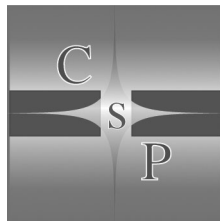


Recognition in Politics

Recognition in Politics
Theory, Policy and Practice

Edited by

Julie Connolly, Michael Leach and Lucas Walsh



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INTRODUCTION

JULIE CONNOLLY, MICHAEL LEACH
AND LUCAS WALSH

Misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe other people. It is a vital human need.

—Charles Taylor 1992: 26

The term “recognition” encapsulates a process of consideration and judgement, in which the identity or attributes of an object, person or relationship are first noticed, and then acknowledged and affirmed, as belonging to one category or concept or another. As has been noted by all those reflecting on the topic, the activity of recognising people or things is practically ubiquitous. In order to think, to converse, or to love we must first recognise the object of our thoughts or affections. Recognition between people may entail a smile or a nod of the head. Anyone who imagines that these small social exchanges are idle or insignificant need only recall when a smile from a friend was not forthcoming, when acquaintances have averted their glance, or when strangers cross the street to avoid you. Behind commonplace gestures of friendship and solidarity lie a series of judgements about the identity and worth of those to whom they are addressed. Likewise, their absence, whether the cause be accidental or the intent malicious, communicates something about the esteem in which an individual is held.

This analysis is reasonably uncontentious. Indeed, recognising something or someone is such an ordinary activity that it may seem too pedestrian to require philosophical attention and political analysis. Nonetheless, the term has insinuated itself into the vocabulary of philosophy and is a central feature of contemporary political discourse. Leaving aside epistemological questions, which are certainly of note but not explored in this volume, this introduction will examine the philosophical and political significance of recognition. Its purpose is to illustrate that many of the questions about the impact of social recognition remain unanswered. Whether articulated by Vietnam Vets, the first peoples of settler societies, or gay parents, the demand for recognition has a

contemporary cachet not yet matched by critical analysis of the value and function of different forms of social recognition. The first decade of the twenty-first century, more than a decade after the publication of Charles Taylor's essay, provides an excellent opportunity to reconsider the politics of recognition and the struggles that comprise it. The present volume addresses this task. The chapters of this edited volume draw our attention to the intersection of philosophy and social science, and develop concepts with which to analyse politics, and in particular the politics of recognition.

Since the publication of Charles Taylor's 1992 essay, there has been a steady flow of publications featuring "recognition" in the title. As is often the case with a paper that resonates with political philosophers and public policy analysts, the concept to which Taylor refers has a much older philosophical genealogy, and its application in contemporary political thought exceeds the confines of the challenges of multiculturalism. Social recognition is an idea with a rich and varied history in philosophy, which received its most enduringly influential rendition by G.W.F. Hegel. More recently, "recognition" has emerged as an analytical framework with which to make sense of competing claims for rights, redistribution, respect and reconciliation. Nonetheless, the rhetorical impact of Taylor's claim, that the affect of misrecognition is crippling, invites scepticism and thereby demands further analysis.

Taylor contends that recognition has a psychological function, though he concentrates less on the impact of recognising someone or something, and more on the effect of being recognised. According to Taylor, this effect is intrinsic to the way we develop a sense of ourselves and our identities. This assertion is consistent with his broader theoretical position that human life is "fundamentally dialogical in character" (1994: 32). Accordingly, our sense of ourselves as particular individuals who nonetheless share social identities is fostered and circumscribed by the feedback we receive from others. He suggests that "[w]e define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (1994: 33). This means that our identities and others' consideration of us are mutually imbricated, and difficult to disentangle: who has not wondered whether a parent's disapproval fostered their taste in music, or lovers?

Taylor's paper, however, does not explore the extent of our dependence on others' judgements. The term "dependence" often implies disapprobation. Financial dependence on state transfers, or co-dependence in filial relations may well be frowned upon, but according to Taylor, complete independence from social recognition is neither advisable nor warranted. If he is correct, such

independence is well nigh impossible. Even “hermits” are likely to continue imaginary conversations with significant others of the past, at least to the extent that their days, like ours, are punctuated by curiosity about oneself and one’s experience. If we accept Taylor’s argument that the “monological ideal” (according to which we find authentic selfhood in isolation from social pressure) is flawed, questions about the nature of dependency still retain their critical edge for theories of recognition. In order to claim that misrecognition is crippling, a wrong in need of a remedy, and to understand the extent of that wrong, we must also consider our relative independence from recognition. Or to be more precise, we must examine the conditions under which misrecognition wounds in the fashion Taylor notes. This means distinguishing forms of misrecognition that are trivial from those that produce and compound the relative disadvantage, if not oppression, of particular individuals and social groups.

In Taylor’s account recognition appears as both a right and an ethical obligation pertaining to a vital human need. The need for recognition is thereby individualised, even if that which is recognised carries the signatory of a collective. Of interest here, however, is the strength and the character of the need, and whether this affects the strength and form that the obligation takes. That is, if our need for recognition is justified, it is presumably because it contributes to human dignity and flourishing. Nonetheless, there may well be instances in which recognition, or at least our desire for it, confounds dignity. This proposition is quite distinct from suggesting that misrecognition causes harm. And the slippage in vocabulary from need to desire is deliberate.

