the demons and drunk with the angels. Or one may laughingly lighten up one's historical finitude in order to rise against human injustices which are the tragedy that matters and that is to be overcome. And at the same time one learns to sober up in order to strip the despondent and drunk desires, which support the false sense of existing, of their illusion. Laughters that wake up liberation specters do not fuel the need for recognition as do some nightmarish ghosts of abject and useless passion; emancipatory laughter invents an active "hope now." Such tragically comic satisfaction of the need for recognition wards off with laughter the hell of self and others, both found jointly in a fraternity-terror.³⁹



Reaching a critical standpoint, it does not suffice to translate existential self-choice either into the goods held by a "Liberal 2" or formal procedures. Otherwise the job of having a critical standpoint vis-à-vis individual or group claims could be settled best by *eudaimonistic* authenticity or by moral autonomy or by a communitarian-liberal debate. My existential approach points to a dimension needed for sustaining both ethical authenticity and moral autonomy. This dimension holds a key to the public discourse on those traditions which *we* wish to keep and those *we* want to transform or jettison. The sought-for existential dimension of recognition inheres in concrete humans. These are embodied, social, and linguistic actors. The key to the thick existential dimension of recognition must be operative on the primordial bodily level of tactile sociality as much as in the distance one is able to take vis-à-vis problematized group identities and skewed normative procedures. In each case, we must theorize the communicative competence for recognition and refusal: a tactile social ability to demand recognition of others (e.g., by smiling) or resist bodily violation (e.g., by refusal to smile back or by crying); an ethical social competence for solidary relations and resistance to their violation from within or without; and a moral competence to take yes and no positions on criticizable validity claims in speech. The 'existential', as I define it, is the mode enabling both bonding and resistance on all three theorized levels of tactile, ethical, and moral individualization through socialization.⁴⁰

Thinkers from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, from Sartre and Beauvoir to Marcuse and Fanon, agree: one is individualized in socialization. They all are good Hegelians to contest Hegel—and today Gadamer, Mead, or Wittgenstein—on this hermeneutic point. Here one

must not contest Taylor and Habermas or Honneth either. The challenge lies in viewing existential categories in light of the agreements: the discourse-theoretical method (section 1 above) and the practical complementarity of authenticity and autonomy (section 2 above). How is one to link existence with the contents of claims to authenticity and with the form of procedurally raising claims? Which claims to difference are ethically authentic? How does existence affect raising and evaluating validity claims? Is there an internal connection of existence (as a distinct critical dimension) with communicative competencies, and does this link affect ethical self-realization and moral self-determination?⁴¹

A Preliminary Sketch: Excursus on Two Sets of Aporias within the Need for Recognition

I limit myself to two sets of aporias facing complex democracies. One, the economic exploitation of scarcity distorts both the communitarian and the liberal versions of the nation-state. Two, the politics of racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, in combined varieties, supplement this exploitation. And they accomplish this equally in regional and global political cultures.

Enjoying one's specific difference. There is an authenticity claimed by groups: which community or whose justice counts as legitimate difference? Any communitarian angle gives *per definitionem* an answer partial to the scope of its solidarity. Regional claims to difference can conflict with other struggles—both within and outside this original difference. However otherwise universal, a group-based solidarity can become merely provincial. The communitarian basis for justice seems too weak to resist the global exploitation of material scarcity. The nation-state promises rights both in political and economic terms and, thereby, mobilizes groups for anti-imperial liberation struggles. And this nation-state is poorly equipped to secure universal justice since it postpones equality for the benefit of its ascending national *nomenklatura*. An enjoyment of “the national Thing . . . a kind of ‘particular Absolute’ resisting universalization,” in Žižek’s Lacanian purview, frustrates equality promised in the process of mobilizing group-solidarity. Lest all strive for universal recognition of all by all (this would mean radical political as well as economic democracy) one group authenticity can emerge as inauthentic for another group. Nationalism becomes a cover for the provincialism of a new *nomenklatura* writ in large letters. Historical National Socialism is the nemesis of any provincial pseudo-universalism. Neither can represent an ethically authentic claim to difference.⁴²

Not only Soviets but also liberal claims to universal democracy are criticized for lacking true universalism. Marginalized groups suspect that

universal justice is for politically and economically dominant groups. These groups hegemonize all procedures. Because today there are no other than national states, liberal democracy emerges within nation-states. Critics of liberalism decry its politically and economically oppressive, culturally homogenizing, and patriarchally and racially assimilative character. Since, as Young warns against emphatic Hegelianism (such as Honneth's, Taylor's, or even Benhabib's), groups are multidimensional; justice as the politics of difference, voicing the complex existentially material needs of the marginalized, alone can enhance struggles for greater political and economic democracy.⁴³

It would seem that in its most optimistic moments the nation-state promises all groups that they will enjoy a high degree of democratic recognition, politics, and economy. This promise of modern national movements of liberation fuels the attractiveness of both its communitarian and liberal revolutions. And this same promise occasions ongoing legitimation and motivation crises of the established "Nation-Thing"—whether in state socialism or late capitalism. *We* come to hate the strange ways others fashion their enjoyment, yet *we* hate the Other in the other (their enjoyment) because we hate it in ourselves—never having owned this Thing in the first place; thus Žižek explains the depth-roots of ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, and racism. This tension between specters of liberation (promise) and their theft (the aporia of nationalism as an "impossible desire")⁴⁴ problematizes all tendentially local partialities in group authenticity and the imperial partialities in consensual aims.

In sum, a liberal-communitarian recognition of identity and difference needs sociopolitical and economic—embodied, radically democratic, and existentially sober—dimensions of multicultural recognition. What is decisive for the political economy of struggles for recognition is a twofold need: an overcoming of an uncritically communitarian grasp of the politics of identity and difference, yet also of the uncritically liberal split between tactile and discursive sociality, between esteem and legitimacy.

Enjoying one's universal significance. Balibar speaks of nationalisms within nationalism: these mark racist and patriarchal partialities in the universal claims to authenticity and autonomy. Partialities affect the ethical projects of authenticity—whether individualistic or communitarian. Partialities also affect the projects of universal justice—whether in moral autonomy or procedural politics. In both, such partialities represent racist and patriarchal distortions of claims to authenticity and autonomy. Motivated interests in distorted social identities affect equally regional and global lifeworlds *from within*. By agreeing with Balibar that racism and sexism are certain supplements to economic exploitation and