Recognition without Ethics?

Nancy Fraser

FOR SOME time now, the forces of progressive politics have been divided into two camps. On one side stand the proponents of 'redistribution'. Drawing on long traditions of egalitarian, labor and socialist organizing, political actors aligned with this orientation seek a more just allocation of resources and goods. On the other side stand the proponents of 'recognition'. Drawing on newer visions of a 'difference-friendly' society, they seek a world where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect. Members of the first camp hope to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, from the North to the South, and from the owners to the workers. Members of the second, in contrast, seek recognition of the distinctive perspectives of ethnic, 'racial', and sexual minorities, as well as of gender difference. The redistribution orientation has a distinguished philosophical pedigree, as egalitarian redistributive claims have supplied the paradigm case for most theorizing about social justice for the past 150 years. The recognition orientation has recently attracted the interest of political philosophers, however, some of whom are seeking to develop a new normative paradigm that puts recognition at its center.

At present, unfortunately, relations between the two camps are quite strained. In many cases, struggles for recognition are dissociated from struggles for redistribution. Within social movements such as feminism, for example, activist tendencies that look to redistribution as the remedy for male domination are increasingly dissociated from tendencies that look instead to recognition of gender difference. And the same is largely true in the intellectual sphere. In the academy, to continue with feminism, scholars who understand gender as a social relation maintain an uneasy arm's-length coexistence with those who construe it as an identity or a cultural code. This situation exemplifies a broader phenomenon: the widespread decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, of the politics of difference from the politics of equality.

In some cases, moreover, the dissociation has become a polarization. Some proponents of redistribution see claims for the recognition of difference as 'false consciousness', a hindrance to the pursuit of social justice. Conversely, some proponents of recognition reject distributive politics as part and parcel of an outmoded materialism that can neither articulate nor challenge key experiences of injustice. In such cases, we are effectively presented with an either/or choice: redistribution or recognition? class politics or identity politics? multiculturalism or social equality?

These, I have argued elsewhere, are false antitheses (Fraser, 1995, forthcoming a, forthcoming b). Justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition; neither alone is sufficient. As soon as one embraces this thesis, however, the question of how to combine them becomes pressing. I maintain that the emancipatory aspects of the two problematics need to be integrated in a single, comprehensive framework. The task, in part, is to devise an expanded conception of justice that can accommodate both defensible claims for social equality and defensible claims for the recognition of difference.

Morality or Ethics?

Integrating redistribution and recognition is no easy matter, however. On the contrary, to contemplate this project is to become immediately embroiled in a nexus of difficult philosophical questions. Some of the thorniest of these concern the relation between morality and ethics, the right and the good, justice and the good life. A key issue is whether paradigms of justice usually aligned with 'morality' can handle claims for the recognition of difference – or whether it is necessary, on the contrary, to turn to 'ethics'.

Let me explain. It is now standard practice in moral philosophy to distinguish questions of justice from questions of the good life. Construing the first as a matter of 'the right' and the second as a matter of 'the good', most philosophers align distributive justice with Kantian *Moralität* (morality) and recognition with Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (ethics). In part this contrast is a matter of scope. Norms of justice are thought to be universally binding; they hold independently of actors' commitments to specific values. Claims for the recognition of difference, in contrast, are more restricted. Involving qualitative assessments of the relative worth of various cultural practices, traits and identities, they depend on historically specific horizons of value, which cannot be universalized.

Much of recent moral philosophy turns on disputes over the relative standing of these two different orders of normativity. Liberal political theorists and deontological moral philosophers insist that the right take priority over the good. For them, accordingly, the demands of justice trump the claims of ethics. Communitarians and teleologists rejoin that the notion of a universally binding morality independent of any idea of the good is conceptually incoherent. Preferring 'thick' accounts of moral experience to 'thin' ones, they rank the substantive claims of culturally specific community values above abstract appeals to Reason or Humanity.

Partisans of the right, moreover, often subscribe to distributive models of justice. Viewing justice as a matter of fairness, they seek to eliminate unjustified disparities between the life-chances of social actors. To identify these disparities, they invoke standards of fairness that do not prejudge those actors' own (varying) views of the good. Partisans of the good, in contrast, reject the 'empty formalism' of distributive approaches. Viewing ethics as a matter of the good life, they seek to promote the qualitative conditions of human flourishing (as they understand them), rather than fidelity to abstract requirements of equal treatment.

These philosophical alignments complicate the problem of integrating redistribution and recognition. Distribution evidently belongs on the morality side of the divide. Recognition, however, seems at first sight to belong to ethics, as it seems to require judgments about the value of various practices, traits and identities. It is not surprising, therefore, that many deontological theorists simply reject claims for the recognition of difference as violations of liberal neutrality, while concluding that distributive justice exhausts the whole of political morality. It is also unsurprising, conversely, that many theorists of recognition align themselves with ethics against morality; following the same reasoning as their liberal counterparts, they conclude that recognition requires qualitative value judgments that exceed the capacities of distributive models.

In these standard alignments, both sides agree that distribution belongs to morality, recognition belongs to ethics, and never the twain shall meet. Thus, each assumes that its paradigm excludes the other's. If they are right, then the claims of redistribution and the claims of recognition cannot be coherently combined. On the contrary, whoever wishes to endorse claims of both types courts the risk of philosophical schizophrenia.

It is precisely this presumption of incompatibility that I aim to dispel. *Contra* the received wisdom, I shall argue that one *can* integrate redistribution and recognition without succumbing to schizophrenia. My strategy will be to construe the politics of recognition in a way that does not deliver it prematurely to ethics. Rather, I shall account for claims for recognition as *justice claims* within an expanded understanding of justice. The initial effect will be to recuperate the politics of recognition for *Moralität* and thus to resist the turn to ethics. But that is not precisely where I shall end up. Rather, I shall concede that there may be cases when ethical evaluation is unavoidable. Yet because such evaluation is problematic, I shall suggest ways of deferring it as long as possible.

Identity or Status?