Just like our identity, our needs and desires for social recognition are formed in “dialogue”, broadly conceived, with others. These needs and desires are undoubtedly affected by specific social circumstances. With a nod to Rousseau, Taylor’s approach explicitly examines the hypothetical scenario in which recognition takes place between social equals, whose roles are not differentiated or organised hierarchically and who share in an understanding of the common good. Taylor rightly dismisses the utopian pretensions that underlie this model of recognition as harbouring a totalitarian fantasy, inimical to cultural plurality. The rest of his essay takes place against the backdrop of social inequality and cultural difference with which we are more familiar. These are, however, circumstances that may corrupt our need for recognition, producing desires for forms of recognition that may well function to reproduce social inequalities.

In his discussion of contemporary multiculturalism, Taylor notes the importance of Franz Fanon analysis of colonialism. Interestingly enough, Fanon’s analysis of the function of recognition in the explicitly racist context of

African colonies, recommends a break with the desire for recognition (1967: 27). He argues that this desire, in as much as it is addressed to colonial masters, serves to reinforce the sense of inferiority that has been inscribed into Black /African subjectivity through dispossession and marginalisation. The more general lesson of this analysis is that in social circumstances where power relationships are asymmetrical, demanding recognition may well reinforce the dominant group's capacity to judge their inferiors. Drawing on Fanon's work, Kelly Oliver (2001: 26) has come to the conclusion that the strength of our desire for recognition corresponds to damage wreaked by disempowerment. In such situations, collective identities may risk misappropriating historical contingencies, which are then misaligned with subjective capacities. In this account, power infects desire. Disappointment is inevitable. The course of recognition is tragic, not least because individuals who are alienated by circumstance struggle for types of recognition that will not alleviate their isolation, nor ameliorate past injustice.

Whether we yield to this conclusion depends on the outcome of our inquiry into the form and function of our desires for recognition. To the extent that they can withstand the more sceptical suggestion that desire deepens dependency, we could well conclude that recognition may contribute to human dignity and flourishing. The ethical claim may yet be vindicated. Moral philosophy explores the possible intersection of virtue, freedom and happiness. For some this intersection is a happy coincidence and, as Kant suggests, the pursuit of virtue entails freedom. Or for those of a more utilitarian bent, virtue is the coefficient of happiness, contingent on the promotion of the latter. Our desire for recognition, however, throws up a roadblock amidst these speculations. Theories of recognition remind us that virtue, happiness and freedom are social accomplishments. Being virtuous, happy or free is a social accomplishment that requires, more than minimally, the co-operation and approbation of others. For these reasons, the term recognition is not marginal to ethics, and the social practices that comprise recognition are central to moral inquiry.

Taylor's essay also asserts that practices of social recognition are generalised and public. Shared norms affect appropriate displays of social recognition and these are consolidated in laws and institutions. Laws may or may not recognise the land rights of first peoples or a woman's right to choose. Likewise, institutions, such as universities or the state, can recognise merit and desert, or wealth and accidents of birth, as a condition of enrolment or citizenship. In his essay Taylor is largely concerned with legal and institutional recognition for the equal worth of cultures. Such recognition may entail creating special categories of rights that aim to preserve the integrity of culture. Alternatively, developing

more inclusive curricula in university courses may help acquit any obligation to recognise the worth of marginalised cultures. Rather than the nature of our desire for recognition and its relationship to human dignity and flourishing, this second set of considerations alerts us to questions about the specific content of our demands for recognition, and the individuals or institutions to which they are addressed.

Taylor's discussion examines the tension between the demand that we recognise the equal worth of individuals (enshrined in the principles of individualism and neutrality that characterise liberalism), and the demand that culture be similarly recognised. He does not discuss the difficulty of identifying what a "culture" is, nor the sometimes ambivalent relationship that individuals have to "culture". Instead he cogently argues that we cannot evaluate the worth of individuals and the cultures of which they are a part by the same criteria. The basis from which we recognise and respect individuals cannot be generalised to culture, lest we suspend our capacity to consider history and evaluate its products. In part, his analysis is motivated in defence of a "hospitable" liberalism whose claim on our imagination is threatened by accusations, emanating from the "politics of difference", that liberalism is blind to the cultural specificity of its tradition and that it is premised on a series of exclusions, pertaining to class, sex and race, which may only be remedied by altering key concepts and practices. These claims are undoubtedly familiar and have been grist to the mill of academic writing and political debate for some time. Despite any purchase they may have on the history of thought, Taylor argues that we cannot conclude that the respect we afford to individuals should be extended to culture as a matter of right, nor that this is necessary to protect the dignity of those same individuals.

According to Taylor, any claim for reciprocal recognition of the equal worth of cultures is trumped by hospitable liberalism. This is a liberalism in which the principle of tolerance precludes active discrimination against individuals on the basis of culture, but preserves our capacity to intellectually discriminate between the products of culture. Despite the Taylor's insight, claims for recognition, including those made on behalf of collective identities, have continued to proliferate, and the politics of recognition remains a field deserving of further and ongoing analysis.

