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Author(s): Robert Z. Birdwell

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Robert Z. Birdwell

Althusser, Hegel, Shklovsky

If Louis Althusser counseled suspicion of ideological "obviousness," one might well be suspicious that his own theory of ideology has long enjoyed the status of obviousness. Althusser's theory gives an account of "ideological State apparatuses" (ISAs): the bourgeois institutions, notably family, education, and religion, that shape the subject to secure its "submission to the rules of established order" and accept a certain position in the socio-economic whole (1971, 132).[1] Althusser holds that all recognition is "misrecognition" or "interpellation" mediated by these apparatuses. Interpellation is the process of a subject being caught up in an "imaginary" relation to other people and to the social whole. This relation is imaginary because it is the stage on which a subject assumes an illusory freedom; in fact its actions are determined by the ISAs (1971, 182).

Althusser's Marxist theory stands Hegelian recognition on its head. While for Althusser the ISAs ensure the individual's "subjection," for Hegel analogous institutions of family, civil society, and state ultimately guarantee the freedom of the individual (Althusser 1971, 143). Hegelian freedom, to be sure, is not "negative" freedom from external constraint. It is rather a "positive" freedom of adherence to institutions that help one actualize one's potential as a rational being.[2] In contradiction to this, Althusser maintains that the purpose of such institutions is not freedom but subordination. Althusser avers that no one, not even "bad subjects,"—or those who try to resist subordination to institutions—are exempt from interpellation (1971, 181). There is no "outside" to ideology: all practices are ideological (1971, 175, 170).

[1]Winfried Fluck also opposes recognition to interpellation (2013, 50).
[2]On the distinction between negative and positive freedom, see Berlin (1969).

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Hegelian recognition, by contrast, is the network of mutual relationships that shape the subject within what Hegel calls the "realm of actualized freedom." Again, this freedom is positive, structured by the "ethical substance" that is society: family, civil society, and state. What for Althusser are ISAs are for Hegel the structures in which "the will is *free,* so that freedom constitutes its substance and destiny" (Hegel 1991, 35; emphasis original). Indeed, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* the apparatuses of family, civil society, and state are the conditions of freedom rather than subjection. Axel Honneth explains that for Hegel "a subject is only truly free if it directs all its efforts towards finding itself in a world whose structure is an expression of the subject's own will" (Honneth 2012, 23). According to Honneth, the family is the source of love; civil society the realm of equality; and the state the bonds of solidarity (Honneth 1995, 25; see Hegel 1991, 64): love, equality, and solidarity are the conditions of possibility for freedom, the actualization of one's potential within society.

Althusser's and Honneth's accounts of subject formation, labeled respectively interpellation and recognition, and characterized by subjection and freedom, alienation and solidarity, pose a paradox. They appear like Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit picture, an image in which the bill of a duck can also be seen as the ears of a rabbit, so that one can switch between seeing the same image as a different animal (Wittgenstein 1968, 194). The oscillation between seeing subject-formation as subjection and seeing it as freedom is analogous to the shift from seeing the picture as a duck to seeing it as a rabbit. Wittgenstein tries to debunk the inclination to attribute the process of perception or "seeing-as" to either subjective or objective factors with a characteristically paradoxical observation: "The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a *new* perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged" (1968, 196). If we insist on one alternative or another, language "goes on holiday" and leads to mysterious ontological implications: if the image changes, something "queer" must be going on in either the subject or the object or both (1968, 19)! For Wittgenstein, the duck-rabbit is only a picture that "holds us captive" (1968, 48). In the case of Althusser and Hegel, however, the stakes of captivity seem more momentous than a theory of perception. Wittgenstein seems to make a conservative point when he urges that "What has to be accepted, the given, is…*forms of life*" (1968, 226; emphasis original). A form of life is our conventional activity that exists in a mutually constitutive relationship with our common manners of speaking: "To imagine a language," postulates Wittgenstein, "is to imagine a form of life" (1968, 8). Yet the paradox that Althusser and Hegel pose is whether our institutions, our forms of life, recognize our agency: whether they are capable of securing our freedom.