The key to my strategy is to break with the standard 'identity' model of recognition. On this model, what requires recognition is group-specific cultural identity. Misrecognition consists in the depreciation of such identity by the dominant culture and the consequent damage to group members' sense of self. Redressing this harm means demanding 'recognition'. This in turn requires that group members join together to refashion their collective

identity by producing a self-affirming culture of their own. Thus, on the identity model of recognition, the politics of recognition means 'identity politics'.[1]

This identity model is deeply problematic. Construing misrecognition as damaged identity, it emphasizes psychic structure over social institutions and social interaction. Thus, it risks substituting intrusive forms of consciousness engineering for social change. The model compounds these risks by positing *group* identity as the object of recognition. Enjoining the elaboration and display of an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective identity, it puts moral pressure on individual members to conform to group culture. The result is often to impose a single, drastically simplified group identity, which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations. In addition, the model reifies culture. Ignoring transcultural flows, it treats cultures as sharply bounded, neatly separated and non-interacting, as if it were obvious where one stops and another starts. As a result, it tends to promote separatism and group enclaving in lieu of transgroup interaction. Denying internal heterogeneity, moreover, the identity model obscures the struggles *within* social groups for the authority, and indeed for the power, to represent them. Consequently, it masks the power of dominant fractions and reinforces intragroup domination. In general, then, the identity model lends itself all too easily to repressive forms of communitarianism.[2]

For these reasons, I shall propose an alternative analysis of recognition. My proposal is to treat recognition as a question of *social status*. From this perspective – I shall call it *the status model* – what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but rather the status of group members as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of group identity. Rather, it means *social subordination* in the sense of being prevented from *participating as a peer* in social life. To redress the injustice requires a politics of recognition, to be sure, but this no longer means identity politics. In the status model, rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with other members.[3]

Let me elaborate. To view recognition as a matter of status is to examine institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as *peers*, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of *reciprocal recognition* and *status equality*. When, in contrast, institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other or simply invisible, hence as less than full partners in social interaction, then we should speak of *misrecognition* and *status subordination*.

On the status model, then, misrecognition arises when institutions structure interaction according to cultural norms that impede parity of participation. Examples include marriage laws that exclude same-sex

partnerships as illegitimate and perverse, social-welfare policies that stigmatize single mothers as sexually irresponsible scroungers, and policing practices such as 'racial profiling' that associate racialized persons with criminality. In each of these cases, interaction is regulated by an institutionalized pattern of cultural value that constitutes some categories of social actors as normative and others as deficient or inferior: straight is normal, gay is perverse; 'male-headed households' are proper, 'female-headed households' are not; 'whites' are law-abiding, 'blacks' are dangerous. In each case, the result is to deny some members of society the status of full partners in interaction, capable of participating on a par with the rest.

In each case, accordingly, a claim for recognition is in order. But note precisely what this means: aimed not at valorizing group identity, but rather at overcoming subordination, claims for recognition in the status model seek to establish the subordinated party as a full partner in social life, able to interact with others as a peer. They aim, that is, *to de-institutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it.*

This status model avoids many difficulties of the identity model. First, by rejecting the view of recognition as valorization of group identity, it avoids essentializing such identities. Second, by focusing on the effects of institutionalized norms on capacities for interaction, it resists the temptation to substitute the re-engineering of consciousness for social change. Third, by enjoining status equality in the sense of parity of participation, it valorizes cross-group interaction, as opposed to separatism and group enclaving. Fourth, the status model avoids reifying culture – without denying culture's political importance. Aware that institutionalized patterns of cultural value can be vehicles of subordination, it seeks to de-institutionalize patterns that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it.

Finally, the status model possesses another major advantage. Unlike the identity model, it construes recognition in a way that does not assign that category to ethics. Conceiving recognition as a matter of status equality, defined in turn as participatory parity, it provides a deontological account of recognition. Thus, it frees recognition claims' normative force from direct dependence on a specific substantive horizon of value. Unlike the identity model, then, the status model is compatible with the priority of the right over the good. Refusing the traditional alignment of recognition with ethics, it aligns it with morality instead. Thus, the status model permits one to combine recognition with redistribution – without succumbing to philosophical schizophrenia. Or so I shall argue next.

Justice or the Good Life?

Any attempt to integrate redistribution and recognition in a comprehensive framework must address four crucial philosophical questions. First, is recognition a matter of justice, or is it a matter of self-realization? Second, do distributive justice and recognition constitute two distinct, *sui generis*,

normative paradigms, or can either of them be subsumed within the other? Third, does justice require the recognition of what is distinctive about individuals or groups, or is recognition of our common humanity sufficient? And, fourth, how can we distinguish those claims for recognition that are justified from those that are not?

How one answers these questions depends on the conception of recognition one assumes. In what follows, I will employ the status model in order to provide a deontological account. Drawing on that model, I shall expand the standard conception of justice to accommodate claims for recognition. By stretching the notion of morality, then, I shall avoid turning prematurely to ethics.

I begin with the question, Is recognition an issue of justice, and thus of morality, or one of the good life, and thus of ethics? Usually, recognition is understood as an issue of the good life. This is the view of both Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth, the two most prominent contemporary theorists of recognition. For both Taylor and Honneth, being recognized by another subject is a necessary condition for attaining full, undistorted subjectivity. To deny someone recognition is to deprive her or him of a basic prerequisite for human flourishing. For Taylor, for example:

> . . . nonrecognition or misrecognition . . . can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need. (Taylor, 1994: 25)

For Honneth, similarly, 'we owe our integrity . . . to the receipt of approval or recognition from other persons. [D]enial of recognition . . . is injurious because it impairs . . . persons in their positive understanding of self – an understanding acquired by intersubjective means' (1992: 188–9). Thus, both these theorists construe misrecognition in terms of impaired subjectivity and damaged self-identity. And both understand the injury in ethical terms, as stunting the subject's capacity for achieving a good life. For Taylor and Honneth, therefore, recognition is an issue of ethics.

Unlike Taylor and Honneth, I propose to conceive recognition as an issue of justice. Thus, one should not answer the question 'What's wrong with misrecognition?' by saying that it impedes human flourishing by distorting the subject's 'practical relation-to-self' (Honneth, 1992, 1995). One should say, rather, that it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them. One should say, that is, that misrecognition is wrong because it constitutes a form of institutionalized subordination – and thus, a serious violation of justice.