Nancy Fraser's reflections on recognition develop a number of themes encountered in Taylor's paper. Indeed, her work promises a means to address the forms of scepticism encountered above, without relegating recognition to the margins of philosophy. Fraser's (1997: 1) analysis of social recognition forms

part of her attempt to develop a theory of justice that is applicable to contemporary societies, in an era of “post-socialist” politics. Her theory centres on the principle of “participatory parity” (Fraser 2003: 36-37). A reformulation of the conditions which Habermas nominated as requisite to moral deliberation, participatory parity refers to those social conditions of reciprocity and equality which allow individuals to contribute to democratic will formation. It is possible to translate the concept of participatory parity into the more familiar idiom of equality of opportunity. Participatory parity is a specific and sophisticated version of the older idea of equality of opportunity, according to which equality is understood in light of three different dimensions of justice: redistribution, recognition and political representation. Fraser defines opportunity as a function of social participation, which determines the very conditions of political engagement. For Fraser, social recognition is an important aspect of justice, but one which does not eclipse the significance of distributive justice and political representation. She assumes a self-consciously “dualist”, and—in this volume—a tripartite, approach to social justice which identifies maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation as central to the explanation of systematic domination (Fraser 2003: 200).

Fraser accepts that any analysis of social exclusion needs to inquire into the practices of recognition that sustain it. For example, she is alert to the fact that the political salience of identity categories is the product of contemporary social conditions. She argues that in the pursuit of participatory parity, however, some identity categories should be affirmed, and others should be deconstructed, and the social conditions which produce them transformed (Fraser 1997: 23). To make this argument Fraser employs highly stylised identity categories. She suggests for example that class-based privations call for redistributive remedies, while sexuality-based discrimination could be redressed by altering the terms of social recognition (Fraser 1997: 17-22). One type of deprivation is economic, the other cultural. Both lead to injustice. Fraser admits that these ideal-type scenarios do not reflect the complexities of social reality. Indeed, her point is that the relationship between identity categories, the politics of recognition and redistributive justice is equally complex (Fraser 1997: 17-19). This means that even where forms of misrecognition stigmatise social groups, redressing economic exclusion might be a more pressing need. Indeed, the problems of recognition may be displaced by effective redistributive strategies.

Part of the politics of recognition, then, involves examining whether misrecognition is the ‘cause’ of subordination, and how modes of misrecognition relate to other forms of discrimination sourced in economic inequality. Fraser enjoins both theorists and activists to examine the consolidation of identity

categories by political processes before determining whether “recognising” them promises to alleviate injustice. This critical approach to the politics of recognition need not be limited in its application to evaluating identity politics. Fraser’s core insight is not that recognition is a vital human need—although it might be—but that misrecognition can contribute to social disadvantage: the first, rather than the second element of Taylor’s quote above. Over the relationship between recognition and psychology, Fraser chooses to analyse the relationship between social recognition and power. By suggesting that we critically interrogate common practices of social recognition, Fraser suspends both premises: that recognition is a common good, and that lurking behind some demands for recognition is a fear of independence. Both alternatives are held in abeyance until the value of recognition in specific circumstances can be analysed.

Fraser’s approach to justice does not include a phenomenology of the daily manifestations of social recognition in human relationships (Bernstein 2005: 310). Her analysis of justice is that of a political theoretician and critical theorist looking for concepts with which to understand social exclusion, and concepts whose broad application will secure social participation. Fraser’s chapter in this volume seeks to situate her tripartite schema of justice in a globalising world. It is an important contribution to debates about justice and globalisation which offers a stimulating theoretical prologue for the chapters that follow. Referring the politics of recognition back to considerations of justice is a key theme of the contributions to this volume. Each of the following chapters explores the politics of recognition in light of implicit, and sometimes explicit, concerns about justice. It is clear that the meanings of recognition and justice change as the chapters move from theoretical to practical policy problems. In this context, Fraser’s contribution is an anchor that grounds the politics of recognition in an expansive and challenging theory of justice.

The Chapters

Part I: Theorising Recognition in Politics

Nancy Fraser’s contribution to this collection represents a development of her work on social justice in the age of identity politics. Fraser’s starting point is the way globalisation is shifting the “frame” of justice claims, which have commonly been mediated through “Keynesian-Westphalian” communitarian traditions of nation states. Fraser argues the an adequate theory of justice must now become three-dimensional, incorporating the political dimension of “representation”, alongside the economic dimension of distribution and the

cultural dimension of recognition. For Fraser, “misrepresentation occurs when political boundaries and/or decision-rules function to wrongly deny some people the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction—including, but not only, in political arenas”. Identifying three different levels of political misrepresentation, including “misframing”—the disjuncture between the national boundaries of political community and the supranational class of persons affected by political decision making under conditions of globalisation—Fraser depicts the Keynesian-Westphalian frame as a powerful instrument of injustice, which “gerrymanders political space at the expense of the poor and despised”. Focussing on the notion of “participatory parity” as a means of measuring the democratisation of the processes of “frame-setting”, Fraser’s central concern in this chapter is to elaborate key dimensions of a theory of “post-Westphalian democratic justice”.

In the second chapter, Julie Connolly critically examines Axel Honneth’s analysis of “struggles for recognition”, arguing that Honneth’s work would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of the multiple and complex responses to misrecognition. She identifies six possible responses to misrecognition, namely stoicism, self-abnegating conformity, non-conformist withdrawal, reification, deconstruction and humanism. Connolly argues that individual and social responses to misrecognition involve judgements about the normative implications of the vulnerabilities exposed by misrecognition, and strategic assessments of the risks involved in challenging social practices of recognition. She concludes that this more nuanced approach to responses to misrecognition would allow Honneth to better articulate the links between recognition struggles and justice claims.

