Axel Honneth
Reification
A New Look at an Old Idea

with Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, & Jonathan Lear

edited by Martin Jay

Reification

The Berkeley Tanner Lectures

The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, which honor the American scholar, industrialist, and philanthropist Obert Clark Tanner, are presented annually at each of nine universities in the United States and England. They were established at the University of California, Berkeley, beginning in the 2000/2001 academic year. This volume is the fourth in a series of books based on the Berkeley Tanner Lectures. In this volume we include the lectures that Axel Honneth presented in March 2005, along with the responses of the three invited commentators on that occasion—Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, and Jonathan Lear—and a final rejoinder by Professor Honneth. The volume is edited by Martin Jay, who also contributes an introduction. We have established the Berkeley Tanner Lectures series in the belief that these distinguished lectures, together with the lively debates stimulated by their presentation in Berkeley, deserve to be made available to a wider audience. Additional volumes are now in preparation.

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Butler is the author of many works about European philosophy as well as feminist and queer theory. Her publications include *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (2000); *Excitable Speech* (1997); *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection* (1997); and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Her most recent works, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* and *Undoing Gender*, both appeared in 2004, a year that also saw the publication of *The Judith Butler Reader*, edited by Butler and Sara Salih.

In 1984, Butler received her Ph.D. in philosophy at Yale University, having earned her M.A. (1982) and B.A. (1978) at Yale as well. She studied philosophy at Heidelberg University as a Fulbright Scholar. Subsequently, she taught at Wesleyan University and Johns Hopkins University before joining the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1993, where she is currently Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric, Comparative Literature, and Gender and Women's Studies.

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RAYMOND GEUSS is a political philosopher who has contributed widely to current research into the paradigms and aims of the social

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Raymond Geuss studied and taught at various universities in the United States and Germany, including Heidelberg, the University of Chicago, and Princeton University, before moving to the University of Cambridge in 1993. He is one of the series editors of Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought.

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Born in 1949, AXEL HONNETH studied philosophy, sociology, and German literature at the universities of Bochum, Bonn, and Berlin. He received his doctorate in sociology in 1982 at the University of Berlin with a dissertation that later appeared as *Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory* (1991). Here he reconstructed the history of Frankfurt School Critical Theory from Max Horkheimer to Jürgen Habermas, focusing on what he called its sociological deficit, and compared it with the work of Michel Foucault, whose own microphysics of power also lacked a full appreciation of the intersubjective constitution of society. It was preceded by a work coauthored in 1980 with Hans Joas on philosophical anthropology entitled *Social Action and Human Nature* (1988) and followed by a collection of essays in social and political philosophy, entitled in its English translation, appearing in 1995, as *The Fragmented World of the Social*, edited by Charles W. Wright (1995). Here, Honneth expanded his range to include a consideration of other French thinkers such as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu, and Castoriadis, in

addition to the Central European tradition from Lukács to Habermas. Two years later, his Habilitationsschrift written under Habermas's guidance came out as *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1995), which drew on insights from Hegel, the American pragmatist George Herbert Mead, and British object relations theory to develop a theory of recognition as the basis of social interaction, which went beyond the methodological individualism associated with the liberal tradition launched by Hobbes and Locke. His Spinoza Lectures published as *Suffering from Indeterminacy* (2000) sought to rescue dimensions of Hegel's often-neglected *Philosophy of Right* for the theory of recognition. In 2003, he defended that theory in a debate with Nancy Fraser published as *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003).

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MARTIN JAY is an intellectual historian of modern Europe and has written extensively on the Frankfurt School, Western Marxism, the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America, French attitudes toward visuality, and the discourse of experience in Western thought. He received his B.A. at Union College in 1965 and his doctorate in history at Harvard in 1971. He has taught at Berkeley ever since, serving as the chair of the History Department from 1998 to 2001 and in 2004. He has written a biannual column for *Salmagundi* since 1987.

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JONATHAN LEAR is a celebrated scholar of psychoanalytic theory and the history of philosophy. Much of his research and teaching probes the intersection of ancient and modern philosophy with psychoanalytic explorations of the mind.

Lear has written prolifically on philosophy and psychoanalysis, and several of his works have garnered the Gradiva Award, bestowed by the National Association for Psychoanalysis each year to the best book published about psychoanalysis. Lear's publications include *Aristotle and Logical Theory* (1980); *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (1988); *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (1990); *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (1998); *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life* (2001); and *Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony* (2003). Lear's book *Freud* appeared in spring 2005 in the Routledge Philosophers Series.

Jonathan Lear received psychoanalytic training in addition to his education and research in philosophy and social thought. He earned bachelor's degrees from both Yale University (1970) and University of Cambridge (1973). Lear received his master's degree from Cambridge in 1976 and his doctorate from Rockefeller University in 1978. After teaching at both Yale and Cambridge, Lear joined the Department of Philosophy at the University of Chicago in 1996, where he is now the John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor of Social Thought.

Reification

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Introduction

Martin Jay

Axel Honneth prefaces his Tanner Lectures on Human Values on the theme of *Reification and Recognition: A New Look at an Old Idea*[1] with two seemingly unrelated epigraphs: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's celebrated claim in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that "all reification is a forgetting" and Ludwig Wittgenstein's observation that "all knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment" from *On Certainty*. What follows in the two lectures he presented to a rapt audience at the University of California, Berkeley, in March 2005, and developed further in a third lecture included in this volume is an ingenious and provocative effort to bridge the gap between these two apparently disparate assertions. Honneth attempts nothing less than a redescription and defense of the concept of reification by means of the theory of recognition—or acknowledgment, as *Anerkennung* can also be translated—that he has been developing over the past two decades.[2]

The theme of forgetting is an especially apt point of departure, for the concept of reification—from the Latin "res" or "thing"[3]—has itself fallen into virtual oblivion in recent years.[4] During the rise of the New Left, when what became known as Western Marxism was first mined as a resource for radical politics, the term began to shoulder aside alternative candidates to define the depredations of capitalism: exploitation, injustice, and even alienation, itself a recent addition to the Marxist vocabulary occasioned by the belated reception of Marx's 1844 Paris manuscripts. First employed by the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács in his 1923 collection *History and Class Consciousness* and developed by the first generation of the

Frankfurt School, it enjoyed a revival during the 1960s in the work of such theorists as Joseph Gabel, Lucien Goldmann, Karel Kosik, and the *Praxis* circle in Yugoslavia. The concept of reification became a powerful weapon in the struggle not only to define what capitalism did to its victims but also to explain why they were unable to resist it successfully. In particular, it could function as a way to make sense of the failure of the working class to realize the historical mission assigned to it by Marxist theory.

But once the hopes in that class's redemptive project were utterly dashed, as the New Left faded into history and orthodox Marxist movements lost their grip on power in parts of the world where they once ruled, the question of why the proletariat failed seemed less urgent. Instead, many commentators came to wonder why it had ever served as the repository of those hopes in the first place. Moreover, the conceptual apparatus undergirding the very idea of reification lost much of its allure with the repudiation of the neo-Hegelian premises of Lukács' argument, premises that allowed him to substitute the proletariat for the Absolute Spirit as the subject and object of history. Structuralist Marxists like Louis Althusser, disdaining Marx's early works, considered the concept of reification a residue of a prescientific ideological humanism.[5] Systems theorists such as Niklas Luhmann rejected the tradition of normative critique in favor of a more objectivist notion of complexity-reducing systems of communication. Poststructuralists influenced by Nietzsche or Spinoza rejected the ideal of a dereified subject, collective or individual, who could be understood as a sovereign, autonomous agent acting consciously to create a world of objectifications that did not appear alien to it. Any longing for a state of being prior to the alleged onset of reification they damned as misplaced nostalgia for a lost paradise that never really existed and can never be restored. Even second-generation Frankfurt School theorists such as Jürgen Habermas let "reification" slip from their active vocabularies.[6]

The term, to be sure, does still find its way into contemporary theories with no political implications. Computer science and artificial

intelligence experts employ it to mean making a data model out of an abstract concept, certain philosophers use it as a synonym for misplaced concreteness or hypostatization, and some linguists enlist it to indicate a process of turning a predicate or function into an object in a language. But as a tool of radical social and political critique, defining a pervasive pathology of human relations, reification has lost much of its critical power.

If it is to enjoy a revival, as Honneth hopes it will, its link with forgetting, noted by Horkheimer and Adorno, will have to be carefully explored. Many questions will have to be addressed, most notably: Who is doing the forgetting? What is being forgotten? And will remembering suffice to produce a change in actual social practices and institutions? In the case of Hegelian Marxists like Lukács, the answer to the first of these questions was straightforward: it was the incipiently universal class, the proletariat, whose labor—or sometimes more broadly, praxis—had made the social world, but whose constitutive role in that making had been obliterated.

Underlying this identification were four crucial assumptions. The first was derived from the productivist bias of Marxist theory. Making, human construction, humankind as *Homo faber,* was the key to understanding the social world, even though it may have come to appear as a "second nature," a system of given structures and institutions outside of human fabrication and control. Insofar as the makers of history were those whose actual labor produced the world of objects that serve human needs, they rather than those who parasitically lived off that labor were the ultimate source of the social world and its value. As such, they had the power to change it.

A second assumption was derived from Giambattista Vico's celebrated "verum-factum principle," which stated that knowledge of the true was itself dependent on the making of the objects of that knowledge.[7] That is, ultimate knowledge of seemingly hidden realities, essences behind appearances such as Kant's elusive "thing-in-itself," was given only to those who had fabricated that reality (in the way an artist can understand the work he or she has created). Only

they could overcome the analytic contradiction of surface and depth dialectically.

Epistemological questions were thus dependent on social ontology. Since the entire social world was made by human labor, it was possible for the universal class that made that world—and only that class—to have full knowledge of the social totality. For Lukács, it was precisely the inability of the inherently undialectical bourgeoisie to grasp the totality of social relations and overcome the antinomy of appearance and essence that made it ultimately inferior to the proletariat. Only the latter were positioned in society as both the ontological creators and epistemological knowers of their creation.

Why they were not yet fully in possession of the knowledge was explained by the fourth major premise of Lukács' argument. As Marx had shown in his celebrated discussion of the "fetishism of commodities" in the first volume of *Capital,* capitalism worked by creating the illusion that the objects created by men were somehow independent of their creative labor, mere tokens of exchange in a circulation that had forgotten its roots in human activity. Fetishism meant missing the meaningful whole, the totality of social relations, and concentrating on only one of its parts, on the object and not the multifaceted process of production underlying it, a process that invested value into those objects through the labor of those who had produced them. It meant abstracting discrete entities out of that concrete totality of relations—in Hegel's sense of concrete as complexly mediated interactions, not as isolated particulars—and understanding them as self-sufficient and static things. Not only were the finished products themselves turned into fungible commodities available for commensurable exchange, but living labor itself had been turned into labor-power, equally a commodity for sale in a labor market that produced a surplus value that accumulated as capital (dead labor whose roots in the living labor of real men had been forgotten). Workers were forced to sell their labor-power as a commodity to survive, which prevented the adoption of the revolutionary praxis that would change the conditions under which they were exploited, alienated, and reified.

As a result of these circumstances, so Lukács reasoned, the proletariat's self-awareness had not been able to get much beyond "economistic trade union consciousness," which focused solely on winning short-term gains within the still capitalist system. Only a vanguard party armed with a theoretical understanding of their plight could lead them beyond this condition, ascribing to them a revolutionary consciousness that they had not yet attained on the empirical level, as Lenin had understood in the revolution he had helped foment in 1917. Only by leaving behind a focus on economic goals and an expansion to a more radical transformation of the totality, which would include cultural as well as political dimensions, could the reifications of the capitalist world be overcome. Only by adopting an active, world-changing practice could the contemplative passivity of a class that had forgotten its constitutive role in making the social world, in fashioning history, be rectified.

If all reification were therefore a forgetting, dereification was a process of "re-membering" what had been torn asunder (dis-membered), an anamnestic recovery of the wholeness of laborer and fashioned object, process and product, theory and practice, and essence and appearance. Denaturalizing unjust social relations that seemed to be an eternal "second nature" would follow, as would the dialectical resolution of the antinomies of bourgeois thought. For Lukács, then, what needs to be recovered is the fundamentally productive, constitutive role of a collective subject, which has made history unconsciously in the past but will make it consciously in the future and recognize itself in its creation. Although mere remembering alone will not suffice to make the revolution, without it no revolution can take place and no emancipation of humankind will be possible.

For cogent reasons that Honneth details in his Tanner Lectures, Lukács' formulation of the reification problematic was a casualty of a history that refused to close the gap between ascribed and empirical consciousness, and even more so of a flawed understanding of the ways in which reification operated and might be overcome. For the productivist model of subjects laboring to make external objects,

which they can either remember or forget as their own product, was inadequate to the full range of human action.[8] As Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas had understood, *praxis* is not reducible to *poiēsis,* communicative interaction is not the same as the labor of *Homo faber*. Prior to both, Honneth argues, is a primal struggle for recognition, first explored in Hegel's early Jena writings, which is as basic, perhaps even more so, than the struggle for self-preservation posited by individualist utilitarians since Thomas Hobbes.

With this assumption, the Vichian *verum-factum* principle so vital to Lukács' version of reification, the claim that knowing follows from making, is tacitly set aside. Instead, Honneth stresses the priority of recognition to cognition, the intersubjective interaction that subtends any relationship between subject and object, self and world. More than Habermas, from whom he has learned so much, Honneth stresses the reciprocity of respect that genuine recognition demands. Not content with a perpetual split between a lifeworld based on symbolic interaction and an alienated social system based on instrumental, strategic rationality and abstract steering mechanisms such as money, he holds out hope for a more fundamental transformation of human relations.

Because of the founding moment of intersubjective recognition in the process of human interaction, it has an inevitable normative dimension that stretches from dyadic love to communal solidarity. Reification, in this optic, means a forgetting of the primal recognition that two humans accord each other in a fundamental process of intersubjective interaction. It means losing sight of what Heidegger had called the "care" or *Sorge* that was a primal dimension of the human relation to the world (or, in his special vocabulary, *Dasein* for *Sein*). It means forgetting Dewey's insight that we are intimately involved with the world before we can observe it from afar, having "qualitative experiences" that are deeper than those of the passive observer, and ignoring Adorno's valorization of mimetic over dominating relationships with both human and natural "others."

One question that then has to be addressed is, How can this insight be translated into concrete social terms? Is there for Honneth a group equivalent to the proletariat posited by Marxists like Lukács, whose reification is so severe that their suffering can motivate radical challenges to the status quo, once their true interests are revealed to them by a vanguard party? In fact, Honneth refuses to assign this favored position to any one group in society; no one has a monopoly of primal recognition in the way Lukács thought the proletariat had with regard to a reified world of objects made by their labor. In his exchange with Nancy Fraser over the relative importance of redistribution and recognition, he denies the a priori existence of new social movements that might fill this role: "The error here lies in the tacit initial premise that 'social movements' can serve critical social theory as a kind of empirically visible guiding thread for diagnosing normatively relevant problem areas. What such a procedure completely overlooks is the fact that official designation as a 'social movement' is itself the result of an underground struggle for recognition conducted by groups or individuals afflicted by social-suffering to make the public perceive and register their problems."[9]

Instead of assigning to a specific group the role of savior of society in advance, Honneth disputes the totalizing claims made for capitalism in early Marxist analyses, which tended to see the world as increasingly in the grip of a reification from which no exit was possible short of an apocalyptic revolution carried out by the most reified class. So bleak an assessment of modern life, Honneth argues, is counterproductive, missing the ways in which meaningful change is still possible short of a total overthrow of the system. Stressing the ongoing struggle for recognition—involving the inviolability of the body, legal equality, and respect for discrete ways of life—he believes he can locate the normative kernel of critique in a level of human interaction even more fundamental than the quest for perfect understanding posited by Habermas as a premise of all human communication. Because that struggle is universal, it can motivate social action whenever the desire for recognition is thwarted.

By refocusing the question of reification not on alienated labor or commodity fetishism or the inability to conceptualize the totality, Honneth inevitably invites questions about the burden he is placing on remembering the fundamental intersubjective recognition denied by reification, the sympathetic acknowledgement, in Wittgenstein's terms, that precedes knowledge. Objections might be raised about its power to rouse the unrecognized to meaningful political action, its ability to serve as a motivating force to change the institutions and practices that systematically block mutual recognition in the present. Remembering a past hurt (or recapturing the trace of positive nurturance) may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to undo the damage caused by the forgetting and all that caused it.

So, too, the implicit telos of respectful mutuality can and has been challenged. Even before his Tanner Lectures, qualms were expressed by skeptics such as Alexander García Düttmann, who argued that Honneth rigs the outcome of the struggle for recognition in advance by positing an ideologically idealized norm of anticipated and desirable reconciliation similar to Hegel's teleological narrative of dialectical synthesis. Ironically, in light of the theme of the present volume, García Düttmann refers to this idealization as itself a form of reification, and charges that there is "an essential link between the reification or objectification of recognition and an idealization which has the effect of an ideologization. It is difficult not to conclude that a politics of recognition which is determined by such a link cannot but produce and reproduce *social conformism.*"[10]

Without explicitly drawing on García Düttmann or turning the concept of reification against Honneth, the three distinguished commentators on his Tanner Lectures—Jonathan Lear, Judith Butler, and Raymond Geuss—all raise similar questions about the fundamental anthropological premise underlying his argument. Although applauding his search for a non-intellectualist basis for social critique, they all wonder if Honneth has accounted for the less savory aspects of precognitive interaction, those that may well frustrate any hope for beneficial mutuality. Why, they ask, does elementary

recognition signify sympathetic recognition? Is there not just as powerful a potential for hate as love in the recognition of the other as a human being? Does "care" in Heidegger's sense immediately translate into genuine concern for other human beings (a conclusion that Heidegger, the notorious apologist for Nazism, was not himself so quick to draw)? Does the psychological model of development on which Honneth bases much of his argument introduce a tacit and unearned teleological notion of successful maturation? Is there not needed a further step that allows recognition to gain the normative, ethical force that makes its forgetting the source of turning people into things? And if so, has Honneth provided a persuasive account of that necessary supplement to his theory of primal recognition?

In his reply, Honneth acknowledges and attempts to face these criticisms head-on. In an earlier work, the 1997 essay "Recognition and Moral Obligation," he made clear that the moral obligations derivable from the primal struggle for recognition were plural rather than singular and may well be in conflict:

Attitudes of unconditional care may be legitimately expected of subjects only in those cases in which mutual bonds rest on an affective foundation; moral respect, on the other hand, designates a form of recognition that can be expected of all subjects equally; and in the case of esteem, finally, it seems to be the case that the moral action corresponding to it possesses an obligating character only within the framework of concrete communities. … Between the three modes of recognition, which taken together constitute the moral point of view, there cannot be a harmonious relation, rather there has to obtain a relation of constant tension.[11]

It may thus be unfair to tax him with the charge that he posits a teleological goal of perfect reconciliation in a neo-Hegelian manner. As for the concern that his model of elementary recognition, prior to the discrete moral obligations that may be derived from it, is itself too unitary and optimistically geared toward mutually positive outcomes, he insists that without at least some such assumption, no possibility of human communication would exist. However

fragile its perpetuation, however uncertain its translation into the plurality of moral obligations mentioned above—and this is the reason its forgetting is such a danger—it remains a latent memory, which can provide a meaningful challenge to the reification of life in the modern world.

Notes

1. A German version of the lectures was published by the Suhrkamp Verlag as *Verdinglichung: Eine Studie* (Frankfurt, 2005).

2. See, in particular, Axel Honneth, *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy,* ed. Charles W. Wright (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts,* trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); *Suffering from Indeterminacy: An Attempt at a Reactualization of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* trans. Jack Ben-Levi (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2000); and Axel Honneth with Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange,* trans. Joel Golb (New York: Verso, 2002).

3. The German word *Verdinglichung* is often, but not invariably distinguished from *Vergegenständlichung,* which is translated as the less pejorative term "objectification."

4. A notable exception is Timothy Bewes, *Reification, or, The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2002), which seeks to rescue the term as a sign of—indeed equivalent to—a deep anxiety whose origins are connected with the loss of a certain version of religious experience. Significantly, neither Honneth nor his commentators acknowledge Bewes's book.

5. In a long footnote in *For Marx,* trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Vintage, 1970), Althusser sneered: "The whole fashionable theory of 'reification' depends on a projection of the theory of alienation found in the early texts, particularly the *1844 Manuscripts,* on to the theory of 'fetishism' in *Capital.* … An ideology of reification that sees 'things' everywhere in human relations confuses in this category 'thing' (a category more foreign to Marx cannot be imagined) every social relation, conceived according to the model of a money-thing ideology" (p. 230).

6. Its residues, however, do appear in Habermas's characterization of the colonization of the symbolic interaction and communicative intersubjectivity of the lifeworld by system-integrating instrumental rationality. In fact, Thomas McCarthy, one of Habermas's most trenchant interpreters, goes so far as to say that "one of the principal aims of *The Theory of Communicative Action* [is] to develop a more adequate version of the theory of reification." See McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 152. Honneth's theory of recognition shares with Habermas the intention to base that more adequate version on intersubjective rather than metasubjective grounds, breaking with the version of consciousness philosophy underpinning the idea of the Hegelian metasubject of history.

7. On the importance of Vico for the larger tradition of Western Marxism inaugurated by Lukács, see Martin Jay, "Vico and Western Marxism," in *Fin-de-siècle Socialism and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

8. As early as his 1986 essay "A Fragmented World: On the Implicit Relevance of Lukács' Early Work," Honneth had noted that "the life-philosophically oriented model of externalization, which forms the conceptual framework on which his diagnosis of the world of capitalist modernity is based, had lost all persuasive power. Neither the process of personality formation nor the emergence and development of societies can today still plausibly be treated as processes that occur according to the pattern of the continuous externalization and reappropriation of psychic drives. The formative process of a subject does not, as suggested by the externalization model, take place as an isolated process of the gradual objectification of motivating drives, but rather takes place as a process of intersubjective socialization. … The process of social constitution can also only be analyzed as a communicative process" (*Fragmented World of the Social,* p. 58).

9. Honneth and Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition?* p. 120.

10. Alexander García Düttmann, *Between Cultures: Tensions in the Struggle for Recognition,* trans. Kenneth B. Woodgate (London: Verso, 2000), p. 156.

11. Honneth, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," *Social Research* 64, 1 (Spring 1997): 30, 32.

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Reification and Recognition: A New Look at an Old Idea

Axel Honneth

Translated by Joseph Ganahl

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"All reification is a forgetting."
> Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno,
> *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

"Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment."
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*

In the German-speaking world of the 1920s and 1930s, the concept of reification constituted a leitmotiv of social and cultural critique. As if refracted through a concave mirror, the historical experiences of rising unemployment and economic crises that gave the Weimar Republic its distinctive character seemed to find concentrated expression in this concept and its related notions. Social relationships increasingly reflected a climate of cold, calculating purposefulness; artisans' loving care for their creations appeared to have given way to an attitude of mere instrumental command; and even the subject's innermost experiences seemed to be infused with the icy breath of calculating compliance. An intellectually committed philosopher's presence of mind was needed, however, before such diffuse moods could be distilled into the concept of reification. It was Georg Lukács who, by boldly combining motifs from the works of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, succeeded in coining this key concept in a collection of essays published in 1925 and titled *History and Class Consciousness*.[1] In the center of this volume so fueled by the hope of an impending revolution is a three-part treatise called "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat."[2] This work moved an entire generation of philosophers and sociologists to analyze the forms of life under the then-prevailing circumstances as being the result of social reification.[3]

After World War II, however, the primacy of the category of "reification" as a diagnosis of prevailing circumstances was lost. As if the horror of the Holocaust had crippled any speculative tendency toward hyperbolic social diagnostics, social theorists and philosophers were instead content to analyze deficits of democracy and justice, without making use of concepts referring to social pathologies such as reification or commercialization. Although these notions lived on in the writings of the Frankfurt School—especially in the works of Adorno—and despite the fact that the memory of Lukács' work flared up once again in the student movements of the late 1960s,[4] the project of an analysis of reification seemed to have become part of a bygone era. Merely mentioning the term "reification" was taken as a symptom of obstinately desiring to belong to a cultural epoch that had long since lost its legitimacy in the wake of the postwar era with its own cultural reforms and theoretical renewals.

Only now do there appear to be an increasing number of signs that this situation could be changing once again. Like a philosophically unprocessed nugget, the category of "reification" has reemerged from the immense depths of the Weimar Republic and retaken center stage in theoretical discourse. There are three, if not four, indicators that lend support to this speculation that the climate in the world of contemporary social diagnostics is changing. First (and quite banally), one can point to a number of recent novels and narratives that radiate an aesthetic aura of the creeping commercialization of our everyday life. By using particular kinds of stylistic devices or drawing upon certain specific lexica, these literary works suggest that we view the inhabitants of our social world as interacting with themselves and others as they would with lifeless objects—without a trace of inner sentiment or any attempt at understanding the other's point of view. The list of authors to be mentioned in this context encompasses American writers such as Raymond Carver and Harold Brodkey, the *enfant terrible* of French literature Michel Houllebecq, and German-speaking literary figures such as Elfriede Jelinek and Silke Scheuermann.[5] Whereas in these literary works the concept of reification is present solely as an atmospheric mood, in recent socio-

logical analysis it has come to be studied as a modified form of human behavior. There are innumerable investigations in the domain of cultural sociology or social psychology that have discerned an increasingly strong tendency on the part of subjects to feign certain feelings or desires for opportunistic reasons to the extent that they eventually come to experience these very same feelings and desires as genuine elements of their own personality.[6] This is a form of emotional self-manipulation that Lukács already had in mind when he described journalism as being a "prostitution" of "experiences and beliefs,"[7] regarding it as the "apogee" of social reification.

Of course, in these diagnoses of a tendency to manage one's feelings, the concept of reification appears as inexplicitly as it does in most of those pieces of literature that create an atmosphere of cold rationality and manipulation. But this is in no way true of a third category of text that documents a return of the thematic of reification. Within the sphere of ethics and moral philosophy, there have been a number of recent endeavors to get a theoretical grasp on the kind of social phenomena that had clearly confronted Lukács in the course of his analysis. The concept of reification is here often explicitly used without any reference to the text from which the term originates. For instance, Martha Nussbaum explicitly uses the term "objectification" to characterize particularly extreme forms in which individuals instrumentalize others.[8] To take another example, although Elisabeth Anderson abstains from explicitly using the term "reification," her description of the economic alienation of contemporary life certainly touches on comparable phenomena.[9] In these ethical contexts, "reification" is used in a decidedly normative sense; it signifies a type of human behavior that violates moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects—as "things" or "commodities." The empirical phenomena thereby referred to encompass tendencies as disparate as the increasing demand for surrogate mothers, the commodification of romantic and familial relationships, and the boom in the sex industry.[10]

Finally, a fourth context can be discerned in which the category of reification is once again being used to conceptualize certain striking developments in contemporary social life. Surrounding the current discussions concerning the results and social implications of brain research, it has often been remarked that the strictly physiobiological approach employed in this sphere betrays a reifying perspective. The argument goes that by presuming to explain human feelings and actions through the mere analysis of neuron firings in the brain, this approach abstracts from all our experience in the lifeworld and treats humans as senseless automatons and thus ultimately as mere things. Just as in the ethical approaches described, this critique draws upon the concept of reification to characterize a violation of moral principles. The fact that the neurophysiological perspective apparently doesn't take humans' personal characteristics and perspectives into account is thus conceptualized as an instance of reification.[11] In both contexts, therefore, the ontological connotations contained in this concept's allusion to mere things play a secondary, marginal role. Thus a certain form of reifying behavior is regarded as questionable or mistaken not because it violates ontological presuppositions of our everyday activity but because it violates certain moral principles that we hold. By contrast, Lukács still assumed that he could carry out his analysis without making any reference to ethical tenets. He took the concept of reification literally in that he assumed it possible to characterize a certain kind of social behavior as being mistaken solely because it doesn't correspond with certain ontological facts.

Although Lukács abstains entirely from the use of moral terminology, his analysis of reification is obviously not without normative content. After all, his mere use of the term "reification" betrays his assumption that the phenomena he describes are in fact deviations from a "genuine" or "proper" stance toward the world. It also appears self-evident to Lukács that his readers will agree with him when he argues for the historical necessity of revolutionizing the existing social circumstances. Yet he introduces these implicit judgments at a theoretical level that is one step below the argumentative level upon

which these other authors formulate and justify their evaluations. For Lukács doesn't regard reification as a violation of moral principles, but as a deviation from a kind of human praxis or worldview essentially characteristic of the rationality of our form of life.[12] The arguments he directs at the capitalist reification of social life possess only an indirectly normative character, in that they result from the descriptive elements of a social ontology or philosophical anthropology that endeavors to comprehend the foundations of our existence. In this sense, Lukács' analysis can be said to deliver a social-ontological explanation of a certain pathology found in our life practices.[13] It is, however, in no way certain whether *we, today,* may speak in such a way, whether *we* can justify objections to a certain form of life with reference to social-ontological insights. Indeed, it isn't even clear whether we, in the light of the exacting demands that present societies currently place on strategic and cold-calculating activity, can use the concept of reification at all to express an internally coherent thought.

