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Recognition and *pathos*

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Abstract

Throughout this essay I offer an adumbrated critique of recognition theory through a psychoanalytic sensibility. Contemporary recognition theory relies on an overly optimistic and intellectualized view of social relations that fails to adequately consider pathological processes inherent in human motivation, particularly those that are unconsciously mediated by collective prejudice and dysrecognition. In revisiting the Hegelian struggle for recognition, much of social reality today is mired in a collective *pathos* that prevents optimal mutual recognition among social collectives. Not all people are disposed, let alone capable, of recognizing the Other. We may have to contend that, in the end, recognition means tolerance of difference and not merely acceptance of one other, which could still bring about a pragmatic co-existence even if people cannot recognize each other as equals. This is largely due, I suggest, to the ontology of prejudice, attachment deficits, and the failure to adopt empathy toward alterity.

Keywords

recognition theory – prejudice – social pathology – Hegel – Honneth – Jung

Axel Honneth (1995, 2012; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) has advanced Hegelian thought in many noteworthy ways, especially in engaging psychoanalysis; however, considerations from psychoanalytic thought and practice suggest that his recognition theory depends on a patently optimistic, if not idealistic, view of human nature. This is especially clear in the case of social collectives (not to mention governments) who regularly fail to interact through reciprocal recognition even when they become aware of their mutual dependency on each other. For instance, people often acquiesce to others for defensive reasons, especially when they are afraid, rather than because they recognize them as

being morally equal. Submission to another's will typically thwarts the probability of the other's aggression being directed toward them, hence protecting the self. This observation equally applies to Habermas' theories of moral consciousness, communicative action, and discourse ethics, which presupposes that human beings by nature are rational animals, and that through linguistic dialogue societies can reinvigorate Enlightenment paradigms of social justice free of domination from otherness based on cooperative speech exchange. In particular, Habermas' (1990, 1993) theory of communicative rationality (*kommunikative Rationalität*) assumes that norms, rules, and procedures for communication and argumentation can be established in the moral-practical realm and have a rational outcome by necessity, when this seems to ignore the non-rational, desirous, emotional, prejudicial, political, and unconscious motivations that govern human discourse and action. From a psychoanalytic point of view, this is unrealistic, if not a wishful fantasy, since it is evident that collectives are largely possessed by unconscious complexes, emotional seizures, attitudinal prejudices, and irrationality, to the degree that unadulterated reason is not even remotely possible, let alone valid. Such highly rationalized accounts of human relations seem to ignore basic psychological dynamics of human motivation based in neurotic propensities, affective dysregulation, dispositions toward aggression, and internal conflict that militates against any pure cognitivist paragon.

Critical theorists have not fully appreciated the insights of psychoanalytic perspectives that deviate from overtly sanguine views valorizing anthropological conditions leading to optimally cohesive social arrangements. To explore the limits of Honneth's position that world societies can achieve reciprocal recognition, I wish to examine the dark side of recognition, namely, its asymmetrical pathological dynamics. Throughout this essay I will explore how these dynamics are informed by early developmental contingencies in attachment, self-formation, social relations, and the negation of difference, addressing the psychodynamics of how dysrecognition and refutation of the Other lead to insidious pathologies within society and the clinic.

Critical theory has traditionally been concerned with the broader social fabric of institutionalized cultural practices that inform a collective ethos with a keen eye on analyzing dysfunction and advocating for real changes in society. This includes critiquing authoritarian politics, safeguarding against totalitarianism, democratizing social justice, and extending an ethical hand in our post-Holocaust world. This shift in social self-consciousness stresses the importance of validating alterity rather than sustaining rival differences between individuals, societies, and nations that fail to acknowledge the need for mutual recognition of the Other. But in today's climate, the Hegelian master-slave dialectic

seems to be very much alive: most developing and non-industrial countries live in servitude to powerful others or the state, and in democratic nations, citizens are largely dependent upon capitalistic enterprises, for which they serve and enrich. In fact, subjugation and domination of otherness is flourishing throughout the globe. Entire peoples are vanquished, refuted, nullified, and denounced simply because they proclaim to have different needs and world-views. When difference and protest persist, they are often overpowered and persecuted under the guise of resistance to conformity to the prevailing forces that enslave them in their actual conditions of oppression.

Our attachments to others, people relations, and intersubjective communal matrices form the psychological edifice of our dependency on others and social institutions organized around just and unjust modes of recognition that are structurally, systemically, and semiotically constituted. When this basic bedrock of relationality is disrupted or vitiated, society experiences anxiety, emotional pain, and retrograde backlash. Individuals, social groups, and civilizations that are victimized by repeated dysrecognition and base negation of their values and collective identities are subjected to a cultural *pathos* against their will.¹ As a result, they/we suffer.

1 Hegel and Jung

While Freud knew very little of Hegel's philosophy,² Jung read his works. He was not a fan. Not only did Jung think Hegel was grandiose when talking about Spirit, he equated Hegel's language with that of a psychotic.³ I wonder if this

1 For the ancient Greeks, *pathos* defined the human condition: to be human is to suffer.

2 By Jean Hyppolite's (1971) account, "Seemingly, Freud had not read Hegel" (p. 57); but we do know that he was at least acquainted with his philosophy. In a paper titled, "The Importance of Philosophy for the Further Development of Psychoanalysis," delivered at the International Congress for Psychoanalysis at Weimar in 1911, James Putnum advocated the need for philosophical integration within psychoanalytic investigation. From Ernest Jones' (1955) biography on Freud, he states:

[Putnum's] burning plea for the introduction of philosophy—but only his own Hegelian brand—into psychoanalysis did not meet with much success. Most of us did not see the necessity of adopting any particular system. Freud was of course very polite in the matter, but remarked to me afterwards: "Putnum's philosophy reminds me of a decorative centerpiece; everyone admires it but no one touches it." (pp. 85–86).