In Chapter three, Geoff Boucher extends Fraser’s analytical approach and notion of participatory parity by supplementing it with the dialectics of intersubjective identity formation, understood as a source of recognition conflict. Examining a “theoretical blind-spot” in the Fraser-Honneth exchange, Boucher proposes a model of the transition from personal identity to status order that integrates Honneth’s insights into the intersubjective origins of recognition with Fraser’s analytical framework. Drawing on the sociological insights of Pierre Bourdieu, the concept of the “habitus” is explored as a means of developing and enriching the Fraser-Honneth debate.

In the following chapter, Kristi Gisselson asks whether “identity, respect and justice are possible within post-humanism?” Framing her discussion in the context of indigenous politics in Australia, Gisselson seeks to show how Fraser’s understanding of recognition, redistribution and representation—as

necessarily linked components of justice—can be demonstrated in the mutually dependant nature of Indigenous claims for cultural, economic and political justice. Using the common possession of certain inalienable rights as an example, Gisselson argues that Indigenous Australians link their claims of misdistribution and misrecognition to their misrepresentation as uncivilised subjects excluded from the Western, territorially-based notion of rights. She contends that Indigenous claims of an inseparable link between self-definition, self-determination and the political frame of universal human rights offer the possibility of transforming that political framework. Arguing that identity, respect, and justice are not possible within posthumanist critiques, Gisselson suggests that certain claims for particularism and universalism may be mutually dependant, rather than exclusive. In doing so, she offers a basis for understanding the epistemological grounds needed for the recognition of, and respect for, difference.

In his contribution, Andy Blunden appraises Nancy Fraser's norm of participatory parity, arguing that the considerable utility of the concept is qualified by some unresolved difficulties over the question of agency. For Blunden, while the claimant of justice is assumed to be social movement, parity of participation is claimed for individuals. Arguing that the problem of agency is the main source of social injustice today, Blunden contends that this ambiguity derives from a wider problem in social theory, namely, that the person as a sovereign subject is wrongly taken to be an extant fact or norm, rather than the endpoint of an unfinished historical process.

Maria Rodrigues then argues that while the existence of universal human rights is widely accepted in international political discourse, there remains a great need for critical philosophical inquiry to examine the foundations of these rights. A universal theory of rights will need to find common denominators amidst the vast array of global cultures and belief systems. Rodrigues proposes a theory of rights that attempts to balance liberalism and communitarian visions of human rights, and presents a range of Asian, African and Indigenous perspectives on rights and personhood. She argues that non-Western emphases on individual responsibility and the common good offer valuable resources in the process of making global human rights mechanisms viable.

Andrew Vandenberg, Matthew Sharpe and Geoff Boucher offer some controversial and compelling arguments about contemporary “neo-conservatism”. Analysing the relationship of new variants of conservatism to the politics of recognition, they reflect on the way neo-conservatism articulates and responds to the relationship between law, morality and power. Arguing that the

neo-conservative right in the USA has successfully transcended the opposition between cultural recognition and economic redistribution, the authors suggest that recent ideological and political developments within conservatism are best described as “post-modern” rather than “new”. For the authors, contemporary conservatives focus on the political construction of social identity and contemporary uncertainty about basic values and the foundations of social order, “while continuing to uphold traditional conservative abhorrence for any systematic scheme, grand reform project, or utopia.” Vandenberg, Sharpe and Boucher explore how a neo-conservative agenda of recognition of the Right in the US embraces “a reactionary conception of justice at the economic, political, and cultural levels.” Central to the agenda of these conservatives is the reinforcement of American hegemony and American society by freeing the political executive from democratic scrutiny and through cultural particularism, political federalism, and economic deregulation.

Part II: Multiculturalism and Recognition

Theories of recognition implicitly deal with the relationship between suffering, injustice and struggles for political recognition. Analysing the reception of the Abu Ghraib photographs, Matthew Ericson’s chapter examines how recognition of suffering can lead to the recognition of injustice, and considers the crucial role played by visual images in shifting the American public’s view of Abu Ghraib. For Ericson, the photographs prompted a “public epiphany” in which the media, the public and politicians were forced to question certain assumptions on which an American sense of national identity was based.

In the second chapter of this section, Tim Soutphommasane’s contribution evaluates multiculturalism as an ideology, focussing particularly on the version of multiculturalism deployed in Taylor’s seminal analysis of the politics of recognition. Employing a two-tiered model of ideology, Soutphommasane examines the conceptual and political dimensions of multiculturalism, concluding that it cannot be seen as a self-sufficient political ideology, and indeed, cannot be separated “in any meaningful way” from an ideology of liberalism.

Ibrahim Abraham’s chapter then explores the way contemporary political philosophy and theology intersect around the vexed notion of political identity. Noting the increasing importance of religion in the political sphere, Abraham argues that religious organisations and theological discourses ought to be subject to the same scrutiny routinely applied to political organisations and policies. Employing Nancy Fraser’s notion of “perspective dualism” as a means

of analysing various schools of Latin American liberation theology, Abraham exhorts us to “begin to take theology seriously, politically”.