This approach offers several important advantages. First, by appealing

to a deontological standard, it permits one to justify claims for recognition as morally binding under modern conditions of value pluralism.[4] Under these conditions, there is no single conception of the good life that is universally shared, nor any that can be established as authoritative. Thus, any attempt to justify claims for recognition that appeals to an account of the good life must necessarily be sectarian. No approach of this sort can establish such claims as normatively binding on those who do not share the theorist's horizon of ethical value.

Unlike such approaches, the status model of recognition is deontological and nonsectarian. Embracing the spirit of 'subjective freedom' that is the hallmark of modernity, it assumes that it is up to individuals and groups to define for themselves what counts as a good life and to devise for themselves an approach to pursuing it, within limits that ensure a like liberty for others. Thus, the status model does not appeal to a conception of the good life. It appeals, rather, to a conception of justice that can – and should – be accepted by those with divergent conceptions of the good life. What makes misrecognition morally wrong, in this view, is that it denies some individuals and groups the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction. The norm of *participatory parity* invoked here is nonsectarian in the required sense. It can justify claims for recognition as normatively binding on all who agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism.

Treating recognition as a matter of justice has a second advantage as well. Conceiving misrecognition as status subordination, it locates the wrong in social relations, not in individual or interpersonal psychology. To be misrecognized, in this view, is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. When such patterns of disrespect and disesteem are institutionalized, they impede parity of participation, just as surely as do distributive inequities.

Eschewing psychologization, then, this approach escapes difficulties that plague rival approaches. When misrecognition is identified with internal distortions in the structure of self-consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim, as imputing psychic damage to those subject to racism, for example, seems to add insult to injury. Conversely, when misrecognition is equated with prejudice in the minds of the oppressors, overcoming it seems to require policing their beliefs, an approach that is illiberal and authoritarian. For the status model, in contrast, misrecognition is a matter of externally manifest and publicly verifiable impediments to some people's standing as full members of society. And such arrangements are morally indefensible *whether or not they distort the subjectivity of the oppressed.*[5]

Finally, by aligning recognition with justice instead of the good life,

one avoids the view that everyone has an equal right to social esteem. That view is patently untenable, of course, because it renders meaningless the notion of esteem.[6] Yet it seems to follow from at least one prominent rival account. In Axel Honneth's theory, social esteem is among the 'intersubjective conditions for undistorted identity formation' which morality is supposed to protect. It follows that everyone is morally entitled to social esteem (Honneth, 1995). The account of recognition proposed here, in contrast, entails no such *reductio ad absurdum*. What it *does* entail is that everyone has an equal right to pursue social esteem under fair conditions of equal opportunity.[7] And such conditions do not obtain when, for example, institutionalized patterns of cultural value pervasively downgrade femininity, 'nonwhiteness', homosexuality and everything culturally associated with them. When that is the case, women and/or people of color and/or gays and lesbians face obstacles in the quest for esteem that are not encountered by others. And everyone, including straight white men, faces further obstacles if they opt to pursue projects and cultivate traits that are culturally coded as feminine, homosexual, or 'nonwhite'.

For all these reasons, recognition is better treated as a matter of justice, and thus of morality, than as a matter of the good life, and thus of ethics. And construing recognition on the model of status permits us to treat it as a matter of justice.

But what follows for the theory of justice?

Expanding the Paradigm of Justice

Supposing that recognition is a matter of justice, what is its relation to distribution? Does it follow, turning now to our second question, that distribution and recognition constitute two distinct, *sui generis* conceptions of justice? Or can either of them be reduced to the other?

The question of reduction must be considered from two different sides. From one side, the issue is whether existing theories of distributive justice can adequately subsume problems of recognition. In my view, the answer is no. To be sure, many distributive theorists appreciate the importance of status over and above the allocation of resources and seek to accommodate it in their accounts.[8] But the results are not wholly satisfactory. Most such theorists assume a reductive economistic-cum-legalistic view of status, supposing that a just distribution of resources and rights is sufficient to preclude misrecognition. In fact, however, not all misrecognition is a byproduct of maldistribution, nor of maldistribution plus legal discrimination. Witness the case of the African-American Wall Street banker who cannot get a taxi to pick him up. To handle such cases, a theory of justice must reach beyond the distribution of rights and goods to examine institutionalized patterns of cultural value. It must consider whether such patterns impede parity of participation in social life.[9]

What, then, of the other side of the question? Can existing theories of recognition adequately subsume problems of distribution? Here, too, I contend the answer is no. To be sure, some theorists of recognition appreciate the

importance of economic equality and seek to accommodate it in their accounts. But once again the results are not wholly satisfactory. Axel Honneth, for example, assumes a reductive culturalist view of distribution. Supposing that all economic inequalities are rooted in a cultural order that privileges some kinds of labor over others, he believes that changing that cultural order is sufficient to preclude all maldistribution (Honneth, 1995). In fact, however, not all maldistribution is a byproduct of misrecognition. Witness the case of the skilled white male industrial worker who becomes unemployed due to a factory closing resulting from a speculative corporate merger. In that case, the injustice of maldistribution has little to do with mis-recognition. It is rather a consequence of imperatives intrinsic to an order of specialized economic relations whose *raison d'être* is the accumulation of profits. To handle such cases, a theory of justice must reach beyond cultural value patterns to examine the structure of capitalism. It must consider whether economic mechanisms that are relatively decoupled from structures of prestige and that operate in a relatively impersonal way impede parity of participation in social life.

In general then, neither distribution theorists nor recognition theorists have so far succeeded in adequately subsuming the concerns of the other.[10] Thus, instead of endorsing one of their conceptions to the exclusion of the other, I propose to develop an expanded conception of justice. My conception treats distribution and recognition as distinct perspectives on, and dimensions of, justice. Without reducing either perspective to the other, it encompasses both dimensions within a broader, overarching framework.