3 Jung (1947) disparagingly writes:

A philosophy like Hegel's is a self-revelation of the psychic background and, philosophically, a presumption. Psychologically, it amounts to an invasion by the unconscious. The peculiar high-flown language Hegel uses bears out this view: it is reminiscent of the megalomaniac

was because Jung was threatened, namely, that Hegel had tread too close to home, hence endangering Jung's originality when he postulated a collective unconscious? After all, *Geist* emerges from an unconscious abyss only to find itself as the culmination of pure self-consciousness, the coming into being of psychic presence.

As I have stated elsewhere (Mills, 2002; 2013, pp. 40–41, n6), Hegel is not only concerned about articulating personal subjective psychology, but also tracing the coming to presence of a universal collective unconscious that anthropologically conditions all of humankind. For Hegel (1807), individual psychology is subsumed within higher social orders objectively constituted within the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) of a collective community having its origins within the family and society. The collective communal spirit draws its source and energy from “the power of the nether world” (§ 462), what Jung calls the collective unconscious. For Hegel (1807), collective spirit “binds all into one, solely in the mute unconscious substance of all” (§ 474). This “unconscious universality” contains the ethical and divine as well as the abnormal, hence the “pathos” of humanity, the “darkness” of the “underworld” (§ 474). Hegel states:

[H]uman law proceeds in its living process from the divine, the law valid on earth from that of the nether world, the conscious from the unconscious, mediation from immediacy—and equally returns whence it came. The power of the nether world, on the other hand, has its actual existence on earth; through consciousness, it becomes existence and activity.

§ 460

Almost a full century before the emergence of depth psychology, Hegel's psychological insights are profound. In this passage, he clearly recognizes that the personal and collective unconscious developmentally and logically precedes consciousness and further sees that each domain maintains its dialectical relation with the other. Universal self-conscious Spirit “becomes, through the individuality of man, united with its other extreme, its force and element, *unconscious Spirit*” (PS § 463).

The universalization or actualization of the unconscious becomes important for Hegel in the depiction of spirit as a dynamically informed, self-articulated totality or complex whole. Thus he not only focuses on human psychology and collective unconscious forces that determine individual and social

languages of schizophrenics, who use terrible spellbinding words to reduce the transcendent to subjective form, to give banalities the charm of novelty, or pass off commonplaces as searching wisdom. (CW, 8, p. 170).

relations, but also points to the generic structural operations of the mind that have their origins in the unconscious, which make human consciousness and thought possible. Here Hegel anticipates psychoanalysis, and particularly Jung's notion of the collective psyche.

Many compatible philosophical positions are operative in both Hegel's and Jung's projects, including the value placed on individuation within the pursuit of wholeness (Kelly, 1993). Both Hegel and Jung emphasize that psyche is a teleological process of becoming as a progressive unfolding of its interior into outward appearances and robust instantiations of spirit or soul. From Hegel's Absolute Spirit to Jung's Self, the psyche looks to complete itself, to manifest in higher modes of consciousness, to fill the lack, to unify opposites and elevate itself on its quest for truth and fulfillment as an organic developmental process, all emanating from an original unconscious ground.

2 The Need to Be Acknowledged

Arguably one of the most widely cited sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is Hegel's (1807) discussion of lordship and bondage.⁴ In pithy form, spirit or mind (*Geist*) ultimately achieves ethical self-consciousness only by recognizing the other as an equal being. But this is a developmental achievement. In our

4 It is important to note that Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness and the struggle for recognition in the *Phenomenology* (1807) is presented differently in the *Encyclopaedia* (1971, 1978) and the *Berlin Phenomenology* (1981). The most noticeable distinction is the brevity of the latter works. Hegel's master-slave discussion, or what we may refer to as lord and servant, and more generally the "relationship of mastery [*Herrschaft*] and servitude [*Knechtschaft*]" (Hegel, 1978, § 433), is given the briefest summation in the *Encyclopaedia* where the discussion from recognition to universal self-consciousness is contained in only six paragraphs and one remark, excluding the additions, and little additional elaboration is offered in the Berlin manuscript. This is undoubtedly why almost all interpretations of desire and recognition rely exclusively on the Jena *Phenomenology*. Furthermore, all references to stoicism, skepticism, and unhappy consciousness are eliminated. This terse account suggests that perhaps Hegel wanted to distance himself from his earlier commitments outlined in the *Phenomenology*, or else that he thought he had treated the subjects adequately beforehand. When we examine his later works, Hegel emphasizes the subjection of the other to the domination of desire as a "thoroughly selfish destructiveness" (Hegel, 1978, § 428, *Zusatz*) that is only concerned with its immediate satisfaction in conquering opposition. Recognitive self-consciousness is the immediate confrontation of two egos, each extending its self into the other. During this moment, the self has an "immediate intuition" of itself as well as the recognition of an "absolutely opposed and independently distinct object" (Hegel, 1978, § 430). When the other is seen merely as an object and not a subject, this ensures there will be no mutual recognition. See Mills (2002, pp. 143–149) for an extended discussion.

intersubjective engagement with others, there is a battle for recognition that takes place between subjects. Yet at first, parties in this struggle are unaware that they are looking for recognition, which is unconsciously mediated, hence the meaning of which is initially unclear to those involved. It is only through the process of confronting otherness that we become cognizant of what we truly want. We may observe how this is ontically infused in all spheres of life and plays a key role in our psychological health and social progress, for every human being wants to be recognized by others as an instantiation of human desire. This naturally extends to society. Before society raises itself to the status of improving its cultural practices for the sake of its peoples, including institutionalized ethics, law and order, and distributive justice, it must start with this basic psychic fact. Those who are deprived of recognition suffer and are condemned to harbor grave feelings of invalidation of their personhood in virtual aloneness.