Lucas Walsh and Michael Leach then examine the way tensions between conflicting policy agendas in education in Australia impact upon the management of cultural diversity. Their chapter discusses the dissonance between two agendas: a conservative attempt to focus on “core” national values, and a neoliberal agenda of “choice”, which is reflected in new school funding policies facilitating the growth of new “religious” schools in Australia. The authors suggest that these tensions between efforts to promote shared values while promoting “parental choice” in private schooling have combined to produce a move away from a common education in civic values and a reemphasis on non-secular, religious schooling. The management of cultural diversity in compulsory education in Australian schools therefore highlights Fraser’s argument that an “identity” approach to recognition politics can lead to fragmentation, rather than revitalisation of public or national values. In doing so, this approach has the capacity to exacerbate social inequalities and participatory deficits in migrant communities.

Part III: Recognition and Social Policy

The final section of this book explores recognition and social policy, beginning with Robin Peace’s contribution. This chapter seeks to situate shifts in EU social policy discourse and implementation in relation to Fraser’s moral philosophy. Using discursive evidence to demonstrate how certain groups and individuals are excluded from social policy at the European level, Peace seeks to enhance Fraser’s concept of participatory parity as a basis for conceptualising democratic social justice. Peace recommends a more relational approach to understanding those categories of people who are not fully accounted for in either EU social policy initiatives, or Fraser’s parameters of social justice. The author argues for a revitalisation and politicisation of an “ethic of care” or, “the instantiation of a notion of relational reciprocity” as a means of understanding key issues of recognition, redistribution and representation in social policy.

Inspired by Fraser’s notion of “the politics of need interpretation”, Lea Campbell’s chapter examines constructions of the “drug using welfare client” in Australian drug policy, and community rehabilitation services. Campbell argues that a more thorough analysis of the politics of need interpretation in drug policy can inform a more meaningful and complex politics of recognition and redistribution in this area of welfare policy. Exploring three discourses of the “juridical-administrative-therapeutic” state: the prohibition discourse; the

competing rationalisms discourse; and the addiction discourse, Campbell offers a fascinating and grounded application of Fraser's politics of need interpretation.

In her case study of family support services, Natasha Cortis then examines users' perspectives on the goals of community services and social policy, and the criteria by which quality and effectiveness is assessed. Using the example of family support, Cortis argues that disadvantaged parents construct the value of services primarily in terms of overcoming harms associated with humiliation and disrespect. Extending redistribution and recognition debates beyond their application to organised social movements, Cortis invites us to reconsider key problems of social policy and welfare service evaluation. For Cortis, the suffering of disadvantaged parents exists beyond the ambit of organised social movements, in what Honneth calls the "shadows of the political public sphere". While Fraser's dualism of redistribution and recognition is useful in highlighting the emphasis placed by community service users on outcomes of recognition, Cortis argues that Honneth's tripartite concept of recognition as "love", "legal status" and "solidarity" more fully captures participant perspectives on using family support policy and services.

Conclusion: Politicising Recognition

The essays collected here describe the manifold ways that recognition is relevant to contemporary inquiry in philosophy and politics. Recognition is primarily evaluative; it involves making judgements about meaning and worth. Recognition is also social; it involves developing relationships and mutual understanding. Analysing social recognition sheds light on how individual and collective identities are formed. Examining the politics of recognition, however, necessarily involves politicising recognition: examining when, where and why recognition is sought, and whether it is justified. The following chapters suggest that our analysis of social recognition must be nuanced and critical.

Like identity politics, recognition theory alerts us to the multiple levels at which power operates, and the multiple forms that exclusion can take. Like identity politics, recognition theory suggests that equal treatment does not necessarily produce justice, or even equality. Indeed, demands for recognition may not even reference equality as a standard. Recognising the injustices of colonialism for example, may be more about setting the historical record straight than arguing for equality. Such claims distinguish between justice and equality, and challenge the cosy conclusion that justice can be guaranteed by the rigorous application of the latter principle.

In other words, whether we can square claims for recognition with liberalism, or whether liberalism reaches its explanatory and emancipatory limit in the face of contemporary struggles against injustice, is a question in need of further analysis. Exploring the politics of recognition will be central to any such inquiry. Our hope is that this collection adds a critical edge to debates about recognition; affirming the significance of recognition to politics and philosophy without losing sight of the challenges it poses, and, just as importantly, the boundaries it transgresses.

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PART I: DEBATING RECOGNITION
AS CRITICAL THEORY

CHAPTER ONE

REFRAMING JUSTICE IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

NANCY FRASER

Globalisation is changing the way we argue about justice. Not so long ago, in the heyday of social democracy, disputes about justice presumed what I shall call a “Keynesian-Westphalian frame.” Typically played out within modern territorial states, arguments about justice were assumed to concern relations among fellow citizens, to be subject to debate within national publics, and to contemplate redress by national states. This was true for each of two major families of justice claims, claims for socioeconomic redistribution and claims for legal or cultural recognition. At a time when the Bretton Woods system of international capital controls facilitated Keynesian economic steering at the national level, claims for redistribution usually focused on economic inequities within territorial states. Appealing to national public opinion for a fair share of the national pie, claimants sought intervention by national states in national economies. Likewise, in an era still gripped by a Westphalian political imaginary, which sharply distinguished “domestic” from “international” space, claims for recognition generally concerned internal status hierarchies. Appealing to the national conscience for an end to nationally institutionalised disrespect, claimants pressed national governments to outlaw discrimination and accommodate differences among citizens. In both cases, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame was assumed. Whether the matter concerned redistribution or recognition, class differentials or status hierarchies, it went without saying that the unit within which justice applied was the modern territorial state.¹

To be sure, there were always exceptions. Occasionally, famines and genocides galvanised public opinion across borders. And some cosmopolitans and anti-imperialists sought to promulgate globalist views.² But these were exceptions that proved the rule. Relegated to the sphere of “the international,” they were subsumed within a problematic that was focused primarily on matters of security, as opposed to justice. The effect was to reinforce, rather than to challenge, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame. That framing of disputes about

justice generally prevailed by default from the end of the Second World War through the 1970s.