I. Reification in the Works of Lukács

To settle the question of whether the concept of reification still retains any value today, we should orient ourselves first of all to Lukács' classical analysis. However, we will quickly see that his own categorial means are insufficient for the task of appropriately conceptualizing the occurrences that he grasps in a phenomenologically more or less accurate way. Lukács keeps very close to the ontologizing everyday understanding of the concept of reification in asserting with Marx on the very first page of his treatise that "reification" signifies nothing but the fact "that a relation between people has taken on the character of a thing."[14] In this elementary form, the concept clearly designates a cognitive occurrence in which something that doesn't possess thing-like characteristics in itself (e.g., something human) comes to be regarded as a thing. At first it isn't clear whether

Lukács holds reification to be a mere epistemic category mistake, a morally objectionable act, or an entirely distorted form of praxis. After only a few sentences, however, it becomes clear that he must have more than a category mistake in mind, because the occurrence of reification takes on a multilayered quality and stability that cannot be put down to mere cognitive error.

The social cause to which Lukács attributes the increasing dissemination and the constancy of reification is the expansion of commodity exchange, which, with the establishment of capitalist society, has become the prevailing mode of intersubjective agency. As soon as social agents begin to relate to each other primarily via the exchange of equivalent commodities, they will be compelled to place themselves in a reifying relationship to their surroundings, for they can then no longer avoid perceiving the elements of a given situation solely in relation to the utility that these elements might have for their egocentric calculations. This shift of perspective leads in many different directions, which for Lukács constitute just as many forms of reification. Subjects in commodity exchange are mutually urged (a) to perceive given objects solely as "things" that one can potentially make a profit on, (b) to regard each other solely as "objects" of a profitable transaction, and finally (c) to regard their own abilities as nothing but supplemental "resources" in the calculation of profit opportunities. Lukács subsumes all these changes in the person's stance toward the objective world, society, and himself or herself under the concept of "reification," without taking the many nuances and diversities among these attitudes into account. He designates the quantitative appraisal of objects, the instrumental treatment of other persons, and the perception of one's own bundle of talents and needs from the perspective of profitability as all being "thing-like." Furthermore, diverse modes of behavior ranging from stubborn egoism through detachment to primarily economic interests all come together in the attitude defined by Lukács as being "reifying."

Lukács, however, intends to do much more in his analysis than merely provide a phenomenology of the changes of consciousness

demanded of people in the process of commodity exchange. Although he at first directs his gaze almost exclusively at the phenomena described by Marx as being indicative of "commodity fetishism,"[15] he begins after a few pages to emancipate himself from a narrow focus on the economic sphere by extending the concept of reification and its various associated forms of coercion to cover the *entirety* of capitalist social life. It isn't clear from the text how this social generalization theoretically occurs, because Lukács seems to oscillate between alternative strategies of explanation. On the one hand, he presents a functionalist argument according to which the purpose of capitalist expansion requires the assimilation of all patterns of activity to commodity exchange;[16] on the other hand, he asserts with Max Weber that the process of rationalization autonomously leads to an expansion of instrumental-rational behavior into social spheres in which traditional modes of behavior previously prevailed.[17] Yet however problematic his rationale for this generalizing process may be, it ultimately aids Lukács in arriving at the central proposition of his study: in capitalism, reification has come to constitute human beings' "second nature."[18] He thereby asserts that every subject involved in the capitalist form of life will necessarily acquire the habit of perceiving himself and the surrounding world as mere things and objects.

Before I can further pursue the question of what type of mistake reification constitutes, it is necessary to depict the next step in Lukács' analysis. As we have seen, he has until now quite carelessly applied the terms of "things" or "thingness" to every sort of phenomenon that a subject could possibly perceive in her surroundings, or in her own person, as an economically utilizable factor. Regardless of whether objects, other persons or one's own talents and feelings are at issue, Lukács maintains that all these get experienced as thing-like objects as soon as they come to be viewed according to their potential usefulness in economic transactions. But of course, this conceptual strategy is insufficient for the task of justifying the idea of reification as a second nature, for when we speak of a "second nature," we are dealing not only with economic occurrences, but with all dimensions

of social activity. How can one explain what reification means *outside* of the sphere of commodity exchange, if this concept solely denotes an occurrence in which all elements of a social situation get redefined as economically calculable factors?

Interestingly enough, Lukács himself seems to have seen this problem, for he shifts the direction of his conceptual approach relatively early in the course of his analysis. Instead of primarily attending to the changes brought about by the process of reification in the objects that a subject perceives, he shifts his gaze toward the transformations occurring in the subject's own style of acting. He asserts that it is also in the "behavior" of the subject itself that commodity exchange causes certain changes, which ultimately affect that subject's entire relation to the surrounding world. For as soon as an agent permanently takes up the role of an exchange partner, he becomes a "contemplative" "detached observer," while his own existence "is reduced to an isolated particle and fed into an alien system."[19] With this conceptual shift of perspective, the concepts of contemplation and detachment become essential to the explanation of what takes place in the modus of reification at the level of social agency. Here, the subject is no longer empathetically engaged in interaction with his surroundings, but is instead placed in the perspective of a neutral observer, psychically and existentially untouched by his surroundings. The concept of "contemplation" thus indicates not so much an attitude of theoretical immersion or concentration as it does a stance of indulgent, passive observation, while "detachment" signifies that an agent is no longer emotionally affected by the events in his surroundings, instead letting them go by without any inner involvement, merely observing their passing.

It is quite clear that this conceptual strategy provides a more appropriate basis for explaining what might be meant by the notion that for human beings, reification has come to constitute a second nature. Although a few theoretical steps still seem to be lacking for a complete explication, the fundamental idea can certainly be summarized in the following fashion: In the constantly expanding

sphere of commodity exchange, subjects are compelled to behave as detached observers, rather than as active participants in social life, because their reciprocal calculation of the benefits that others might yield for their own profit demands a purely rational and emotionless stance. At the same time, this shift of perspective is accompanied by a reifying perception of *all* relevant situational elements, since the objects to be exchanged, the exchanging partners and finally one's own personal talents may only be appraised in accordance with how their quantitative characteristics might make them useful for the pursuit of profit. This kind of attitude becomes "second nature" when through corresponding processes of socialization, it develops into such a fixed habit that it comes to determine individual behavior across the entire spectrum of everyday life. Under these conditions, subjects also begin to perceive their surroundings as mere thing-like givens, even when they are not immediately involved in the process of commodity exchange. Lukács consequently understands "reification" to be a habit of mere contemplation and observation, in which one's natural surroundings, social environment, and personal characteristics come to be apprehended in a detached and emotionless manner—in short, as things.

With this short reconstruction of Lukács' analysis, we have at least indirectly defined what kind of mistake or failure *cannot* be denoted by reification. As we have already seen, such a distorting perspective does not designate a mere epistemic category mistake. This is not only because reification constitutes a multilayered and stable syndrome of distorted consciousness, but also because this shift in attitude reaches far too deep into our habits and modes of behavior for it to be able to be simply reversed by making a corresponding cognitive correction. According to Lukács, reification constitutes a distorting "stance"[20] or mode of behavior that is so widespread in capitalist societies that it can be described as "second nature." As a result, reification for Lukács can be conceived neither as a kind of moral misconduct, nor as a violation of moral principles, for it lacks the element of subjective intent necessary to bring moral terminology

into play. Unlike Martha Nussbaum, Lukács isn't interested in determining the point at which the reification of other persons becomes a morally reproachable act.[21] Instead, he sees all members of capitalist society as being socialized in the same manner into a reifying system of behavior, so that the instrumental treatment of others initially represents a mere social fact and not a moral wrong.

By discussing what Lukács cannot mean by reification, it is starting to become clearer how he does in fact intend this key concept to be understood. If reification constitutes neither a mere epistemic category mistake nor a form of moral misconduct, the only remaining possibility is that it be conceived as a form of praxis that is *structurally* false. The detached, neutrally observing mode of behavior, which Lukács attempts to conceptualize as "reification," must form an ensemble of habits and attitudes that deviates from a more genuine or better form of human praxis. This way of formulating the issue makes it clear that this conception of reification is in no way free of all normative implications. Although we are not dealing with a simple violation of moral principles, we are indeed confronted with the much more difficult task of demonstrating the existence of a "true" or "genuine" praxis over and against its distorted or atrophied form. The normative precepts reinforcing Lukács' analysis do not consist in a sum of morally legitimate principles, but in a notion of proper human praxis. This kind of notion, however, draws its justification much more strongly from social ontology or philosophical anthropology than from the sphere customarily termed moral philosophy or ethics.[22]

Now, it wouldn't be correct to say that Lukács wasn't aware of this normative challenge. Although he possesses a strong tendency to polemicize with G. W. F. Hegel against the idea of abstract moral duties, he knows very well that his talk of a reifying praxis or "stance" must be justified by a notion of true human praxis. It is for this reason that he intersperses throughout the text indications of what a practical human relation to the world *not* affected by the coercion of reification might look like. For instance, an active subject must be

conceived as experiencing the world directly or in an unmediated (*miterlebend*) way,[23] as an "organic part of his personality,"[24] and as "cooperative," whereas objects can be experienced by the active subject as being "qualitatively unique,"[25] "essential,"[26] and particular in content. Yet these anthropologically thoroughly plausible passages stand in an odd contrast to the statements in which Lukács, drawing on Hegel and Johann Fichte, attempts to summarize his vision of "true" human praxis. Here he maintains that we can speak of undistorted human agency only in cases where an object can be thought of as the product of a subject, and where mind and world therefore ultimately coincide with one another.[27] As these passages demonstrate, the conception of "agency" employed in Lukács' critique of reification is decisively influenced by an identity philosophy similar to the one found in Fichte's notion of the mind's spontaneous activity.[28] There can be no doubt nowadays, however, that by grounding his critique of reification in this way, he has robbed it of any chance of social-theoretical justification.[29]

Yet beneath these official, idealistic statements, there are also places in the text where Lukács expresses himself much more moderately. For example, he asserts that genuine, "true" praxis possesses precisely the same characteristics of empathetic engagement and interestedness that have been destroyed by the expansion of commodity exchange. Here Lukács doesn't contrast reifying praxis with a collective subject's production of an object, but with another, intersubjective attitude on the part of the subject. It is with this trace found in Lukács' text that my following considerations will deal. I will now turn to the question of whether it makes sense to reactualize the concept of reification in such a way that it can be understood as an atrophied or distorted form of a more primordial and genuine form of praxis, in which humans take up an empathetic and engaged relationship toward themselves and their surroundings.

Still standing in the way of such an act of rehabilitation, however, is a set of obstacles connected with certain problems in Lukács' treatise that we have not yet dealt with. What makes Lukács' approach so

questionable is not only his "official" strategy of using as his normative point of orientation a concept of praxis in which all objectivity is quite idealistically regarded as emerging from the subjective activity of the species. Just as problematic is his social-theoretical assertion that commodity exchange forms the sole cause of this behavioral transformation that gradually penetrates into all spheres of modern social life. The Marxist premise remains untouched: involvement in economic exchange processes is assumed to have such a profound significance for individuals that it engenders a permanent change, or even a total disruption, of their entire set of relations toward themselves and the world. Furthermore, the question arises in this connection whether Lukács has not gravely underestimated the extent to which highly developed societies require—for reasons of efficiency—that their members learn to deal strategically with themselves and others. If that is indeed true, then a critique of reification should not be as totalizing as Lukács conceives it, but would instead have to exclude spheres of social life in which this kind of observing, detached behavior has a perfectly legitimate place.[30] In what follows, it is not my intention to deal with all these ambiguities and problems systematically and one by one; instead I hope that by reformulating Lukács' concept of reification in an action-theoretical approach, I can prepare the ground for a perspective from which these unsettled questions lose their dramatic character and instead prompt some illuminating speculations.

II. From Lukács to Heidegger and Dewey

We have already seen that in developing his critique of reification, Lukács implicitly offers two opposed alternatives for explaining his recourse to a "true," undistorted form of human praxis. In the "official" version, it seems as if he intends to criticize the reifying practices that have become second nature by judging them against the ideal of a comprehensive form of praxis, in which all of reality

is ultimately engendered by the productive activity of the species. Apart from the fact that it is based on idealist premises, this first model is bound to fail because of its assertion that the existence of every kind of object and nonproduced entity constitutes a case of reification. It is only in the second alternative version of his theory that Lukács seems to take more seriously what he himself says about the derivative, merely "contemplative" mode of practices und attitudes that he classifies as cases of reification. For in this "unofficial" version, which is substantiated in many places in the text, he judges the defect of reifying agency against an ideal of praxis characterized by empathetic and existential engagement. In this version, all idealist overtones are missing, since here he is dealing more with a particular form of interaction than with a kind of world-generating activity. If we follow the indications contained in considerations such as these, we encounter an astounding affinity with ideas developed by John Dewey and Martin Heidegger shortly after the publication of Lukács' text.[31] And if we go a little further along in time, Stanley Cavell could also be said to belong to the ranks of authors whose theories display an affinity with the second version of Lukács' critique.[32] I would first of all like to concentrate on one point of convergence between Lukács and Heidegger in order to provide further illumination of the concept of engaged praxis.

It has often been noted that there is more than one point of contact between Lukács' treatise and Heidegger's *Being and Time*.[33] This theoretical "kinship" becomes even more apparent if one consults Heidegger's 1924 lectures on Aristotle.[34] To recognize the first point of agreement between these two authors properly, however, one must note that Lukács sought to do more than just give a critique of the reifying effects of the capitalist economic system. He also intended to demonstrate that modern philosophy is doomed to run constantly into irresolvable antinomies, because it is rooted in reified everyday culture and thus remains entrapped within the subject-object opposition.[35]

This same task of criticizing modern philosophy for its fixation on the dualism of subject and object also constitutes the starting point of Heidegger's philosophical project. Like Lukács, the author of *Being and Time* is also convinced that the idea that we can neutrally comprehend reality is responsible for the ontological blindness that has prevented an appropriate response to the question concerning the structures of human existence. Of course, Heidegger does not share Lukács' further intention of tracing the philosophical privileging of the subject-object schema itself back to the reified form of life in capitalist society. Social-theoretical considerations remained so alien to Heidegger that he never even made the slightest attempt to question the social roots of the ontological tradition he so thoroughly criticized. Nonetheless, Heidegger and Lukács share the intention of subverting or "destroying" the prevailing conception of an epistemic subject who neutrally encounters an external world, and they do so to such an extent that they are both compelled to present an alternative view.

Heidegger disposes of this task by offering an existential-phenomenological analysis intended to demonstrate that the world is always already disclosed to human beings in their everyday activity. According to Heidegger, we do not encounter reality in the stance of a cognitive subject, but rather we practically cope with the world in such a way that it is given to us as a field of practical significance. The concept that Heidegger employs to characterize the structure of this kind of practical relation to the world is "care."[36] This concept provides a link to Lukács' own attempts to extract a broader concept of praxis by contrasting it with behavior that is merely detached and contemplative. In the same way that Heidegger views the concept of care, Lukács seems to regard the idea of engaged praxis as providing the key to refuting in a fundamental way the prevailing fixation upon the subject-object schema. For in engaged activity, the subject no longer neutrally encounters a reality that still remains to be understood, but is existentially interested in a reality that is always already disclosed as having qualitative significance.

In explaining this second point of contact between these two philosophers, however, one should bear in mind that Lukács proceeds quite differently than did Heidegger. Whereas the author of *Being and Time* intends to demonstrate that the mentalist language employed by traditional ontology only obstructs our view of the factical character of care in everyday existence, Lukács proceeds from the entirely different premise that capitalism's progressive reification eliminates *any* possibility of engaged praxis. Lukács thus *cannot* conceive of his project as unveiling an already present possibility of human existence, but instead as sketching a future possibility. With regard to the problem of traditional ontology, this methodological distinction means that unlike Heidegger, Lukács cannot refute traditional ontology's dominance by mere reference to factical reality. He is instead compelled to find in reality reified circumstances that could only be eliminated by first overcoming capitalist society.

This complication brings up one of the most difficult problems posed by Lukács' text. Upon closer investigation, it isn't at all clear whether he is really arguing that the process of reification has already eliminated all elements of "true" engaged praxis, for the text in many places—above all in the final chapter dealing with the "awakening" of the proletariat to its social and historical situation—gives the opposite impression. In these moments, Lukács, drawing upon Fichte and quoting Marx, attempts to argue that the abolishment of reified social relations can be conceived only as an act in which the working class becomes aware that it is both the author of and an actor in its own drama. According to this conception, it is precisely because the proletariat leads such a deeply demeaning and reified existence that the realization that "social facts are not objects but relations between men" must necessarily arise within this class like a spontaneous *volte-face*.[37] If we strip these historical-philosophical speculations of all idealist glorification and distill them down to their essence, then we are left with the realization that reification has not eliminated the other, non-reified form of praxis but has merely concealed it from our awareness. Like Heidegger, Lukács would also

assume that reified social relations merely represent a false framework for interpretation, an ontological veil concealing the fact of an underlying genuine form of human existence.

If we follow this interpretation, to which Lukács' text hardly offers an alternative, both thinkers can be seen to agree to a great extent on the placement of their respective notions of praxis. Both Lukács' allusions to engaged praxis and Heidegger's notion of care designate that form of practical orientation that is especially characteristic of the structure of the *human* mode of existence. For in opposition to the prevailing conception that has become second nature, and according to which humans primarily and constantly strive to cognize and neutrally apprehend reality, humans in fact exist in a modus of existential engagement, of "caring," through which they disclose a meaningful world. Lukács assumes that even in social circumstances that, due to the expansion of commodity exchange, have been reified, this elementary characteristic of human activity must be present in an at least rudimentary form. Otherwise, Lukács would not be able to assert that only an act of becoming aware of what one is in fact already doing (and not, for instance, some more complex act of anticipation or recollection) is required to bring our practical involvement in the world to light in spite of prevailing reified social relations. In this sense, both thinkers are convinced that even in the midst of the false, ontologically blind present circumstances, the elementary structures of the human form of life characterized by care and existential interestedness are always already there.

This commonality has a further consequence; namely, that Lukács and Heidegger must concur on a decisive third point. Until now, I have maintained that for Lukács, "reification" indicates neither a mere category mistake nor a moral transgression, but rather a false "stance" or habitual form of praxis. However, that can't be wholly correct if both authors indeed agree that the conception of objectified and reified relations is merely a kind of interpretive veil concealing our factical care and empathetic engagement. Given this premise, Lukács must assume that reification doesn't represent a false form

of habitualized praxis, but a false interpretive habit with reference to a "correct" form of praxis that is always given in an at least rudimentary fashion. To speak of "reified" social circumstances would consequently be to allege that agents living under such conditions have a misguided understanding of the practices they have in fact always been carrying out in their everyday lives. At the same time, these false interpretations cannot be conceived as having no influence on the actual actions of these subjects, for Lukács would assert just as vigorously as Heidegger that the reign of the subject-object division and the hegemony of the ontological schema of "presence-at-hand"[38] exercise a negative if not destructive influence on our everyday dealings with the world.

As a consequence of this extra complication, both thinkers are compelled to advocate a proposition with something like the following content: The habit, which has become second nature, of conceiving one's relationship to oneself and to one's surroundings as an activity of neutral cognition of objective circumstances, bestows over time a reified form on human activity, without ever being able to eradicate the original "caring" character of this activity completely. This antecedent characteristic must, in the form of pre-reflective knowledge or marginal practices, remain present in such a way that critical analysis could make us aware of it at any time. To complete his theoretical sketch, Lukács would only have had to add that reified habits of thought originate not so much from the predominance of a false ontology as from the social generalization of commodity exchange—that the increasing transformation of social practices into indifferent, observing activity is ascribable to the constraints imposed upon subjects' interpretive habits by their own involvement in merely calculating processes of exchange.

With that, we have reached a point at which we can now have a go at the question of whether Heidegger's notion of care can in fact contribute to illuminating the concept of praxis upon which Lukács based his critique of reification. We assumed this when considering the second, unofficial alternative for interpreting his theory, in

which Lukács characterizes the structure of genuine human praxis by attempting to determine those elements that reified, merely contemplative behavior seems to lack. This now leads us to the realization that human beings *must* in fact constantly deal with the world in the same engaged and interested manner as Heidegger aimed to show with the notion of care. At first glance, this reference to "care" seems to indicate little more than what is described today as the "perspective of the participant" in contrast to the perspective of a mere observer. In other words, human subjects normally participate in social life by placing themselves in the position of their counterparts, whose desires, dispositions, and thoughts they have learned to understand as the motives for the latter's actions. If, conversely, a subject fails to take over the perspective of another person and thereby takes up a merely detached, contemplative stance toward the other, then the bond of human interaction will be broken, for it will then no longer be maintained by their reciprocal understanding of each other's reasons for acting.[39] The elements characterizing the so-called participant's perspective thus consist of the act of taking over the perspective of another person, and the resulting understanding of the other's reasons for acting.

The question that of course now arises is whether this indeed designates the same aspects of human action that Heidegger and Lukács intended to describe with their respective notions of care and engaged praxis. The question is, Can the intuitions connecting both these authors and their critiques of the predominance of the subject-object schema be appropriately and completely translated into the assertion that the perspective of the participant enjoys a permanent and necessary priority over that of the mere observer? The fact that both Heidegger and Lukács intended their notions of praxis to encompass a person's dealings both with other persons and with his or her surroundings casts doubt on this hypothesis. They didn't conceive of the stance embodied by care or by empathetic engagement as applying solely to the other subject involved in human interaction, but in principle to any and every object involved in the context of human

praxis. And even the use of the term "object" in this context is something that Heidegger would reject, since it remains far too entrapped within the subject-object opposition.[40] The "perspective of the participant" has neither the same range of application as Heidegger's "care" or Lukács' "empathetic engagement" (*Anteilnahme*), nor the same substantive meaning. "Care" and "empathetic engagement" are expressions that, although they designate the act of taking over the perspective of another person, also add an element of affective disposition, even of positive predisposition, which isn't appropriately expressed by the notion that subjects always seek to understand each other's reasons for acting.[41] This marks a razor-thin, yet all the more definite line dividing the intuitions of both our authors from the considerations formulated today with the aid of the concepts of "communicative" or "intentional" stances. While these latter notions aim to point out that human beings generally communicate with one another by reciprocally taking up the role of a second person, Lukács and Heidegger assert that this kind of intersubjective stance is always already connected with an element of positive affirmation and emotional inclination, which is not sufficiently expressed in the attribution of rational motivation to these subjects.

To understand this assertion better, we should take another look at all of its fundamental elements. We assert nothing less than that the human relationship to the self and the world is in the first instance not only genetically, but also categorially bound up with an affirmative attitude, before more neutralized orientations can subsequently arise. We can connect up with our guiding topic by pointing out that the abandonment of the originally given affirmative stance must result in a stance in which the elements of our surroundings are experienced as mere objective entities, as objects that are present-at-hand. "Reification" correspondingly signifies a habit of thought, a habitually ossified perspective, which, when taken up by the subject, leads not only to the loss of her capacity for empathetic engagement, but also to the world's loss of its qualitatively disclosed character. Before I can further pursue the question of whether this clarification

could allow us to continue to employ the concept of reification today, I must first attempt to justify its foundational premise; that is, the assertion that the attitude of care enjoys not only a genetic but also a conceptual priority over a neutral cognition of reality. I intend subsequently to reformulate this assertion by cautiously replacing the Heideggerian notion of care with the originally Hegelian category of "recognition." In this way, I believe it is possible to justify the hypothesis that a recognitional stance enjoys a genetic and categorial priority over all other attitudes toward the self and the world. Not until I have shown this fact will I be able to come back to my guiding question of whether we can today once again sensibly take up Lukács' concept of reification.

In two fascinating essays that appeared shortly after the publication of *History and Class Consciousness,*[42] John Dewey sketched in the terms of his own theory a conception of human beings' primordial relation to the world that parallels those of Lukács and Heidegger in a surprising number of points. Dewey's reflections boil down to the assertion that every rational understanding of the world is always already bound up with a holistic form of experience, in which all elements of a given situation are qualitatively disclosed from a perspective of engaged involvement. If we follow this train of thought far enough, it becomes possible not only to make a transition from the notion of care to that of recognition, but also to demonstrate the primacy of this kind of recognition over all merely cognitive attitudes toward the world.

Like Lukács and Heidegger, Dewey is skeptical of the traditional view according to which our primary relationship to the world is constituted by a neutral confrontation with an object to be understood. Although he neither uses the concept of reification to characterize this doctrine nor shares the pathos of Heidegger's worldview as far as the phenomenon that he is describing is concerned, Dewey agrees with these two thinkers that the predominance of the subject-object model cannot help but leave its impression on society's conception of itself. He asserts with Heidegger and Lukács that the

longer we hold on to the traditional opposition of subject and object, the more our life practices will be damaged, since cognition and feelings, theory and practice, science and art will thereby be more and more torn apart.[43] The rationale that Dewey offers for his critique of the "spectator model" of knowledge,[44] however, turns out to be considerably more direct and simple than that of Lukács or Heidegger. Without any culture-critical digressions, he attempts to demonstrate with arguments from epistemology and the philosophy of language that our emotionally saturated practical dealings with the world provide the basis for all rational knowledge. Dewey begins his explanation with the assertion that all existential propositions have their cognitive roots in situations that "despite their internal complexity for the acting subject are thoroughly dominated and characterized by a single quality."[45] Regardless of whether we interact with other people or deal with material objects, the characteristics of a given situation will always be saturated in a certain quality of experience that does not permit distinctions between emotional, cognitive, and volitional elements. That which we experience in such moments, and which constitutes the "moods" or "attunements" (Heidegger) of these kinds of situations, dominates our understanding of ourselves and our world in such a comprehensive way that it is impossible for us to isolate one particular aspect of a given situation.

According to Dewey, it is in this underlying quality of all our experience that the existential immediacy and practical involvement of our dealings with the world are brought to bear. He employed the term "interaction"[46] to indicate that our everyday activity is not characterized by a self-centered, egocentric stance, but by the effort to involve ourselves with given circumstances in the most frictionless, harmonious way possible. Just as is true of the mode of care, in interaction the world is not centered around us; instead, we experience situations in such a way that we "take care" to maintain a fluent interaction with our surroundings. In what follows, I will refer to this primordial form of relating to the world as "recognition" in its most elementary form. For the moment, I merely want to emphasize the

fact that our actions do not primarily have the character of an affectively neutral, cognitive stance toward the world, but rather that of an affirmative, existentially colored style of caring comportment. In living, we constantly concede to the situational circumstances of our world a value of their own, which brings us to be concerned with our relationship to them. On this elementary level, the concept of recognition thus shares a fundamental notion not only with Dewey's concept of practical involvement, but also with Heidegger's care and Lukács' engaged praxis; namely, the notion that the stance of empathetic engagement in the world, arising from the experience of the world's significance and value (*Werthaftigkeit*),[47] is prior to our acts of detached cognition. A recognitional stance therefore embodies our active and constant assessment of the value that persons or things have in themselves.

Dewey intends to demonstrate that we can succeed in rationally breaking down and analyzing an experienced situation only by detaching ourselves from the qualitative unity of this situation, by distancing ourselves from this experience. The analytic components that we require to deal intellectually with a problem of action result from the reflexive attempt to separate retroactively the components that we have experienced in their unity as part of a single qualitative experience. Only at this point, when we secondarily "process" a situation by dissecting it into emotional and cognitive elements, can we distill an object of cognition, which the acting individual can then encounter as an affectively neutral subject. This subject can now employ the whole of her attention, which had previously been fully "lost" in the act of immediate experience, as cognitive energy toward the intellectual handling of a problem that, as the object of the subject's attention, banishes all other situational elements to the background. However, Dewey never fails to emphasize that the primordial, qualitative content of experience cannot be allowed simply to vanish in this cognitive process of abstraction; otherwise, the harmful fiction of a merely existing object—of a mere "given"[48]—may emerge. For as soon as we have forgotten the kind of qualitative

experience that obtained at the beginning of our reflective endeavors, we lose sight of the reason for which we undertook this reflection in the first place. To not lose sight of the goal of our entire mental operation, we must constantly and consciously keep this operation's origin in qualitative experience in the background.