In days of serfdom and feudalism that existed in the High Middle Ages, people were ruled by autocracy and the aristocracy, of which recognition was merely a one-way relation. The governing Lord was recognized and the serf did the recognizing. In fact, this was a matter of life or death—fear and despair kept one alive by obedience and subservience to a potentially cruel Master. Hegel believes this struggle over being acknowledged is a necessary one in order to be truly independent and free, as the odyssey of pure self-consciousness (*viz.*, social awareness) is a progressive unfolding of recognizing its own ethical nature unified in self-knowledge as a higher truth and culmination of civilized social life. In other words, true recognition by society requires collective reason and action where all people are seen (theoretically and pragmatically) as equal, hence comprising and participating in and of a society (or the state) harmonized in egalitarian principles, and as such constitutes the will of the people. But this is not the case for all societies. As we may plainly see in our world governed by violence, chaos, proto-fascism, dictatorship, despotism, and oppression of the masses, absolute self-consciousness (namely, enlightened society) remains merely an abstract ideal, especially for non-democratic nations.

Regardless of the limits of human societies within today's climate of globalization failing to unite individuals, ethnic groups, and disparate cultures in a collective ethos, Hegel's theory of recognition has tangible, applied concrete merits. In fact, the problem of recognition may constitute the majority of our world ills today. From the cradle to the grave, a child wants the love, emotional attunement, validation, and acceptance that only a parent can afford, just as a parent wants reciprocal acknowledgement for their role in raising their child, as well as forgiveness for their imperfections, even in the final moments while lying in their death bed. This speaks to a universal theory of human nature. So

why does most of the world live in negation of this collective need where radical splitting is instituted and alterity signals the proclivity to deny, withhold, aggress upon, and deracinate the other? Although this phenomenon is complex and overdetermined, let us return to basics using Hegel as our guide.

People are unreflectively seen as being mere objects—as *things* that exist “out there” in the world, because they are divorced from our emotional and personal lives in order for us to psychologically function—or we’d all be basket cases! It is only when we contemplate the nature of this otherness that we are confronted with our own normativity: others are and have a self that exists independently from “me.” “What is this other? What does the other have that I don’t have? What do I want? What do I lack that the other has?” These questions lie on the sunrise of self-consciousness, because we are instantly made aware of the external reality of other human beings who are just like us in essence although we have separate identities, personalities, and longings. We become aware of our desires through reflection upon (and as projected onto) the other, on the subject that stands before us even though we see this other as an independent (impersonal) object. When we recognize the other as a desirous and intentional being, we are immediately made aware of the subjectivity of the other, one we have an obligation to address. “What does this other want?” This leads us to one of Hegel’s most important insights: when we confront otherness, we are entangled in desire and lack, which initiates a skirmish for recognition.⁵ Who will be acknowledged in this mutual otherness? Here subjectivities stand fundamentally opposed to one another.

Hegel (1807) pushes the issue further and forces us to face a most grave predicament: when mutual opposition confronts each other, “each seeks the death of the other” (§187). This understandably creates a crisis situation. Who will be defeated? In our contemporary world of cutthroat competition, economic exploitation and rivalry, political dominion, legal intervention, military strategizing, and transgovernmental maneuvering of hegemonic policies,

5 While discourse on desire and lack is thought to have derived from Sartre and Lacan—who essentially purloined Hegel’s theory when he was exposed to Kojève’s (1929) lectures on Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, which Lacan (1991) borrows from liberally, these notions originate from Hegel. Desire immediately apprehends what it is not from what it would like to be, hence the self starts from a place of inequality, deficiency, and lack. Hegel (1978) explains:

The self-conscious subject knows itself to be *implicitly identical* with the general object external to it. It knows that since this general object contains the *possibility* of satisfying desire, it is *adequate* to the desire, and that this is precisely why the desire is stimulated by it. The relation with the object is therefore necessary to the subject. The subject intuits its *own deficiency*, its own onesidedness, in the object; it sees there something which although it belongs to its own essence, it lacks (*EG* § 427, *Zusatz*).

which ideology will win out over others? One side must acknowledge that they are weaker and the other stronger, so when posturing and rhetoric fail, a natural deference ensues, much like what we see in the animal kingdom governed by evolutionary currents. One must bow down and accept their inferiority and servitude, while the other maintains the status of victor. What used to be a literal fight to the death is now largely a symbolic one depending upon where you live or come from. Genocide in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are cordial reminders in recent decades of what can happen when power differentials implode. But this happens on a more pedestrian plain everyday everywhere in the world. People want respect: when they are dismissed or insulted, they emotively react with counter-contempt and rancor, if not narcissistic rage and the need to devalue or shame the other in the heat of the moment. This can even precipitate violence and the need for revenge due to wounded pride. From Wotan to Trump, fake news, and a gullible inane public, we are living in precarious times of transition and outright stupidity.