Although it went unnoticed at the time, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame gave a distinctive shape to arguments about social justice. Taking for granted the modern territorial state as the appropriate unit, and its citizens as the pertinent subjects, such arguments turned on what precisely those citizens owed one another. In the eyes of some, it sufficed that citizens be formally equal before the law; for others, equality of opportunity was also required; for others still, justice demanded that all citizens gain access to the resources and respect they needed in order to be able to participate on a par with others, as full members of the political community. The argument focused, in other words, on what should count as a just ordering of social relations within a society. Engrossed in disputing the “what” of justice, the contestants apparently felt no necessity to dispute the “who.” With the Keynesian-Westphalian frame securely in place, it went without saying that the “who” was the national citizenry.

Today, however, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame is losing its aura of self-evidence. Thanks to heightened awareness of globalisation, and to post-Cold War geopolitical instabilities, many observe that the social processes shaping their lives routinely overflow territorial borders. They note, for example, that decisions taken in one territorial state often impact the lives of those outside it, as do the actions of transnational corporations, international currency speculators, and large institutional investors. Many also note the growing salience of supranational and international organisations, both governmental and nongovernmental, and of transnational public opinion, which flows with supreme disregard for borders through global mass media and cybertechnology. The result is a new sense of vulnerability to transnational forces. Faced with global warming, the spread of AIDS, international terrorism, and superpower unilateralism, many believe that their chances for living good lives depend at least as much on processes that trespass the borders of territorial states as on those contained within them.

Under these conditions, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame no longer goes without saying. For many, it is no longer axiomatic that the modern territorial state is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice. Nor that the citizens of such states are the pertinent subjects. The effect is to destabilise the previous structure of political claims making—and therefore to change the way we argue about social justice.

This is true for both major families of justice claims. In today's world, claims for redistribution increasingly eschew the assumption of national economies. Faced with transnationalised production, the outsourcing of jobs, and the associated pressures of the "race to the bottom," once nationally focused labour unions look increasingly for allies abroad. Inspired by the Zapatistas, meanwhile, impoverished peasants and indigenous peoples link their struggles against despotic local and national authorities to critiques of transnational corporate predation and global neoliberalism. Finally, WTO protestors directly target the new governance structures of the global economy, which have vastly strengthened the ability of large corporations and investors to escape the regulatory and taxation powers of territorial states.

In the same way, movements struggling for recognition increasingly look beyond the territorial state. Under the umbrella slogan "women's rights are human rights," for example, feminists throughout the world are linking struggles against local patriarchal practices to campaigns to reform international law. Meanwhile, religious and ethnic minorities, who face discrimination within territorial states, are reconstituting themselves as diasporas and building transnational publics from which to mobilise international opinion. Finally, transnational coalitions of human-rights activists are seeking to build new cosmopolitan institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, which can punish state violations of human dignity.

In such cases, disputes about justice are exploding the Keynesian-Westphalian frame. No longer addressed exclusively to national states or debated exclusively by national publics, claimants no longer focus solely on relations among fellow citizens. Thus, the grammar of argument has altered. Whether the issue is distribution or recognition, disputes that used to focus exclusively on the question of what is owed as a matter of justice to community members now turn quickly into disputes about who should count as a member and which is the relevant community. Not just "the what" but also "the who" is up for grabs.

Today, in other words, arguments about justice assume a double guise. On the one hand, they concern first-order questions of substance, just as before: How much economic inequality does justice permit, how much redistribution is required, and according to which principle of distributive justice? What constitutes equal respect, which kinds of differences merit public recognition, and by which means? But above and beyond such first-order questions, arguments about justice today also concern second-order, meta-level questions: what is the proper frame within which to consider first-order questions of

justice? Who are the relevant subjects entitled to a just distribution or reciprocal recognition in the given case? Thus, it is not only the substance of justice, but also the frame, which is in dispute.³

The result is a major challenge to our theories of social justice. Preoccupied largely with first-order issues of distribution and/or recognition, these theories have so far failed to develop conceptual resources for reflecting on the meta-issue of the frame. As things stand, therefore, it is by no means clear that they are capable of addressing the double character of problems of justice in a globalising age.⁴

In this essay, I shall propose a strategy for thinking about the problem of the frame. I shall argue, first, that in order to deal satisfactorily with this problem, the theory of justice must become three-dimensional, incorporating the political dimension of representation, alongside the economic dimension of distribution and the cultural dimension of recognition. I shall also argue, second, that the political dimension of representation should itself be understood as encompassing three levels. The combined effect of these two arguments will be to make visible a third question, beyond those of the “what” and the “who,” which I shall call the question of the “how.” That question, in turn, inaugurates a paradigm shift: what the Keynesian-Westphalian frame cast as the theory of social justice must now become a theory of post-Westphalian democratic justice.