As already noted, the normative core of my conception is the notion of *parity of participation*.[11] According to this norm, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers. For participatory parity to be possible, I claim, at least two conditions must be satisfied.[12] First, the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and voice. This I call the *objective condition* of participatory parity. It precludes forms and levels of material inequality and economic dependence that impede parity of par-ticipation. Precluded, therefore, are social arrangements that institutional-ize deprivation, exploitation and gross disparities in wealth, income and leisure time, thereby denying some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers.[13]

In contrast, the second condition requires that institutionalized pat-terns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem. This I call the *intersubjective condition* of participatory parity. It precludes institutionalized norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associ-ated with them. Precluded, therefore, are institutionalized value patterns that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction – whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed 'difference' or by failing to acknow-ledge their distinctiveness.

Both the objective condition and the intersubjective condition are

necessary for participatory parity. Neither alone is sufficient. The objective condition brings into focus concerns traditionally associated with the theory of distributive justice, especially concerns pertaining to the economic structure of society and to economically defined class differentials. The intersubjective condition brings into focus concerns recently highlighted in the philosophy of recognition, especially concerns pertaining to the status order of society and to culturally defined hierarchies of status. Thus, an expanded conception of justice oriented to the norm of participatory parity encompasses both redistribution and recognition, without reducing either one to the other.

This approach goes a considerable way toward resolving the problem with which we began. By construing redistribution and recognition as two mutually irreducible dimensions of justice, and by submitting both of them to the deontological norm of participatory parity, it positions them both on the common terrain of *Moralität*. Avoiding turning prematurely to ethics, then, it seems to promise an escape route from philosophical schizophrenia.

Recognizing Distinctiveness?

Before proclaiming success, however, we must take up our third philosophical question: does justice require the recognition of what is distinctive about individuals or groups, over and above the recognition of our common humanity? If the answer proves to be yes, we will have to revisit the question of ethics.

Let us begin by noting that participatory parity is a universalist norm in two senses. First, it encompasses all (adult) partners to interaction. And, second, it presupposes the equal moral worth of human beings. But moral universalism in these senses still leaves open the question whether recognition of individual or group distinctiveness could be required by justice as one element among others of the intersubjective condition for participatory parity.

This question cannot be answered, I contend, by an *a priori* account of the kinds of recognition that everyone always needs. It needs rather to be approached in the spirit of a pragmatism informed by the insights of social theory. From this perspective, recognition is a remedy for social injustice, not the satisfaction of a generic human need. Thus, the form(s) of recognition justice requires in any given case depend(s) on the form(s) of *mis*recognition to be redressed. In cases where misrecognition involves denying the common humanity of some participants, the remedy is universalist recognition; thus, the first and most fundamental redress for South African apartheid was universal 'non-racial' citizenship. Where, in contrast, misrecognition involves denying some participants' distinctiveness, the remedy could be recognition of specificity; thus, many feminists claim that overcoming gender subordination requires recognizing women's unique and distinctive capacity to give birth. In every case, the remedy should be tailored to the harm.[14]

This pragmatist approach overcomes the liabilities of two other, mirror-opposite views. First, it rejects the claim, espoused by some distributive

theorists, that justice requires limiting public recognition to those capacities all humans share. Favored by opponents of affirmative action, that approach dogmatically forecloses recognition of what distinguishes people from one another, without considering whether such recognition might be necessary in some cases to overcome obstacles to participatory parity. Second, the pragmatist approach rejects the opposite claim, equally decontextualized, that everyone always needs their distinctiveness recognized.[15] Often favored by recognition theorists, this second approach cannot explain why it is that not all, but only some, social differences generate claims for recognition – nor why only some of those claims, but not others, are morally justified. More specifically, it cannot explain why those occupying advantaged positions in the status order, such as men and heterosexuals, usually shun recognition of their (gender and sexual) distinctiveness, claiming not specificity but universality (Nicholson, 1996). Nor why, on those occasions when they do seek such recognition, their claims are usually spurious. By contrast, the approach proposed here sees claims for the recognition of difference pragmatically and contextually – as remedial responses to specific pre-existing injustices. Putting questions of justice at the center, it appreciates that the recognition needs of subordinated actors differ from those of dominant actors and that *only those claims that promote parity of participation are morally justified*.

For the pragmatist, accordingly, everything depends on what precisely currently misrecognized people need in order to be able to participate as peers in social life. And there is no reason to assume that all of them need the same thing in every context. In some cases, they may need to be unburdened of excessive ascribed or constructed distinctiveness. In other cases, they may need to have hitherto underacknowledged distinctiveness taken into account. In still other cases, they may need to shift the focus onto dominant or advantaged groups, outing the latter's distinctiveness, which has been falsely parading as universal. Alternatively, they may need to deconstruct the very terms in which attributed differences are currently elaborated. Finally, they may need all of the above, or several of the above, in combination with one another and in combination with redistribution. Which people need which kind(s) of recognition in which contexts depends on the nature of the obstacles they face with regard to participatory parity.

We cannot rule out in advance, therefore, the possibility that justice may require recognizing distinctiveness in some cases.

Justifying Claims for Recognition

Up to this point, I have managed to answer three major philosophical questions about recognition while remaining on the terrain of *Moralität*. By construing recognition on the model of status, I have given it a deontological interpretation. And by expanding the standard paradigm of justice, I have treated redistribution and recognition as two mutually irreducible dimensions of, and perspectives on, justice, both of which can be brought under

the common norm of participatory parity. Thus, I have so far avoided the turn to ethics and escaped philosophical schizophrenia.

At this point, however, the question of ethics threatens to return. Once we accept that justice *could*, under certain circumstances, require recognition of distinctiveness, then we must consider the problem of justification. We must ask: what justifies a claim for the recognition of difference? How can one distinguish justified from unjustified claims of this sort? The crucial issue is whether a purely deontological standard will suffice – or whether, on the contrary, ethical evaluation of various practices, traits and identities is required. In the latter event, one will have to turn to ethics after all.