What is often recognized is not the equality of the other, but rather a scornful inequality, namely, the narcissistic fact that people often do not care about alterity over their own lives and self-interests, to the point that the Other becomes a dangerous threat to one's safety. Although we may acknowledge that others are independent persons, it does not mean that we "respect others as persons" (Hegel, 1821, §36). On the contrary, respect is earned. Avoidance, withdrawal, and submissiveness, on the other hand, are defensive modes of self-survival, especially in the face of a powerful opponent. Do our world societies (i.e., Hegel's Objective Spirit or Jung's collective psyche instantiated in a state) think about the common universal good for all, or merely their own self-regard and political pressures invested in their own nation and communities? Despite there may be checks and balances designed to help treat citizens fairly, this does not generalize to a universal society of cosmopolitans (namely, citizens of the cosmos) who value all human life equally. Of course such hypostatization of a so-called collective mind only makes sense as an abstract conception that embodies the spirit of democracy, as imperfect as this may be. But when it comes down to actualizing a universal good, humanity becomes a multiple personality split in its desires, needs, conflicts, demands, and dissatisfactions.

There is always a tension arc between the individual and the collective that stands in relation to pure freedom versus ideality as a good for all. We should never presuppose that we all have the same values and opportunities to pursue and obtain life goals equally, for we all have different historicities and restrictions that condition the developmental, ontic, cultural, material, and economic substrates that in turn curtail our opportunities, liberties, worldviews, and out-

comes. So when Honneth (2012) says that a distributional schema of justice “would have to be replaced by the involvement of all subjects in a given relationship of recognition” (p. 45), this seems to violate human nature. Not all people are disposed, let alone capable, of recognizing the other. We may have to contend that, in the end, recognition means tolerance of difference and not merely acceptance of the other, which could still bring about a pragmatic co-existence even if people cannot recognize each other as equals.

In today’s society we live in fear of death for looking at someone the wrong way, of seeing *their* desire for what *you* are imagined to possess, or what they lack and want, to the point that you could be mugged for the change in your pockets, raped at whim, or shot in the face just because somebody didn’t like the way you looked at them. The gaze, the look—the *stare* is an invitation to aggression. We are instinctively obsequious and show assent or acquiesce when we are afraid. We avoid the face of the other—hence look away, dodge confrontation, and yield; conversely, just as we look for conflict, seek out a fight, hate the other (just for being other), and retaliate in perceived defeat simply because we have the need to find foes. Some object *must* become a designated whipping post as a form of displacement. Eye aversion is the best way to evade engaging with the other—simply a faceless entity that is deemed a threat worth avoiding yet one already identified as a powerful object for inducing fear in the first place. We can sniff out their aggression, their malice, their negativity and so-called (intuited) evil propensities. Disavowal and disassociation become common defenses. The other is as alien to us as we are to them, and we hope that they will just leave us alone, if not disappear. In the face of conflict, we simply want the other to vanish.

But what happens when the Other wants something from us, or demands our recognition, let alone restitution, as if it were a right? Our proverbial backs go up. Yet the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in response to Apartheid, the scandal over the US federal Chinese Exclusion Act and interning Japanese Americans in WWII, as well as First Nations children in Christian residential schools in Canada, and the process of family members publically addressing (and sometimes forgiving) murderer’s openly in courts of law (such as with the organization Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation) show how recognition has healing properties. But it does not undo injustice. Inequality and disparities are everywhere. We all have to get in line before we are acknowledged let alone recognized, some as subjects in their own right, but mostly as objects wanting something from others equally viewed as things in mutual opposition. Here the notion of equality by some may be seen as entitlement by others, which challenges the status quo at the same time the establishment offers its own political offensives. We develop our defenses, some cynical, caustic, stoic

and/or emotionless, others manic and counter-aggressive, in order to deal with the Other's demands and in facing our own lack. Envy, jealousy, and passive-aggressiveness are common dispositions. Protest and violence are eruptions of frustration sometimes fueled by paranoid relations. Facing alterity always involves an interpersonal negotiation between mutual conflict, competing values, emotional prejudices, and privileged self-serving agendas. This takes place in all facets of society as it does in the consulting room.

3 From the Psychological to the Social

As with Freud's (1921) qualification that individual psychic processes can never stand apart from social psychology and the cultural environs that impact on both personal subjectivity and the objective conditions that interpolate society, so too many critical theorists had turned to psychoanalytic paradigms to bolster social philosophy. For Marcuse (1955), psychological categories are political categories and are inseparable from the broader sociological forces that shape civilization. As he tells us, "psychological problems turn into political problems: private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of the personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder" (p. 21), namely, sick society. Marcuse is very clear in his insistence that the individual is determined by "the societal forces which define the psyche" (Ibid). Here Jung is lurking in Marcuse's closet. Yet at the same time, psychology becomes the foundation of sociology and the cultural dynamics and institutional organizations that in turn inform the psychological.

If you begin with the premise that all human beings are psychological creatures and that all inner experience is psychologically mediated, then by natural extension this would apply to the notion of the social, and specifically the politics of desire instantiated within any community. And if you start with the premise that the psychological is shaped by the social, then the same argument applies. Groups are psychologically informed and inform others right down to a single subject, whether this applies to our families, cohorts, communities, the provincial or nation state, and so forth. From Jung to Heidegger and Lacan, we are thrown into a collective psychic matrix and socio-symbolic order that informs our being in the world. Here the individual develops within the social, and the social within the individual.