For a Three-Dimensional Theory of Justice: On the Specificity of the Political

Let me begin by explaining what I mean by justice in general and by its political dimension in particular. In my view, the most general meaning of justice is parity of participation. According to this radical-democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction. Previously, I have analysed two distinct kinds of obstacles to participatory parity, which correspond to two distinct species of injustice.⁵ On the one hand, people can be impeded from full participation by economic structures that deny them the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers; in that case they suffer from distributive injustice or maldistribution.

On the other hand, people can also be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing; in that case they suffer from status inequality or misrecognition.⁶ In the first case, the problem is the class structure of society, which corresponds to the economic dimension of justice. In the second case, the problem is the status order, which corresponds to the cultural dimension.⁷ In modern capitalist societies, the class structure and the status order do not neatly mirror each other, although they interact causally. Rather, each has some autonomy vis-à-vis the other. As a result, misrecognition cannot be reduced to a secondary effect of maldistribution, as some economic theories of distributive justice appear to suppose. Nor, conversely, can maldistribution be reduced to an epiphenomenal expression of misrecognition, as some culturalist theories of recognition tend to assume. Thus, neither recognition theory alone nor distribution theory alone can provide an adequate understanding of justice for capitalist society. Only a two-dimensional theory, encompassing both distribution and recognition, can supply the necessary levels of social-theoretical complexity and moral-philosophical insight.⁸

That, at least, is the view of justice I have defended in the past. And this two-dimensional understanding of justice still seems right to me as far as it goes. But I now believe that it does not go far enough. Distribution and recognition could appear to constitute the sole dimensions of justice only insofar as the Keynesian-Westphalian frame was taken for granted. Once the question of the frame becomes subject to contestation, the effect is to make visible a third dimension of justice, which was neglected in my previous work—as well as in the work of many other philosophers.⁹

The third dimension of justice is the political. Of course, distribution and recognition are themselves political in the sense of being contested and power-laden; and they have usually been seen as requiring adjudication by the state. But I mean political in a more specific, constitutive sense, which concerns the constitution of the state's jurisdiction and the decision-rules by which it structures contestation. The political in this sense furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out. Establishing criteria of social belonging, and thus determining who counts as a member, the political dimension of justice specifies the reach of those other dimensions: it tells us who is included, and who excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition. Establishing decision-rules, likewise, the political dimension sets the procedures for staging and resolving contests in both the economic and the cultural dimensions: it tells us not only who can make

claims for redistribution and recognition, but also how such claims are to be mooted and adjudicated.

Centred on issues of membership and procedure, the political dimension of justice is concerned chiefly with representation. At one level, which pertains to the boundary-setting aspect of the political, representation is a matter of social belonging; what is at issue here is inclusion in, or exclusion from, the community of those entitled to make justice claims on one another. At another level, which pertains to the decision-rule aspect, representation concerns the procedures that structure public processes of contestation; what is at issue here are the terms on which those included in the political community air their claims and adjudicate their disputes.¹⁰ At both levels, the question can arise as to whether the relations of representation are just. One can ask: Do the boundaries of the political community wrongly exclude some who are actually entitled to representation? Do the community's decision-rules accord equal voice in public deliberations and fair representation in public decision-making to all members? Such issues of representation are specifically political. Conceptually distinct from both economic and cultural questions, they cannot be reduced to the latter, although, as we shall see, they are inextricably interwoven with them.

To say that the political is a conceptually distinct dimension of justice, not reducible to the economic or the cultural, is also to say that it can give rise to a conceptually distinct species of injustice. Given the view of justice as participatory parity, this means that there can be distinctively political obstacles to parity, not reducible to maldistribution or misrecognition, although (again) interwoven with them. Such obstacles arise from the political constitution of society, as opposed to the class structure or status order. Grounded in a specifically political mode of social ordering, they can only be adequately grasped through a theory that conceptualises representation, along with distribution and recognition, as one of three fundamental dimensions of justice.

If representation is the defining issue of the political, then the characteristic political injustice is misrepresentation. Misrepresentation occurs when political boundaries and/or decision-rules function to wrongly deny some people the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction—including, but not only, in political arenas. Far from being reducible to maldistribution or misrecognition, misrepresentation can occur even in the absence of the latter injustices, although it is usually intertwined with them.

At least two different levels of misrepresentation can be distinguished. Insofar as political decision-rules wrongly deny some of the included the chance

to participate fully, as peers, the injustice is what I call ordinary-political misrepresentation. Here, where the issue is intraframe representation, we enter the familiar terrain of political science debates over the relative merits of alternative electoral systems. Do single-member-district, winner-take-all, first-past-the-post systems unjustly deny parity to numerical minorities? And if so, is proportional representation or cumulative voting the appropriate remedy?¹¹ Likewise, do gender-blind rules, in conjunction with gender-based maldistribution and misrecognition, function to deny parity of political participation to women? And if so, are gender quotas an appropriate remedy?¹² Such questions belong to the sphere of ordinary-political justice, which has usually been played out within the Keynesian-Westphalian frame.