Dewey makes this demand clear in the case of simple predication, which he regards as an example for the linguistic act of abstraction involved in the attempt to fixate upon an object of cognition. If we take any arbitrary statement possessing a subject-object form, this linguistic form itself suggests that hereby a characteristic has merely been attributed to a given entity. If we remain at this level of predication, it ultimately remains ontologically impossible to determine the relationship in which the characteristic actually stands with the apparently independent entity. This riddle can't be solved until we subsequently realize that the predicative statement results from the attempt to abstract from an original qualitative experience. For it then becomes clear that subject and object "correlatively" complement one another by virtue of having originally indicated the direction of movement contained in a qualitatively experienced engagement with the world.[49] In a manner clearly reminiscent of Heidegger's distinction between "readiness-to-hand" and "presence-at-hand," Dewey illustrates his argument with the predication that "Man is mortal." This statement doesn't lose the character of mere attribution until we translate it into the original, transitive form "men die," which articulates the "care" for "human destiny" that stood at the origin of the linguistic process of abstraction.[50]

Dewey is evidently convinced that all statements in which humans are defined by a predicate can be deciphered following this pattern. He sees these kinds of predications as being merely the result of an analytical reformulation of the fears, concerns, and hopes that we feel toward other persons when we encounter them in our customary stance of recognition. At this point, both elements of the later declarative sentence are still "correlative" to each other, as they form underlying qualities of experience that reveal the direction of our

care only in their interplay. Consequently, there "is" no already clearly outlined and fixed entity with the name "man" existing independently of the qualitative effect that we anticipate in our existential engagement. Not until this experience has been transformed into a general declarative statement is the context torn apart that previously connected the experienced person and the felt effect. It is at this point that the ontological fiction can arise that there "exist" humans lacking all characteristics, fictive because we ascribe these attributes to these humans only in the act of predication. This is why Dewey speaks, just as Wilfred Sellars later does, and in a formulation whose substance—if not its wording—is once again reminiscent of Heidegger, of the "deceptive idea of the 'given' ": "The only thing that is unqualifiedly given is the total pervasive quality; and the objection to calling it 'given' is that the word suggests something *to* which it is given, mind or thought or consciousness or whatever, as well possibly as something that gives. In truth 'given' in this connection signifies only that the quality immediately exists, or is brutely there. In this capacity, it forms that to which all objects of thought refer."[51] Taking these considerations as my starting point, I would like to demonstrate that recognition enjoys both a genetic and a conceptual priority over cognition.

III. The Priority of Recognition

To explain why I believe that empathetic engagement precedes a neutral grasping of reality, that recognition comes before cognition, I must go beyond the theoretical-historical framework within which I have been moving up to this point. Independent evidence and arguments are required in order to demonstrate without merely invoking philosophical authorities that a layer of existential engagement indeed provides the basis for our entire objectifying relation to the world. Not until we have taken this step can we sketch how the concept of "reification" must be constituted if it is to preserve Lukács'

intuitions in a recognition-theoretical form. As a contrast against which I intend to set off my own assertions, I will once again employ the idea that human behavior is distinguished by the communicative stance achieved through taking over a second person's perspective. I contend by contrast that this ability to take over the perspective of another person is itself rooted in a kind of antecedent interaction that bears the characteristic features of existential care. I intend to substantiate this hypothesis first of all from a genetic point of view by taking a look at the cognitive preconditions that are contained in the way in which children acquire the ability to take over the perspective of another (1). I will then turn to the much more difficult task of a systematic or categorial proof of this hypothesis (2).

(1)

In the fields of developmental psychology and socialization research, it has long been agreed that the emergence of children's abilities to think and interact must be conceived as a process that occurs in the act of taking over another person's perspective. According to this conception, which derives from a synthesis of either Jean Piaget and G. H. Mead[52] or Donald Davidson and Freud,[53] the acquisition of cognitive abilities in the child's development process is peculiarly bound up with the formation of primary relations of communication. A child thus learns to relate to an objective world of stable and constant objects by taking up the perspective of a second person, thereby gradually decentering his or her own primarily egocentric perspective. The fact that an infant comes into contact very early with a figure of attachment ("psychological parent"), taking up this person's view and steering it toward certain significant objects, is interpreted by these theories to be an indication of a phase of experimentation in which a child tests out the independence of another perspective on the surrounding world. To the extent that she succeeds in placing herself in the perspective of this second person and then in perceiving the surrounding world, an infant acquires an authority who can

correct her judgments about the world, allowing her for the first time to perceive objects in an impersonalized, objective way. The age at which children acquire the ability to carry out this kind of triangulation[54] is generally considered to be nine months. This is why recent research speaks of the "nine month revolution,"[55] because it is at this age that a child acquires the ability to perceive an attachment figure as an intentional agent, whose stance toward the surrounding world is likewise goal-oriented and therefore of the same significance as the child's own relation to the world.

What is notable about all these developmental psychology theories—which, like the theories of G. H. Mead or Donald Davidson, emphasize the necessity of taking over another's perspective for the emergence of symbolic thought—is the extent to which they ignore the emotional side of the relationship between children and their figures of attachment. Mead had a certain tendency to describe a child's early step of taking over the perspective of a concrete second person as if the child's affective connection to this second person didn't play any significant role.[56] And indeed, a certain tendency toward cognitivism can be said to prevail among the greater majority of attempts to explain the origin of mental activity in the child's communicative relationship to a figure of attachment. The triangular relationship in which a child after phases of protoconversation places herself as soon as she has suspected the independence of a second person's perspective is described by these theories as being a largely emotionless space. Only very recently have there been some attempts to reverse these cognitivist abstractions by making comparative investigations of children with autism. These investigations have demonstrated with astounding regularity that a small child must first have emotionally identified with an attachment figure before he can accept this person's stance toward the world as a corrective authority. It is on these kinds of findings that I would like to build so as to prove the ontogenetic priority of recognition over cognition.

It is most likely the empirical comparison with autistic children that has allowed these investigations to develop a greater sensitivity

to the affective components of the infant's interaction with people and objects in his surroundings. These theories generally trace the cause of autism back to the fact that diverse and usually constitutional barriers prevent the affected child from developing feelings of attachment to the primary parent figure. By contrast, both Peter Hobson and Michael Tomasello—to name just two researchers in this field—point out that in the case of children *not* affected by autism, this kind of emotional identification with others is absolutely necessary to the taking over of another person's perspective, which in turn leads to the development of the capacity for symbolic thought.[57] The starting point of these investigations consists in the same transition from primary to secondary intersubjectivity that the cognitivist approaches also have in mind. These theories suggest that at the age of nine months, a child makes several notable advances in interactive behavior. He or she acquires the ability to point out objects to his or her attachment figure by means of protodeclarative gestures and then to view these objects with this person; he or she can further make his or her attitude toward meaningful objects dependent upon the expressive behavior with which this other person reacts to these objects; and finally, the child appears, in doing what G. H. Mead calls "playing," to grasp gradually the fact that familiar meanings can be uncoupled from their original objects and transferred to *other* objects, whose newly borrowed function can then be creatively dealt with. The theoretical approaches I have been distinguishing concur with each other to a great extent as to the proper description of these or similar advances in the child's learning process. They both emphasize the developments in communicative interaction by which a child learns step by step and through the perspective of a second person to perceive objects as entities in an objective world that exists independently of our thoughts and feelings about it. Unlike the cognitivists, however, Hobson and Tomasello contend that a child could not make all these advances if he or she had not already developed a feeling of emotional attachment to a psychological parent, for it is only by way of this antecedent identification that the child is able to be moved,

motivated, and swept along by the presence of a concrete second person in such a way as to comprehend this person's changes of attitude in an interested way.

The specific nature of this theory can best be illuminated by turning once again to the differences between this approach and the cognitivist approach in explaining the causes of autism. Whereas the customary, cognitivist approaches are compelled to trace the origin of autistic behavior back to cognitive deficits related to disturbances in the child's abilities to think and speak, Tomasello and Hobson attribute the decisive cause to the child's lack of receptiveness to the emotional presence of attachment figures. This psychological detachment may itself be genetically conditioned, but what is decisive is the fact that an autistic child is thereby structurally prevented from emotionally identifying with a concrete second person. Martin Dornes summarizes the results of this explanation's awareness of the role of affectivity in autism in a way that links up well with my original topic. Because autistic children are "emotionally unreceptive, they remain entrapped within their own perspective on the world and don't become familiar with any other perspective. They don't see, or rather they don't *feel* that facial expressions, bodily movements and communicative gestures give expression to attitudes. They are blind to the expressive mental content of such phenomena, or rather to their meaning. An autistic infant thus isn't 'mentally blind' due to a cognitive deficit, but rather because he or she is in the first instance *emotionally* blind."[58]

I would like to point out in passing that Theodor W. Adorno made some similar remarks in certain places in his works—above all in *Minima Moralia* and *Negative Dialectics*. Formulations can be found again and again in these texts which indicate that Adorno, like Hobson or Tomasello, recognized that the human mind arises out of an early imitation of a loved figure of attachment. Indeed, he states in a well-known aphorism from *Minima Moralia* that a person doesn't become a person until he or she imitates other persons. Immediately afterward he writes that this kind of imitation constitutes the "arche-

type of love."[59] At issue here is the same act of decentering that the other two authors regard as the starting point of the child's mentation—that is, a kind of existential, even affective sympathy toward other persons that allows children to experience their perspectives on the world for the first time as having significance. The act of placing oneself in the perspective of a second person requires an antecedent form of recognition that cannot be grasped in purely cognitive or epistemic concepts, as it always and necessarily contains an element of involuntary openness, devotedness, or love. This devotion to (or, as Adorno states in psychoanalytical terms, this "libidinal cathexis" of objects) is what allows children to place themselves in the perspective of another in such a way that they can acquire a broader and ultimately depersonalized conception of reality.

Of course, this notion out of developmental psychology cannot be equated with the ideas that I have derived from the works of Lukács, Heidegger, and Dewey when I tried to demonstrate the convergence of the various notions that the three of them employ. There I was concerned with arguing for the general priority enjoyed by a particular stance of engagement or recognition over all other forms of relating to the world; here I am concerned with showing that emotional receptivity comes before the transition to cognition of intersubjectively given objects in a strictly temporal sense. Neither the type of priority nor the specific character of that which is said to have priority is the same in both cases; emotional attachment or identification with another concrete person is indeed distinct from the concepts of fundamental existential care or concern that Heidegger or Dewey had in mind. I do believe, however, that this ontogenetic finding offers a first indication of the plausibility of my general assertion. For it appears to be true that it is from the perspective of a loved one that small children first gain an inkling of the abundance of existential significance that situational circumstances can have for people. Therefore, it is through this emotional attachment to a "concrete other" that a world of meaningful qualities is disclosed to a child *as* a world in which he must involve himself practically. Genesis

and validity—or in Marxist terms, history and logic—should not be torn apart to such an extent that the conditions under which a child's thinking originates lose their relevance for the categorial significance of our knowledge of the world.

This is precisely how Adorno intended for his statements on the affective basis of our cognitive acts to be understood. The fact that it is from the perspective of a loved figure of attachment that children arrive at an objective understanding of reality indicates at the same time that the more perspectives on a single object of perception we can gather, the more appropriate and precise our knowledge of objects will be. Just as is true of small children, however, so also for adults this act of taking over other perspectives, which will always reveal to us a new aspect of an object, is attached to the hardly accessible prerequisite of emotional receptivity or identification. In this sense, Adorno holds that the preciseness of our knowledge depends on the extent of emotional recognition or affective acceptance of as many perspectives as possible. With that, I have already left the sphere of developmental psychology argumentation and have subtly slipped into the arena of categorial substantiation.

(2)

What I hope to have been able to show by this point in my account is that in ontogenesis—that is, in a chronologically understood process—recognition must precede cognition. If the investigations previously mentioned are indeed correct, then the individual's learning process functions in such a way that a small child first of all identifies with her figures of attachment and must have emotionally recognized them before she can arrive at knowledge of objective reality by means of these other perspectives. Although my last comments on Adorno were intended as a hint that these intersubjective emotional conditions surrounding the origin of our thinking processes most likely also reveal something about the conditions of validity of our thought, these kinds of speculations cannot of course substitute for

the arguments that would be necessary if one wished to assert the priority of recognition over cognition in a conceptual sense. Both Heidegger and Dewey, and presumably Lukács as well, had this kind of conceptual priority in mind when they asserted that our epistemic relation to the world must be preceded by a stance of care, existential involvement, or recognition. These authors intended to demonstrate that our efforts to acquire knowledge of the world must either fail or lose their meaning if we lose sight of this antecedent act of recognition. Thus Heidegger regards even the most objectified, "scientific" knowledge of behavior as a derivative of the antecedent stance that he describes with the term "care."[60] John Dewey writes that all research must remain aware of its origin in the diffuse problematic of everyday uncertainty so as not to lose sight of its "regulative principle."[61]

I would now like to take up a third approach—one that is closer to our topic—to demonstrate that our cognitive relation to the world is also attached in a conceptual sense to a stance of recognition. Stanley Cavell's reflections on the relation between cognition and recognition are certainly worth a look in this connection.

Cavell arrives at his concept of acknowledgment through his critique of the notion that we could ever have direct, unmediated knowledge of other persons' mental states, of so-called other minds.[62] He is convinced that the proponents of such an assumption are much too accepting of a premise that actually stems from their opponents—the skeptics—who doubt the possibility of such certainty. Skeptics have always regarded the issue of possible access to other people's mental states as an epistemic challenge, demanding an answer to this challenge in categories of certain knowledge. Yet Cavell contends that as long as anti-skeptics attempt to refute skeptics head-on on these terms, they will be condemned to failure, for they ultimately cannot dispute the fact that our knowledge of others' mental states can never have the kind of qualitative certainty that characterizes the first-person perspective. The attempt to describe our access to another subject's mental states on the model of a cognitive relation does not do justice to the fact that mental states simply aren't objects

of knowledge. Even the mere assertion that I "know" about my own pain or my own envy belies the fact that I am far too caught up in or "impaled upon"[63] these mental states to be able to claim that I have detached cognition or knowledge of them. In my relations to others, I am not an object about which I impart information through descriptive statements; rather, as Cavell says with Wittgenstein, a subject discloses his mental states to another person by bringing these states to the other person's attention.

Up to this point, Cavell's line of reasoning proceeds very similarly to Jean-Paul Sartre's in the third part of *Being and Nothingness,* where Sartre presents his own critique of skepticism.[64] He is also convinced that skepticism concerning other minds cannot be refuted as long as one retains the premise that our access to other persons is primarily cognitive. To assume this kind of relation to others is to construct an ideal of epistemic certainty that is not attainable, simply because my own mental states can in no way be objects of knowledge or cognition for me. According to Sartre, this asymmetry can only be overcome by conceiving of a subject's relation to another person in the same way in which we conceive of the relation between a second subject and that subject's *own* mental states. Just as we do not in this case speak of knowledge, but of affectedness or involvement, we should not conceive of a communicative agent as an epistemic subject, but instead as an existentially engaged subject who doesn't merely neutrally take notice of other persons' emotional states, but is rather affected by them in his own self-conception.

On this topic, despite all their methodological differences, Cavell and Sartre agree to a great extent. After demonstrating that assertions about one's own emotional states cannot be understood as statements of knowledge, Cavell draws consequences for our understanding of elementary relations of interaction that come very close to those found in Sartre's phenomenological analysis. Just as a speaker normally discloses his emotions to a second person by bringing attention to them without recourse to knowledge, the linguistic reaction of the listener cannot be interpreted as an act of cognition

either. Rather, it is only through the listener's "sympathy" with the emotions that the speaker has brought to her attention that she gives her response. Cavell remarks, "I might say here that the reason 'I know you are in pain' is not an expression of certainty is that it is a response to this exhibiting; it is an expression of *sympathy*."[65]

In describing this notion of "sympathy," we have come very close to the issue in Cavell's line of argumentation that is most relevant for my concern. Following Wittgenstein, he wants to claim that a certain stance, in which a subject feels existentially involved in the emotional world of another subject, must precede all possible cognitive knowledge of that other subject's mental states. Once I have done this and thereby established a connection to another person, I can then perceive the other's expressions of emotion as that which they really are: that is, as making a claim on me and demanding an appropriate reaction. For Cavell, "to acknowledge" is thus to take up a stance in which the behavioral expressions of a second person can be understood as demands to react in some specific way.[66] A person who does not react in any way, not even in a negative way, only thereby expresses the fact that he or she has not properly understood the emotional expression of the other person. In this sense, Cavell connects the understanding of statements of emotion with the need to adopt a recognitional stance. Conversely, he regards the inability to take up such a stance as ultimately signifying an inability to maintain social relationships.[67]

It is at this point that Cavell and Sartre part ways. It is true that both authors replace the cognitivist model of social interaction, which they hold to be a burden inherited from the tradition of skepticism, with a model of reciprocal affectedness that both label "recognition." Indeed, subjects are generally certain of having another subject with mental properties before them, since they are touched by this second subject's emotional states in such a way that they see themselves compelled to react in a certain way. Whereas Sartre concludes negatively from this existential fact that subjects reciprocally limit each other's freedom for boundless transcendence,[68] however, Cavell is

content to make a therapeutic reference to the necessary priority of acknowledgment. He sees the danger implied in the everyday seduction of the cognitivist model to be so great as to demand a constant reminder of the fact of mutual sympathy. Cavell's language-theoretical discussion is intended primarily to defend against a false image of interpersonal communication. He maintains that the fabric of social interaction is not, as philosophers often assume, spun out of the material of cognitive acts, but instead out of that of recognitional stances. The reason that we don't normally have any difficulty understanding the emotional statements of other subjects is that we have already taken up a stance in which the invitation to act contained in these statements appears to us as a self-evident given.

This last summary should have made clear why I feel that Cavell's analysis systematically reinforces the position I have been presenting here, but to which I have until now taken a merely historical approach. In my view, Lukács, Heidegger, and Dewey were all already convinced that recognition must generally precede cognition in the sphere of social activity. The findings that I presented from the realm of developmental psychology have reinforced this conceptual sketch in a temporal or genetic sense. But only now with recourse to Cavell has it become possible to go beyond the temporal sense of this assertion and defend its *categorial* meaning, for according to his analysis, we can understand the meaning of a particular class of linguistic propositions only if we are in that stance or attitude which he describes as "acknowledgment." To put it briefly, the acknowledgment of the other constitutes a non-epistemic prerequisite for linguistic understanding. Cavell also appears to agree with the intentions of the other three authors in holding that this form of recognition signifies something more than or different from what is customarily understood when we speak of "adopting a communicative stance" or "taking over another person's perspective." Just as is the case with Heidegger's concept of care, Cavell's concept of acknowledgment contains an element of empathetic engagement or sympathy, of an antecedent act of identification, which is ignored by

those who claim that understanding other people requires nothing more than an understanding of their reasons for acting.

Cavell is not claiming that by taking up such a stance of acknowledgment, we will always demonstrate a sympathetic and affectionate reaction. He also regards mere indifference or negative feelings as possible forms of intersubjective acknowledgment, as long as they solely reflect a non-epistemic affirmation of the other person's human personality.[69] Thus the adjective "positive," as I have used it in connection with the concept of empathetic engagement (*Anteilnahme*), mustn't be understood as referring to positive, friendly emotions. This adjective instead signifies the existential fact—which certainly has implications for our affects—that we necessarily affirm the value of another person in the stance of recognition, even if we might curse or hate that person at a given moment. But perhaps we could go a step beyond Cavell and assert that even in cases where we recognize other persons in an emotionally negative way, we still always have a residual intuitive sense of not having done full justice to their personalities. In such a situation, that element in our recognitional stance which we customarily call "conscience" would be at issue.

In any case, we can see that the recognitional stance at issue here represents a wholly elementary form of intersubjective activity, but one that does not yet imply the perception of the *specific* value of another person. The stance that Heidegger names "care" (*Sorge*) or "solicitude" (*Fürsorge*) and which Dewey names "involvement" lies below the threshold at which that particular form of mutual recognition takes place in which the other person's specific characteristics are affirmed.[70] Nevertheless, there remains a difference between Cavell and the other authors that makes it difficult simply to add Cavell's analysis to the philosophical tradition I have been describing. Unlike Heidegger, Dewey, or Lukács, Cavell appears to limit the validity of that which he calls a "stance of acknowledgment" solely to the sphere of interpersonal communication. Any notion suggesting that we also necessarily find ourselves already in a recognitional stance toward nonhuman objects is apparently alien to his theory.

I will have to come back to this contrast in now turning once again to the issue of reification, the explanation of which I am above all concerned with here.

IV. Reification as Forgetfulness of Recognition

In the preceding section, I have presented several pieces of evidence which, although they vary in their respective emphases, all ultimately point in the same direction. Both the above-described theories of developmental psychology and Cavell's analysis reinforce the assertion that in human social behavior, recognition and empathetic engagement necessarily enjoy a simultaneously genetic and categorial priority over cognition and a detached understanding of social facts. Without this antecedent act of recognition, infants could not take over the perspectives of their figures of attachment, and adults would be incapable of properly understanding the linguistic propositions of those with whom they interact. Of course, none of these reinforcing theories asserts that we must also necessarily take up this kind of engaged recognitional stance when encountering non-human objects. For developmental psychology, emotional identification with a concrete second person is regarded as a prerequisite of all thought, without its being necessary, however, that we take a specific stance toward objects. Because of the particular interests of his philosophical project, Cavell doesn't address our relation to nature at all. For the moment, I would like to put aside this difficulty in order once again to pick up the thread of my argument where I left it before diving into the elucidation of the primacy of recognition. My original question was, How can the concept of reification be formulated once again for us today in a way that takes as much account as possible of Lukács' original intentions?

As shown above, reification can be understood neither as an epistemic category mistake nor as a transgression against moral principles. Unlike a category mistake, reification refers to something that

is not simply epistemic, but a habit or form of behavior. It can also be distinguished from a moral wrong by the fact that it cannot be traced to an ascribable instance of liability or guilt. As was made especially clear in the comparison with Heidegger, Lukács intended "reification" to be understood as a kind of mental habit or habitually ossified perspective, which when taken up by human subjects causes them to lose their ability for empathetic engagement in other persons and occurrences. He was convinced that to the same degree to which this loss occurs, subjects would become transformed into neutral spectators, to whom not only their social and physical surroundings, but also their own mental life necessarily appear as an ensemble of merely thing-like entities.

We can now assert with hindsight that for Lukács, "reification" must be a name for both a process and a result.[71] It indicates *both* the occurrence of a loss—the substitution of a secondary and false human stance for a genuine and correct one—*and* the result of a reifying perception. In the meantime, we have come to see that there are many good reasons for assuming that prior to all our cognitive attitudes, at least with regard to the world of social relations, we take up an antecedent stance of recognition or engagement. But how can Lukács justify the assertion that a loss of this genuine form of behavior is possible, if it is indeed so deeply rooted in the human way of living? This question contains the greatest difficulty for an attempt to revive the concept of reification, for unlike Heidegger, who can here point out the deforming effect of ontological world-pictures, Lukács is compelled to explain this loss by means of social circumstances—in other words, by means of a network of social practices and institutions in which, as I have shown, these recognitional stances must have effect. How then can the process of reification be explicated as a social occurrence, if that which is supposedly lost is of such major significance for human sociality that it must somehow be expressed in *all* social occurrences?

There is really only one answer to this question that can be found in *History and Class Consciousness,* which is, however, so

unconvincing that Lukács himself later rejected it.[72] We must consequently conceive of the process of reification as precisely that occurrence through which the genuine, involved human perspective is neutralized to such a degree that it ultimately transforms into objectifying thought. One could say with Dewey that in this case reification consists in nothing but this reflexive act of detachment through which we, for the purpose of attaining objective knowledge, extract ourselves from the experience of qualitative interaction in which all of our knowledge is always already anchored. If this view is correct, if reification is indeed identical with an objectification of our thought, then every social occurrence demanding such objectification would be a manifestation of the process of reification. In fact, there are many passages in *History and Class Consciousness* which suggest that Lukács intends to assert that reification consists solely of a socially compelled neutralization of our antecedent stance of empathetic engagement. We can already see that this assumption must be inaccurate, because it would have totalizing ramifications; until now we have understood the antecedent act of recognition not as the contrary of objectified thought but as its condition of possibility. In the same way that Heidegger conceived of scientific knowledge as a possible and legitimate continuation of "care,"[73] Dewey was also convinced that all objective thought is rooted in the reflexive neutralization of our original qualitative experiences. Both of these thinkers regarded the recognitional stance as a practical, non-epistemic attitude that must be taken up if one is to attain knowledge of the world or other persons. It thus appears highly implausible to assume with Lukács that this kind of recognitional perspective must stand in any kind of tension with cognition, or that they might even be irreconcilable. In fact, the objective understanding of persons, objects, or issues is a possible product of an antecedent act of recognition and is not its polar opposite.

Moreover, the way in which Lukács equates reification and objectification leads to a highly questionable conception of social processes of development. Essentially, Lukács must hold that every social innovation that requires that we neutralize our original act of

recognition and make this neutralization institutionally permanent is a case of reification. Thus he ultimately cannot avoid regarding everything that Max Weber described as part of the process of social rationalization in the European modern age as a social totalization of reification. Yet because Lukács is also compelled to assert that this original stance of empathetic engagement can never be lost—since, after all, it lies at the base of all social relations—his conception of society here comes up against its limit. If everything within a society is reified just because it urges the adoption of an objectifying attitude, then human sociality must have vanished completely. All these regrettable consequences result from Lukács' conceptual strategy of reducing objectification to reification. For my purposes here, it suffices to note that reification must be understood differently than Lukács understands it in his own work.

To a certain extent, Lukács' conception of reification is not sufficiently complex, not sufficiently abstract. By treating every situation in which recognition gets supplanted by an objectifying stance of cognition toward objects and persons as an instance of reification, he implicitly repudiates the significance of the increase of objectivity in social development processes. One possible way of avoiding Lukács' mistake might be to draw upon external criteria to decide in which spheres a recognitional stance is required and in which spheres an objectifying stance is more functionally appropriate. Habermas, for instance, took this functionalist path in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, in attempting to conceive "reification" as precisely the process through which strategic, "contemplative" (*beobachtende*) modes of behavior penetrate into social spheres in which communicative orientations are "functionally necessary."[74] The disadvantage of this kind of conceptual strategy, however, is quite clearly that it implicitly loads these functionalist distinctions with a normative burden of proof that they cannot possibly shoulder. The question concerning the point at which objectifying attitudes unfold their reifying effects cannot be answered by speaking of functional requirements in an apparently nonnormative way.[75]

For this reason, I suspect that the question of finding appropriate criteria for reification must be posed in a different way altogether. As long as we retain the simplistic conception that every form of detached observation is opposed to antecedent recognition, we do not take sufficient account of the fact that the neutralization of recognition and engagement normally serves the purpose of intelligent problem solving. So instead of allowing the danger of reification to arise wherever the recognitional stance has been abandoned, as Lukács does, we should orient ourselves in our search toward the superordinate criteria for judging the kind of relation that these two distinct attitudes have to one another. At this higher level, where we are concerned with the modus of this relationship, we can discern two poles capable of replacing the opposition with which Lukács had been operating. We have, on the one hand, forms of knowledge sensitive to recognition, and, on the other, forms of knowledge in which every trace of their origin in an antecedent act of recognition has been lost.

These somewhat complicated formulations are intended to articulate the fact that it is prima facie most advisable for us to distinguish between two modes in which these two kinds of stances relate to one another: they are either transparent to each other or obscure, accessible or inaccessible. In the first case, the act of cognition or detached observation remains conscious of its dependence on an antecedent act of recognition; in the second case, it has freed itself of the knowledge of this dependency and deludes itself that it has become autonomous of all non-epistemic prerequisites. By further pursuing Lukács' intention at a higher level, this kind of "forgetfulness of recognition" can now be termed "reification." I thereby mean to indicate the process by which we lose the consciousness of the degree to which we owe our knowledge and cognition of other persons to an antecedent stance of empathetic engagement and recognition.

Before I proceed to make this assertion more plausible, I would first like to demonstrate briefly that this assertion is wholly compatible with the intentions of some of the authors that I have already dealt

with above. Dewey, to whom the Continental notion of reification was wholly alien, repeatedly hints in the essays cited above that our reflexive thought risks becoming pathological as soon as it loses sight of its roots in a qualitative experience of interaction. By shutting out the origin of these thoughts, an increasing tendency emerges in all of our scientific efforts to forget those elements of existential affectedness for the sake of which we undertook these efforts in the first place.[76] Cavell doesn't argue very differently when he asserts that this antecedent act of recognition must be conceived as an "exhibiting of the object of knowledge";[77] this conversely means that if we are not conscious of this original experience of direct engagement, we don't even really know what we are dealing with when we interact with other persons. Adorno emphasized more than any other writer the fact that the appropriateness and quality of our conceptual thought is dependent upon the degree to which we are capable of remaining conscious of the original connection of our thought to an object of desire—a beloved person or thing. He even regarded the memory of this antecedent act of recognition as providing a kind of guarantee that a given act of cognition has not constructed its object but has grasped it in all its concrete particularity.[78]

None of these three authors set the non-epistemic requirement of empathetic engagement in polar opposition to conceptual thought; rather, they were all convinced that it is at the moment in which our reflexive efforts lose consciousness of their origin in an act of antecedent recognition that we cross the threshold to pathology, skepticism or—as Adorno would have called it—identity thought. It is this element of forgetting, of amnesia, that I would like to establish as the cornerstone for a redefinition of the concept of "reification." To the extent to which in our acts of cognition we lose sight of the fact that these acts owe their existence to our having taken up an antecedent recognitional stance, we develop a tendency to perceive other persons as mere insensate objects. By speaking here of mere objects or "things," I mean that in this kind of amnesia, we lose the ability to understand immediately the behavioral expressions of other persons

as making claims on us—as demanding that we react in an appropriate way. We may indeed be capable in a cognitive sense of perceiving the full spectrum of human expressions, but we lack, so to speak, the feeling of connection that would be necessary for us to be affected by the expressions we perceive. In this respect, forgetting our antecedent recognition, which I take to be the core of all forms of reification, indeed corresponds to the result produced by a perceptive reification of the world. In other words, our social surroundings appear here, very much as in the autistic child's world of perception, as a totality of merely observable objects lacking all psychic impulse or emotion.