Let us begin by noting that not every claim for recognition is warranted, just as not every claim for redistribution is. In both cases, one needs an account of criteria and/or procedures for distinguishing warranted from unwarranted claims. Theorists of distributive justice have long sought to provide such accounts, whether by appealing to objectivistic criteria, such as utility maximization, or to procedural norms, such as those of discourse ethics. Theorists of recognition, in contrast, have been slower to confront this question. They have yet to provide any principled basis for distinguishing justified from unjustified claims.

This issue poses grave difficulties for those who treat recognition as an issue of ethics. Theorists who justify recognition as a means to self-realization are especially vulnerable to objections on this point. According to Axel Honneth, for example, everyone needs their distinctiveness recognized in order to develop self-esteem, which (along with self-confidence and self-respect) is an essential ingredient of an undistorted identity (Honneth, 1995). It seems to follow that claims for recognition that enhance the claimant's self-esteem are justified, while those that diminish it are not. On this hypothesis, however, racist identities would seem to merit some recognition, as they enable some poor Europeans and Euroamericans to maintain their sense of self-worth by contrasting themselves with their supposed inferiors. Antiracist claims would confront an obstacle, in contrast, as they threaten the self-esteem of poor whites. Unfortunately, cases like this one, in which prejudice conveys psychological benefits, are by no means rare. They suffice to disconfirm the view that enhanced self-esteem can supply a justificatory standard for recognition claims.

How, then, *should* recognition claims be judged? What constitutes an adequate criterion for assessing their merits? The approach proposed here appeals to participatory parity as an evaluative standard. As we saw, this norm overarches both dimensions of justice, distribution and recognition. Thus, for both dimensions the same general criterion serves to distinguish warranted from unwarranted claims. Whether the issue is distribution or recognition, claimants must show that current arrangements prevent them from participating on a par with others in social life. Redistribution claimants must show that existing economic arrangements deny them the necessary objective conditions for participatory parity. Recognition claimants must show that institutionalized patterns of cultural value deny

them the necessary intersubjective conditions. In both cases, therefore, the norm of participatory parity is the standard for warranting claims.

In both cases, too, participatory parity serves to evaluate proposed remedies for injustice. Whether they are demanding redistribution or recognition, claimants must show that the social changes they seek will in fact promote parity of participation. Redistribution claimants must show that the economic reforms they advocate will supply the objective conditions for full participation to those currently denied them – without significantly exacerbating other disparities. Similarly, recognition claimants must show that the sociocultural institutional changes they seek will supply the needed intersubjective conditions – again, without substantially worsening other disparities. In both cases, once again, participatory parity is the standard for warranting proposals for reform.

This represents a considerable improvement over the 'self-realization' standard just discussed. Focusing on capacities for participation, the status model condemns the institutionalization of racist values even in cases where the latter provide psychological benefits to those who subscribe to them. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the norm of participatory parity is by itself sufficient to distinguish justified from unjustified claims for the recognition of difference.

Same-Sex Marriage, Cultural Minorities and the Double Requirement

The problem is that not all disparities are *per se* unjust. Theorists of distributive justice have long appreciated this point with respect to economic inequalities. Seeking to distinguish just from unjust economic disparities, some of them have drawn the line between those inequalities that arise as a result of individuals' choices on the one hand, and those that arise as a result of circumstances beyond individuals' control on the other, arguing that only the second, and not the first, are unjust (see, for example, Dworkin, 1981). Analogous issues arise with respect to recognition. Here, too, not all disparities are unjust – because not all institutionalized value hierarchies are unjust. What is needed, consequently, is a way of distinguishing just from unjust disparities in participation. The key question here, once again, is whether the deontological norm of parity of participation is sufficient for this purpose – and whether, if not, one must turn to ethics.

To answer this question, let us apply the standard of participatory parity to some current controversies. Consider, first, the example of same-sex marriage. In this case, as we saw, the institutionalization in marital law of a heterosexist cultural norm denies parity of participation to gays and lesbians. For the status model, therefore, this situation is patently unjust, and a recognition claim is in principle warranted. Such a claim seeks to remedy the injustice by de-institutionalizing the heteronormative value pattern and replacing it with an alternative that promotes parity. This, however, can be done in more than one way. One way would be to grant the same recognition to homosexual partnerships that heterosexual partnerships

currently enjoy by legalizing same-sex marriage. Another would be to de-institutionalize heterosexual marriage, decoupling entitlements such as health insurance from marital status and assigning them on some other basis, such as citizenship and/or territorial residency. Although there may be good reasons for preferring one of these approaches to the other, both of them would serve to foster participatory parity between gays and straights; hence both are justified in principle – assuming that neither would exacerbate other disparities. What would not be warranted, in contrast, is an approach, like the French PACS[16] or the 'civil union' law in the US state of Vermont, that establishes a second, parallel legal status of domestic partnership that fails to confer all the symbolic or material benefits of marriage, while reserving the latter, privileged status exclusively for heterosexual couples. Although such reforms represent a clear advance over existing laws, and may command support on tactical grounds as transitional measures, they do not fulfil the requirements of justice as understood via the status model.

Such tactical considerations aside, the case of same-sex marriage presents no difficulties for the status model. On the contrary, it illustrates a previously discussed advantage of that model: here, the norm of participatory parity warrants gay and lesbian claims deontologically, without recourse to ethical evaluation – without, that is, assuming the substantive judgment that homosexual unions are ethically valuable. The self-realization approach, in contrast, cannot avoid presupposing that judgment, and thus is vulnerable to counter-judgments that deny it.[17] Thus, the status model is superior in handling this case.

Perhaps, however, this example is too easy. Let us consider some pre-sumptively harder cases involving cultural and religious practices. In such cases, the question arises whether participatory parity can really pass muster as a justificatory standard, whether, that is, it can serve to warrant claims deontologically, without recourse to ethical evaluation of the cultural and religious practices at issue. In fact, as we shall see, participatory parity proves adequate here as well – provided it is correctly applied.