One does not have to bifurcate the arrangements of society from naturalized psychology to see how their dynamic processes and co-occurrence pressurize and inform one another within a systemic unit. We can surely observe how certain structures and political policies within societies lead to more prob-

lems in living and suffering in individuals, and how natural psychological processes such as desire, envy, greed, rage, entitlement, aggression, and so on are intensified and play out through pathological enactments when societies undergo material deprivation, economic austerity, tragedy, trauma, war, political oppression, and so on. When social institutions, capitalistic enterprise, and the populace do not acknowledge or recognize disenfranchised subgroups and the extreme hardships they face due to race, socioeconomic, and educational disparities that privileged classes do not face, social fabrics begin to fray in tatters.

The struggle for recognition, as psychoanalysis shows, is present from birth onward—from daycare to death, as each of us are mired in familial, societal, and cultural conflict that saturates our being in the world. The failure to recognize the other, and more insidiously, chronic invalidation and repudiation of different peoples, produces and sustains intersubjective and interethnic aggression to the point of murder and war. Here the Hegelian struggle for life and death is a lived reality that affects our conception of social justice and institutionalized forms of recognition. But the point I wish to make here is that dysrecognition may in fact trigger and sustain violence based on an emotional revolt in reaction to political injustice. Let's call this the "Fuck You!" attitude. Indeed, aggression is not only instinctual, for lack of a better word, hence emanating from biological forces, it is also triggered by relational or interpersonal failures at validation and empathy that are sociologically instituted. When such dysrecognition is performed and sustained by the state, here we may say that a certain unconscious politics is operative on both the individual and collective level of a given society, which can lead to a vicious cycle of perpetration, victimization, and social malaise that always psychologically penetrates those who are marginalized. And this may be intensified as a posttraumatic act that resurrects earlier psychic pain experienced in childhood, especially when invalidation, abuse, and insecure attachments inform the next generation of social pathologies.

4 Unconscious Politics

Much of psychoanalysis is in simpatico with critical theory in its tacit hopes of bettering society; but psychoanalytic observations can be quite pathologizing as well, and for good reason. Here the two disciplines are critical of the way collectives think and behave. We may speculate that this has to do with, on some level, the way people are raised and taught to think and act in a given cultural milieu, yet we must begin with rudiments. What do people require

psychologically in order to thrive? Beyond recognition, I suggest, and I am in good company, lies psychic needs for love, validation, and empathy. These are essential for healthy development. When they are lacking, withheld, truncated, or absent, a person, and even whole societies, may develop a traumatic reaction to life. This notion is quite simple in fact, a basic ingredient of the human aspect.

All people as individuals have basic psychic needs, which feed and sustain a society. If those needs are thwarted or disabused, then this creates a fundamental retrograde backlash that has detrimental repercussions on people's health and wellbeing, as well as the productive social functioning of the collective. It is not rocket science. If you are deprived of the essential psychological nutrients of life, let alone if you are abused, oppressed, disenfranchised, or suffer developmental traumas, then this impacts on us all. People are unhappy, suffer, and develop psychological disorders that do not allow them to function adequately, let alone meet higher-level expectations for psychosocial adaptation to common stress. The quality of subjective life is tarnished and society is affected in every tangible way, from economics to healthcare to lost productivity and creativity, to the qualitative erosion of living a good existence. People act out, become aggressive, anxious and depressed, fall into crisis or despair, or become dysfunctional in every conceivable manner, which creates an ambiance for internal implosion, whether this is projected outwardly or interiorized into self-destructive modes of being and behavioral patterns. The bottom line is that all individuals require that certain psychological needs be met or there will be subjective suffering that spews forth on any communal collective regardless of their content or context, typically beginning with one's immediate family, which only perpetuates a transgenerational transmission of *pathos* that infects any given society and the broader cultural identifications and organizations at large. When this happens, whether conspicuously or cryptically, what is empirically predictable is a future world full of more suffering and pathology.

One of the major roadblocks that derail a discernable intellectual picture of the need for mutual or collective recognition is in deciphering the anathema of unconscious politics that underlie behavioral acts of every person in the world. People, societies, and governments do not act rationally, nor should we expect them to. We do not live in a purely adjudicated intellect or logical universe, but rather one derived from the prisms of our base urges, impulses, emotions, and internal conflicts that must undergo a developmental and educational process of exercising self-constraint, affect regulation, behavioral modification, and instructional training in order to achieve psychological and social maturity. The gleanings of reason, truth, virtue, and wisdom are higher order accomplish-

ments.⁶ But this is hardly achieved by everyone. In fact, this level of psychic cultivation is more of an outlier than an actualization for most people. At most we are all striving for the attainment of certain values and ideals. What is more commonplace is that we succumb to our own immediate shortcomings and conflicts, ethical limitations of character, and attitudinal prejudices that condition how we relate to self, others, and the world.

We develop internal resistances, oppositions, and counter-struggles to internalized and interiorized conflict from birth onward. This is simply an economic (if not evolutionary) reaction to protecting the self against real or perceived threat and emotional pain. This naturalized tendency is partially derived from (if not determined by) unconscious desire and its reactionary defenses and resultant disharmonies fueled by affective currents that merely seek their own resolutions and satisfactions over others, which are projected upon society at large. Here we may observe a basic splitting mechanism in the psyche: identity and division become irreconcilable, where there is no discernable point of synthesis or sublation. People see their own esoteric or group microcosm as the hallmark of truth and reality that takes objective priority over others, when such myopic identifications are in dialectical competition with alterity. In other words, the Other is negated in principle based on one's own reinforced preferences that take precedence and are more personally important, the underside of narcissistic hubris. This attitude is the foundation of every country and nationalist (or populist) movement who values its own citizens over other countries as a pragmatic necessity governing political identificatory self-interest ranging from every partisan preference and local whim to domestic and foreign decree.