By shifting the concept of reification from a simple level, at which it merely signifies the opposite of engagement or recognition, to a complex level, at which it describes a particular relation between recognition and cognition, we of course raise a series of problems that are not exactly easy to solve. First of all, we require at least a rough idea of how the cognitive process can cause our antecedent recognition to be forgotten. Where Lukács describes in his overly simple model the way in which merely contemplative behavior displaces activity and praxis, he inserts the social factor of "the market." He is convinced that it is the anonymous behavioral compulsions of the capitalist free market system that cause subjects to take up a merely cognitive stance toward their surroundings. But if we replace this simple concept of reification with our higher level concept, we cannot move as directly and immediately to the sociological level of explanation as Lukács did. Instead, we must explain beforehand in what way it is at all possible for us subsequently to lose sight of the recognitional prerequisites of social practices while carrying out these very practices. Normally it is said that the particular rules that we learn more through habitual practice than through explicit instruction cannot later be unlearned. So how could it be possible that the both chronologically and categorially antecedent act of recognition could be forgotten in the course of our everyday acts of cognition? I feel that it becomes easier to answer this question once it has been made clear that "to forget" does not here possess the strong mean-

ing that is generally employed in the term "to unlearn" (*verlernen*). It cannot be true that our consciousness can simply be dispossessed of this fact of recognition and that recognition thereby "vanishes" from view. Instead, a kind of reduced attentiveness must be at issue, which causes the fact of recognition to fall into the background and thus to slip out of our sight. Reification in the sense of "forgetfulness of recognition" therefore means that in the course of our acts of cognition, we lose our attentiveness to the fact that this cognition owes its existence to an antecedent act of recognition.

Now there are at least two exemplary cases of this form of reduced attentiveness that are quite helpful for the task of distinguishing between different origins of reification. *First,* in the course of our practices we might pursue a goal so energetically and one-dimensionally that we stop paying attention to other, possibly more original and important motives and aims. An example of this phenomenon might be the tennis player who, in her ambitious focus on winning, forgets that her opponent is in fact her best friend, for the sake of whom she took up the game in the first place. The way in which her goal becomes independent of the context in which it originated is, in my opinion, one of the two patterns according to which we can make sense of how reification comes about: we stop attending to the fact of antecedent recognition, because in the course of our practices the purpose of observing and cognizing our surroundings asserts its independence, so to speak, to such a degree that it banishes everything else to the background. *Second,* a series of thought schemata that influence our practices by leading to a selective interpretation of social facts can significantly reduce our attentiveness for meaningful circumstances in a given situation. I'd prefer to abstain from giving an example here, because the case is so well known that it doesn't require a trivial illustration. In the course of our practices, our attentiveness to the fact of antecedent recognition can also be lost if we allow ourselves to be influenced by thought schemata and prejudices that are irreconcilable with this fact. In this sense, it would make much more sense to speak here not of "forgetting" but of "denial" or "defensiveness" (*Abwehr*).

By distinguishing between these two cases, we have become familiar with two patterns according to which the process of reification can be explained within the framework of our more complex model. I could summarize by saying that we are dealing either with a process in which cognitive goals have become completely detached from their original context, with the result that our cognitive stance has become rigid or overemphasized, or, in the second case, with a retroactive denial of recognition for the sake of preserving a prejudice or stereotype. With this explanation, we have acquired the means to move over to a sociological level of explanation. We now possess a sufficiently differentiated and sophisticated concept of the forms of reification, which enables us to investigate the social reality of the present day with regard to how these processes could have come about. It is clear that we are dealing here either with institutionalized practices, which cause contemplation and observation to become independent of their roots in recognition, or with socially effective thought schemata, which compel a denial of antecedent recognition. I would, however, prefer to put off this step toward sociological analysis until the last section of my investigation (VI). Instead, I would like to turn to a problem I have left on the sidelines until now. This is the question of whether we can draw any conclusions from our previous arguments for the primacy of recognition about humans' relation to their natural surroundings and themselves.

The three philosophers that I dealt with in the first two sections were convinced that engaged praxis, care, and recognition all enjoy a priority over disinterested contemplation with regard to our relationship to nature. Just as we must be affected by other people before we can take up a more neutral stance, so also our physical surroundings must be disclosed to us in their qualitative value *prior to* our more objective dealings with them. Unlike this more comprehensive assertion, the theories I cited in the third section as independent exhibits are limited to assertions about the inter*personal* world. It is solely with relation to other persons that Tomasello, Hobson, and Cavell speak of the primacy of identification or acknowledg-

ment—not at all in relation to nonhuman sentient beings, plants, or even things. Yet the concept of "reification" that I have attempted to resuscitate here in connection with the work of Lukács demands that we account for the possibility of a reifying perception not only of our social world, but also of our physical world. The things we encounter in our everyday dealings with the world must also be regarded as entities to which we relate in an inappropriate way when we apprehend them merely neutrally and according to external criteria. It is therefore not difficult to see that this intuition confronts me with a problem that is partly due to the narrow basis of my talk of "recognition." After all, how can the idea of a reification of nature be justified, if until now I have only demonstrated that we must preserve the priority of recognition in our relations toward other persons?

Here, too, I don't simply want to resort to the solution that Lukács had in mind, but prefer to take a wholly different path. If we wished to stick with Lukács, then it would not suffice for him to demonstrate that we must always necessarily take up a stance of engagement toward nature as well. As we have seen, this would not be a difficult task with the help of Heidegger and Dewey, because both in their diverse ways insisted on the fact that our physical surroundings must always already have been disclosed to us in their qualitative significance before we can relate to them in a theoretical fashion. Beyond this, Lukács would also have to show that abandoning this kind of perspective would ultimately be irreconcilable with the goal of apprehending nature as objectively as possible. Only when it could be claimed here as well that recognition enjoys a categorial priority over cognition could he prove in the end that in treating nature instrumentally, we violate a necessary precondition of our social practices. I don't see how one could carry off such a proof today. Even in the works of Heidegger or Dewey, I hardly see any support for the strong hypothesis that an objectification of nature could in any way harm the primacy of care or qualitative experience. Thus the direct path that Lukács takes in justifying his idea of a possible reification of nature has been closed off to us. We may regard the possibility

of interactive, recognitional dealings with animals, plants, and even things to be ethically desirable, but this normative preference cannot provide any sound arguments for claiming that society cannot go beyond these forms of interaction. Instead, the attempt to pursue Lukács' intuition along the detour of the priority of intersubjective recognition seems to be more promising. For this assertion I can lean on a thought that I mentioned briefly in referring to Adorno's idea of a primordial act of imitation.

As we have seen, Adorno also argued that our cognitive access to the objective world can be opened up only through our identification with an important figure of attachment, through the libidinal cathexis of a concrete other. Yet he also drew an additional conclusion from this argument, one that throws some light on the question with which we are concerned here. He believed that a child learns to separate attitudes toward objects from the objects themselves, thereby gradually forming a concept of an external and independent world only via this prior act of identification. Finally, he also asserts that a child will continue to preserve the perspective of the loved person to whom he or she feels attached, regarding this perspective as a further aspect of the now objectively fixed object. This act of imitating a concrete second person, which draws upon libidinal energies, becomes transmitted, so to speak, onto the object by endowing it with additional components of meaning that the loved figure of attachment perceives in the object. The more second-person attitudes a subject can attach to this same object in the course of his libidinal cathexis, the richer in aspects the object will ultimately appear in objective reality. In this sense, Adorno was certainly convinced that it is possible to speak of "recognition" with relation to nonhuman objects, but for him this manner of speaking had only the borrowed meaning that we show respect for those particular aspects and meanings of the object that owe their existence to the attitudes of other persons toward these objects. Perhaps one should formulate Adorno's conclusion more sharply and reproduce it as an internal context of morality and knowledge. This would produce the following: Our rec-

ognition of the individuality of other persons demands that we per-
ceive objects in the particularity of all those aspects that they attach
to these objects in their respective views of them.[79]

This normative escalation, however, goes far beyond what is nec-
essary for reformulating, with Adorno's aid, the idea of a possible
reification of nature. By pursuing his line of reasoning, we have the
opportunity to justify this concomitant idea without having to resort
to speculations about interactive dealings with nature. As I argued
before, the reification of human beings signifies that we have lost
sight of or denied the fact of antecedent recognition. With Adorno,
we could add that this antecedent recognition also means respecting
those aspects of meaning in an object that human beings accord that
object. If it is indeed the case that in recognizing other persons we
must at the same time recognize their subjective conceptions and
feelings about nonhuman objects, then we could also speak without
hesitation of a potential "reification" of nature. It would consist in
our failing to be attentive in the course of our cognition of objects to
all the additional aspects of meaning accorded to them by other per-
sons. Just as is the case with the reification of other persons, a "cer-
tain blindness"[80] is here at hand. We then perceive animals, plants, or
things in a merely objectively identifying way, without being aware
that these objects possess a multiplicity of existential meanings for
the people around us.

V. The Contours of Self-Reification

In the preceding sections, I have drawn on recognitional-theoretical
considerations to reformulate two aspects of what Lukács termed
"reification" in his classic essay. I have made clear that we can use the
term "reification" in a direct sense only when referring to our rela-
tions to other persons, whereas our relation to nature can be called
"reified" only in an indirect or derivative sense of the term. When
our relation to other persons is at issue, "reification" means that we

have lost sight of our antecedent recognition of these same persons; whereas when we speak of our relation to the objective world, the term signifies our having lost sight of the multiplicity of ways in which the world has significance for those we have antecedently recognized. The asymmetry found in the use of this concept results from the fact that the ways in which recognition constitutes a necessary precondition of our cognition of nature and of other persons differ from each other. Whereas we can take up a reifying stance toward the objective world without losing the possibility of cognitively disclosing it, it is impossible for us to perceive other people as "persons" once we have forgotten our antecedent recognition of them.[81] So whereas the "reification" of natural objects or nonhuman sentient beings does not constitute a violation of a practical prerequisite of the reproduction of our social lifeworld, this certainly is the case whenever we take up a reifying stance toward other persons. But in order not to have to abandon the idea of reification of nature completely, I have recommended that the recognitional conditions of human interaction be extended to our dealings with the natural world. For although we don't violate any practical preconditions of our cognitive relationship to nature when we take up an objectifying stance toward it, we do violate indirectly non-epistemic requirements for our dealings with other humans. After all, we also "forget" our antecedent recognition of other persons if in our objectifying behavior we ignore the existential meanings that these persons have conferred upon their natural surroundings. In a reference to certain threads in Adorno's work (especially in *Minima Moralia*), I have already pointed out that a higher level "forgetfulness of recognition" is at issue here. Yet in his famous essay on human "blindness," William James demonstrated much more convincingly and directly just how much we can disregard or even overlook other people if we ignore how they have charged their surroundings with existential meaning.[82]

Yet Lukács also spoke of a third aspect in which reifying behavior could be observed. Along with the intersubjective world of other

persons and the objective world of natural objects, he also conceived of the world of inner experiences—of mental acts—as a phenomenal domain which we can encounter in a stance of mere contemplation or observation, instead of in the appropriate stance of empathetic engagement. On the whole, Lukács goes to little effort to explain the structure of self-reification in greater detail, though his reference to the journalist who is forced to make his own "subjectivity," "temperament," and "powers of expression"[83] conform to what is expected of him from his readers apparently offered enough illustrative material to motivate Adorno—nearly twenty-five years later—to quote him in detail at the corresponding point in his own text.[84] However, Adorno does not make clear how we are to conceive in detail the structure of a reifying relationship to ourselves either. Although he explains this relationship as a stance in which a subject directs its attention at its own psychic "characteristics" as if at "its internalized object," employing them until they "finally slide into their situation-specific assignment,"[85] the question still remains how we are to describe a positive, non-reifying stance toward our own subjectivity. If we today wish to take up this third complex within Lukács' concept of reification, then we must ask ourselves—as we have done up to now with regard to nature and other persons—if a recognitional stance (necessarily) also enjoys priority in our self-relationship. Can we reasonably claim that human subjects take up a recognitional stance toward themselves proximally and for the most part, such that a merely cognitive self-relationship could be characterized as a case of reification, and therefore as an inappropriate, deficient form of self-relationship (*Verfehlung*)?

There are several theoretical paths that could be taken to arrive at a positive answer to this question. For example, we could draw upon Donald Winnicott's object relations theory, in which he concludes from his investigations into the child's separation-individuation process that an individual's psychic health depends on a playful and explorative way of dealing with his or her desires.[86] This exploratory mode of relating to ourselves might well be thought to display

essentially the same features that we would have reason to expect from a recognitional stance toward ourselves.[87] Another way of substantiating the priority of recognition in our self-relationship would be to think back to Aristotle's much too neglected discussions of "self-friendship" or "self-love" in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[88] His regard for the affirmative, benevolent mastering of one's own instincts and affects as a prerequisite of a successful self-relationship might also serve to illustrate the kind of relationship characterized by a recognitional stance toward our mental life. And finally, one could cite Peter Bieri's reflections on the necessity of "appropriating" (*Aneignung*) our own will.[89] If, as Bieri maintains, we can attain freedom of the will only if we do not merely accept our desires and feelings, but articulate them and thereby make them our own, then this process of appropriation gives us an idea of what a recognitional self-relationship requires of us.

Yet all these ways of making a recognitional self-relationship plausible presuppose prior knowledge of how the concept of recognition is to be used appropriately in the context of our self-relationship. Since we customarily use this concept with reference to interpersonal interaction, it is still unclear whether it applies to our self-relationship at all. Moreover, whereas these three conceptions—reification in our relation to other people, in our relation to nature, and in our relation to ourselves—are for the most part to be understood as normative or ethical ideals, the priority of a "recognitional" self-relationship must be discussed in social-ontological terms. For if reification is regarded indeed as capable of penetrating the subject's self-relationship, then an "original," normal form of self-relationship must be implied from which reification can be judged a problematic deviation. This is why I think it best not to resort immediately to conceptually related ideas, but to consider the issue for itself. And indeed, the way in which we customarily relate to our own desires, feelings, and intentions can be convincingly and meaningfully illustrated by the concept of recognition.

An appropriate place to start in justifying this thesis might be to explain how the *opposite* view would look. According to one widespread conception, the way a subject relates to herself must be conceived as identical to the way she supposedly relates to the objective world. Just as we seem to become aware of things in the world by neutrally cognizing them, so we also encounter our own desires and feelings in a cognizing stance. In the same way that a subject perceives objective reality, she can turn into herself to observe a particular mental occurrence. In a recent study, David Finkelstein characterized accurately this model of the subject's self-relation as "detectivist." Here the subject is conceived as a detective who possesses privileged knowledge of his own desires and feelings because he has undertaken a search in his own mental world and "discovered" these desires and feelings. According to this model, a subject's intentions exist prior to the subject's turn into himself, and he need only discover them to make them accessible to consciousness.[90] Yet in our summary of the accounts of Lukács, Heidegger, and Dewey, we have already seen just how unconvincing is the idea that our primary relation to the objective world is cognitive. Thus it is but a small step for us to pose the question of whether this idea possesses any more plausibility with regard to our self-relationship.

The first difficulty facing a cognitivist view of our self-relationship results from the necessity of preserving a parallel to our cognition of "external" objects by attributing to the subject an internal cognitive organ. Regardless of how this inwardly directed act of perception might be defined more closely, it certainly implies the existence of a particular sense faculty that permits us to perceive our mental states in the same way in which our sense organs permit us to perceive objects in the world. So many convincing objections have been raised against this conception of an "inward eye" that it should suffice to cite just one, namely John Searle's regress argument, to get the point across. Searle demonstrates that if we attain consciousness of our mental states by means of an inwardly directed perceptive act, then

this act must itself constitute a mental state that we can illuminate only through a higher level act of perception—which ultimately leads to an infinite regress.[91] It is not, however, only the conceptual necessity of presupposing an inwardly directed perceptive organ that makes the equating of our self-relationship with a cognitive act so very problematic. A second difficulty results from the fact that this image of our mental experiences is phenomenologically highly implausible and misleading. Since according to this view we grasp our desires and feelings as cognizable objects, these mental states would have to possess the same distinct and self-contained character as entities in the objective world. Feelings or intentions would have to bear clearly defined contours as mental occurrences before we could discover them by turning back toward ourselves and looking inward. Yet this conception does not do justice to the fact that these kinds of mental states generally possess a rather diffuse and highly indeterminate substance that cannot be grasped so easily. To grasp fully our desires and feelings, it seems we must perform an additional act that is capable of according these unclear and blurry mental states a clearly contoured meaning. Consequently, it is problematic and even misleading to think of our self-relationship in terms of a cognitive act by which we seek to discover preexisting objective entities.

It would require very little effort to raise further objections to this cognitive model, all of which would have to do with the particular way in which mental states are given to us. For example, so little do our desires and feelings appear categorizable according to a clearly defined index of space and time that they can hardly be grasped as objects existing in space and time at all.[92] Yet for the purpose of working out a plausible notion of personal self-reification, the two objections formulated above should suffice. Just as little as the human relation to the world is to be understood as being merely cognitive can the subject's relation to himself be described as one in which he cognitively detects his mental states. Already as far back as Nietzsche, a whole different model in contrast to this "detectivism" was brought into play, a model that is completely focused on

the active component of our self-relationship. This "constructivist" model also amounts to something very different from what we must have in mind when we speak of the priority of a recognitional relationship to ourselves.

Constructivism or "constitutivism," to revive a term from David Finkelstein,[93] capitalizes on that particularity of our self-relationship that the cognitive model failed to elucidate; namely, although we may talk about our mental states with certainty and authority, we do not have the same kind of certainty about them that we do about perceivable objects. Constructivism concludes from this asymmetry that we ourselves must be involved actively in constituting these mental states. According to the constructivists, at the same moment that we articulate particular intentions for our partners in interaction, we resolve ourselves to allow these intentions to exist in our own thoughts. Yet this is to make a virtue out of a necessity; that is, it turns our uncertainty about whatever feelings and intentions we may have at a given time into a constructive act. We hereby relate to our mental states by suddenly deciding to accord them a certain substantiality, which we express subsequently toward other persons. Although this conception is superior to the cognitive model in that it neither presupposes an inwardly directed perceptive capability nor equates mental states with objects, it transforms our desires and feelings nevertheless into products of our own free decision; the subject thus seems to be wholly responsible for her mental states.

This last remark alone suggests that constructivism must also end up in explanatory difficulties that are just as grave as those afflicting detectivism. Whereas the idea that we relate to our own mind through an inwardly directed perceptive act was shown to be unsatisfactory because of the nonobjective character of our mental states, the constructivist conception fails because of the obstructive and unruly nature of our mental states. None of our feelings possess such a high degree of plasticity that we could accord them an arbitrary quality of experience by simply giving them a name. Phenomenologically speaking, we encounter our mental states for

the most part as phenomena that befall us—as feelings, desires, or intentions to which we are passively exposed long before we attain the distance necessary for interpreting them.[94] Constructivism appears to deny this restrictive nature of our feelings by ascribing to the subject an infinite capacity for self-attribution; the idea that we are familiar with our own mental states because we have created them fails because of its restrictive character. Although we may have the capacity to step back from our feelings in order to shape them partly through an act of interpretation, our passive exposure to these feelings nevertheless restricts such activity to a great extent.

Yet we shouldn't allow this reference to a passive element in our self-relationship to send us back to the cognitive model according to which we should conceive our desires and feelings once again as independent objects. We should retain the constructivist insight that our mental states exist independently neither of our consciousness of them nor of our speaking about them. Indeed, a pain exists only if the affected subject is aware of it; I don't really feel a desire until I have found a halfway suitable expression for it. The point at which constructivism goes astray is where it describes this relation of mutual dependence as being a mechanism by which the subject *creates* its own feelings and intentions, as if it were solely our consciousness of pain that brings pain into existence; as if all of our desires were produced through an act of linguistic formulation. The very fact that there is *something* to which we give expression, or toward which we direct our attention, demonstrates just how absurd is the conclusion that constructivists draw from their accurate starting point. If we didn't receive the impetus of a passive sensation, we would never set to focusing our attention on that sensation, or to finding a fitting expression for it. This doesn't necessarily imply that we must presuppose an object independent of any conceptual prehistory as the source of every such impetus, an object that would act upon us as would as an element of our first nature. Normally, we are already familiar with our desires and feelings to a certain extent, because we have learned during the process of our socialization to perceive

these mental states as internal elements of a lifeworld that we share with others through language. Of course, our own mental states do surprise us time and again—states that appear completely foreign and opaque to us because of their absence from our previous linguistic socialization. But even in these cases, which may result from our unfamiliarity with these emotions or to a previous process of desymbolization,[95] we can take up a stance toward these feelings that allows us to disclose and articulate their foreignness by comparing them with the horizon of feelings already familiar to us.[96] If we conceive our self-relationship according to this pattern, then a middle path is opened up to us between detectivism and constructivism, a path that might be called "expressionism." According to this model, we neither merely perceive our mental states as objects nor construct them by manifesting them to others. Instead, we articulate them in the light of feelings that are familiar to us. A subject who relates to himself in this original manner must necessarily regard his own feelings and desires as worthy of articulation. It is thus advisable for us in this instance as well to speak of the necessity of an antecedent stance of recognition.

This form of recognition is not directed at our partners in interaction, whose existence as persons must be accepted before we can take up any sort of communication with them. The kind of recognition at issue here is something that a subject must have already demonstrated toward herself if she is to be capable of entering into expressive contact with her own mental states. If a subject does not regard her desires and feelings as worthy of articulation, she will not be able to gain access to the mental life that is to be maintained in her self-relationship. This type of recognition is frequently characterized as a kind of "care of the self"[97]—parallel to the Heideggerian notion of care. This notion indicates that a subject takes up the stance of engaged concern toward herself that Heidegger regarded as being characteristic of our dealings with things and other humans. If we don't project any more ethical ambitions onto this activity of self-care than are already implied when a person regards his or her desires

and feelings as worthy of articulation, then this activity of self-care is identical with the stance I would like to designate as "recognition." A subject capable of an expressive self-relationship must necessarily be capable of affirming himself to the extent that he regards his own psychic experiences as worthy of being actively disclosed and articulated.[98] This definition of self-recognition corresponds more or less to what Harry Frankfurt terms "self-love" in his latest book.[99] Both he and I presuppose a type of self-relationship in which we affirm or identify with our own desires and intentions in such a way that we almost necessarily strive to uncover our fundamental, genuine, or just "second-order" volitions. Here I will use the term "expressive" to indicate the stance that we take up toward ourselves in this process of self-discovery—and, unlike Harry Frankfurt, I am convinced that this is the kind of self-recognition that Freud assumed to be a self-evident and unquestionable stance for humans to take up toward their own selves.

To link these considerations to our central topic—the idea of a possible self-reification in Lukács' theory—we need to reinterpret the two above-described models of self-relationship only slightly. All along I have presupposed that detectivism and constructivism constitute two deficient ways of defining the way in which humans relate to their own selves. Neither the view that our feelings are already there as potential objects of cognition nor the view that we constitute our feelings by attributing them to ourselves provides us with a satisfactory explanation of our relationship to ourselves. Yet there is no reason why we shouldn't take these two models as indicators of possible deficiencies in our self-relationship. By understanding detectivism and constructivism as two forms of ideology critique, we can regard them not as deficient descriptions of the original mode in which we relate to our mental life, but as appropriate descriptions of deficient modes of self-relationship. It isn't difficult to make such a shift of perspective plausible in the case of detectivism, which describes our self-relationship as a cognitive process. To gain an impression of the deficient social type that detectivism outlines in

an unintentionally appropriate fashion, we must think of a person who regards his or her own desires as having a fixed and permanent character that is to be uncovered and contemplated. The same goes for constructivism—its descriptive model can be demonstrated easily to constitute a sketch of a certain social type. We can think of people who live the illusion that the feelings and desires they calculatingly present toward others could in fact be their very own genuine feelings and intentions. Both of these examples illustrate that we can certainly imagine forms of self-relationship that are congruent with the models described by detectivism and constructivism. In the former case, a subject relates to her mental states as if to something fixed and given, while in the latter case she regards these mental states as something to be produced, the character of which can be determined according to the situation. It's no accident that I have formulated these points in such a way as to allow an easy connection to the phenomenon of self-reification. The forms of self-relationship described by detectivism and constructivism correspond to states in which one's own self becomes reified, because in both cases these states are grasped as given, thing-like objects. The only difference between these two types of reified self-relationship consists in the fact that in one form the subject experiences her own feelings as "internally" self-contained and static objects that are to be uncovered, whereas in the other form the subject regards them as something to be instrumentally produced.

After what has been said here, it would appear that we could easily agree with Lukács on the possibility of personal self-reification, if this were taken to indicate ways in which we experience our feelings and desires as thing-like entities. Today's literature is filled with descriptions of human personalities who are either caught in a circle of self-observation or who expend a great deal of energy fabricating strategically convenient motives and needs.[100] This development has been accompanied by a gradual decline in the psychoanalytic culture in which people were expected to enter into a relationship with themselves that would allow them tentatively to explore

their own goals—and therefore *not* merely to observe or even manipulate them.[101] Given our considerations up to this point, we can best describe the kind of reifying tendencies responsible for this development with the notion of "forgetfulness of recognition." This concept signifies that the modes in which subjects merely observe or produce their mental states can take hold only if "subjects" begin to forget that their desires and feelings are worthy of articulation and appropriation (*Aneignung*). Therefore, just as is the case with the reification of other persons, the reification of one's own person merely signifies the result of our having lost sight of antecedent recognition. Just as is the case when we take up a reifying stance toward another person, so in our case do we lose sight of the fact that we have always already recognized ourselves, as this represents the only way of gaining access to our own feelings and intentions. To know what it means to have desires, feelings, and intentions at all, we must already have experienced these mental states as a part of our selves that is worthy of affirmation and should be made known to our partners in interaction. Just as is the case with the recognition of others, it is not merely a genetic priority that this kind recognition of ourselves enjoys.

We can easily ascertain further aspects in this elementary structure of a recognitional self-relationship that also contain all those elements mentioned at the beginning of this section with reference to other theories. Winnicott's talk of the creative and playful exploration of our own needs, Aristotle's concept of friendship with oneself, and Bieri's concept of the appropriation (*Aneignung*) of our own desires constitute additional facets of the type of recognition that subjects must grant to themselves in the sense that they must necessarily regard their mental states as a part of themselves that is capable and worthy of articulation. If we lose consciousness of antecedent self-affirmation, if we ignore or neglect it, then we allow space for forms of self-relationship to arise that could be described as cases of self-reification. We would then even experience our own desires and feelings as thing-like objects capable of being passively observed or actively engendered.

VI. The Social Sources of Reification

In my attempt to trace the diverse dimensions (intersubjective, objective, and subjective) of the social phenomenon of reification back to the fact of forgetfulness of recognition, I have left out the central piece of Lukács' analysis. All of his observations regarding the rising dominance of a merely contemplative type of behavior, whether it be in the workplace, in our relation to nature, or in our social dealings, are summed up in the social-theoretical assertion that the universalization of commodity exchange brought about by capitalism is the sole cause for these phenomena of reification. He is convinced that as soon as subjects are compelled to conduct their social interactions primarily in the form of commodity exchange, they will necessarily perceive their partners in interaction, the goods to be exchanged, and finally themselves as thing-like objects; correspondingly they will relate to their surroundings in a merely contemplative fashion. It is difficult to raise one single, central objection to this assertion, for it simply contains too many problematic elements. The very fact that, according to our analysis thus far, we only reify other persons if we lose sight of our antecedent recognition of their existence as persons should suffice to demonstrate just how unconvincing is Lukács' equation of commodity exchange and reification, given that the persons with whom we interact in the process of economic exchange are normally present to us, at least legally, as recognized persons. Nevertheless, Lukács hereby outlines a task which remains a substantial challenge for any analysis of processes of reification: if the tendency toward reifying behavior is not to be traced back to processes of mental or cultural development, it will be necessary to identify those social structures or practices that promote or cause such a tendency. As a conclusion I would like to develop a few preparatory considerations for this kind of "social etiology" (M. Nussbaum) of reification from three different perspectives. Here I can lean on a few hypotheses that have played a role in my treatment of the possible causes for our forgetfulness of recognition toward other persons.

(1) Lukács describes the effects of a capitalist free-market society as automatically leading to a generalization of reifying behavior in all three dimensions, until a point at which there remain only subjects who reify themselves, their natural surroundings, and all other humans. This totalizing element in Lukács' theory is based on a set of conceptual mistakes. In what follows I intend to look only at those errors whose analysis will advance our understanding of the social roots of reification. From a conceptual perspective, we can see that Lukács has a problematic tendency to equate the depersonalization of social relations with occurrences of reification. It was of course Georg Simmel who in his work *The Philosophy of Money* investigated the extent to which the increase in market-related transactions is accompanied by a growing indifference toward our partners in interaction.[102] His point was that other persons' distinctive properties lose significance for us as soon as these persons appear merely as partners to an exchange of goods for money. Lukács implicitly equates the process of "objectification" analyzed by Simmel with social reification, without properly considering the central distinction between them. For as Simmel emphasizes, persons whom we encounter in a "depersonalized" relationship of commodity exchange must remain present to us as bearers of general personal characteristics for us to accept them as accountable exchange partners at all, whereas to reify other humans means simply to deny their existence as humans.[103] So whereas the depersonalization of social relationships necessarily presupposes the elementary recognition of a now anonymous other as being a human person, reification consists in disputing or "forgetting" precisely this antecedent recognition. Reification, therefore, cannot be equated with the general process of "objectification" of social relationships—a process that Georg Simmel claimed was the price to be paid for the increased negative freedom generated by the multiplication of economic exchange relations.