What is crucial here is that participatory parity enters the picture at two different levels. First, at the *intergroup* level, it supplies the standard for assessing the effects of institutionalized patterns of cultural value on the relative standing of *minorities* vis-à-vis *majorities*. Thus, one invokes it when considering, for example, whether erstwhile Canadian rules mandating uniform headgear for Mounted Police constituted an unjust *majority communitarianism*, which effectively closed that occupation to Sikh men. Second, at the *intragroup* level, participatory parity also serves to assess the *internal effects of minority practices* for which recognition is claimed – that is, the effects on the groups' own members. At this level, one invokes it when considering, for example, whether Orthodox Jewish practices of sex segregation in education unjustly marginalize Orthodox girls and whether those practices should be denied recognition in the form of tax exemptions or school subsidies.

Taken together, these two levels constitute a double requirement for

claims for cultural recognition. Claimants must show, first, that the institutionalization of majority cultural norms denies them participatory parity and, second, that the practices whose recognition they seek do not themselves deny participatory parity – to some group members as well as to non-members. For the status model, both requirements are necessary; neither alone is sufficient. Only claims that meet both of them are deserving of public recognition.

To apply this double requirement, consider the French controversy over the *foulard*. Here the issue is whether policies forbidding Muslim girls to wear headscarves in state schools constitute unjust treatment of a religious minority. In this case, those claiming recognition for the *foulard* must establish two points: they must show, first, that the ban on the scarf constitutes an unjust majority communitarianism, which denies educational parity to Muslim girls; and, second, that an alternative policy permitting the *foulard* would not exacerbate female subordination – in Muslim communities or in society-at-large. Only by establishing both points can they justify their claim. The first point, concerning French majority communitarianism, can be established without difficulty, it seems, as no analogous prohibition bars the wearing of Christian crosses in state schools; thus, the current policy denies equal standing to Muslim citizens. The second point, concerning the non-exacerbation of female subordination, has proved controversial, in contrast, as some French republicans have argued that the *foulard* is itself a marker of such subordination and must therefore be denied recognition. Disputing this interpretation, however, some multiculturalists have rejoined that the scarf's meaning is highly contested in French Muslim communities today, as are gender relations more generally; thus, instead of construing it as univocally patriarchal, which effectively accords male supremacists sole authority to interpret Islam, the state should treat the *foulard* as a symbol of Muslim identity in transition, one whose meaning is contested, as is French identity itself, as a result of transcultural interactions in a multicultural society. From this perspective, permitting the *foulard* in state schools could be a step toward, not away from, gender parity.[18]

In my view, the multiculturalists have the stronger argument here. (This is *not* the case, incidentally, for those who would recognize what they call 'female circumcision' – actually, genital mutilation, which clearly denies parity in sexual pleasure and in health to women and girls.) But that is not the point I wish to stress here. The point, rather, is that the argument is rightly cast in terms of parity of participation. For the status model, this is precisely where the controversy should be joined. As in the case of same-sex marriage, so in the case of cultural and religious claims: participatory parity is the proper standard for warranting claims. Differences in its interpretation notwithstanding, the norm of participatory parity serves to evaluate such recognition claims deontologically, without any need for ethical evaluation of the cultural or religious practices in question.[19]

In general, then, the status model sets a stringent standard for justifying claims for the recognition of cultural difference. Yet it remains wholly

deontological. Applied in this double way, the norm of participatory parity suffices to rule out unwarranted claims, without any recourse to ethical evaluation.

Ecology without Ethics?

The question remains, however, whether participatory parity suffices in every case, or whether it must be supplemented by ethical considerations in some. In the latter event, not all claims that passed the deontological test would be justified. Rather, only those that survived a further round of ethical examination would be deemed worthy of public recognition. On this hypothesis, participatory parity would be a necessary but not sufficient condition of justification. While serving to filter out claims that are unacceptable on deontological grounds, it would be incapable of supplying the final step, namely, assessing the *ethical value* of contested practices. Thus, it would be necessary, in the end, to turn to ethics.

This prospect arises when we consider cases that are not amenable to pluralist solutions. These would be cases, unlike same-sex marriage or *l'affaire foulard*, that cannot be handled by institutionalizing toleration. In those two cases, people with different ethical views of the good life could agree to disagree and opt for a regime of live-and-let-live. Suppose, however, we encountered a case in which people's ethical visions were so directly antithetical, so mutually undermining, that peaceful coexistence was an impossiblity. In that event, the society would be forced to choose between them, and parity of participation would cease to be a relevant goal. With that deontological standard no longer applicable, it would be necessary to evaluate the alternatives ethically. Citizens would have to assess the relative worth of two competing views of the good life.

Certainly, such cases are in principle possible. But they are not as common as those who assign recognition to ethics believe. Consider the hypothetical case of a society committed to ensuring the integrity and sustainability of the natural environment. Let us suppose that the social arrangements in this society institutionalize eco-friendly patterns of cultural value. Let us also suppose that the effect is to disadvantage a minority of members who identify with eco-exploitative cultural orientations. Suppose, too, that those members mobilized as a cultural minority and demanded equal recognition of their cultural difference. Suppose, that is, that they demanded the institutionalization of a new pattern of cultural value that ensured parity for eco-friendly and eco-exploitative cultural practices.

Clearly, this is a case that is not amenable to a pluralist solution. It makes no sense to institutionalize parity between eco-friendly and eco-exploitative orientations within a single society, as the latter would undermine the former. Thus, society is effectively constrained to opt for one orientation or the other. The question is what can justify the choice. Proponents of ethics assume that the grounds must be ethical. As they see it, citizens must decide which orientation to nature better conduces to a good form of life; and they must justify their choice on such ethical grounds. If

citizens opt for enviromentalism, for example, they must appeal to value judgments rooted in an ecological world-view; if they opt for anti-environmentalism, on the contrary, they must appeal to anti-ecological values. Such appeals are problematic, however, for reasons we have already noted. Both invoke justifications internal to a world-view that the other side explicitly rejects. Thus, neither side can justify its position in terms that the other could in principle accept. And so neither can avoid casting the other outside the circle of those entitled to such justification.[20] Yet that is itself a failure of recognition – of one's fellow citizens *qua* citizens. In general, then, if no other – non-ethical – justification is available, misrecognition, and therefore injustice, cannot be avoided.