We must seriously question the prejudicial unconscious forces that drive political states of affairs, from individual and communal choices to international policy, for collective humanity is neither unified in its aims nor prioritizes matters outside of its immediate scope of parochial concerns or regional inclinations. Is the political unconscious a universal phenomenon, namely, is it structurally inscribed in the very ontological fabric of the psyche? This would

6 This is why, according to Hegel (1807), we all must be subjected to a master (e.g., a parent, teacher, clergy, the law) in order to achieve maturation in thought, intellect, restraint, moral disposition, aesthetic sensibility, and spiritual realization. In his words, "In order to be free, in order to be capable of self-control, all peoples have therefore had first to undergo the strict discipline of subjection to a master" (1978, § 435, *Zusatz*). Although we tend to think of masters as problematic and oppressive, in this context I wish to emphasize that the notion of achieving discipline, success, and mastery is facilitated by adult upbringing, instruction, education (*Bildung*), and self-refinement.

suggest that, with qualifications, notwithstanding divergent groups and individualities that comprise a community of followers identified with attaining certain material gains, enjoyment, or reinforcing a self-serving perspective or worldview, all people are predisposed a priori to favor certain unconscious attitudes even if they are irrational and ultimately self-destructive. And it is unequivocally taking place on a mass scale across all civilized parts of the world.

What we are witnessing in concrete forms is how the collective psyche is divided based on unconscious politics identified with certain ideologies fortified by cultural relativity and animus toward alterity. Here we should question the capacity of collectives to make rationally informed judgements when wish, self-interest, and insular governmental hegemonies make decisions that affect us all. Yet government is elected by the people in democratic countries, which brings us to question why in recent political times the majority of citizens would vote for leaders—say, in the United Kingdom and America, who are anti-environment, anti-immigration, xenophobic, racist, bigoted, religiously intolerant, misogynistic, anti-gay, and pro-war, just to name a few indecencies. From *Brexit* to the election of U.S. Republican President Donald Trump, humanity should beckon a call to reason. It is no surprise to psychoanalysis that we are witnessing the disintegration of culture, for illogical decisions are unconsciously chosen based on emotional prejudices, which speaks to the greater manifestation of collective social life immersed in its own *pathos*.

5 The Ontology of Prejudice

Prejudice forms a basic constituency in our psychic constitutions, for we all pass judgments on others based on our preferential appraisal of what we value and are accustomed to find familiar and/or pleasing. The dialectical tension between difference and similarity carries a certain psychological hold over people, for our earliest familial identifications are based in shared experiences and values, and we gravitate toward those who we feel attracted to due to communal affiliation and shared meaning. But the double edge of the dialectic (as negativity resulting in higher unity) exposes us to a dilemma, for the dialectic is the ontological dynamic underlying prejudice itself. Here we may be reminded of Adorno (1966): the dark side of the negative is always emphasized in any act of judgment. In fact, it is the structural edifice for judgment to exist. Most societies *need* to have enemies, that is, they need to have an emotional whipping boy or designated scapegoat to beat and project all of their inner conflicts, frustrations, rage, hate, homicidal fantasies, and so forth onto, or else we would

have never invented poetics, theatre, drama, the arts, music, religion, politics, and so on, for the human psyche requires forms of displacement and sublimation in order to transform internal discord, affect, and ambivalent experience into palatable outlets so we may psychologically function and adapt to real, perceived, or felt adversity.

The reality of racism, ethnic discrimination, inter-ethnic rivalries and hostilities, micro-competitions and devaluations within subcultures and fringe subgroups, and emotional prejudices cast onto objects of alterity are all too human universal propensities: to deny them would be an incredulous attempt at posturing political correctness in favor of truth. The mass contempt in many nations for immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, and asylum seekers of different ethnic and national persuasions, even if only a minority view, speaks to the underground psychic reality of human prejudice worried that the Other will steal their chickens, jobs, sexual partners, and enjoyment. A recent example of this was a mob of over 1000 South Africans that raided a Somali neighborhood in Pretoria killing foreign African settlers based on a hate campaign against foreigners, immigrants, and refugees who are accused of creating unemployment and increasing crime.⁷ Here the “foreigner” is transferentially constructed as the elected evil Other who will mooch, pillage, and soak up the citizenry’s pleasures and deprive them of their national birthrights and liberties, and who are moreover left flipping the bill for the outsider to enjoy a free lunch. “Keep that piece of shit out of my country!” This is a common visceral opinion among many American, British, and European communities, to such a degree that the immigrant, migrant worker, or refugee should be deprived of subsidy, welfare, food stamps, unemployment insurance, access to healthcare, education, day-care, and other privileges just because of their foreign status or so-called lack of entitlement to “free” services on the government’s dime.⁸

This exclusionary phenomenon speaks to both the individual and collective rupture of feelings of security and safety that are perceived to be imperiled when political changes occur in social strata and potential emergent threats manifest, a paranoid and/or hysterical process that lies at the very heart of

7 There have been many anti-foreigner attacks in recent years in South Africa targeting migrants and refugees, including mobs killing foreign African immigrants in 2008 and 2015. Violence has largely been directed toward Nigerians, Zimbabweans and Congolese, which has escalated tensions between South Africa and other African countries (see York, 2017).