Just as problematic as his equating of depersonalization and reification is Lukács' tendency to see a kind of necessary unity between

distinctive dimensions of reification. Although he makes an effort to distinguish conceptually between these three aspects—the reification of other persons, objects, and one's own self—he also seems to take it for granted that each of these forms necessarily gives rise to the other two. He does not regard the interplay of these three aspects as an empirical issue, but as the result of a conceptual necessity. Unlike Lukács, in my analysis I have tried to show, at least indirectly, that there is no necessary connection between the various aspects of reification. Such a connection holds only with regard to the reification of the objective world, which must be understood as a mere derivative of the forgetfulness of our recognition of other humans. Reification of the objective world and self-reification need not, however, necessarily imply each other. It is an interesting question—but one that can in no way be settled a priori—whether and to what extent the reification of other persons gives rise to a particular form of self-reification, or whether and to what extent self-reification must necessarily accompany the reification of others. At any rate, further analysis would be required before any definitive conclusions could be reached on these matters.

A third problem for the social etiology that Lukács presents in his analysis of reification concerns not his categorial, but his objective (*sachlich*) and thematic premises. Following Marx's base-superstructure schema, Lukács regards the economic sphere as having the power to shape cultural life to such an extent that he regards all aspects of social life as necessary effects of economic processes. Consequently he can presume that the phenomena of reification that he originally discovered only in capitalist commerce will also have infected all other social spheres of life. Although his official explanation of these totalizing tendencies is that all of society has been "capitalized" through and through, nowhere does Lukács even begin to substantiate his assumption that the principles of the capitalist market have indeed "colonized" family life, general public opinion, the parent-child relationship, or our leisure time. Thus there

remains a constant arbitrary element in Lukács' notion of a totaliza-
tion of economically based reification—which is itself problematic
because he equates it with processes of depersonalization.

The privilege that Lukács grants to the economic sphere may
be linked with the fourth, also rather thematic problem so clearly
apparent in his sociological explanation of reification. If we read his
treatment of reification today from a historical distance of eighty
years, we will be astounded by the fact that the only phenomena
Lukács regards as cases of reification are all very closely connected
with processes of economic exchange. He hardly thematizes any of
the phenomena that appear to us today to constitute much stronger
evidence for reifying behavior, such as the bestial dehumanization
characteristic of racism or human trafficking.[104] It is no accident that
Lukács ignores an entire class of phenomena of reification; this is
not ascribable to any lack of attention to such occurrences or to his
not yet being able to perceive them. His ignorance in this regard is
instead traceable to a systematic blindness associated with his preju-
dice that only economic forces can lead to a denial of humans' human
characteristics. Lukács in no way sought to gain knowledge of the
ideological convictions that could cause entire groups of people to
appear depersonalized and thus as mere things. He was so singu-
larly focused on the effects of capitalist commodity exchange on the
behavior of social actors that he was incapable of taking note of any
other social source of reification.

In light of these four problems, it seems advisable for us today to
abandon the sociological framework of Lukács' analysis of reifica-
tion. Lukács was indeed wholly correct in wanting to draw attention
to the reifying effects that can accompany the institutional expan-
sion of capitalist commodity exchange; further and above all, he
sought to get sight of the fact that our treatment of other persons as
mere commodities presupposes our having forgotten our anteced-
ent engagement with and recognition of other persons. Despite all
this, however, his approach remains conceptually and thematically

much too restricted to the identity between commodity exchange and reification to be capable of delivering a theoretical foundation for a comprehensive and differentiated analysis of the phenomenon of reification.

(2) I have already noted the first steps that would be necessary for a total reconstruction of a social etiology of reification. If the core of every form of reification consists in forgetfulness of recognition, then its social causes must be sought in the practices or mechanisms that enable and sustain this kind of forgetting. Yet here we are confronted with an additional problem, one that couldn't be properly analyzed in my previous considerations: because the reification of other persons and of the self do not necessarily appear together, wholly different causes might be responsible for these two distinct forms of reification. Despite the fact that both constitute types of forgetfulness of recognition, their characteristics are so different that their social origins are also likely to be starkly distinct. For this reason, I will treat these two types of reification separately in my attempt to characterize the potential causes of their social emergence in a somewhat more detailed manner.

As was demonstrated in section IV, humans must first lose sight of their antecedent recognition of others before they are able to take up a reifying stance toward other persons (or groups of persons). This could happen through one of the following causes: either these social actors are participating in a social practice in which the mere observation of the other has become so much an end in itself that any consciousness of an antecedent social relationship disappears, or they have allowed their actions to be guided by a set of convictions that leads them subsequently to deny this original act of recognition. In both cases, a person unlearns something he or she previously and intuitively mastered. Yet whereas in the first case a particular praxis is what gives rise to this denial, in the second case it is a result of adopting a specific worldview or ideology. With regard to the second case, we could say that reification constitutes a mere habitual

derivative of a reifying set of convictions. The strength of such a denial proceeds from the content of a specific ideology and is not engendered by a particular praxis.

It is only this last case—the emergence of a reifying stance caused by one-dimensional praxis—that Lukács has in mind when he asserts that capitalist commodity exchange is the sole social cause for all forms of reification. He thereby not only fails to take account of the above-mentioned distinction between depersonalization and reification, but he also ignores the fact that the legal status of the participants to an economic exchange protects them from the consequences that would result if each of them took up a merely reifying stance toward the other. For no matter how much one might view the other from the perspective of one's own utility maximization, the other person has some minimal legal protection under the terms of the contract, which in turn guarantees him or her a minimal degree of respect.[105] Because Lukács regards modern legal institutions themselves as being the offspring of reifying tendencies, he is not capable of taking appropriate account of the protective power of law, in which a meager and yet all the more effective translation of antecedent recognition can be observed.[106] This draws attention, however, to the fact that the possibility of a merely reifying stance increases to the same degree that a purely "contemplative" praxis is no longer bound to the law's minimal guarantees of recognition.

Wherever practices of pure observation, assessment, and calculation toward the lifeworld escape the established framework of legal relations and become independent, the kind of ignorance of antecedent recognition arises that we have described as the core of all intersubjective reification. The spectrum of current social developments that reflect such tendencies run from the increasing hollowing-out of the legal substance of labor contracts[107] all the way to the first indicators of a practice in which children's potential talents are regarded solely as an issue of genetic measurement and manipulation.[108] In both cases, the institutionalized barriers that have prevented a denial of our recognitional primary experiences are threatening to collapse.

It is more difficult than it appears at first glance to define clearly the relation between social praxis and intersubjective reification in the second case, in which sets of convictions with unmistakably reifying stereotypes of other groups of persons are found to prevail. I have said that under these circumstances, merely to adopt such an ideology is to deny antecedent recognition. Therefore, we must conceive this social occurrence as follows: under the effect of reifying stereotypes (of women, Jews, etc.), groups of individuals are retroactively deprived of the personal characteristics that have been accorded to them habitually and without question on the basis of antecedent social recognition. Indeed, a whole set of attempts by sociologists to explain racism and the pornographic representation of women have followed this explanatory pattern. This approach leaves the question totally unanswered, however, as to how a mere thought construct or system of description could possess the strength to unsettle retroactively an antecedently familiar fact and leave it socially fragmented. In any case, it is hard to imagine—as Sartre demonstrated in his essay "Reflections on the Jewish Question"—how human beings could be brought by purely intellectual paths to deny insistently the personal characteristics of members of other social groups.[109] This is why it would probably make more sense to take account of the element of praxis in explaining this phenomenon and to assume that a correlative interplay of one-dimensional praxis and a set of ideological convictions must be at work. The social practices of distanced observation and the instrumental treatment of other individuals are thus sustained to the same extent that these practices find cognitive reinforcement in reifying stereotypes, just as these typifying descriptions conversely receive motivational nourishment by serving as a suitable interpretive framework for a given kind of one-dimensional praxis. A system of behavior develops in which the members of particular groups of individuals come to be treated as things because their antecedent recognition is retroactively denied.

(3) The structure of forgetfulness of recognition toward other individuals is wholly distinct from the form of recognition in which we

deny that our desires, feelings, and intentions are worthy of articulation—so much so that it would be highly implausible to assume one and the same social cause for both of these forms of reification. We might speculate that in both cases, subjects do not in general explicitly intend to foster such forms of reification; it is rather their involvement in particular practices that engenders their reifying behavior. But again, this does not mean—as Lukács would have it—that it is the same set of practices in both cases that gives rise to the tendency toward a reifying stance. So how could those social practices that engender a stance of self-reification be conceived instead? This is not an easy question to answer, but at least I would like to conclude with a suggestion as to the direction in which an answer could be sought.

I have attempted to demonstrate that even the individual's self-relationship presupposes a specific type of antecedent recognition, because a proper relation to one's self demands that we understand our desires and intentions as parts of our selves that require articulation. I believe that a tendency toward self-reification arises as soon as we (once again) begin to forget our previous self-affirmation by regarding our psychic sensations as mere objects either to be observed or produced. It is therefore obvious that we should search for the causes of reifying behavior in social practices that are connected with the self-presentation of subjects in the broadest sense. Of course, it is true that all social action necessarily involves a relation to one's own desires and intentions. Nevertheless, we can discern institutionalized practices that are functionally tailored to the presentation of our own selves; job interviews, particular services (e.g., stewardess), or organized dating services are examples that immediately come to mind. The character of such institutionalized practices, which require individuals to portray themselves publicly, can be highly variable. The spectrum of possibilities could encompass everything from institutions that create space for experimental self-exploration to institutional arrangements that compel those involved to simulate particular intentions. My feeling is that the tendency toward self-reification will increase as subjects become more

and more involved in institutions of self-portrayal that possess the characteristics just described. Institutions that latently compel individuals merely to pretend to have certain feelings, or to give them a self-contained and clearly contoured character, will promote the development of self-reifying attitudes.

Job interviews or Internet dating services might serve here as current examples for institutionalized practices of this kind. Whereas job interviews used to have the function of examining applicants' suitability for a specific job based on written documents presented by the various applicants or on the corresponding abilities that they could demonstrate, the sociology of work now informs us that these interviews have come to acquire a wholly different character. They have increasingly come to resemble sales talks, demanding that applicants portray their future commitment to the company as convincingly and dramatically as possible.[110] This shift of focus from the past to the future compels applicants to begin to grasp their own feelings and attitudes about work as "objects" to be brought forth and formed according to future demands. The more a subject is exposed to demands for self-portrayal, the more he will tend to experience all of his desires and intentions as arbitrarily manipulable things. By contrast, the other form of self-reification—in which a subject passively observes and takes note of his own sensations—is visible in the practices that have arisen in connection with the use of the Internet as a means for finding a partner: this standardized way of making contact with potential partners compels users to describe their personal characteristics according to prescribed categories. The way in which users come into contact with each other obliges them to enter their personal characteristics under predetermined and precalibrated rubrics. Once two users have found sufficient overlappings between their respective lists of characteristics and thereby become an electronically selected pair, they are then instructed to inform one another of their feelings for each other through the high-speed medium of e-mail messages. One doesn't need an overactive imagination to picture how this might promote a form of self-relationship

in which a subject no longer articulates his or her own desires and intentions in a personal encounter, but is forced merely to gather and market them according to the standards of accelerated information processing.[111]

These examples mustn't be confused with prognostic assertions; instead they should be regarded as serving to outline ways in which social practices might be capable of promoting the development of reifying behavior. These are in no way to be regarded as empirical statements that could permit us to explain the actual occurrence of reifying processes. They are not intended to characterize a development that has taken place; rather, they serve to illuminate the logic of possible social changes. Nevertheless, we could perhaps draw a conclusion from the peculiar status of these last considerations—one which concerns the entire intention of my efforts in these lectures. In the last three decades, social criticism has essentially limited itself to evaluating the normative order of societies according to whether they fulfill certain principles of justice. Despite the success of this approach in justifying some normative standards, and despite its efforts at differentiating the various fundamental aspects involved in defining such standards, this approach has lost sight of the fact that a society can demonstrate a moral deficit without violating generally valid principles of justice. Recent social criticism has failed not only to pay sufficient attention to the deficiencies that are still best described by the term "social pathologies,"[112] but it has even failed to establish plausible criteria for judging certain social practices to be pathological. This limitation cannot be justified with reference to the fact that democratic societies evaluate their own social and political orders primarily in relation to standards of justice, since deliberations within the democratic public sphere are confronted constantly with issues and challenges that raise the question of whether particular social developments might be regarded as desirable beyond all consideration of what is just. In answering such questions, which are often termed "ethical" questions, it is obvious that philosophically inspired social criticism cannot reserve for itself a sacrosanct

interpretive authority. My hope, however, is that social ontology can provide us with the means to understand and criticize the social developments described here, which would in turn enrich public discourse with solid arguments and stimulate it in the process. My attempt to reformulate Lukács' concept of reification from a recognition-theoretical perspective is dedicated to just such a task, and my attempt has not been unaffected by my concern that our current societies might be developing in the direction that Lukács, with insufficient theoretical analysis and overly exaggerated generalization, anticipated more than eighty years ago.

Notes

1. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

2. Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness*, pp. 83–222.

3. See Martin Jay, "Georg Lukács and the Origins of the Western Marxist Paradigm," chap. 2 of Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

4. See Furio Cerutti et al., *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein heute. Diskussion und Dokumentation* (Amsterdam: Verlag de Munter, 1971 [Schwarze Reihe Nr. 12]); and Jutta Matzner, ed., *Lehrstück Lukács* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

5. Raymond Carver, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (New York: Vintage, 1992); Harold Brodkey, "Innocence," in *Stories in an Almost Classical Mode* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Michel Houllebecq, *Extension du Domaine de Lutte* (Paris: J'ai Lu, 1999); Elfriede Jelinek, *The Piano Teacher* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2002); Silke Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen. Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling, 2005). In all these literary works, however, the perception of instances of reification is

bound up with the observation of phenomena of alienation. Rahel Jaeggi has made an excellent attempt at reconstructing this concept of alienation—which, like reification, stems from the Marxist tradition—in her recent work *Entfremdung: Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005).

6. Arlie Russel Hochschild's study has become a classic: *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

7. Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 100.

8. Martha Nussbaum, "Objectification," in *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 8.

9. Elisabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). See especially chaps. 7 and 8.

10. Stephan Wilkinson, *Bodies for Sale: Ethics and Exploitation in the Human Body Trade* (London: Routledge, 2003). See also Rahel Jaeggi's survey "Der Markt und sein Preis," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 47 (1999), Vol. 6: 987–1004.

11. This is the direction taken by Andreas Kuhlmann in his article "Menschen im Begabungstest. Mutmaßungen über Hirnforschung als soziale Praxis," in *WestEnd. Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1, 1 (2004): 143–153.

12. Charles Taylor has undertaken this kind of "deeper" form of criticism—which I have here named "social-ontological"—in his essay "Explanation and Practical Reason" (in *Philosophical Arguments* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995], pp. 34–60). For a summary of the problematic, see my essay "Pathologies of the Social: The Past and Present of Social Philosophy," in David M. Rasmussen, ed., *The Handbook of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 369–399. The only recent attempt at a "social-ontological," though speech-analytically oriented, rehabilitation of the concept of reification has been carried out by Christoph Demmerling in his *Sprache und Verdinglichung. Wittgenstein, Adorno und das Projekt der kritischen Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994).

13. Axel Honneth, "Eine soziale Pathologie der Vernunft. Zur intellektuellen Erbschaft der Kritischen Theorie," in Christoph Halbig and

Michael Quante, eds., *Axel Honneth: Sozialphilosophie zwischen Kritik und Anerkennung* (Münster: LIT, 2004), pp. 9–32.

14. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 83. See Rüdiger Dannemann's comprehensive study of Lukács' concept of reification, titled *Das Prinzip Verdinglichung, Studie zur Philosophie Georg Lukács* (Frankfurt am Main: Sendler, 1987).

15. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 163ff. For the connection between the analysis of fetishism and the critique of reification, see Georg Lohmann, *Indifferenz und Gesellschaft. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Marx* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), esp. chap. 5.

16. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 95.

17. Ibid., pp. 101f.

18. Ibid., p. 86.

19. Ibid., p. 90.

20. Ibid., p. 89.

21. See Nussbaum, "Objectification."

22. For a treatment of the problems, see my essay "Pathologies of the Social: The Past and Present of Social Philosophy."

23. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 97.

24. Ibid., p. 100.

25. Ibid., p. 126.

26. Ibid., p. 129.

27. Ibid., pp. 123, 141–142.

28. Fred Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For a treatment of Lukács' dependence on Fichte's notion of self-producing activity, see Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács—From Romanticism to Bolshevism,* trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979), chap. 2.

29. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 359.

30. This is the strategy that Habermas pursues in reviving the critique of reification in *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), chaps. 6 and 8.

31. I am referring here to Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962); and to two works by John Dewey, both in *The Later Works (1925–1953)*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; London: Feffer and Simons, 1981): "Qualitative Thought" (1930), in Vol. 5, 243–262, and "Affective Thought" (1926), in Vol. 2, 104–110.

32. Stanley Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 238–266.

33. See Lucien Goldmann, *Lukács und Heidegger. Nachgelassene Fragmente* (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1975). Goldmann also discusses both places in *Being and Time* (pp. 72, 487) in which Heidegger explicitly speaks of "reification" and is thereby most likely referring to Lukács' famous text (Goldmann, *Lukács und Heidegger,* pp. 113ff).

34. Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*. In Gesamtausgabe, II. Abteilung, Bd. 18, Frankfurt am Main, 2002.

35. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," pp. 110–149.

36. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* pp. 83, 235–241, and *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie,* pp. 55ff.

37. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 180.

38. On the schema of the "presence-at-hand" in the works of Heidegger, see *Being and Time*, pp. 81ff. See also the helpful elucidation of the opposition between "readiness-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*) and "presence-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*) in Heidegger's thought by Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being in the World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), chap. 4.

39. On the idea of the "perspective of the participant," see the exemplary treatment by Jürgen Habermas in his essay "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1979); and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987).

40. In his analysis of Dasein, Heidegger avoids using the concepts of "object" and "thing" on the ontological level. Instead, he mostly employs the concept of "equipment" as a complementary category to "readiness-to-hand." See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 96–98.

41. Hubert L. Dreyfus has also emphasized the components of positive predisposition that go beyond its instrumental significance for the Heideggerian concept of care. See Dreyfus, *Being in the World*, chap. 14.

42. Dewey, "Affective Thought," pp. 104–110; "Qualitative Thought," pp. 243–262.

43. See Dewey's introduction to his essay "Affective Thought," p. 104.

44. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960).

45. Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," pp. 245–246.

46. See John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), chap. 5.

47. According to this interpretation, Heidegger's notion of care always has a decentering element in that a concern for the inner claims made by the respective object is also always at issue. This contrasts with Ernst Tugendhat's portrayal in his essay "Schwierigkeiten in Heideggers Umweltanalyse," in *Aufsätze* 1992–2000 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), pp. 109–137.

48. Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," p. 253.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. See Jürgen Habermas, "Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity," in *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

53. See Marcia Cavell, *The Psychoanalytic Mind. From Freud to Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

54. Much of the following analysis is based on Michael Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Peter Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought: Exploring the Origins of Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Martin Dornes, "Die emotionalen Ursprünge des Denkens," *WestEnd, Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 2, 1 (2005): pp. 3–48.

55. Tomasello, *Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, pp. 61ff.

56. Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 80.

57. See Peter Hobson, *Autism and the Development of Mind* (Hove, U.K.: Psychology Press, 1993); and Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition,* pp. 78ff. Dornes gives an excellent summary in his text: "Die emotionalen Ursprünge des Denkens," pp. 23ff.

58. Dornes, "Die emotionalen Ursprünge des Denkens," p. 26.

59. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (New York: Verso Books, 1984), Aphorism 99.

60. See Heidegger, *Being and Time,* p. 175.

61. Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," p. 261.

62. See Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging." On Cavell's theory of intersubjectivity, see Espen Hammer, *Stanley Cavell. Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary* (London: Polity Press, 2002), chap. 3.

63. Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," p. 261.

64. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), part 3, chap. 1. See also Axel Honneth, "Erkennen und Anerkennen. Zu Sartres Theorie der Intersubjektivität," in Axel Honneth, *Unsichtbarkeit. Stationen einer Theorie der Intersubjektivität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003).

65. Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," p. 263 (emphasis in original).

66. Ibid.

67. See also Cavell's fascinating analysis of "King Lear" in his essay "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear,*" in *Must We Mean What We Say?* pp. 267–356.

68. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* part 3, chap. 2.

69. Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging."

70. We are thus dealing with a more elementary form of recognition than the one that I have dealt with in my previous treatments of the issue. See my *Unsichtbarkeit. Stationen einer Theorie der Intersubjektivität,* pp. 10–27. As a result, I now assume that this "existential" mode of recognition provides a foundation for all other, more substantial forms of recognition in which the affirmation of other persons' specific characteristics is at issue.

71. See Lohmann, *Indifferenz und Gesellschaft,* p. 17.

72. See Lukács, "Preface" (1967), in *History and Class Consciousness,* pp. ix–xlvii.

73. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §33 and §44.

74. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, chap. 8: 1 and 2.

75. This problem ultimately hangs together with the distinction that Habermas makes between "system" and "lifeworld," in which normative and functional considerations are subtly joined together. See my analysis in *Critique of Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), chap. 9.

76. Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," p. 261; "Affirmative Thought," pp. 104f.

77. Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," p. 259.

78. See Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Aphorism 79; and Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1997), p. 226. Unlike Martin Seel (*Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004]), I believe that the idea of "recognitional knowledge" (ibid., 42ff.) in the work of Adorno can be explained only in connection with his psychoanalytical speculations about all knowledge's grounding in our drives (*Triebgrund*).

79. See Martin Seel, "Anerkennende Erkenntnis. Eine normative Theorie des Gebrauchs von Begriffen," in *Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation*, pp. 42–63. As I have already mentioned (see note 78), my interpretation differs from Seel's only in the sense that I take Adorno's speculations about the contribution of libidinal cathexis to knowledge as a basis of explanation for this normative epistemology.

80. William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition,* edited by John McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 629–644.

81. This is undoubtedly the difference dealt with in the classical opposition between "explaining" and "understanding." An exemplary treatment can be found in Karl Otto Apel, *Die "Erklären: Verstehen" Kontroverse in transzendentalpragmatischer Sicht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

82. See James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." On the multiplicity of existential and psychic meanings that objects can have for humans, see Tilmann Habermas's fascinating work *Geliebte Objekte. Symbole und Instrumente der Identitätsbildung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999). It is this denial of the multiplicity of meanings contained in our surroundings that I indicate as reification of nature or of the objective world.

83. Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," p. 100.

84. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Aph. 147 ("Novissimum Organum"), p. 230.

85. Ibid., p. 231.

86. See Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1989). See Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, pp. 98ff.

87. See Axel Honneth, "Decentered Autonomy: The Subject After the Fall," in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007, 181–193.

88. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* book 9, chaps. 4–8.

89. Peter Bieri, *Das Handwerk der Freiheit* (Vienna: Hanser, 2001), chap. 10.

90. David Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), chap. 1.

91. John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 171.

92. A whole repository of objections to the cognitive model of self-relationship can be found in the recent novel by Pascal Mercier (Peter Bieri), *Nachtzug nach Lissabon* (Vienna: Hanser, 2004).

93. Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner,* chap. 2.

94. For an exemplary treatment of the issue, see Hermann Schmitz, "Gefühle als Atmosphären und das aktive Betroffensein von ihnen," in Heinrich Fink-Eitel/Georg Lohmann, eds., *Zur Philosophie der Gefühle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 33–56.

95. Alfred Lorenzer, *Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

96. I have borrowed the idea of a "middle path" from Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner*, pp. 58ff.

97. See Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3* (New York: Vintage, 1988).

98. The extent to which the ability to affirm oneself is dependent upon being recognized by others has been dealt with in a recent work by Ernst Tugendhat, *Egozentrizität und Mystik. Eine anthropologische Studie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), chap. 2.

99. See Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), chap. 3.

100. For an exemplary treatment of the first type, see Judith Hermann, *Sommerhaus, später. Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998). For the second type, see Kathrin Röggla, *wir schlafen nicht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).

101. Jonathan Lear, "The Shrink Is In," *Psyche* 50, 7 (1996): 599–618.

102. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, edited by David Frisby (New York: Routledge, 1990), chap. 4.

103. Ibid.

104. See Avishai Margalit's penetrating analysis of this issue: *Über Achtung und Verachtung* (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 1997), part 2, p. 6.

105. Kant bases his defense of marriage contracts on this consideration. It can certainly be said that he regarded such contracts as a means of defense against the danger of reciprocal reification in sexual relationships. On the strengths and weaknesses of this thought construct, see Barbara Herman, "Ob es sich lohnen könnte, über Kants Auffassungen von Sexualität und Ehe nachzudenken?" in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 43. Jg./1995, H.6, pp. 967–988.

106. For an exemplary treatment of the issue, see Joel Feinberg's essay "The Nature and Value of Rights," in his *Rights, Justice and the Bounds of Liberty. Essays in Social Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 143ff. See also Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, pp. 107–121.

107. Robert Castel offers an excellent explanation in his *Die Metamorphosen der Sozialen Frage—Eine Chronik der Lohnarbeit* (Constance: UVK, 2000).

108. See Andreas Kuhlmann, "Menschen im Begabungstest." In *WestEnd. Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1, 1 (2004): 143–154.

109. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate,* trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1965). Catharine MacKinnon delivers an equally convincing criticism of an "intellectualist" explanation of the objectification of women in her

Feminism Unmodified (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

110. I owe my information on these developments to Stephan Voswinkel, who is currently carrying out a project at the Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt am Main), financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, on the structural transformation of job interviews.

111. See, e.g., Elizabeth Jagger, "Marketing the Self, Buying an Other: Dating in a Post-Modern Consumer Society," in *Sociology: The Journal of the British Sociological Association*, Vol. 32, No. 4, (1998): 795–814.

112. Honneth, "Pathologies of the Social."

Comments

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Taking Another's View:
Ambivalent Implications

Judith Butler

It is an honor to respond to Axel Honneth's thoughtful reflections on
the problem of reification. I can hardly do justice to the complexity of
the theory advanced in his writings on this topic in this context, for
what he has provided is doubtless the most extended and thought-
ful engagement with Lukács on the issue of reification that has been
offered in the last several years. Indeed, Honneth himself begins his
project by raising the question of Lukács' belatedness, and his efforts
to return to the concept of reification involve a critical appropria-
tion of Lukács' view as well as a substantially independent reflec-
tion. Honneth's effort to rethink what reification might still mean
for us is, of course, based on a reconstruction of Lukács' work, but it
is also brought into a productive engagement with more contempo-
rary concerns within philosophy, psychology, and social criticism.
What is at first quite striking is the linkage between the problem of
reification and the concept of recognition. It is probably fair to say
that Honneth has in a singular fashion sought to bring attention to
the problem of recognition, not only in Hegel, but in contemporary
social theory and philosophical anthropology. He now seems to me
to be doing the same for reification by proposing that reification is
to be understood as a set of practices that deny or lose sight of the
primacy of recognition as a social praxis.

His exposition reformulates the concept of reification and attempts
to establish reification in relation to a more primary practice of rec-
ognition, which, in turn, takes on specific forms in relation to others, to

nature, and finally to oneself. One of the first ways in which Honneth distinguishes his view from the Marxian concept of reification proposed by Lukács is to question the model of commodity fetishism that holds sway over the concept of reification in Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. Honneth notes that reification entails not only that a subject treat humans as objects, where objects are understood on the model of the commodity, but that subjects come to regard themselves in reifying ways as well. He remarks that, for Lukács, "it is in the behavior of the subject itself that commodity exchange effects changes which ultimately affect that subject's entire relation to the surrounding world." Accordingly, Lukács makes way for an account of reification as a *habit* of detached observation, in which even one's perceptual field is treated as a field of objects from which one remains strangely distanced and toward which one acts instrumentally. Over and against this reification of the subject's relation to its own perceptual field, can Lukács demonstrate that a true or genuine praxis exists and persists despite the effects of reification?

Honneth argues that we cannot find an adequate answer in Lukács' text, since for Lukács the predominate way to counter reification is through a return to a subject who is said to discover itself as the "producer" of its world and so not to suffer the alienation of his or her own actions in objectified forms. Honneth finds, however, in Lukács that this subject-centered account exists in tension with what Honneth variously calls an "action-theoretical" or "interactionist" account. This latter view is the one that Honneth seeks to both emphasize and to further elaborate in this essay. Honneth's distinctive contribution to the interactionist position consists in his proposal that we consider recognition as a primary, if not primordial, mode of apprehending others, one that forms the basis of subsequent attitudes and practices, including reification itself.[1] The condition of reification, in which attitudes and practices as well as other persons and environments are treated as instrumentalizable objects, is derived from—and constitutes a distortion of—the attitude and practice of recognition. Reification consists in a "forgetting" or deflection from recognition

itself. And further, it is never possible to supplant recognition with objectification (understood as the full success of reifying practices), since recognition inevitably underwrites reification.