Wittgenstein's comments on perceptual shifts as well as his conservatism about forms of life may be counterposed to Viktor Shklovsky's notion of defamiliarization. Shklovsky, too, theorizes shifts in perception, but for him the shifts come about through a salutary warping of language, and they

have ethical implications. This distortion or defamiliarization is the function of art *par excellence.* In Shklovsky's famous formulation, "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*" (2012, 12). Shklovsky asserts that art, and specifically poetic language, which may manifest in "poetry" as well as "prose," departs from the everyday, the logical, the chronological, or the grammatical. Defamiliarization, which is the use of figurative or strange language when clichés usually serve the purpose of describing or engaging with the world, arrests the "automatism of perception" and resets one's experience of the world so that one can perceive its contours anew and act accordingly (2012, 22). If Wittgenstein warns us against going against the grain of our grammar, of trying to "justify" our language-games (1968, 200) or trying to test the cogency of "custom and upbringing" (201), Shklovsky urges us rather to subject our language games to such tests: to distort words, to try out the "difficult, roughened, impeded language" of poetry (Shklovsky 2012, 23). What Wittgenstein calls the "dawning of an aspect" (of a duck, a rabbit) is indeed only a transition from one convention to another. But the process of defamiliarization is the technique of figurative language that violates convention: for example, seeing the duck-rabbit as a human face.

Given the canonical and obvious status of the theory of interpellation, the theory stands by its own premises in need of defamiliarization. Defamiliarization of a perception is different from refutation of an argument. To defamiliarize Althusser's theory is not only to challenge the theory's adequacy as a complete account of subject formation but to undermine the very efficacy of the process of interpellation to the extent that that process governs subject formation.[3] Defamiliarization disrupts the automatism of perception in order to enable the disruption of the automatism of agency itself. Thus defamiliarization may challenge interpellation or misrecognition in a moment of ground-clearing for a recognition properly so-called.

Winfried Fluck has recommended that critics "read for recognition," premising this program on the ubiquity of the phenomenon of recognition, which appears everywhere, he claims, from the stories of Hans Christian Andersen to the novels of Henry James (Fluck 2013, 45). But his concept of recognition is interpellative insofar as it depends upon invidious distinctions between persons—for example, between the moral high ground of Isabel Archer and the duplicity of Madame Merle, or the class distinctions between Cinderella and her relatives. A recognition that resists interpellation appears elsewhere, for example, in a marginal Depression-era collection of novels about the worst-off in the U.S. In her analysis of proletarian fiction, Barbara Foley largely excludes these novels, because they fail to depict a Hegelian Marxist progression of consciousness and thus fail to conform to the revolutionary essence of the genre. Although these texts such as Edward Dahlberg's *Bottom Dogs* and Nelson Algren's *Somebody in Boots,* Tom Kromer's *Waiting*

[3]See Jameson (1974, 57).

for Nothing and Edward Newhouse's *You Can't Sleep Here*, "resonate with veracity," "none treats the entire life span of its hero and focuses its didacticism around the dialectical issue of simultaneously retaining and negating working-class origins" (Foley 1993, 287). These novels depict not the proletariat but what is sometimes called the lumpenproletariat: the unemployed, marginally employed, or illegally employed; orphans, prostitutes, and criminals. Dahlberg et al. model a recognition of absolute equality of humankind and the most fundamental kind of solidarity, since humankind in its most naked state is foregrounded and affirmed through a relationship of love. If the picture of subjectivity that this aggregate of novels presents is plausible, then neither Althusser's picture nor Hegel's, framed as they are by the state, has to hold us captive. This is not to say that defamiliarization is either mimetically or deductively "plausible"—it is neither a representation nor an argument; rather, it is in some sense compelling, a sort of revelation, but leaves us free to accept or reject it, to act on it or not. Defamiliarization is a sharpening of perception that inspires a certain ethical stance. Novels of the "bottom dogs" are a passage from obviousness through defamiliarization that will enable an opening onto a new and strange kind of familiarity, the recognitional relationship of love that sets one free to imagine new language games, new forms of life.

Bottom Dogs*: Recognition as Love*

Edward Dahlberg's *Bottom Dogs*, a series of episodes in the youth of orphan Lorry Lewis, was written on the verge of the Depression in 1928 and published in 1930. At the start of *Bottom Dogs,* Lorry lives with mother Lizzie, a barber who moves from one Midwest town to another whenever business runs dry or people catch on to the fact she sells bogus therapeutic wares. She and her lover Henry get annoyed and send Lorry to an orphanage. The new home lacks luxury, but Dahlberg avoids pity to make it a place of camaraderie and play. When Lorry gets too old for the orphanage, he drops out of school and gets a job with American Express. Fired unfairly for appearing to skip work, Lorry decides to head out to California "ridin' the blinds." When he arrives in L.A., he does not find work, only a new group of peers at the Y.M.C.A. who mirror his old orphanage group in their good-natured, unproductive activity. Throughout the novel, Lorry has longed for sex but without success. In the final chapter, he meets a woman at a club and later loses his virginity.