8 Just as a side note, we would not want to live in a world where everyone has a Ph.D. We need people to work, to do certain jobs that others are not willing to do, able to, or could not do in order to keep the economy functioning and healthy, and to buy real estate and take care of a nation’s aging population. Here is a perfect example of our mutual dependency on each other.

human psychological motivations, as it would be illogical not to fear what is unknown and unfamiliar for what is domestic, customary, and familiar. Here the Other is categorically, oppositionally constituted even if there is no discernable threat at all. Difference signifies its own meaning based on dissimilarity, fear, and potential personal loss and sacrifice of a country's members or their own kind. Here the personal idiosyncrasy of selective identification with a certain element of one's culture, language, nationalism, or social complex can wreak political consequences. And even when altruistic and humanistic movements prevail, there is always a spoiler introduced based on human frailty, desperation, and the inevitability of pathological enactments. When German citizens took to protest over the Syrian and North African migrants who allegedly robbed, looted, and sexually assaulted their women after being graciously accepted into their country during the 2015 refugee crisis (which of course happens every day everywhere regardless of where you come from), not to mention several United States Governors refusing to allow refugees to settle in their home states once it was discovered that ISIS connections were part of the Paris attacks based on refugee involvement, it is no surprise why panic would set in and the floodgates would be closed based on mass protest. These events even sparked President Donald Trump to ban Muslims (as everyone knows) from entering the US, and to build a wall on the border of Mexico to keep out the "illegal freeloaders." Here it becomes obvious that the foreign unknown Other as "alien archetype" (Mills, 2018, p. 217), who has their own needs, desires, adversity, and trauma, will likely have their own "psychological baggage" and material losses that other nation states will have to pay for, and this is likely how a large percentage of the populace thinks. Why else would people get so emotionally bent out of shape by an influx of new people into their country? The fear of so-called "hard working" citizens supporting and taking care of foreigners on their sweat and taxes, where food, shelter, transport, economic subsidies, and entertainment (such as access to TVs, cell phones, computers, and the Internet) are given away without merit (even in the spirit of humanitarian aid), spur bad feelings among the working class and rich alike. Who wants a dependent child when you never wanted to get pregnant to begin with?

Part of the problem facing us is that prejudice is ontologically constituted in the most rudimentary aspects of human consciousness as psychological disposition. Like the nature of the dialectic, prejudice has both negative and positive valences. While violence and destruction are the instruments of prejudice, so too is caring and love. Prejudice is not merely a negative construct; prejudice defines our valuation practices, which are the Mecca of individual and communal life. Rather than conceive of prejudice as simply a pathologi-

cal anomaly, prejudice is also responsible for our most revered ideals. As I have said elsewhere (Mills & Polanowski, 1997, pp. 11–13), prejudice in its essence is the preferential self-expression of valuation, as corrupt as that may be.

6 A World without Recognition

Although it is problematic to make mass generalizations, it may not be entirely illegitimate to say that we largely live in a world where there is no proper recognition of the Other as the equiprimordial complementarity of the Self. In other words, it's too cognitively overwhelming to uphold the radical Levinasian responsibility to the Other over the immediacy of one's life and duties to family and those who we value, as if we could become Jesus and minister to a world collective. This ethical ideal defies logic, real human limitations, and the psychological disposition of the masses. But speaking metaphysically, the dialectical onto-interconnectedness of identity and difference ensures that self-in-relation to alterity is a mutually implicit dynamic. When we attempt to analyze the human condition extraspectively or scientifically, and look into the psyche or soul through an introspective analysis of our interiority, we can discern the universal experiences that all people engage in psychologically, only to recursively fall back into bifurcation that maintains rigid antitheses. The self is experienced and thought *not* to be the other. The *Them* is eclipsed for the *I*, while the *We* becomes occluded.

We may argue that, strictly speaking, humanity is not an identity at all, but rather a collection of identities or subjects who largely exist and relate to one another in opposition to mutual difference. Despite the fact that we all maintain shared identifications and values with others throughout our globalized world, not everyone is recognized, nor is this remotely possible given that people are divided based on their desires, conflicts, beliefs, values, identities, and moral principles. Here we should maintain no pretense of a pristine Hegelian sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the subjective individual within objective social consciousness, where the pinnacle of ethics and justice reach their logical zenith in the concrete universals of culture, for this is merely a theoretical abstraction. In fact, much of social reality resists sublation, and can indeed regress or withdrawal back to early primitive instantiations governed by *pathos*.⁹ The

9 In *Origins: On the Genesis of Psychic Reality*, I provide my own revisionist amendments to Hegel's dialectical method that takes into account the nature of dialectical regression, temporal mediacy, and the ubiquitous nature of contingency that challenges universal pronouncements of an Absolute unity of mind (see Mills, 2010, pp. 51–58).

Absolute unity of the individual within the social as the logical culmination of pure self-consciousness is simply an illusion, although one that may spur along our continual pining for refining social systems of democracy, law, ethics, and justice. Here reformation and advance is culture's teleological endeavor. Whatever values and ideals societies adopt, they are always mediated through unconscious psychic processes¹⁰ that condition (and taint) the collective, even when there are good intentions involved. Although the fantasy of wholeness conceived through Hegel's philosophy of mind as a self-articulated, dynamic complex holism arriving at pure unification of the individual within the collective is a noble ideal, a sentiment similar to Jung's notion of individuation, such a grand logical synthesis belies the empirical confounds that reflect social reality today marked by division, fracturing, and splitting of peoples, groups, and nations that radically resist unity. The projection of our aggression, hatred, and destructive envy onto a hating Other only ensures mutual conflict and dysrecognition, where some compromises conceivably occur. Despite these limitations and inevitable frictions between individuals and societies, collective identifications among people about ideals and social values do facilitate advances in ethical self-consciousness, which have a concrete impact on social policy and legislative reform that in turn restructure social institutions and the domestic practices of citizens.