In support of this elaboration, Honneth recruits Cavell, Dewey, and Heidegger to work out what recognition as a form of praxis might come to mean. What seems salient throughout these readings is the notion that reification is neither a category mistake nor a moral failure. "If reification," he writes, "constitutes neither a mere epistemic category mistake nor a form of moral misconduct, the only remaining possibility is that it be conceived as a form of praxis that is *structurally* false." It is unclear why this is the *only* remaining possibility, though it is abundantly clear that this is the alternative possibility that Honneth seeks to pursue. If, in his view, reification were a category mistake, we would be obligated to find a new vocabulary, but that might not alter our attitudes and practices. And if it were a moral fault, it would reflect upon our character or faulty modes of moral reasoning. Neither model would allow us to see that recognition is the condition of possibility for human exchange, for communication, and for acknowledging the existence of others. Although Honneth distinguishes the normative account of recognition from morality, it would seem that recognition, regardless of its fundamental status in any and all social ontologies, constitutes a moral value. When he refers to the existence of a "genuine human practice," it is clear that this "genuine" practice advances ethically desirable consequences: recognition, reciprocity, care, and the affirmation of the existence of another. And I take it that Honneth would not be worrying about reification if he were not primarily concerned with the ways in which the self, others, and the environment can all be treated as instrumentalizable objects rather than as subjects and bearers of recognition, and if he were not interested in establishing the conditions of possibility for the latter.

The mistake Lukács apparently made was to offer as an alternative to reification a version of human action that privileges the generative or productive capacities of the human subject, relegating the objects

of the perceptual field to products and effects of the human will. This highly anthropocentric view is flawed because it understands action as unilaterally undertaken by a subject, and it mistakes the problem of reification for one version of the problem of alienation, namely, the alienation of objects from their makers. According to this limited view, the world would ideally exist as a reflection of my will. What is other to me would thus offend against my will and constitute a kind of estrangement of objects. If we were to understand reification in these terms, it would thus come to characterize overbroadly the independence of objects and others. Similarly, this view implies problematic consequences for thinking about the human relationship to nature. It would anthropomorphize nature in an unacceptable way, and it would misunderstand the very normative ideal of a genuine praxis, which implies an involvement, a form of care, and a kind of attentiveness, that establishes a pre-epistemic relation between subject and object. The relationship to nature is a precondition of the relationship to others, and so both are understood, in a primary way, to be component dimensions of recognition in Honneth's view.

Honneth characterizes recognition in various ways, but what seems most central to his conception is the notion that cognitive attitudes are primarily grounded affective relations: involvement, concern, interrelatedness, and modes of care. Over and against a relationship of involvement and care, reifying attitudes are those that deny or deflect from this primary mode of engagement and support detached and distanced modes of observation and instrumentalization.

Honneth disputes the subject-centered and anthropomorphizing account of human action in Lukács' text, but he also offers a distinction between reification and objectification that has strong implications for his account. In Honneth's view (and ultimately, in Lukács'), reification can never fully objectify our relations to others, to nature or, indeed, to ourselves. For a full objectification to happen, recognition would have to be fully eviscerated. But if reification is derived from recognition (even as it is defined as a "turning away" from recognition), it follows that reification always presupposes and

reinstitutes recognition, despite its manifest aims. Some trace of recognition remains throughout all possible acts of reification, and this persistent trace establishes the enduring priority of recognition to reification in Honneth's view. When we consider, then, those habits of neutral observation that form over time, that compose some or many of our habits of knowing and interaction in our daily lives, they never fully succeed in eradicating the originally involved and "caring" engagement with the world.

When we ask more narrowly in what this involvement and care consists, we receive several formulations that are worth considering in some detail. It is not enough simply to be participatory rather than observational, since there are all kinds of modes of involvement and participation that would not satisfy the ideal of a genuine praxis that Honneth is outlining for us here. In fact, what defines the ideal of genuine praxis is a norm of reciprocity, one that he understands to be articulated in its nascent form in the relationship between the caregiver and the child, one that he explicitly calls the defining structure of the "social bond." As is clear from this formulation, the social bond is singular, and I take it that it would be self-same social bond in any particular society. This thesis distinguishes Honneth's view as a kind of philosophical anthropology over and against a sociology. And though the use of the term "recognition" clearly recalls Hegel, Honneth has made clear elsewhere that he grounds his view only partially in Hegel, and more centrally in Fichte. Hegel, after all, is responsible for the subject-centered position that Honneth opposes, and though the "reciprocity" of recognition proves important to his view, the dynamics of subjugation and fear of death found in Hegel's discussion of recognition in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* are nowhere to be found in this account. As a result, the reciprocal recognition born of strife and domination is not the kind that Honneth is willing to affirm.

Honneth's aim is to delineate the structure of a "genuine praxis," an engagement with others and with the environment that implies alterations in the dispositions and attitudes of the subject as well. But

if a genuine practice is what we are after, then not any sort of care and involvement will do. It has to be a kind of participation and involvement that affirms the primary emotional attachments through which we enter into sociality, ones that we find at work in this "social bond" that is singular and pervasive; moreover, it will have to be a kind of participation and involvement that carries reciprocity as both its implicit and articulate structure. But what is meant by reciprocity in this instance, if we are not to assume that "reciprocal recognition" in Hegel's sense is at issue?

Honneth tries to elaborate on this view when he claims that "human subjects normally participate in social life *by placing themselves in the position of their counterparts,* whose desires, dispositions, and thoughts they have learned to understand as the motives for the latter's actions" (my emphasis). To participate, then, means to take up the position of the other. It is probably worth noting that sometimes he writes "takes up" the position of the other, by which he means a certain "appropriation" (*Aneignung*), and sometimes he writes of "taking over," but in each case he is specifying what he means by care, participation, and involvement (*Anteilnahmung*). Indeed, if we fail to take up the position of the other, then it is assumed that the other remains reified for us, or, perhaps better said, we maintain instead a set of reifying relations to the other. We know only our own aims, and the other is an instrument for the satisfaction of our aims. It would seem that, according to this scheme, our choice is either to be merely observational (and hence reifying) and fail to take up the position of the other, or to be participatory, by which we mean, among other things, taking up the position of the other.

Many of the questions that I have for this position follow from this last set of claims. For instance, Can we fail to take up the position of the other but still engage in a participatory relation to her? Perhaps we can, and we can still call those forms of engagement participatory, though they do not rise to the level of a genuine praxis. What if we express a hateful or sadistic impulse toward the other? I would presume that such attitudes and relations are not distanced

and detached, but are invested and involved. It would seem that these kinds of aggressive or negative emotional dispositions and expressions are neither quite observational nor involved and engaged in ways that subscribe to principles of reciprocity and care. Where do they fit? If such modes of disposition are neither, what does it tell us about the framework we are asked to accept at this point? It would be one thing to claim that taking up the position of the other defined the very meaning of participation, in which case to participate means precisely to adopt that position and nothing else. But it would be another thing to claim that one form of participation is "adopting the point of view" of the other, and that that is a better form of participation than some other forms. But such a view would compel us to accept that there are modes of involvement and care that lose sight of the other, and that they still qualify as modes of engagement. I can "care" for someone to the point that he loses all independence, and I can become very engaged by an argument or altercation with someone I dislike intensely. It won't do to say that despite my controlling behavior in the first instance and my overt aggression in the second, I am still somehow affirming the existence of the other and, so, implicitly engaged in a mode of recognition. Honneth, of course, offers this as an explanation for how, for instance, a mode of recognition is nevertheless maintained in the midst of hate speech or aggressive action. But if he wants to argue this, he can no longer claim that affective involvement is a sign of recognition, and detachment a sign of observational and reifying attitudes.

In fact, if we look at modes of rage that seek to eradicate the other, that is, to physically harm and kill the other, then we have a mode of highly affective engagement that in no way seeks to affirm the existence of the other; rather, it seeks to eradicate the existence of the other. If we accept the proposition that to be affectively engaged is to affirm the existence of the other, we continue to have no way of really explaining human aggression. And this means that our accounts of human infancy, even of the primary bond, imagined as singular, will have to preclude positions such as Melanie Klein's and even Freud's.

Of course, it is always possible to say that hateful and aggressive modes of relating are a consequence of the observational mode, or that no matter how affectively involved, the other is still finally instrumentalized, and that this is a sign of reification. If this is true, then reification cannot rightly be described as observational over and against recognition that is affective. The observational mode implies that others are objects, and so, accordingly, we treat them as objects, and violence is an expression, if not the ultimate expression, of that sort of reifying treatment. But what if violence is considered a way of being involved? To say that we affirm the existence of the other whom we maim, and that our very affective involvement testifies to this affirmation, is surely a way of ruling out the possibility of extreme aggression that is as equally primordial, social, and human, as modes of recognition and respectful care. Further, to be involved would neither be a good in itself nor carry a highly normative value, but would be neutral with respect to normative claims. Indeed, we would be returned to that understanding of everyday life wherein our involvements are sometimes caring and sometimes careless, attention is needed to make sure the other is affirmed, and vigilance is required to make sure that we are not instrumentalizing others in ways that are cruel. If a normative value is to be derived from involvement, it is not because involvement presupposes a normative structure of genuine praxis, but because we are beings who have to struggle with both love and aggression in our flawed and commendable efforts to care for other human beings. Thus, in my view, modes of involvement bear different moral meanings for us; they are bound by no single pregiven structure, relation, or bond, much less a normative one, and that is why we are under a responsibility to negotiate among such involvements as best we can. It is not a matter of returning to what we "really" know or undoing our deviations from the norm, but of struggling with a set of ethical demands on the basis of myriad affective responses that, prior to their expression in action, have no particular moral valence.

Of course, Honneth's critique of instrumental relations continues a critical concern with instrumentality, including a critique of instrumental reason, that was one of the signature contributions of the Frankfurt School. Of course, many social psychological positions formulated in the aftermath of the Nazi concentration camps debated this issue, questioning whether the obliteration of moral sensibility among the Nazis was a result of the hegemony of instrumental reason. Humans were quite literally turned into soap and shades, and so it would appear that reification was most horrifically at work in treating humans as objects. We can certainly note as well that in the scientific experiments with children, the ill, and the disabled, a certain set of "observational attitudes" clearly took the place of caring ones. I do not know whether this forms the major historical background for Honneth's continuing reflections on instrumentality. Do we say that Nazi doctors and torturers were detached and dissociated, and that this was, in a sense, the extreme form of reification? Is reification an adequate way, though, of understanding human violence in these extreme forms?

The problem, of course, is that instrumental reason and modes of reification can themselves become forms of passion, modes of attachment, sites of emotional investment and excitation. They are not exclusively detached and dry and scientific. And even if they are, there can and must be an erotics and an emotional investment that sustains that detachment and dryness, even what we might call an excitation about being cold. I think we have to consider this kind of model if we are to take account of the kind of sadism at issue here. And if we are not to attribute to the original social bond a kind of "goodness" that, in my view, certainly coexists with the capacity for destruction and that, together, produce the ambivalent structure of the psyche on the basis of which individual and group ethical attitudes and actions are formed.

I would like to assume that Honneth agrees with me at least on this point, that we cannot assume that if only we are passionate and

emotionally involved, we will do the right thing. In my view, there is
no innate moral trajectory in involvement, participation, and emo-
tionality, since we are beings who, from the start, both love and resist
our dependency, and whose psychic reality is, by definition, ambiva-
lent. I take it that this is the part of psychoanalysis that Jonathan Lear
formulates in a different way in this volume, one that Honneth will
not accommodate in his current theory. The dimension of psychology
and psychoanalysis to which Honneth seeks recourse is the theory
of attachment. But he reads that theory only selectively. As much as
attachment is a precondition for development—a thesis with which
I wholeheartedly concur—so differentiation is a task that engages
us throughout life, and which makes for the persistent structure of
a certain ethical quandary: How do I remain attached and remain
boundaried or separated as a self? And how do I live this boundary
that both closes me off to others and opens me to them? Indeed,
I don't think we can say, as Honneth has argued, that attachment
precedes differentiation, since to attach to something is already to
have crossed the divide between that thing, that person, and myself.
This is, after all, what distinguishes attachment from fusion where
no boundary between self and other can be found. And so differenti-
ation is as much a condition of attachment—maybe even sometimes
its curse—as it is a consequence. And if we consider the definition of
reciprocity that Honneth offers, it follows as well that to "take up"
another person's perspective is precisely to cross over from here to
there, and so to affirm that there is a space between. If there were no
distance, there could be no "taking up" of the other's perspective: one
would, as it were, already be flooded by that perspective. And the task
would be quite different: to find a means of differentiating so that
the other might be recognizable as separate from me. Indeed, some
accounts of nationalist identification have suggested that soldiers in
the Nazi army understood themselves as part of one personality, that
the identification with the Führer successfully destroyed differenti-
ated relations, producing a certain passionate obedience in the name
of a leader in whose personality the "I" was already incorporated.

It may be that detachment, observation, and instrumentality appear as the social ills that have taken us away from genuine praxis. But if it is possible to be passionately detached—as it is, for instance, when one breaks off a relation and resolves to go about one's life without the offending person at issue—and if it is possible to "want to be used" (that is, to be an instrument for another's pleasure, and to enjoy one's instrumentality for that purpose), then it seems that we cannot rigorously separate the instrumental from the engaged.

If we turn to reconstructed infant-parent scenarios to discern the primary social bond, a number of new problems emerge. First of all, why is this understood as a dyadic relation, and why is the parental figure accordingly singular? I say this not because I think the triad is more important—though it does, I think, produce the problem of mimeticism and scarcity in ways that have significant implications for thinking about desire, identification, jealousy, and "place." Rather, it is because the parent-infant dyad inscribes a socially contingent arrangement of parenting that is idealized, if not reified, as a singular and primary social bond. As anthropologists and sociologists have shown us, there are many forms of parenting relations, and children can have more than one primary object of attachment. Indeed, D. W. Winnicott very famously moved from the position of thinking that the maternal object was the primary relation for the child to arguing that the maternal function may well be distributed across several persons (and several genders). He came to understand that it should be possible to ask after "the maternal field" and allowed that "bits and pieces" of maternal function could be scattered among several caregivers. A child may thus find primary relationality in relation to a complex set of kinship relations that are not symbolized or typified by a single person. Hence, it does not follow that the primary social bond, understood as a bond established in infancy, is necessarily dyadic. Of course, there are also reasons to question why, if we wanted to discern a primary social bond, we would look to infancy, given that the infant is born into a complex and preexisting set of social relations that are not reducible to the dyadic relation.

Why do we imagine that the primary structures of the social begin with the child? With what social relations does the child begin? What social relations make possible the emergence of the child, and what relations are in place, waiting for the child, when it emerges into the world?

But even if we agree to try to work within Honneth's framework, it still makes sense to ask whether it is, finally, our powers of detachment and observation that put us at risk of destroying what Honneth calls the human or the social bond. If this is so, and if reification emerges within particular social relations—that is, at the level of a sociology—then all we would have to do is alter those contingent social relations to "return" to a genuine praxis that, luckily, is always lurking just beneath our instrumental attitudes. In a way, the "genuine bond" functions as an Arcadian myth, a "before" to the social that is at once the foundation of the social and a guide that might restore us to a more genuine sense of relationality from which, under social conditions of reification, we have become estranged. I understand this as a wish, a hope, but like many wishes of the Arcadian variety, it is based on a certain refusal to see that matters cannot be stipulated so optimistically "at the start." Is it not also part of our emotional constitution to be of two minds about our most fundamental relations and our most primary modes of attachment? The problem of forming a bond within conditions of dependency is no easy one, and it produces the permanent necessity of aggression, of breaking and separating, on the one hand, and dependency, helplessness, and need, on the other hand. What human escapes this struggle between love and aggression? Can we call the former "recognition" and make it more primordial than the other, or are they co-constitutive? If we prioritize care and untroubled attachment, is that a way of making sure we are, from the start, "necessarily" good and become contingently bad under only certain social conditions? Is this a Rousseauian conceit in which natural pity attunes us, for instance, to the suffering of others and then becomes distorted and displaced under conditions of property that compel us into instrumental relations that deny that

more primary form of social responsiveness? What if the struggle between love and aggression, attachment and differentiation, is coextensive with being human?

With this set of concerns in mind, let us consider what it means to "to take up the position of the second person." I take this to be of paramount ethical significance in Honneth's view. It is an important issue, one that is fundamental to ethnography, moral philosophy, and social theory. What does it mean to come up with a "reciprocal understanding of each other's motives" and to identify this achievement of reciprocity as "the bond of human interaction"? Honneth makes clear that this capacity for reciprocal understanding constitutes the meaning of recognition for him, that recognition precedes and conditions cognition, indeed that it establishes the "onto-genetic priority of recognition over cognition" and that, as such, it is prior to all forms of observation that would include observational methods.

Indeed, this communicative stance through which a reciprocal understanding of motives is achieved defines human behavior essentially. Honneth writes, "Human behavior is distinguished by the communicative stance through taking over a second person's perspective." We see the beginnings of this capacity in the infant, he claims, since the infant contains this principle of reciprocal understanding in his or her ability to take up the perspective of the other. Finally, I'd like to consider whether the kinds of developmental theories on which he relies inadvertently reintroduce reification into the heart of recognition.

What support does Honneth offer for this characterization of the infant carrying this norm of reciprocity in its primary attachments, its capacity to respond to the ostensibly singular caregiver and to take the point of the view of the caregiver?

Honneth cites three sources for the "developmental psychology" and "socialization research" that support his views.[2] So that tells us that some part of those fields supply research that can be used to back up his claims. But what are the countervailing trends, and can he broker them? We are meant to understand that the primordial social

bond is not a sociological concept, and yet we turn to developmental psychology to furnish the empirical support for this presociological relationality. Do we say that the parent-child dyad cannot usefully be approached through sociological accounts of kinship? Or are we to assume that the implicit account of kinship presupposed by developmental psychology that assumes the primacy of the dyad is not usefully explored or criticized by sociological means? Developmental psychology is a large and contested field, and one would have to decide among competing methodologies and justify the choice of one methodology rather than another. In any case, even if one wanted to base the claim for a primordial and genuine praxis on empirical research, one would have to decide among empirical studies, and it wouldn't be quite convincing to engage only those that already seem to support the thesis. If we are to understand that "socialization research" furnishes the empirical work on the phenomenon of socialization that would provide the basis for his claims about the priority of recognition, then we would have to know more generally how empirical proof, itself based on observational methods, can be used to support a primary relationality that is non-observational, and why we should accept the results of any such research after the criticism of observational methods that we have been offered by Honneth's extensive critique? So when he remarks, for instance, that "these theories demonstrate that at the age of nine months, a child makes several notable advances in interactive behavior," we are asked to take as confirmed observational truth that this is the case. But why should we accept this? And where is the discussion both of countervailing empirical findings (Daniel Stern, for instance), and the status of the empirical, observational methodology? After all, Honneth has offered us extensive arguments in favor of existential involvement, forms of caring, and the priority of recognition to detached observation, understood as a reifying attitude. Why rely suddenly on an observational method to supply empirical grounding for this very claim? Indeed, why the turn to the empirical here at all? After all, if recognition is primordial, and if it is coextensive with

basic acts of perception that precede and condition cognition, and if it constitutes a form of interaction that precedes and conditions forms of observation, then it would seem that we need to reverse the order here, contextualizing the study of empirical phenomena such as "socialization" within the more fundamental framework of recognition. After all, if our perceptions and then our cognition emerge from this framework, it would be this framework that is presupposed in any particular empirical inquiry.

If we were then to pursue the empirical inquiry to supply empirical proof for a framework that itself conditions empirical observation, we would be effectively reversing and nullifying the argument for which we are seeking proof! Indeed, the better strategy is to ask, How would developmental psychology itself be redefined if it were to ground its own observational methods in a more primordial recognitional attitude? How would its methodology change, and what would its relation to social theory and philosophical analysis look like, if it were to take up this philosophical anthropology as its theoretical grounding?

Before we can recommend such a trajectory for empirical research, however, let us consider once again what it means to "adopt" or "take over" or "take up" the point of view of the other. We seem to have these options: we are recognitional if we are able to adopt the other's point of view. I gather that this is not the same as making the other's point of view the same as my own; I do not "adopt" it in that sense. And it must be possible to disagree with another and also to be able to "adopt his or her point of view" in the course of that disagreement. So it seems to mean only, as Honneth has suggested, "understanding another's reasons for acting." Raymond Geuss has suggested that it means that "I am compelled to take into account your desire." Now, both of these seems to be the kinds of reflections that individuals learn how to do as they emerge, and that adults are particularly obligated to undertake such considerations when they consider possible modes of conduct and possible modes of response to another's conduct. The infant who is crying for milk or extremely uncomfortable and unable

to roll over is not in the business of understanding another's reasons for acting when the infant calls out, makes its demands, and starts to form its initial and most emphatic attachments and identifications. Is the other "over there," as someone separate from me, from the start? Am I engulfed or overwhelmed by the other? And how does this "I" even come about, given the flux of physiological demand and enigmatic handling to which it is subject, without will? Do we need to know both how the "I" is formed and how it achieves separation from others before we can ask how it comes to adopt the point of view of the other?

In support of his argument, Honneth turns to Adorno's claim in *Minima Moralia* that "a person doesn't become a person until he or she imitates other persons." He continues that, for Adorno, this form of imitation is an "archetype of love." But we must be careful here about what we mean by "imitation," since I gather that if we "take up" the perspective of another, we are doing something other than simply sympathizing with a point of view. In the case where I understand the reasons for another's action or belief, I do not necessarily share those reasons, and it does not follow that I must hold to the same reasons. Indeed, the recognition of the alterity of the other human being—the existence of that other as precisely not me—depends on my being able to distinguish the other's perspective from my own, and then to undertake an understanding of that perspective as well as I can. Imitation, however, opens up another set of problems. For instance, there are modes of mimetic involvement on the part of the child, ways of responding to smiles and touch, to laughter and to distress on the part of caregivers, and these primary impressions are part of what form the affective conditions of experience itself. In fact, the very possibility of an "I" who understands his or her own motor capacity and articulations as his or her own is a later accomplishment, one that follows from a process of differentiation in which one must overcome the transitive mimeticism of primary impressions. There can be no "I" without undergoing this separation from a primary mimeticism, and that primary mimeti-

cism nevertheless continues to have a structuring and formative effect on that "I." If that "I" is doubtless already formed through a mimeticism that precedes and inaugurates subject formation, then clearly that mimeticism is not the same as "adopting the perspective of the other" in the ways that have been suggested above. Indeed, if we think about primary modes of transitivity in which, for instance, the infant echoes the sounds that she or he receives, sustains a certain transitive relation to surrounding voices, these constitute less incipient moments of recognition of the alterity of the other than modes of responsiveness that predate the first-person perspective. That first-person is made possible by virtue of the second- and third-, and those "other voices" become part of one's own, constitute the condition of possibility for something that is belatedly and perhaps always only partially "one's own."

Hence, in relational psychoanalysis and in various positions derived from Winnicott, primary relations precede the formation of what we call an "ego," and even the "ego" is understood primarily as consisting of modes of "ego relatedness." In a different vein, post-Lacanian theorists such as Mikkel Borsch-Jakobsen have suggested that identification *precedes* the formation of the subject, and so the mimetic echo of the other, we might say, instigates the "I" who maintains, quite unconsciously, the trace of the Other at the basis of itself. This is also very close to the theory of Jean Laplanche, though for him it is the overwhelming impress of primary others (what he calls "the adult world"—eschewing the presumptive dyad) that mark and animate drives and come to constitute an alterity at the heart of the subject, the first-person "I."

These are complex matters that cannot be fully interrogated here, but it seems to me that if Honneth wants to select from psychoanalytic perspectives and build an alliance between attachment theory and psychological research, he could do that more persuasively by showing how his theory can engage and refute a rival set of accounts that are equally psychoanalytic and concerned with attachment and differentiation. The kinds of moral deliberations that adults conduct

when they seek to understand the reasons why others act as they do are not analogous to what happens at the early stages of attachment, identification, and responsiveness. Indeed, it seems not quite right to ask an infant to be fully responsive to alterity. Nor does it seem quite right to find the incipient structure of morality in an infant's efforts to secure its basic needs.

Honneth seems to subscribe as well to the view that to understand properly the expression of another human being is to respond appropriately. This view sets up a structural isomorphism between expression and response that is highly normative in character and fails to understand that the same expression of suffering on a person's face may well elicit in one person a sympathetic desire to alleviate its cause and in another a sadistic desire to aggravate the suffering. Indeed, it may be the same person feels a desire to alleviate and to aggravate the suffering and is caught precisely in that bind of ambivalent response. Can we account for this kind of human reaction in Honneth's model? His insistence that only sympathy is the true or correct response begs the question, since at that point we are no longer describing recognition as a relationality prior to cognition, as a genuine praxis, but very clearly as a morally right mode of conduct. Indeed, if he argues that only the sympathetic response is "right," then he has clearly shifted into a discussion of moral deliberation, and on that level he may well be justified. But if he does this, then he can no longer assume the analytic separability of the sphere of "genuine praxis" from the domain of morally right conduct. This comes out in several places through Honneth's text when, for instance, he seeks recourse to the morally charged language of violation in saying, for instance, that reifying attitudes toward nature "indirectly violate the non-epistemic requirements for our dealings with other humans."

Indeed, at some points, it seems, Honneth is very much in favor of an emotional involvement with the things of this world, suggesting that this kind of involvement, *Bezogenheit,* is what constitutes the possibility of recognition, where recognition affirms and articulates

a relation of involvement between the perceiving subject and the countervailing world. Indeed, at some points, it would seem, recognition is a model through which the subject-object distinction is itself criticized, and a more relational understanding of involvement is offered in its place. But here, it seems, we have another model at work, one in which the recognition of another as having an objective separateness is extremely important. In describing the work of Hobson and Tomasello, Honneth remarks that they "emphasize the developments in communicative interaction through which a child learns step by step and through the perspective of the second person to perceive objects as entities of an objective world that exists independently of our stance toward it."

We might try to recast this understanding in light of what Honneth has already offered us: If we must *first* attach to a second person and, as part of that attachment, come to adopt that second person's perspective, it would seem that we must first regard that second person as a second person. That is: we must come to regard that second person as second, that is, as not me, separate from me. It would only be on the occasion of this differentiation that I could come to encounter that second person as a separate person and so adopt their point of view. Let's hold off for the moment thinking about "what it means to adopt a point of view," and stay with the logical presuppositions of this encounter that is so important a part of the moral dimension of human praxis for Honneth. If the child must first take on the second-person point of view, and even perceive through this second person's perspective, to perceive "objects as entities of an objective world that exists independently of our stance toward it," then it seems clear that the child must undergo a loss of his or her egocentrism—narcissism, if you will—and not only form an attachment but take on the perspective of the one to whom he or she is attached, in order to understand an objective world that exists with some degree of significant indifference toward him or her. This loss of egocentrism is accomplished, then, in at least two steps: the first is through the recognition of the second person as second, and the taking on of the

second person's perspective (still unclear), and then, through that displacement in the second-person perspective or appropriation of the second-person perspective, opening up perceptually to a world that exists in its objectivity and, also, its independence from us. If this is a mode of development that we understand to be appropriate, if not "genuine," then it would seem that it is precisely by denying our involvement with that world that we come to understand it in its objectivity and independence.

Of course, it would be necessary to say that an egocentric involvement is not the same as the kind of involvement that Honneth praises as part of the primarily affirmative mode of a genuine human praxis. But it would seem that the developmental models he uses to make his point subscribe to a view that assumes the emergence of relational attitudes from a primary egocentrism or, indeed, from a place of undifferentiated transitive receptivity. This primary state would be overcome through an objective and nonrelational mode of perception toward objects that are characterized primarily by their independence and *not* by their involvement with us. Indeed, if detached observational neutrality is a methodological prerequisite for development psychologies such as Hobson's and Tomasello's, then it may be that that very objectivity exemplified by the methodology is also ascribed to the child.

I agree with Honneth's enormously productive claim that "emotional receptivity comes before the transition to cognition of intersubjectively given objects in a strictly temporal sense." If he means to suggest that objectively given objects are those that are intersubjectively given, then he is able to retain a shared subjective basis for the objectivity of the objects in question. The first mode of encounter is, in his view, dyadic, and the consequence of that dyadic encounter is to take on a second-person point of view that allows for another perspective on an object. Adopting the perspective of the second person not only introduces us to a new aspect of the object but is the means through which the objectivity of the object is constituted.

Significantly, Honneth relies on Adorno's notion of imitation to show how the child comes to perceive the attributes of the independently existing other person or object. He writes:

This act of imitating a concrete second person, which draws upon libidinal energies, becomes transmitted, so to speak, onto the object by endowing it with additional components of meaning that the loved figure of attachment perceives in the object. And the more second-person attitudes a subject can fuse to the same object in the course of its libidinal cathexis, the richer in aspects the object will ultimately appear to him in its objective reality.