Fortunately, the difficulty is less intractable than first appears. In fact, a non-ethical resolution is available, as the anti-ecologists' claim violates the deontological standard of participatory parity – well before ethical evaluation has to kick in. Specifically, it violates the second prong of the double requirement, which holds that proposed reforms must not exacerbate one disparity of participation in the course of remedying another. In this case, the anti-ecologists seek to remedy their own disparity vis-à-vis their eco-friendly fellow citizens – but they would do so at the expense of future generations. By instituting parity now for practices that would worsen global warming, they would deny their successors the material prerequisites for a viable form of life – thereby violating intergenerational justice. Thus, the anti-ecologists' claim fails the test of participatory parity. And so this case, too, like same-sex marriage and *l'affaire foulard*, can be adjudicated on deontological grounds. No recourse to ethics is necessary.

The moral here is that one should proceed cautiously before turning to ethics. Ethical evelution, after all, is problematic. Always contextually embedded, it is subject to dispute whenever divergent evaluative horizons come into contact. Thus, one should take care to exhaust the full resources of deontological reasoning before taking that step. In fact, as this example shows, cases that initially seem to require ethics can often be resolved by deontological means. This is not to say that cases requiring ethical evaluation are impossible in principle. But one can only determine whether or not one is really facing such a case by going through a long chain of moral reasoning, aimed first at finding a deontological resolution. To fail to complete that chain is to turn prematurely to ethics. In that event, one embarks on a dubious enterprise. Appealing to substantive horizons of value that are not shared by everyone concerned, one sacrifices the chance to adjudicate recognition claims definitively – in ways that are binding on all.

Conclusion

For this reason, as well as the others I have offered here, one should postpone the turn to ethics as long as possible. Alternative approaches, favored, alas, by most recognition theorists, turn prematurely to ethics. Foreclosing the option of developing a deontological interpretation of recognition, they miss the chance to reconcile claims for the recognition of difference with claims

for egalitarian redistribution. Thus, they miss the chance to restructure the conceptual terrain that is currently fostering philosophical schizophrenia.

Given that unpalatable alternative, it is reassuring to see just how far one can get with a deontological interpretation of recognition. And we *did* get remarkably far here. By employing the status model, with its principle of participatory parity, it was possible to handle apparently ethical questions, such as the recognition of same-sex marriage on the one hand, and of minority religious and cultural practices on the other, without in fact turning to ethics. Even the seemingly harder case of environmental ethics proved susceptible to deontological resolution.

In general, then, the argument pursued here supports a rather heartening conclusion: there is no need to pose an either/or choice between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. It is possible, on the contrary, to construct a comprehensive framework that can accommodate both – by following the path pursued here. First, one must construe recognition as a matter of justice, as opposed to 'the good life'. This, in turn, requires replacing the standard identity model of recognition with the alternative status model sketched here. Next, one must expand one's conception of justice to encompass distribution and recognition as two mutually irreducible dimensions. This involves bringing both dimensions under the deontological norm of participatory parity. Finally, after acknowledging that justice could in some cases require recognizing distinctiveness over and above common humanity, one must subject claims for recognition to the justificatory standard of participatory parity. This, as we saw, means scrutinizing institutionalized patterns of cultural value, and proposals for changing them, for their impact on social interaction – both across and within social groups. Only then, after all these steps, *might* one encounter a situation in which it *could* prove necessary to turn to ethics. Apart from such cases, one will succeed in remaining on the terrain of *Moralität* and in avoiding the ethical turn.

It is possible, I conclude, to endorse both redistribution and recognition while avoiding philosophical schizophrenia. In this way, one can prepare some of the conceptual groundwork for tackling what I take to be the central political question of the day: how can we develop a coherent orientation that integrates redistribution and recognition? How can we develop a framework that integrates what remains cogent and unsurpassable in the socialist vision with what is cogent and irrefutable in the new, apparently 'postsocialist' vision of multiculturalism? If we fail to ask this question, if we cling instead to false antitheses and misleading either/or dichotomies, we will miss the chance to envision social arrangements that can redress both economic and cultural injustices. Only by looking to integrative approaches that unite redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice for all.

Notes

Portions of this article are adapted and excerpted from my essay, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation' (Fraser,

1. For a fuller discussion of the identity model of recognition, see Fraser (2000).

2. For a fuller critique of the identity model, see Fraser (2000).

3. For fuller accounts of the status model of recognition, see Fraser (2000, forthcoming a).

4. I am grateful to Rainer Forst for help in formulating this point.

5. As I noted, the status model eschews psychologization. What this means, however, requires some clarification. The model does not suppose that misrecognition never has the sort of psychological effects described by Taylor and Honneth. But it maintains that the wrongness of misrecognition does not depend on the presence of such effects. Thus, the status model decouples the normativity of recognition claims from psychology, thereby strengthening their normative force. When claims for recognition are premised on a psychological theory of 'the intersubjective conditions for undistorted identity formation', as in Honneth's (1995) model, they are made vulnerable to the vicissitudes of that theory; their moral bindingness evaporates in case the theory turns out to be false. By treating recognition as a matter of status, in contrast, the model I am proposing avoids mortgaging normative claims to matters of psychological fact. One can show that a society whose institutionalized norms impede parity of participation is unjust even if it does not inflict psychic damage on those it subordinates.

6. Here I am assuming the distinction, now fairly standard in moral philosophy, between respect and esteem. According to this distinction, respect is owed universally to every person in virtue of shared humanity; esteem, in contrast, is accorded differentially on the basis of persons' specific traits, accomplishments or contributions. Thus, while the injunction to respect everyone equally is perfectly sensible, the injunction to esteem everyone equally is oxymoronic.

7. This point can be restated as follows: although no one has a right to equal social esteem in the positive sense, everyone has a right not to be *dis*esteemed on the basis of institutionalized group classifications that undermine her or his standing as a full partner in social interaction. I owe this formulation to Rainer Forst (personal conversation).