Perhaps the most we can expect is a Fichtean (1794) infinite striving for perfection, although we will likely have to settle for only achieving a quantum and quality of improvement. Here the idea of cultivating social betterment as participating in the ethical leads us to value the notion of mutual recognition as an ideal value. If what we crave and want for ourselves—namely, to be acknowledged, validated, and understood—is to be denounced in another as a reciprocal human being mirroring the inverse of who we are and experience, then this form of negation and hypocrisy not only casts a shadow on the other, but also sullies ourselves as an offense to virtue. Yet this idealist language does not inspire mass psychology, which typically devolves into the particular lives, longings, sufferings, and priorities of singular personalities who live among a sea of rivals all competing for recognition and personal gain.

One of the reasons for our impasse in achieving collective recognition of all people is a failure to possess, nurture, and demonstrate empathy for others.

10 Although the different schools of psychoanalytic thought offer their own nuanced theoretical frameworks, one universal belief is that there are unconscious processes operating within the psyche that stand in relation to social organizations that reinforce them. See Mills (2014) for comprehensive overview of the philosophies of the unconscious in Hegel, Freud, Jung, Lacan, Heidegger, Sartre, Winnicott, and Whitehead.

This failure is intimately tied to a subset of the problem, that is, our inability to foster global identifications with others. Empathy is based on an intersubjective identification with the other as an experiential self just like we are. Each of us stands united in spirit as an egalitarian subject that feels and needs. This basic shared identification with our fellow human beings is what gives empathy its value. But this is never easy to universally expect, let alone institute or institutionalize on a grand scale. It is an awareness that needs fostering, the seeds of which begin in early childhood facilitated by a healthy, emotional holding environment grounded in secure attachments to parents, caregivers, and family members or their surrogates. Through personal experiences of being recognized, validated, shown care and psychological warmth, as well as feeling loved and understood, empathy for others develops as self-realization of the good and the need to embrace it, as does our emotional intelligence in socialization practices. Feeling felt, seeing the pain in others' eyes, and recognizing the experience of the other as a reciprocal self-relation to one's own interior helps to open up an ethical stance we are obliged to extend to the other as a fellow *Thou*, or more appropriately, *You*—a recognition of personhood. This is a form of ethical self-consciousness as felt-compassion that not all people are psychologically capable of harboring or showing based upon their own personal plight or tragedies, family upbringing, cultural displacement or disenfranchisement, developmental traumas, and so forth. But this does not mean that empathy cannot be awakened or taught. If global societies were to promote empathy as an educational imperative and intrinsic valued commodity as an end in-itself institutionalized within a given community or culture—as well as promoting the value of fostering loving emotional attachments to others, which begins in the home, the world would be a better place.

7 Concluding Reflections

Jung (1917b) suggests that neurosis is the failed attempt to heal a universal split in the collective psyche. Here he may be said to mirror the concerns that pre-occupy critical theorists.

We always find in the patient a conflict which at a certain point is connected with the great problems of society ... [T]he apparently individual conflict of the patient is revealed as a universal conflict of his environment and epoch. Neurosis is thus nothing less than an individual attempt, however unsuccessful, to solve a universal problem.

JUNG, *CW*, 7 § 438, p. 265

Jung attributes this collective neurotic manifestation to the “shadow-side of the psyche” that has attained the character of “*autonomous complexes*” in their own right on a mass scale (p. 266, italics in original). Here it is easy to appreciate where Jung is coming from. When social reality is burdened with *pathos*, it leads to a sick soul. Neurosis is an attempt to repair social pathology through compromise formation.

During the same year, in *On the Psychology of the Unconscious*, Jung (1917a) also wrote that: “Neurosis is intimately bound up with the problem of our time and really represents an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the individual to solve the general problem in his own person” (CW, 7 §18, p. 20). This seems to suggest that by curing the individual one cures society.¹¹ The more individuals who are less encumbered by unconscious conflicts are more likely to influence societies that will be less split or conflicted given that healthy people make societies healthier. If neurosis is a failed attempt to remedy social problems, then psychological symptoms are the manifestation of social malaise. But this does not mean that individual healing will cure a sick society. Self-correction or restoration cannot be simultaneously superimposed onto the greater masses as an isomorphic correlate that transmogrifies material society in its concrete structures and communal reality. At most we can say is that if neurosis is indeed an unsuccessful attempt to unconsciously resolve a collective problem, social amelioration may only be achieved through collective actions. Self-healing cannot be generalized to the collective unless the collective takes measures to generalize to the healing of individuals. Individual cure may have very little to do with healing on a grand scale, especially when social collectives are bombarded by mass disparities and individual suffering within the collective. Here social dysrecognition only perpetuates collective suffering.

When one is treated like a thing and not recognized as a proper human being, the subject begins to relate to others as things in an ocean of objects where the kernel of the value of reciprocal recognition devolves into negation, intransigent antagonism, strife, fear of alterity, paranoia, sustained aggressivity, and repetition compulsion. When cultural trauma saturates attachment and socialization patterns, we can assuredly predict a future full of human suffering, where psychic and sociological impairment leaves many existential stains. Here we must recognize that the many faces of pathology transfigure our internal natures and scars the social landscape, even when a given individual or society recognizes the collective good in recognizing others.

¹¹ Giovanni Colacicchi (2018), personal communication.

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