In the above, we can discern a certain confusion between what is imitated in the other and what is endowed upon the other. Is there a way to overcome this confusion? And what are its consequences for Honneth's view? If the point of imitation is to establish the possibility for the child of "taking on" or "taking over" the other's point of view, and if imitation involves endowing the other with attributes, then it would seem that the other whose point of view the child takes on is an other who is at least partially constructed through the libidinal wishes and projections of the child. We seem then to have returned to the original problem that Honneth identified in Lukács, namely, the tension between a view of alterity that is constructed and produced by the subject and one that belongs to an interactionist mode that yields the possibility of the recognition (and affirmation) of the other in his or her separateness and independence. If our imitations are always to some extent attributive—that is, if we endow the other with qualities and attributes as part of a more general wishfulness and capacity for idealization—is there any way to relieve the shadow of the ego from the perception of the object? And to return to the other point about mimeticism and the transitivity of primary impressions, we would have to ask the converse question: Is there any way to distinguish the first-person from those impressions of alterity by which it is constituted? If not, is there any way finally to relieve the ego of the shadow cast by the object?[3]

Honneth concludes his text by discussing what it means to "forget" this antecedent mode of recognition, and he seeks to redefine reification as a mode of such forgetfulness. He stipulates, "It cannot be true that our consciousness can simply be dispossessed of this fact of recognition and that recognition thereby 'vanishes.'" The force of the stipulation is clear: consciousness is, by definition, bound up with recognition, so forms of reification that appear to have supplanted recognitional relations and attitudes can only be a kind of semblance. Of course, I am aware that such stipulations cannot be proven, and Honneth at one point refers to his inquiry as a set of "illuminating speculations." It would seem that this stipulation is a speculation of sorts, and so belies a certain urgency and necessity for which, finally, there can be no proof. We can well imagine that the world would be unbearable if we did not assume that we were bound up with others in a caring way "from the start" and that the conditions of that start remain with us, even if in inchoate form, throughout life. But if such relations of care are prior to cognition and coextensive with consciousness itself, then they do not rely on any particular empirical circumstances to be true. If, however, that relation of care is presumed to be a feature of all child-rearing arrangements, then we have to consider whether such is true. In either case, a confusion exists between recognition as a social a priori and recognition as an empirically induced or facilitated more of relationality.

Further, if Honneth wants to argue that humans can't take up a reifying stance toward other persons (or groups of persons) without losing sight of their antecedent recognition of others, then he is presuming a temporal relation between recognition and reification that needs to be explained. If it happens in the course of a developmental narrative of childhood, then it belongs to the temporal trajectory of a singular human life. But if it is a condition of possibility, a relationality that is coextensive with human sociality, then it would seem to exist regardless of child-rearing practices or the particular trajectory of an individual life. The temporal priority of recognition would be a logical one, and we would need to understand the difference between

the two. In addition, if we say that reification consists of the forgetting of recognition, then it would appear that we define reification in that way, and we cannot say that it takes place only after that forgetting takes place. That forgetting would be the act itself. What makes this all the more peculiar is that if we approach the problem developmentally, it would seem that recognition is something achieved, and so would emerge first only after we wake from a more primary forgetfulness. This last seems to be the case, since otherwise in infancy, we would be fully aware of the existence of the other, and so act in ways that are indistinguishable from a certain ideal of adult moral conduct. This would place an unfair normative burden on any child, whose demands and blindnesses are part of its "right," and it would confound our own understanding of the difference between what conditions the capacity for recognition and what ideal forms that recognition might take.

Notes

1. See especially Part II, "Morality and Recognition," in Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). It should be clear that Honneth takes distance from the Hegelian account, which makes strife essential to the struggle for recognition. For Honneth, modes of caring are implicit in all social relations and constitute "primordial" conditions for social interaction.

2. See his citations to Michael Tomasello, Peter Hobson, and Martin Dornes in this volume.

3. For these two views, see Christopher Bollas, *In the Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) and Jessica Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Philosophical Anthropology and Social Criticism

Raymond Geuss

I should like to begin by describing some of the historical background to Professor Honneth's very rich account of the relation between cognition, recognition, and reification in the hope that this will allow us to focus more sharply on some of the central features of his position. The historical narrative I want to present is one that consists of two inter-nested subplots. The first is a story about the characteristic philosophical anthropology of the West; the second a story about the development of a certain kind of social criticism.

To start with the first of these, John Dewey used to say that there was what he called an "intellectualist" bias in Western philosophy, as it had developed since Plato. One way in which this bias expressed itself, Dewey thought, was in the traditional attempts to analyze the essential properties of human beings. These properties were supposed to be basic to the human mode of life, characteristic of humans in distinction from other entities (particularly animals), and of great importance to the members of our species. "Intellectualism" is the thesis that humans are defined by their ability to engage in a certain type of action: the formation and systematic evaluation of beliefs. If one adds to this the further assumption that humans are also endowed with a distinct faculty of reason which ought to be allowed free rein to follow its own nature in regulating the acceptance of beliefs, one gets a version of the traditional rationalism, which has been the default position for most philosophers since Plato:[1] If my reason has evaluated the beliefs I have formed, those that satisfy the

standards that reason imposes on them can count as (correct) cognition (of the world). These are the ones, so the account runs, that ought to guide my action. For this conception not to become completely unrealistic as a full account of human life, and in particular of human *action*, some place had to be found for something other than simple doxogenesis, the mere generation of beliefs. There had to be a motor, something that actually moved a human agent out of the realm of speculation—of merely entertaining thoughts and beliefs—and brought it about that the agent acted in the external world in one way rather than another. Usually, then, philosophers admitted a second sector of the human psyche, distinct from the realm in which reason and the cognitive apparatus were located. This second realm was inhabited by desires, wants, impulses, and emotions, as the things that provided the push, as reason provided the guidance, for human action. Action required a conjunction of belief and desire. This realm of desire was motivationally important but, on the traditional view, had to be kept very firmly under control lest it distort the process of cognition. The "real" self was a freestanding, self-regulating, cognitive subject: it was the starting point for and the teleological goal of human life, and of philosophy.

This main Western tradition was never completely uncontested, but in retrospect we can see the importance of a shift that took place at the very end of the eighteenth century. Fichte, and following him most of the German Idealists, set out systematically to reject one important element of the traditional model in the name of the primacy of the practical over the cognitive. Fichte claimed that traditional philosophers had started from the assumption that the human subject was to be construed essentially as a cognitive apparatus, which had, as it were, dropped straight down from heaven, complete in all respects. Contrary to this, however, he argued, this subject had a genesis, and the first task of philosophy must be to understand exactly how it had come into existence. Fichte asserts, first, that the human subject brings itself into existence through performing a particular kind of metaphysical action, that of positing itself; only when

the self has performed this highly paradoxical action can cognition, or any other kind of engagement with the world, take place. Second, Fichte held that I can be sure of the existence of an external world only because I know immediately that I stand under certain practical obligations to other people, and for this to make sense these other people must be real. A certain kind of aboriginal metaphysical activity and a commitment to practical (and that, for Fichte, means "moral") principles, then, are in some sense prior to cognition.[2]

The project of demoting cognition had a checkered history in the nineteenth century, but around the turn of the century it seemed to gain momentum, and the old Western idea that it was enough to understand a human being as a mere self-contained, belief-producing, and belief-evaluating machine comes increasingly to be questioned. Honneth mentions Dewey, Lukács, and Heidegger as crucial figures in this development. Each of them represents a significant attempt to locate the formation and evaluation of beliefs in the context of a wider and prior kind of human praxis. For Dewey, belief formation took place in the pre-doxastic, immediate, qualitative encounter of a living animal with an experiential situation; for Lukács, doxogenesis had to be understood as embedded in the social activity of a historically constituted socioeconomic formation; and for Heidegger, the final framework for conceptualization and the formation of beliefs was a kind of "being-in-a-world" that was essentially constituted by a concernful, pre-predicative engagement in existing human projects.

That, then, is the first subplot of my story. The second subplot tells of the dissatisfaction with the social, political, existential, and aesthetic condition of post-Enlightenment societies, which begins to be expressed in the late eighteenth century and grows more common as the nineteenth century progresses. Schiller in the 1790s describes modern society as fragmented, Marx analyzes the alienation of capitalist societies, Durkheim introduces the concept of *anomie* into sociology, and Nietzsche tries to find a way out of the nihilism that he takes to be the specific modern danger.

Just as there is a wide variety of diagnoses of what it is about the modern world that is dispiriting, there is also a wide variety of proposed remedies, ranging from appeals for elite cultural renewal and educational reform to calls for revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist mode of production. One thing these forms of social criticism have in common is that the more interesting of them do not intend to be moralizing—that is, they do not discuss the defects in society relative to subjective failings of individual agents or relative to notions of responsibility, guilt, regret, or any of the rest of the Christian and post-Christian apparatus. If the criticism is *not*, however, moralizing, then to what can it appeal?[3]

Professor Honneth, I take it, is interested in a particular way in which these two historical strands—the anthropological and the critical—come together, as they do with special salience in the early work of Lukács and particularly in his account of reification. "Reification" is Lukács' term for a state of society in which humans treat themselves and others as if they were things, not people, and experience social relations generally as if they were relations between nonhuman entities.

Reification, Lukács holds, is a systematic, nonmoral defect or pathological feature of contemporary society, and part of the reason it exists is that in our society agents are encouraged to think of themselves in abstraction from full, affective participation in active work processes, and to see themselves as mere contemplative agents trying to attain correct cognitive beliefs about a society over which they know they have no final control.[4] They thus have false anthropological beliefs about themselves and the world in which they live. Lukács argues that the capitalist form of economic organization is responsible for this, and hence also for reification, and that a reified self-concept makes social change more difficult. Honneth proposes to give Lukács' theory of reification a new foundation in a theory of recognition that will allow it to maintain its edge as a critical theory of modern society.

Honneth, then, thinks that Lukács is right in one respect, but wrong in another. Lukács is right to think that modern society is reified and that this counts as a significant defect. He is wrong in the foundation he gives for his theory of reification. Lukács' theory is grounded in a metaphysical view derived from German Idealism. It has the superficial appearance of a secular theory, but, correctly understood, it will be seen to be derivative of a theological belief about the relation between God and the world. As the world is the full, complete image that God creates of himself, so society should also be the full, complete, unreduced, and undistorted image of the people who make it up. What is wrong with a reified society is that it fails to live up to this standard. Honneth holds that this standard is completely unrealistic—no human society could ever be so completely under the control of its members that it was nothing but a mirror image of them. Lukács' theory of reification can, however, be reconstructed as a theory about what happens when a society fails to instantiate the correct forms of "recognition" among its members. The need for recognition is originally grounded in the fact that it is the necessary precondition for cognition, and this fact can then be used to criticize any society that exhibits signs of reification.

So I take it that the basic structure of Honneth's argument is:

(A) Recognition is a precondition of cognition.
(B) Reification is a failure of recognition.
(C) Because of the overwhelming importance of cognition in society, we have good ground to criticize any feature of society that undermines the preconditions of cognition.
(D) Thus we have grounds to criticize a society that is reified.

This is a complex argument with potentially far-reaching conclusions, so it makes sense to try to be as clear as possible about the basic concepts and claims. "Recognize"/"recognition" has in English a number of distinct meanings, and Honneth, I think, characteristically uses the term in a further sense that is slightly idiosyncratic.

In one first primary sense, to "recognize" means to identify or, in particular, to reidentify. Paradigmatically I can say I recognize something if I see it, then see it again and know that it is the same thing (*widererkennen*). This can be said of objects or places in the world— "I recognize the Colosseum," meaning I saw it on a previous trip, see it again now and know that it is the same thing, and that I have applied the correct proper name to it. We can also, of course, say of people that we recognize them or fail to recognize them in this sense. Usually this is said of people as mere objects of perception: "She was so brown after her holiday in Mallorca, I didn't recognize her," but in some cases there can be a more interiorized, psychological use: "Since the death of her daughter, she is so changed one would scarcely recognize her." This could mean that her features have become drawn and her color paler, but it is more likely to mean that she has certain psychological properties that had seemed to be very deep-seated and which she no longer exhibits.

"I recognize" can also be used in a second major sense to mean something like "I admit" or "I grant"; "I recognize the truth of what you say" or "I recognize your claim for compensation." This looks like a performative, the primary context for which would be public discussion. A similar usage might be the now slightly archaic use of the word "acknowledge" to designate the public acceptance of the paternity of a child born outside marriage.[5] Performatives like these seem to get their meaning from the possibility of doing something *or not* doing it. Thus, the properly constituted authorities can say in a certain context "Her Majesty's government recognizes the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan," or they can say (in the appropriate context "Her Majesty's government does *not* recognize the Taliban," or finally they can try studiously to avoid *saying* anything. In some contexts, one can even perform a specific act of avoiding positive or negative commitment, such as formally declaring neutrality in the case of war.

Honneth, however, uses "recognition" in a third sense, which is not the same as either of the previous two. Recognition for him refers

to a primordial form of being open to and concernfully engaged with nature, other people, or ourselves and affectively interested in the nature of our interaction with them. There seems to me little doubt that Honneth is describing an important feature of human life, but it seems slightly forced to call it "recognition" in English (or, for that matter, *Anerkennung* in German).[6] The basic question is not whether Honneth gives a satisfactory formal definition of recognition, but whether there is a single, underlying phenomenon here—rather than, for instance, a variety of *different* processes—and, if there is, whether that phenomenon can play the role that Honneth assigns to it. Recognition, in his theory, is supposed to satisfy *two* distinct conditions at the same time: on the one hand, the recognition in question is supposed to be something which is a strict precondition for any form of human cognition, and, on the other, this recognition is supposed to provide the foundation for a nonmoralizing analysis of social pathologies, and thus for radical criticism of societies.

As we have seen, Honneth tries to render the phenomenon of recognition more familiar to us by claiming that it is something Dewey, Heidegger, and Lukács all in some sense saw, although each of them conceptualized it in a slightly different way. Honneth, I think, significantly underplays the strong differences between Dewey, Lukács, and Heidegger, but let us accept for the sake of argument that all three of these figures are committed to the idea that there is a form of minimal practical, emotional, and existential engagement with the world, other people, and myself which is a strict precondition for any form of human cognition. Even if this were to be true, such an engagement—such "recognition" in Honneth's technical sense of the word—could not sensibly be called a *positive* engagement with our world. It would have to be something that was in some sense prior to, and that renders possible, any distinction we could make between positive, negative, or neutral attitudes, actions, or emotions. I am recognizing you in Honneth's sense regardless of whether I help you, harm you, or adopt an attitude of indifference to your existence because the recognition in question is prior to adopting any of these

specific attitudes. This is a point Heidegger makes repeatedly: from the fact that care for the world is prior to cognition, it does not follow that I must have a basically affectionate, optimistic, or fostering attitude toward anything in the world in particular. To love, to hate, or to be indifferent, detached, neutral, and so on are all ways of being "care-fully" engaged. To repeat, the priority of care, concern, and so on has, precisely because it is quasi-transcendental, no—and that means really *no*—effect on how we ought to act concretely toward individuals, groups, or nature. I "care" for you—and thus also, if one takes the parallel between Heideggerian care and recognition seriously—and I "recognize" you (in this sense) as much if I ignore you, treat your death as mere collateral damage, or do all in my power to humiliate and destroy you, as I do if I cherish your every whim. If care (or recognition) is a precondition of everything and anything, including hatred or indifference, it cannot be the basis of an ethics or social criticism. Sartre spent his whole life trying to prove Heidegger wrong about this, and failed.

Reading Honneth's text, one often gets the feeling that he believes that the brutality we see around us results mainly from an indifference or excessive detachment, which is rooted in lack of recognition. Brutality (in the sense of having relatively crude desires), indifference, and active, intentional destructiveness are, however, different phenomena. The ways in which these psychic configurations, and others, interact with one another and with social circumstances are highly complex and require careful analysis. The terrified soldier at a checkpoint who knows he is loathed by all around him and will fire at any sudden movement, the operative who moves from one secret base to another trying to extract information from hooded captives, the suicide bomber on his way to act on his convictions: it does make sense to speak of "social pathology" in cases like these, but appeal to a purported "forgetfulness of recognition" is not helpful. The best way to extract information may be to enter imaginatively and empathetically into the world the other inhabits; acting on strongly held conviction does not seem to be a form of exhibiting indifference; and the

soldier's problem is not excessive or inappropriate detachment, but a perhaps a well-grounded fear and revulsion. Serious social criticism will not, of course, stop here with questions about the psychology of individuals in given situations, but will also ask: How did the soldier come to find himself at that checkpoint? Who trained the operative? In what way, for what reasons, and under what circumstances did the strongly held convictions in question come to be formed? I do not see how awareness of the fact that all cognition is ultimately rooted in "qualitative thinking" or in practical engagement with the world will help us to explain, understand, criticize, or change any of this.

John Dewey, to return to the place from which I began, thought that moral philosophy as a discipline was inherently reactionary, an attempt to invent an illusory discourse about imaginary metaphysical entities so as to defend highly inegalitarian social structures; ethics was the protection of existing privilege against novelty and the pressing needs of the many. A progressive society is one that supports serious scientific research, founds laboratories and libraries, fosters the arts, and provides space for a variety of experiments in living; a society in a phase of regression builds new prisons, police stations, and law schools, and endows chairs in moral philosophy. For Dewey, then, politically progressive social theory had to be nonmoralizing. I remain convinced of the importance of the project of trying to eliminate such words as "evil" from our moral, and especially our political, vocabulary and cultivating a nonmoralizing form of global social criticism. Unfortunately, I cannot believe that recognition could serve as a basis for such criticism.

Notes

1. "Rationalism" in this sense is *not* opposed to empiricism—that one ought to accept beliefs that are supported by experience is itself a principle of reason in the very general sense in which I am using this term.

2. The metaphysics involved here is extremely complex, obscure, and to modern sensibilities implausible, but in a way that does not matter.

Fichte notoriously never was able to give a general account of his basic philosophical position that satisfied him, and so the corpus of his writings in some sense must be treated as work in progress. The first strand of argument I attribute to him in the main text is most clearly visible in the various versions of his *Wissenschaftslehre* (see J. G. Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, ed. I. H. Fichte [Berlin: Veit & Co., 1845/46]; photomechanical reprint, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971). The second strand appears in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (*Sämmtliche Werke*, Vol. 2 [Berlin: Veit & Co., 1845/46. Rpt.: Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965], pp. 165–321).

3. On what grounds do Schiller, Hölderlin, Marx, Heidegger, and many others think there is something fundamentally wrong with the social world within which we live? In a post-Enlightenment society, some of the options that were perhaps available earlier are no longer plausible; one cannot claim to have direct access to the revealed will of God who requires us to condemn some feature of it. One early approach—that found, for instance, in the works of Schiller—criticized modern society by comparing it with an idealized past (Periclean Athens) and finding it wanting. The standard against which the present is being measured is known only very indirectly through imperfectly transmitted ancient writings and decaying monuments. This approach is weak for at least three reasons. First, it is not clear that the idealized past really had the properties now attributed to it. Second, even if the admirable properties claimed for it really did exist in the past, it might not be possible to re-create them under contemporary conditions (for instance, in a society without slavery). And third, it is not clear why the admiration we have for it is not simply a prejudice, and why should one prejudice count for more than any other?

4. Needless to say, at first blush the idea that agents in capitalist societies are "mere observers" rather than active, emotionally engaged participants seems completely counterintuitive, particularly if one takes as paradigmatic agents industrial workers (or "immediate producers"), rather than, for instance, stockbrokers or management consultants. In his discussion of capitalism, Lukács seems to conflate two very different things: (a) analysis of the world of industrial workers under the conditions of early capitalism, and (b) analysis of *exchange behavior* such as one finds it most clearly in stock transactions. Phenomenologically, these seem two very different kinds of things indeed, but the idea that the members of *either* group are

especially detached or emotionally neutral seems peculiar, and even the idea that although they are not "really" detached and neutral, but (falsely) understand themselves in that way seems implausible.

5. See, for instance, *King Lear* I.i. "the whoreson must be acknowledged" and *The Tempest* V.i. where Prospero says of Caliban "This thing of darkness I/acknowledge mine," which seems to refer to some metaphorical acceptance of responsibility.

6. The situation is slightly more complicated than it otherwise would be because the English term "recognize" covers roughly the same semantic area as two quite distinct German words, *anerkennen* and *wiedererkennen*. On the other hand, *anerkennen* is used as the equivalent of both "recognize" and "acknowledge." I suspect that Honneth's usage is strongly influenced by the translation of Stanley Cavell's term "acknowledging" into *anerkennen*, which then (incorrectly) looks prima facie as if it could be retranslated into standard English as "recognition."

The Slippery Middle

Jonathan Lear

I would like to thank the Tanner Foundation and the members of the Tanner Committee in Berkeley for bringing us all together and for inviting me to comment on Axel Honneth's fascinating lectures. And I would like to thank Honneth: as we have all heard, these lectures are at once serious and imaginative. There is so much in these lectures that is thought-provoking, that I am genuinely grateful to be here. Whatever reifying tendencies may be hidden in my practices, I am not the commentator who mistook his invitation for a hat.

Still, it seems to me that the job of a commentator is to face up to a tough question: Am I actually persuaded by Honneth's argument? If so, why? If not, why not? Ultimately, I am not persuaded, and I am going to explain why. The central problem, in a nutshell, one might call the problem of the slippery middle. Three crucial terms for Honneth are *recognition*, *care*, and *reification*—but all these terms are polyvalent. They each pick out a host of phenomena that have in common, at best, a family resemblance. In crudest outline, if one has a syllogistic argument—"All A's are B; all B's are C; therefore all A's are C'—one had better be sure that the middle term B picks out the same thing in both premises. Otherwise there will only be an appearance of validity. But I suspect that "recognition" and "reification" are ambiguous and that they allow for slippage in the middle term. As a result, one gets to conclusions that are stronger than the evidence or the argument allows.

Honneth covers a wide variety of theories, but each is deployed in such a way as to instantiate a secularized version of the fall. That

is, there is some prior condition—and the priority may be historical, or it may be in terms of individual psychological development, or it may be an atemporal conceptual priority or an atemporal ontological priority—that in each case is in some sense good. We might call this prior condition *recognition* or *care*. Then there is some disruption or distortion of that prior condition. There will obviously be different accounts of the disruption or distortion depending on whether the narrative is, say, social critique, developmental psychology, or fundamental ontology. For Lukács, for example, the distorting force was capitalism. And now we are in a less good condition—let us call it *reification*. In this less-good condition we systematically misinterpret ourselves, others, and the world we inhabit. And this misinterpretation isn't simply cognitive; it is emotive and encompassing: it affects all aspects of life. However, precisely because our current condition is a fall—a turning (or being turned) away from a prior good condition—we can recognize glimpses of that prior condition even in its distortions. Thus there is a kind of redemptive hope that we can recover a sense of that prior good condition—recognition—and take it forward into a better future. When Honneth gives his own account of reification, he characterizes it as a kind of forgetting. That gives us the hope of remembering something we have forgotten; and this, by definition, would get us past the bad condition of reification.

Now by saying that the various narratives all have the structure of the fall, I do not thereby mean to impugn them. Perhaps our condition fits this structure. But seeing the narratives this way ought to awaken us to an occupational hazard. There will be a tendency in any theory that has this structure to build too much goodness into the prior condition. For it is that prior goodness that is not only supposed to help us recognize and criticize our present bad condition; it is meant to validate some image of how we might go forward. The posterior condition's claim to legitimacy is based in part on its claim to be the inheritor of the original goodness of the prior condition. Might we then unwittingly be building too much goodness into that prior condition?

I think the answer to this question is basically "yes." Because Honneth has been talking about developmental psychology, I shall use it as an example. But a version of my problem will arise for every version of Honneth's narrative. Let me at once wholeheartedly endorse Honneth's claim that infantile capacities for recognition are crucial for development. Indeed, I think the child-development literature supports Honneth's claims much more than even he thinks. He says, "Indeed, a tendency toward cognitivism can be said to prevail among the greater majority of attempts to explain the origin of mental activity in the child's communicative relationship to a figure of attachment." These cognitivist theories, says Honneth, tend to "ignore the emotional side of the relationship between children and their figures of attachment." But there is a huge literature on child development—to give one example, the attachment theorists in Britain in the United States—who develop John Bowlby's work going back to the 1950s; the work of child psychoanalysts going back to Anna Freud and Melanie Klein as early as the 1920s; not to mention the mother-infant work of D. W. Winnicott—*all* of which stress the emotional aspects of recognition in the relations between an infant and her emerging world. In terms of the wealth of contemporary work, let me just mention Peter Fonagy et al.'s *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. This is a fine piece of empirical research that makes out Honneth's basic claim. So let us agree with Honneth that an emotively laden capacity for recognition is a crucial part of infant development.

But even here there is a problem that social theorists and philosophers tend to overlook. Winnicott, a pediatrician and psychoanalyst, argued in a series of marvelous papers in the 1950s and '60s that part of what it is for children to develop their capacity for recognition is to develop their capacity *to hate*. As the infant increasingly comes to recognize that Mommy is herself an agent with her own desires and projects, the infant has an ever-increasing basis for being angry at her, for thinking of ways to manipulate her, punish her, and otherwise bring her under his control. And the child may use

sophisticated cognitive-and-emotional understandings of Mommy's psychological makeup to achieve his ends. In short, even if we accept that the capacity for recognition is there in infancy and that it involves emotionally laden processes, it does not thereby follow that there need be any respect for the autonomy of the recognized other. Or think of it this way: a child may "recognize Mommy's independence" by figuring out ever more psychologically sophisticated ways to manipulate her. I shall return later to the problem of the place of aggression in recognition.

But, now, for the purposes of argument I'd like to make a distinction between two species of recognition: first, there is *recognition-as-sine-qua-non* for any real development at all. We investigate this form of recognition when we ask: what is the minimum of emotive-cognitive recognizing of others' points of view required for the development of a capacity for symbolic thought, language, and the ability to recognize and track the mental states of others? Second, there is *recognition-as-paradigm* of healthy human development. We inquire into this form of recognition when we ask, What capacities for sympathy, empathy, acknowledgment of others are required for human well-being? These two forms of recognition, while related, are importantly different.

Here I think the challenging contrast case is not autism—which Honneth discusses—but certain forms of narcissism. There are certain types of narcissists who are extremely good at recognizing that other people have their own point of view—along with their own motivations, desires, and projects. These people can be charming and apparently emotionally engaged, and they can be remarkably attuned to the needs of others—certain successful politicians come to mind, as do certain kinds of seducers and con artists. And these people can use the emotionally laden language of recognition: they can "feel your pain," encourage you to "respect the diversity of others"; indeed, they can encourage you to recognize others' points of view. The psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch talked of the "as-if personality": this is an example of the as-if apostle of recognition. For

this kind of narcissist, it can all be in the service of gratifying his or her desires. These people do have remarkable social and recognitional skills, but these are deployed in the service of treating people as means to their ends.

Now as a turn of phrase we might want to say that these people "treat others as objects." Certainly, their behavior is not pretty, and it is open to criticism. But it is not clear that there has been any kind of ontological mistake. It is not as though they are treating other people simply, say, as a car that has run out of gas. If I want to get the car going again, I don't have to consider its feelings or motivations or projects; I don't have to think about what it thinks about me; I don't have to mislead it into thinking that its projects are my projects. I recognize that the problem is purely mechanical: if I want to get the car going again, all I have to do is get some gas. But if I am a talented narcissist, and I really do want to get this other person up and running in my direction, I will take her humanity into account. I will realize that I'm dealing with a different ontological realm than I am when I'm dealing with my car. I may pay close attention to this other person's desires, hopes, and projects. I may have become very good at recognizing the distinctive humanity of others *because I want to use them!* This may be awful, but it isn't an ontological mistake. Nor need it involve any kind of forgetting of some prior recognitional capacity. That will only seem so if we conflate recognition-as-sine-qua-non and recognition-as-developmental-paradigm.

Obviously, there is some kind of capacity these people lack; they have some kind of developmental deficit. And we may call this deficit a deficit in the capacity for recognition. But this is a recognitional capacity which is a developmental paradigm. This is the recognitional capacity we equate with human flourishing. Surely, the narcissists I'm describing do lack that recognitional capacity. But that recognitional capacity wasn't necessary for them to develop into the kind of narcissists they are. On this sense of recognition, this need not have been a capacity they once had and then lost. There is simply no evidence for that. These people are using and developing the

recognitional skills they have had all along—it's just not what we (correctly) think of as a paradigm of human flourishing.

It is important to keep in mind that there are all sorts of distinctively human relations—which go back long before modernity—which involve dominating others, humiliating them, exerting mastery over them, and otherwise subjugating them. These are distinctively human forms of *being-with*. So is cannibalism. Warriors of Native American tribes would on occasion eat the hearts of their defeated enemy. This was in some sense vengeance, and it was intended as a deterrent—which are themselves distinctively human forms of recognition—but it was also recognition of the bravery of their opponent. By eating the heart, the hope was that the warrior was also consuming the other's bravery and would now have that bravery inside him. These forms of behavior may be vulnerable to various forms of critique. But one form of criticism is, I think, not justified by the evidence: that all of these forms require covering over—forgetting—forms of recognition that had to have been there in childhood. Nor is there any evidence that an ontological mistake has been made.