8. John Rawls, for example, at times conceives primary goods such as income and jobs as social bases of self-respect, while also speaking of self-respect itself as an especially important primary good whose distribution is a matter of justice (see Rawls, 1971: §67, §82; 1993: 82, 181, 318 ff.). Ronald Dworkin, likewise, defends the idea of equality of resources as the distributive expression of the equal moral worth of persons (1981). Amartya Sen (1985), finally, considers both a sense of self and the capacity to appear in public without shame as relevant to the capability to function, hence as falling within the scope of an account of justice that enjoins the equal distribution of basic capabilities.

9. The outstanding exception of a theorist who has sought to encompass issues of culture within a distributive framework is Will Kymlicka. Kymlicka proposes to treat access to an 'intact cultural structure' as a primary good to be fairly distributed. This

approach was tailored for multinational polities, such as Canada, as opposed to poly-ethnic polities, such as the United States. It becomes problematic, however, in cases where mobilized claimants for recognition do not divide neatly (or even not so neatly) into groups with distinct and relatively bounded cultures. It also has diffi-culty dealing with cases in which claims for recognition do not take the form of demands for (some level of) sovereignty but aim rather at parity of participation within a polity that is crosscut by multiple, intersecting lines of difference and inequality. For the argument that an intact cultural structure is a primary good, see Kymlicka (1989). For the distinction between multinational and polyethnic politics, see Kymlicka (1996).

10. Absent a substantive reduction, moreover, purely verbal subsumptions are of little use. There is little to be gained by insisting as a point of semantics that, for example, recognition, too, is a good to be distributed; nor, conversely, by maintain-ing as a matter of definition that every distributive pattern expresses an underlying matrix of recognition. In both cases, the result is a tautology. The first makes all recognition distribution by definition, while the second merely asserts the reverse. In neither case have the substantive problems of conceptual integration been addressed. In fact, such purely definitional 'reductions' could actually serve to impede progress in solving these problems. By creating the misleading appearance of reduction, such approaches could make it difficult to see, let alone address, poss-ible tensions and conflicts between claims for redistribution and claims for recog-nition.

11. Since I coined this phrase in 1995, the term 'parity' has come to play a central role in feminist politics in France. There, it signifies the demand that women occupy a full 50 percent of seats in Parliament and other representative bodies. 'Parity' in France, accordingly, means strict numerical gender equality in political represen-tation. For me, in contrast, 'parity' means the condition of being a *peer*, of being on a *par* with others, of standing on an equal footing. I leave the question open exactly as to what degree or level of equality is necessary to ensure such parity. In my formu-lation, moreover, the moral requirement is that members of society be ensured the *possibility* of parity, if and when they choose to participate in a given activity or inter-action. There is no requirement that everyone actually participate in any such activity.

12. I say '*at least* two conditions must be satisfied' in order to allow for the possi-bility of more than two. I have in mind specifically a possible third class of obstacles to participatory parity that could be called 'political', as opposed to economic or cultural. 'Political' obstacles to participatory parity would include decision-making procedures that systematically marginalize some people even in the absence of maldistribution and misrecognition, for example, single-member district winner-takes-all electoral rules that deny voice to quasi-permanent minorities. The corre-sponding injustice would be 'political marginalization' or 'exclusion', the corresponding remedy, 'democratization'. For a more extended discussion of this 'third' dimension of justice, see Fraser (forthcoming a). For an insightful account of single-member district winner-takes-all electoral rules, see Guinier (1994.)

13. It is an open question how much economic inequality is consistent with parity of participation. Some such inequality is inevitable and unobjectionable. But there is a threshold at which resource disparities become so gross as to impede partici-patory parity. Where exactly that threshold lies is a matter for further investigation.

14. I say the remedy *could* be recognition of difference, not that it must be. In fact,

there are other possible remedies for the denial of distinctiveness – including deconstruction of the very terms in which differences are currently elaborated. For a discussion of such alternatives, see Fraser (forthcoming a).

15. Both Taylor and Honneth hold this view. See Taylor (1994) and Honneth (1995).

16. This is a law permitting non-married couples (gay or straight) to register as cohabiting partners entitled to many of the benefits previously reserved for married couples. Although it was intended to benefit gays and lesbians, most registrants have been straight couples who don't wish to marry.

17. Let me forestall any possible misunderstanding: I myself have no quarrel with the view that attributes ethical value to homosexual relationships. But I still insist that it cannot adequately ground the claim for recognition in societies where citizens hold divergent views of the good life and disagree among themselves as to the ethical value of same-sex unions.

18. Certainly, there is room for disagreement as to the effects of the *foulard* on the status of girls. Those effects cannot be calculated by an algorithmic metric or method. On the contrary, they can only be determined dialogically, by the give-and-take of argument, in which conflicting judgments are sifted and rival interpretations are weighed.

19. In general, the standard of participatory parity cannot be applied monologically, in the manner of a decision procedure. Rather, it must be applied dialogically and discursively, through democratic processes of public debate. In such debates, participants argue about whether existing institutionalized patterns of cultural value impede parity of participation and about whether proposed alternatives would foster it – without exacerbating other disparities. For the status model, then, participatory parity serves as an idiom of public contestation and deliberation about questions of justice. More strongly, it represents *the principal idiom of public reason*, the preferred language for conducting democratic political argumentation on issues of both distribution and recognition. For a fuller account of this dialogical approach, see Fraser (forthcoming a).

20. For the argument for a basic right to justification in terms one could in principle accept, see Forst (1999).

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Nancy Fraser is the Henry and Louise A. Loeb Professor of Politics and Philosophy at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. She is also co-editor of *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*. Her books include *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (English edition: University of Minnesota Press and Polity Press, 1989; German edition: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994); *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (English edition: Routledge, 1997; Spanish edition: Siglo del Hombres, 1997; German edition: Suhrkamp Verlag, forthcoming in 2001; Japanese edition: Jokyo Press, forthcoming in 2001); and *Adding Insult to Injury: Social Justice and the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Kevin Olson (English edition: Verso, forthcoming in 2001.) Professor Fraser is also a co-author of two books: with Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (English edition: Routledge, 1994; German edition: *Streit um Differenz*, Fischer Verlag, 1993) and with Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (English edition: Verso, forthcoming in 2001; German edition: Suhrkamp Verlag, forthcoming in 2001). She is a co-editor of *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1992). Her current research is on globalization.