Less obvious, perhaps, is a second level of misrepresentation, which concerns the boundary-setting aspect of the political. Here the injustice arises when the community's boundaries are drawn in such a way as to wrongly exclude some people from the chance to participate at all in its authorised contests over justice. In such cases, misrepresentation takes a deeper form, which I shall call misframing. The deeper character of misframing is a function of the crucial importance of framing to every question of social justice. Far from being of marginal importance, frame-setting is among the most consequential of political decisions. Constituting both members and nonmembers in a single stroke, this decision effectively excludes the latter from the universe of those entitled to consideration within the community in matters of distribution, recognition, and ordinary-political representation. The result can be a serious injustice. When questions of justice are framed in a way that wrongly excludes some from consideration, the consequence is a special kind of meta-injustice, in which one is denied the chance to press first-order justice claims in a given political community. The injustice remains, moreover, even when those excluded from one political community are included as subjects of justice in another—as long as the effect of the political division is to put some relevant aspects of justice beyond their reach. Still more serious, of course, is the case in which one is excluded from membership in any political community. Akin to the loss of what Hannah Arendt called “the right to have rights,” that sort of misframing is a kind of “political death.”¹³ Those who suffer it may become objects of charity or benevolence. But deprived of the possibility of authoring first-order claims, they become non-persons with respect to justice.

It is the misframing form of misrepresentation that globalisation has recently begun to make visible. Earlier, in the heyday of the postwar welfare state, with the Keynesian-Westphalian frame securely in place, the principal concern in thinking about justice was distribution. Later, with the rise of the new social

movements and multiculturalism, the centre of gravity shifted to recognition. In both cases, the modern territorial state was assumed by default. As a result, the political dimension of justice was relegated to the margins. Where it did emerge, it took the ordinary-political form of contests over the decision-rules internal to the polity, whose boundaries were taken for granted. Thus, claims for gender quotas and multicultural rights sought to remove political obstacles to participatory parity for those who were already included in principle in the political community.¹⁶ Taking for granted the Keynesian-Westphalian frame, they did not call into question the assumption that the appropriate unit of justice was the territorial state.

Today, in contrast, globalisation has put the question of the frame squarely on the political agenda. Increasingly subject to contestation, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame is now considered by many to be a major vehicle of injustice, as it partitions political space in ways that block many who are poor and despised from challenging the forces that oppress them. Channelling their claims into the domestic political spaces of relatively powerless, if not wholly failed states, this frame insulates offshore powers from critique and control.¹⁵ Among those shielded from the reach of justice are more powerful predator states and transnational private powers, including foreign investors and creditors, international currency speculators, and transnational corporations.¹⁶ Also protected are the governance structures of the global economy, which set exploitative terms of interaction and then exempt them from democratic control.¹⁷ Finally, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame is self-insulating; the architecture of the interstate system protects the very partitioning of political space that it institutionalises, effectively excluding transnational democratic decision-making on issues of justice.¹⁸

From this perspective, the Keynesian-Westphalian frame is a powerful instrument of injustice, which gerrymanders political space at the expense of the poor and despised. For those persons who are denied the chance to press transnational first-order claims, struggles against maldistribution and misrecognition cannot proceed, let alone succeed, unless they are joined with struggles against misframing. It is not surprising, therefore, that some consider misframing the defining injustice of a globalising age.

Under these conditions, of heightened awareness of misframing, the political dimension of justice is hard to ignore. Insofar as globalisation is politicising the question of the frame, it is also making visible an aspect of the grammar of justice that was often neglected in the previous period. It is now apparent that no claim for justice can avoid presupposing some notion of representation, implicit

or explicit, insofar as none can avoid assuming a frame. Thus, representation is always already inherent in all claims for redistribution and recognition. The political dimension is implicit in, indeed required by, the grammar of the concept of justice. Thus, no redistribution or recognition without representation.¹⁹

In general, then, an adequate theory of justice for our time must be three-dimensional. Encompassing not only redistribution and recognition, but also representation, it must allow us to grasp the question of the frame as a question of justice. Incorporating the economic, cultural, and political dimensions, it must enable us to identify injustices of misframing and to evaluate possible remedies. Above all, it must permit us to pose, and to answer, the key political question of our age: how can we integrate struggles against maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation within a post-Westphalian frame?

On the Politics of Framing: From State-Territoriality to Social Effectivity?

So far I have been arguing for the irreducible specificity of the political as one of three fundamental dimensions of justice. And I have identified two distinct levels of political injustice: ordinary-political misrepresentation and misframing. Now, I want to examine the politics of framing in a globalising world. Distinguishing affirmative from transformative approaches, I shall argue that an adequate politics of representation must also address a third level: beyond contesting ordinary-political misrepresentation, on the one hand, and misframing, on the other, such a politics must also aim to democratise the process of frame-setting.

I begin by explaining what I mean by “the politics of framing.” Situated at my second level, where distinctions between members and nonmembers are drawn, this politics concerns the boundary-setting aspect of the political. Focused on the issues of who counts as a subject of justice, and what is the appropriate frame, the politics of framing comprises efforts to establish and consolidate, to contest and revise, the authoritative division of political space. Included here are struggles against misframing, which aim to dismantle the obstacles that prevent disadvantaged people from confronting the forces that oppress them with claims of justice. Centred on the setting and contesting of frames, the politics of framing is concerned with the question of the “who.”

The politics of framing can take two distinct forms, both of which are now being practiced in our globalising world.²⁰ The first approach, which I shall call