Honneth argues that "the attitude of care enjoys not only a genetic, but also conceptual priority over a neutral comprehension of reality"—and I agree with him about that. He continues: "I believe it is possible to justify the hypothesis that a recognitional stance enjoys a genetic and categorical priority over all other attitudes toward the self and the world." Again, in some meaning of those words, I think he's right. But I don't think it's the meaning he needs. To use a Nietzschean analogy, the hungry lion *cares* about the little lamb he has just recognized—he certainly doesn't have a detached, neutral stance toward it. And his recognitional stance is marvelously affirmative. Indeed, the lion is about to respect the lamb as a lamb. The talented narcissist I've been describing is a predator higher up the food chain. He *cares* about humans all right and certainly does not take a detached or neutral stance with respect to them. And he has an "affirmative recognitional stance" toward others in that the

desires, intentions, motives, and projects of others really do matter to him—indeed, they really do matter in an emotional as well as cognitive way. It's just that they don't matter to him in the way we feel they ought to matter. If we are appalled by his appalling behavior, we may well want to say he is treating other people as objects; and under the influence of some social theory we may want to say he is "reifying" them. But there is no evidence that he had a recognitional capacity in childhood that has somehow been lost. Perhaps certain societal formations do encourage the production of such pathological character types, but if we are looking for a general social account of what we have all become, this doesn't seem to be it.

It is, I think, important for social theorists and philosophers to consult the research of developmental psychology. But it is also important to recognize a danger for anyone who wants to make the kind of argument that Honneth wants to make. For developmental psychologists are concerned with development. This may sound like a truism, but it has significant consequences. To recognize anything as development, one needs a conception of a goal (or telos) that the development is developing toward. One needs this even if one is tracking failures of development. Implicitly or explicitly, there will be a conception of human flourishing as a developmental paradigm. There will be a conception of psychological and social well-being in terms of which the development is being evaluated. So, for instance, in terms of mature, adult capacities for recognition of others, developmental psychologists will not in general ask, "What are the bare minimum conditions for developing the capacity to recognize other peoples' desires, projects, and concerns in order to become better at manipulating them as means to your ends?" They will ask, "What are the conditions of recognizing others as independent agents?" That is, in general, they will be working with some model of *recognition-as-paradigm* of development, rather than *recognition-as-sine-qua-non* of any development at all. Using this richer developmental paradigm, they will look for the antecedents in infancy and stress their importance for development. As far as I'm concerned,

that's fine. But we need to keep in mind that what we are discovering are the antecedents of this developmental paradigm of recognition. It does not follow that we are discovering the necessary conditions for the possibility of recognition of humans as such. And if we are solely concerned with the bare elements of human recognition in infancy—that is, recognition-as-sine-qua-non—it may well be that there are people who are capable of that, but nevertheless do not fit the developmental paradigm of human well-being. I take it that certain forms of narcissism fit this profile.

So there might be some form of reasoning that on the surface looks very plausible:

Childhood development requires recognition; recognition is required throughout development; therefore recognition ought to be present in adult life. Therefore, if some aspect of recognition is missing in adult life, it must somehow have been erased or distorted along the way.

In this argument, everything depends on how we are trading between *recognition*$_1$ (the bare capacity needed for development of language and basic social skills) and *recognition*$_2$ (the capacities for recognition that are part of human flourishing). The mere fact that *recognition*$_1$ does have to be there in childhood for us to develop at all does not give us any basis for thinking *recognition*$_2$ must be there in adulthood. We may indeed correctly think that *recognition*$_2$ *ought* to be there in adulthood; and when it isn't there, we may look for reasons why it failed to develop out of earlier capacities for recognition. And we may even find that this failure is significantly tied to certain social conditions. That is, we may track the failure to develop the capacity for *recognition*$_2$. But it does not follow that a person must already have been exercising those capacities or he never would have acquired language, knowledge of objects, or the capacity to recognize others in a *recognition*$_1$ -type sense.

Let me close with a brief remark about human aggression—and our capacity to recognize it. There seems to me something wishful about the social critiques such as Lukács' that Honneth

discusses—which covers over salient facts about human beings. For if the social theory posits some prior condition that is good—call it "recognition" or "care"—and then there is some condition of the fall—call it "capitalism" or "commodification" or "reification"—then there is at least hope that if we could only overcome this intervening condition, then we could restore, return to, or, perhaps, transform that original good condition. But what if that original condition was actually a mixed bag? What if we started out not only ready to empathize and sympathize with others, but also as greedy, competitive, aggressive, envious, jealous, murderous animals? And what if our developing capacities of recognition of others were in the service of *all* those needs? Though society may have shaped those aggressive impulses in various ways, when it comes to the bare fact of aggression—its existence in human life—to use Bob Dylan's memorable phrase, we keep on keep'n on.

Ironically, Freud—writing at the same time as Lukács—made this point about communism. He called it an "untenable illusion" because it made the wishful assumption that humans are basically good and well-disposed toward others and that the only problem was that private property was getting in the way. "Aggression was not created by property. It reigned almost without limit in primitive times, when property was still very scanty, and it already shows itself in the nursery …; it forms the basis of every relation of affection and love among people." What would people do after the class struggle had been overcome? Find something else to fight about! At least, that's what Freud thought.[1] My point is *not* to defend Freud's view. It is rather to use Freud's view to show that there is something that these types of social critiques tend to leave out of consideration. For *as social critique,* they tend to locate the problem in some formation or deformation of society—say, reification—and by encouraging us to think that *that* is where the problem lies, we are thereby absolved from looking at some of the less attractive aspects of ourselves. The idea that the organization of society (and culture) can shape the human psyche—can shape the most intimate capacities

for recognition of others and indeed give us a "second nature"—goes back at least to Plato and Aristotle. But as valuable and true as this insight is, it can also be used in the service of misleading us about ourselves. If we are motivated to look away from our own aggressive tendencies and conflicts, theory—whether it be philosophy or social critique or psychology—can be unwittingly complicit by encouraging us to think that the real problem lies not with us, but with the current social formation. Obviously, this is not at all a reason to avoid social criticism—God knows, social injustice cries out for recognition and cure—but it is a reason, I think, to be wary of certain uses to which large-scale social critique can be put.

Postscript: June 2006

The comments above were delivered in response to Honneth's Tanner Lectures at Berkeley in March 2005. In the interim, Honneth has revised his lectures for publication, in part in response to the comments made by the various commentators. This seems to me admirable: it would be a shame if he felt the need to leave his thoughts "reified" in their original form just so readers could see how the original comments applied to them. Nevertheless, I have decided to leave my comments in their original form, as I think the basic structure of the criticism still applies. In this postscript I shall briefly discuss one new example as a way of illustrating the general point I am making.

Honneth takes up David Finkelstein's critique of the "detectivist" model of a subject's relation to his own mental states.[2] In Honneth's words: "Here the subject is conceived as a detective who possesses privileged knowledge of his own desires and feelings because he has undertaken a search in his own mental world and 'discovered' these desires and feelings." To link this up with the central topic of the lectures, "the idea of a possible self-reification in Lukács' theory," Honneth argues that only a slight reinterpretation of this model is needed. There is no reason, he says, that detectivism shouldn't be

understood as an indicator of "possible deficiencies in our self-relationship." Honneth suggests we understand detectivism as a form of ideology critique. His suggestion is that we regard it not as a deficient description of the original mode in which in which we relate to our mental life, but instead as an appropriate description of a deficient mode. "It isn't difficult to make such a shift in perspective plausible in the case of detectivism, which describes our self-relationship as a cognitive process. To gain an impression of the deficient social type that detectivism outlines in an unintentionally appropriate fashion, we must think of a person who regards his or her own desires as having a fixed and permanent character to be uncovered and contemplated." In such a case, says Honneth, "a subject relates to her mental states as if to something fixed and given." This corresponds to an occurrence "in which one's own self becomes reified, because … these [mentally experienced] states are grasped as given, thing-like objects."

In this case, the slippery middle term is "deficiencies in our self-relationship." This phrase may stand for any of the following conditions:

(i) A deficient ontological condition. On this reading, the self is constituted by its self-relations, and thus a deficiency in the self-relationship essentially involves a deficiency in self-constitution. One example of such a deficiency might be an actual relating to oneself as a mere thing-like object rather than as a self.

(ii) An inadequate and thus misleading story we tell ourselves about our self-relationship.

(iii) An unhealthy psychic-social phenomenon. For example, an overly rigid personality may itself be a product of various social and cultural factors and may in turn contribute to certain social rigidities.

For Honneth's argument to work, (i), (ii), and (iii) would have to fit together in fairly direct ways, but Honneth does not give us reasons for thinking they do, and I am skeptical that anyone could.

Finkelstein's detectivism is an example of (ii), and there is no reason to think that a person who holds such a view must suffer from either condition (i) or (iii). In particular, a well-constituted and decent human being, one who is self-aware and sensitive to and concerned about others, may nevertheless have not worked through the twentieth century's contributions to the philosophy of mind. He may be confused when it comes to (ii) but in great shape when it comes to (i) and (iii). Conversely, one doesn't have to meet that many philosophers to realize that people with reified personalities can nevertheless be up to date on their Wittgenstein. Thus one may be in great shape when it comes to (ii) but a mess when it comes to (iii) or even to (i).

Honneth would have to show that if someone accepts the detectivist account of mental states in the philosophy of mind he *thereby* "relates to its mental states as if to something fixed and given." This does not follow. It may well be that the story he tells himself about how he relates to his mental states does not accurately describe how he actually does relate to his mental states. And even if a person actually did relate to his mental states as though the detectivist account were true, Honneth's result would still not follow. For in this case, "fixed and given" would function as the slippery middle term. It is true that on the detectivist model I would be searching for already-existing mental states—in that sense they would be "fixed and given"—but it does not follow that the mental states must remain as they are in a rigidly "fixed and given" way. These mental states might be rapidly changing in sensitive response to input from the social world. As a sensitive, ethically attuned person, recognizing others as persons with their own needs, my mental states might well be changing rapidly—and as a detectivist I'd be searching to discover what these changes are.

In conclusion, though I think Honneth's work on recognition is of ethical and social significance, there are dangers in trying to locate that work within the tradition of ontological critique. First, there is a danger of wishfulness. Part of the temptation of ontological critique

is the idea that those societies that deserve criticism are encouraging its members to make a flat-out mistake about reality. If a social injustice were based on the fact that we were treating persons as though they were in some other ontological category—a nonperson of one sort or another—the criticism would be straightforward. But often the problem in not that we are not treating persons as persons, but rather that we are treating them *badly* as persons. To understand how and why this is, the hard work that needs to be done is essentially ethical, not ontological, in nature. Second, there is, as I said above, a danger of nostalgia: as though it is the modern world that has ushered in this ontological mis-relation. It is of course a truism to say that the modern (and postmodern) world has brought great changes to the way we live, but to characterize these changes in terms of a master narrative of ontological breakdown is to run the risk of forcing myriad changes into one nostalgic narrative of the fall. And certainly, if we look at premodern human life, there is much evidence that, on occasion, they treated each other in thing-like ways.

Notes

1. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 21, trans. James Strachey (Scranton, Pa.: 1969), pp. 112–113.

2. See David Finkelstein, *Expression and the Inner* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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Rejoinder

Axel Honneth

Translated by Joseph Ganahl

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To some it may seem a coincidence, to others it may just expose the blatant weakness of my entire approach, but it is surprising to see that all three rejoinders to my Tanner lectures converge in one single objection. According to Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss, and Jonathan Lear, my attempt to reactualize Georg Lukács' theory of reification is guilty of employing an overly optimistic anthropology. In none of their contributions is this objection raised in a careless manner; on the contrary, they all strive for a great measure of hermeneutic precision and fairness. I would like to take the opportunity to thank them right at the start for the benevolence and engagement with which they have taken up the considerations I have presented in my lectures. Despite all their willingness to comprehend my strategy of reactualizing this key notion in the work of Lukács, the unpleasant fact remains that this strategy has nevertheless failed truly to convince any of the three commentators. My recommendation that we take up a social-ontological stance and assume the priority of a kind of elementary recognition in order to interpret reification as the "forgetting" or denial of this recognition has been met with reservations as to whether this approach reads too much intersubjective sympathy into the initial human situation. It was the unanimity of this objection that first made clear to me that I had failed to explicate clearly the status of the problematic of reification in my own theory of recognition. Indeed I refer to this larger context only in one note (note 70), without working out all the relevant connections clearly enough for an uninitiated reader. Yet, once we take this framework into consideration and relocate the idea of elementary recognition to its proper place in the structure of my argumentation, I am convinced

that the objection presented by Butler, Geuss, and Lear can be shown to be unjustified. In the context of my theory of recognition, the form of recognition dealt with in these lectures is only intended as a necessary prerequisite of all human communication, one which consists in experiencing the other in a way that is not connected with normative implications or even positive attitudes.

Therefore, I would first like to present the general frame of reference in which my attempt to elucidate the notion of reification is located (1 and 2). Only after having done so will I come back to the particular problems that, according to all three commentators, result from understanding reification as a kind of "forgetfulness of recognition" (3).

1.

When I resolved to take up the work of Lukács and make reification the topic of my Tanner Lectures, I intended to keep as close as possible to the literal meaning of the term. I thereby intended to avoid the currently prevalent use of the term as indicating a stance or action through which other persons are instrumentalized. This use of "reification" would mean to use other people as instruments for individual, egocentric aims, even if we don't necessarily abstract from their human characteristics. On the contrary, for the most part it is precisely their specifically human capacities that we make use of to achieve our own purposes. Unlike the notion of "instrumentalization" described here, reification presupposes that we completely fail to perceive the characteristics that make these persons into instances of the human species in any true sense. To treat somebody as a thing is to take him or her as something that lacks all human properties and capacities. The only reason why the notion of reification is so often equated with that of instrumentalization is that when we think of instruments, we normally think of material things. Yet this is to lose sight of the fact that what make them useful as instruments for others' purposes are their specifically human characteristics.

Of course, by committing to this literal, ontological meaning of the term, we greatly restrict the scope of what can count as a case of reification in the social world. Genuine cases of reification only exist where something that in itself has no thing-like properties is perceived or treated as a thing. Here we would certainly think of slavery, as, according to the convictions of many social historians, it was a system of production in which laborers were treated as mere things.[1] But I won't take up the difficult question as to the application of this concept until I deal with the problem of whether we speak of "reification" only with reference to other persons or also in relation to ourselves and our natural environment. Before I come to that issue, I would like to discuss further just how we can define "reification" appropriately. As soon as we commit to the literal meaning of the term, we can no longer simply appeal to moral norms to condemn instances of reification. Whereas we can criticize forms of instrumentalizing other persons by proving that they violate certain generally acknowledged moral principles, the critique of reification demands that we make an ontological distinction between "proper" and "false" ways of dealing with other persons. Certainly, we could just say that for moral reasons one is forbidden from treating other human beings as things, but this doesn't really seem to take account of the social-ontological weight of the notion of reification. To reify other persons is not merely to violate a norm, but to commit a fundamental error, because one thereby violates the elementary conditions that underlie all our talk of morality. Thus if we keep to the literal meaning of the term, we should take reification in its negative sense to mean a violation of necessary presuppositions of our social lifeworld. At this point, we are conceptually compelled to specify the conditions under which interaction between human subjects is appropriate in a social-ontological sense.

This task, however, is thoroughly limited in two ways that we need to take into consideration. On the one hand, we can take our orientation only from characteristics that are general or formal enough to prevent culturally specific prejudices from coloring our view. At the same time, the foundational determinations cannot be so

empty as to make it impossible to outline the phenomenal content of what by contrast is to be labeled "reification." In my attempt to find a happy medium between these two requirements, I initially took my orientation from one of Lukács' formulations. At some points in his text, he equates reification with the stance of an impartial spectator, of mere observation, such that a stance of existential involvement or sympathy (*Anteilnahme*) could emerge as the original, "intact" form of humans' relation to world. Additional evidence for such a privileging of engagement over neutral cognition, of involvement over detachment, could also be found in the works of Heidegger and Dewey. The former used the term "care" and the latter used the concept of "qualitative experience" to demonstrate that in the human lifeworld an involved stance always precedes the merely detached observation of persons or issues. I could also have found further confirmation for this social-ontological thesis in the phenomenological analyses of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.[2] In any case, on the basis of the sheer mass of such findings in the history of thought, I drew a conclusion that awoke a great deal of skepticism on the part of all three of my commentators: in humans' relation to world, recognition precedes cognition, such that we should understand reification as a violation of this rank order. The doubts raised in their responses, however, do not so much concern this priority itself as they do the implications of the concept of recognition used in this context. They thus ask, What optimistic premises or normative orientations are presupposed in the claim that humans always already relate to their fellow subjects in a recognitional manner? I can respond to this question only by elucidating the place that this concept of elementary recognition is meant to have in a theory of human intersubjectivity.

2.

The mere suggestion that we reactualize the content of categories such as "sympathy" or "care" with the use of the notion of

elementary recognition was a cause for concern in the eyes of my commentators. Raymond Geuss, in particular, expressed doubt as to whether this kind of translation is justified. Yet only in the first instance were the considerations that motivated me to take this step of a theoretical-strategic nature. It is true that I sought to find a terminology that would preserve continuity with my older writings on recognition, but my central interest was to illuminate the issue that Lukács, Heidegger, and Dewey had in mind. If we ask ourselves what "sympathy," "care," and "affectedness" (*Betroffenheit*) all have in common, we notice immediately that they are all expressions of the existential significance that a certain given object possesses for us. We care only about those events and are affected only by those occurrences that are of direct and unmediated relevance for the way we understand our lives. Thus we cannot *not* react to things that affect us in this manner, for everything that concerns us existentially compels us to behave in some specific way. I only suggested that we grasp this form of existential significance as a result of an antecedent and very elementary form of recognition. We react to certain phenomena in our lifeworld with existential receptiveness, because we take up a stance toward these phenomena in which we accept them as the other of our self. Drawing on Cavell,[3] I would claim that this antecedent recognition manifests itself in the fact that we cannot avoid taking a position toward such phenomena.

Formulated this way, this form of recognition clearly is not intended to contain any norms of positive concern or respect. Nor does it claim that certain positive, benevolent feelings are at work. My use of terms such as "affective sympathy" (*affektive Anteilnahme*) or "antecedent identification" was only an attempt (perhaps a rather awkward one) to draw attention to the nonepistemic character of this type of recognition. What occurs in this type of recognition, what makes up its particular character, is that we take up a stance toward the other that reaches into the affective sphere, a stance in which we can recognize in another person the other of our own self, our fellow human. This is why I wanted to distinguish this form of

elementary recognition from what is often called the "perspective of the participant" in current philosophical discussion. The stance that I have in mind precedes this perspective, because it represents the epistemic condition for our capacity to orient ourselves toward the other's reasons. Some of the objections to my argumentation raised by Judith Butler seem to me to arise from a neglect of this distinction. Whereas she feels that I equate elementary recognition with the perspective of the participant, what I really sought to demonstrate was that we can take over the perspective of the other only after we have previously recognized in the other an intentionality related to our own. This is not a rational act or one in which we become conscious of reasons. Rather, we precognitively take up a certain stance.

Yet, as mentioned above, this stance itself has no normative orientation. Although it compels us to take up some sort of position, it does not determine the direction or tone of that position. Love and hate, ambivalence and coldness, can all be expressions of this elementary recognition as long as they can be seen to be modes of existential affectedness. Therefore, this type of recognition is still far from the threshold beyond which we can speak at all of norms and principles of reciprocal recognition. Normatively substantial forms of recognition such as are embodied in social institutions of traditional honor, modern love, or equal law, represent instead various manners in which the existential scheme of experience opened up by elementary recognition gets "filled out" historically. Without the experience that other individuals are fellow humans, we would be incapable of equipping this schema with moral values that guide and limit our actions. Therefore, elementary recognition must be carried out, and we must feel existential sympathy for the other, before we can learn to orient ourselves toward norms of recognition that compel us to express certain specific forms of concern or benevolence. The implication for the structure of my own theory of recognition is that I must insert a stage of recognition before the previously discussed forms,[4] one that represents a kind of transcendental condition. The spontaneous, nonrational recognition of others as fellow human beings thus forms

a necessary condition for appropriating moral values in the light of which we recognize the other in a certain normative manner.[5]

What I mean by the "filling out" of the existential schema of recognition is that individuals learn in the process of their socialization to internalize culturally specific norms of recognition, thereby enriching the elementary conception of their fellow humans—a conception that they have as a habit from a very young age—step by step with the specific values embodied in the principles of recognition that prevail in their society. These kinds of internalized norms are what regulate how subjects deal with each other legitimately in various social relationships. They regulate what kind of expectations I can have of others, what duties I have toward them and what kind of behavior I can count on from them. All this ultimately results from an orientation—one which we have come to take for granted—toward principles that determine institutionally the (evaluative) senses in which we recognize one another in accordance with the relationship existing between us. Taken together, these principles of recognition constitute the moral culture of a given epoch of social development. And if we take account of the degree of internalization and habitualization of such norms, we could even say that they represent a society's "second nature."[6]

3.

These observations on the normative content of recognition have led us far away from the topic of reification. It is clear that violations of norms that stem from the (institutionalized) principles of reciprocal recognition represent cases of moral injury, for we thereby fail to recognize somebody in the way that the intersubjective morality of our relationship demands of us. We could also say that subjects can make morally legitimate efforts to expand this sort of morality of recognition in accordance with its foundational principles. In this case, we are dealing with a struggle for recognition, which seeks to

claim the surplus content of a norm of recognition.[7] However, none of these cases touches on the phenomenon that the term "reification" is meant to indicate (literally), for reification denotes a rather improbable social case in which a subject violates not only existing norms of recognition, but the antecedent condition itself, by not even perceiving or treating the other as a "fellow human being." Reification annuls the form of elementary recognition that ensures that we existentially experience other humans as the other of our self. This kind of recognition means that whether we like it or not, we pre-predicatively concede the other a relationship-to-self, which, like our own relationship-to-self, is affectively directed toward the realization of personal goals. If this antecedent recognition is absent, if we no longer have existential sympathy for the other, then we treat him or her as a lifeless object, a mere thing. Thus the greatest challenge for the attempt to rehabilitate the category of reification consists in the difficulty of explaining this kind of disappearance of elementary recognition.

In my attempt to find a solution to this problem, I once again took my initial orientation from a suggestion made by Lukács. This isn't to say that his approach is sufficiently transparent; on the whole, he only hints at his own explanation for how subjects can lose a form of relation to the world that he sees as so constitutive for every form of sociality. The core of his suggestion, however, that we view the permanent effect of a certain kind of highly one-sided praxis as the cause for this disappearance, seems to me to offer us the appropriate key. Unlike Heidegger, who traces the rising dominance of "presence-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*) back to an anonymous change in our basic ontological conceptions, Lukács explains the social dissemination of reification with reference to the compulsions to abstract that are necessitated by lasting involvement in capitalist commodity exchange. It was the form more than the content of this suggestion that convinced me from the beginning. Although I find it implausible that the mere activity of commodity exchange could give rise to a reifying stance (see section 6); it seems to me all the more fruitful

to view a certain kind of lasting, routine praxis as the social cause of reification. The conclusion I believe I can draw from Lukàcs' approach consists in a general, rather vague hypothesis about the social etiology of reification. Subjects can forget or learn later to deny the elementary recognition that they generally grant to every other human being, if they continuously contribute to a highly one-sided form of praxis that necessitates abstraction from the "qualitative" characteristics of human beings. Although I am still unsure as to whether this explanation in fact represents an appropriate way of dealing with this problem, I can't think of any alternative for explaining how such a deeply culturally anchored stance like elementary recognition (of all fellow human beings) can be later annulled. We do, of course, need further to elucidate the practices that are assumed to be responsible for such "forgetfulness of recognition," as well as social cases in which this forgetfulness appears, and to this end I would like to offer some thoughts more precise than was possible to offer in my lectures.

The example of the tennis player, whom I used in the lectures to demonstrate a kind of one-sided praxis, was most likely a poor choice, for it does not ultimately display the consequence of reification and is thus even misleading. I was basically concerned with describing a case in which the purpose of an action can attain such independence from its codetermining motives that any attentiveness for the cooperating partner vanishes completely. What should have stood at the center of this example was the mechanism through which a single purpose can achieve independence and thereby lead to the elimination of all antecedent relations to the world. We must make this assumption in order to explain just how the contribution to a certain sort of praxis can eventually lead to the "forgetting" of antecedent recognition. Unlike the harmless case I described, however, the purpose of praxis must be constituted in such a way that its achievement of independence can cause a detachment from all original social relations and thus bring about forms of reification. Perhaps the activity of war as we experience it in films and novels can serve as a better example. In these contexts, we often see or read

how the purpose of annihilation becomes so much a purpose in itself that even in the perception of those not involved (e.g., women and children), all attentiveness for fellow human qualities is lost. In the end, all members of the groups presumed to be the enemy come to be treated as lifeless, thing-like objects that deserve to be murdered and abused. I feel it would be misleading to take this kind of reaction to be a position on the quality of the other as a human being; rather, in this case every trace of existential resonance seems to have vanished so completely that we cannot even label it emotional indifference, but only "reification."

This example makes clear that I was highly imprecise in my discussion of the way in which the purpose of mere observation becomes independent. Not every form of praxis in which the observation of others becomes the sole purpose leads to their reification, because observation can certainly serve the detection of specifically human properties. In order to evade Judith Butler's justified objections, therefore, I must be more precise in defining the criterion according to which I intend to pick out purposes that lead to reification as soon as they become independent purposes. To do this, I must specify the differences between the purposes served by practices of observation in the one or the other case. A development psychologist who observes an infant's behavior gathers data to increase our knowledge about the maturation of certain capabilities that are only accessible in a stance of primary recognition. By contrast, a soldier observing enemy territory is interested in gathering information as to where the dangers and obstacles for the goal of annihilating the enemy lie. It seems clear that it is only in the second case that the independence of the purpose of observation can lead to a "forgetting" of the elementary recognition originally granted to every human being. In the process of becoming independent, the aim of gathering data for the purpose of thwarting dangers causes the observer retrospectively to "forget" the human qualities that were initially perceived in the enemy. Perhaps we could generalize this example by asserting that the independence of those practices whose successful

execution demands that we ignore all the human properties of our fellow human beings can lead to intersubjective reification. It is only when these practices become routine and habitual, however, that they can move us to "forget" all our original recognition and treat the other as a mere thing. By formulating the point in this way, we can avoid a circular argumentation, which would consist in smuggling all the characteristics that make up reification itself into the definition of the practices that lead to recognition. Indeed, not every action that requires an abstraction from the human properties of the other to succeed generates a reifying attitude. This action would have to become a lasting routine, for only this kind of habitualization has the power later to disable the antecedent stance of recognition.

However, these brief remarks demonstrate just how improbable true cases of reification are for the social lifeworld as a whole. It was only in preparing my Tanner Lectures, indeed only in the discussions following the lectures, that I realized that it is only in rare and exceptional cases, only at the zero-point of sociality, that we find a true denial of antecedent recognition. By contrast, fictive reification—cases in which other persons are treated *as if* they were mere things—is part and parcel of some of the more intensified forms of human action. In the case of both sexuality and cruelty, we are familiar with plenty of situations in which it appears that the other is nothing but an object to be dealt with at will, but these forms of reification have their stimulus in the fact that beneath the surface we remain aware of the ontological difference between persons and things.[8] By contrast, this difference vanishes in original cases of reification, in which one not only imagines the other as a thing but truly loses the feeling that the other is a living being with human properties. Even commodity exchange, which Lukács views as the central cause for the emergence of reifying attitudes, does not seem to me to constitute a real case in which antecedent recognition has been forgotten. The mere fact that both parties refer to each other as legal entities on the basis of their contractual relationship prevents the possibility of reification (see pp. 75–85 of this book). Of course,

it's a different story if the commodity that the contracting parties deal in is a human being who doesn't enjoy legal rights. In modern forms of slavery, such as are found in the sex trade, depersonalized practices have become so routine that we can certainly count them as cases of reification.

Yet, if I recall just what phenomenon awoke my interest in the topic of reification, I must concede that it was the difficulty in interpreting "industrial" mass murder. Even today it is difficult to comprehend reports describing how young men could nonchalantly shoot hundreds of Jewish children and women in the back of the head.[9] And elements of such horrifying practices can also be found in all the genocides that marked the end of the twentieth century. If we as humans relate to each other through antecedent recognition, a fact of which I am certain, then these mass murders raise the question as to how we can explain the vanishing or "forgetting" of this previous recognition. My small study is not least an attempt to find an answer to this anthropological mystery of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. See Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

2. Sartre uses categories such as "relationship of interiority," "affection," or "ontological solidarity" in *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993). Merleau-Ponty speaks of "communication" or "engagement" in *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962), part 2, chap. 4.

3. Stanley Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 238–266.

4. See Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1995), part 2, chap. 5;

"Redistribution as Recognition. A Response to Nancy Fraser," in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso Press, 2003).

5. John Searle's attempt to trace individual intentionality back to collective intentionality, which is in turn anchored in a "sense" of coexistence or cooperation, is interesting in this connection. See his *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 23–26. What I have to say about the institutional "filling out" of the basic existential schema of recognition can be understood in terms of Searle's analysis of the creation of institutional facts (chaps. 4–5).

6. I use this term in the same sense as did John McDowell (*Mind and World* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994]). See my discussion of the issue in "Between Hermeneutics and Hegelianism: John McDowell and the Challenge of Moral Realism," in Nicholas H. Smith, ed., *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

7. Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition."

8. Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), chap. 6, pp. 89–112.

9. Christopher Browning, *Ganz normale Männer* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1998).

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