The claim that *Bottom Dogs* concerns love and not the denial of love is *prima facie* implausible. The picaresque, a progress from family to anonymous sex, strays from any stable ideal of love and *a fortiori* from any successful recognition. Yet what's at stake is not an ideal of love but a form of love available even to a reject of society. Having been let go, Lorry takes a streetcar and "feel[s] his limbs slice the cool night air" (Dahlberg 1930, 125). Between

the firing and the streetcar ride, he encounters a prostitute, who stands as an object of desire and a harbinger of the bottom of the economy to which Lorry will sink. The firing incites desire, which the adolescent Lorry has noticed, "if he hadn't done well at school or had gotten into trouble…" (1930, 124). The precarity of Lorry's position, far from inspiring the shame that kills lust, awakens it. Lorry requires love: having lost a job, he suddenly cannot provide for himself. Yet that need brings with it lust, and with lust the desire for intimacy, which as much as material benefits is what Lorry has lacked throughout his life. Dahlberg transforms brute need into full-fledged human desire—even something mystical—in a moment of union when Lorry sees the prostitute chatting with a taxi driver: "For a moment his eyes had passed over into her thighs, mouth, and breast" (1930, 124). The insertion of an "into" suggests penetration but preempts the image of this woman as a mere object or mere means, for penetration itself becomes strange as the opposition of subject and object is dissolved, as if the eyes had at once merged with the thighs, etc., in oneness rather than wanting. The response, of course, does not reciprocate Lorry's ecstasy: "She gave him the high sign" (1930, 124).[4] This interpellative act of "hailing" interrupts the ecstatic moment of love, calling the latter into question—that is, calling it what it obviously is. The taxi driver as the anonymous third person in the scene threatens to reduce the whole experience to a mere moment of lust. From a complacent position external to this recognitive encounter, only the relation of what Marx and Engels called "naked self-interest…callous 'cash payment'" obtains (1998, 5-6); but for Lorry, this sex is sublimed into love just because it condemns the cash nexus and evades consummation.

A parodied moment of Hegelian freedom—finding oneself in the other—is at the same time bound to a brutal metonymical chain. Dahlberg associates love with sex, sex with whores, and whores with the venereal disease that will frighten Lorry away: indeed, that distances him from conventional love throughout the novel. But prostitution here is not merely the travesty of love that it is from a bourgeois point of view. The love of which Lorry becomes conscious, or into which he briefly dissolves, is the experience of absolute exclusion from what is normally called love, such that for a moment he is excluded even from himself and from the egoistic relation on which bourgeois love is premised. The defamiliarization at work in meeting the prostitute contradicts the durable relation of love in Hegel's sense; but it is thereby a critique of the exclusivity of Hegelian love defined in terms of the family that will in turn be assimilated into civil society and state.

This brief encounter with a prostitute shifts the aspect under which one might see all the preceding and succeeding narrative. The encounter denies bourgeois love and makes room for the camaraderie of other boys. The

[4]See Butler (2005, 27-28) for the suggestion that recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is "ecstatic" rather than "imperialist." My point, however, is that defamiliarization, a moment prior to recognition, may be ecstatic.

alternative is accessible from within the present social order. It is found in the orphanage school and the Y.M.C.A., not as the "ideological" structures that they are in their "material" practices, but as comprehended under their spiritual aspect, as imbued with love by Lorry and his moneyless friends. Material, following the Marxist tradition, I take to be in the last instance economic. Spiritual I oppose to the economic; it is a way of imagining persons independently of their place in the economic order, and therefore a way of seeing them that acknowledges their ability to live in spite of a lack of economic agency.

Though the bottom dog is hardly a model subject of religion or family or school, it is not "outside" in the sense of living off the grid. It is embedded in class society; but it is outside in the sense of having no property but the soul. Althusser holds that there is a kind of knowing "outside" of ideology: the "subject-less" discourse of "science" (1971, 171). Yet for Dahlberg the knowledge embodied in love, not science, is the outside of ideology. Love is possible after the stages of identification and alienation, Hegelian recognition and Althusserian interpellation, have been negated or passed through; love thus opens onto a new freedom. It is important that Althusser admits only a single counter-example to his claim that all human activity is ideological; this crack in the monolith of his theory threatens to broaden to accommodate other forms of knowledge: not just *science* but *connaissance*.

Unjustified and Justified Recognition, or, Interpellation and Recognition

Yet how can I assert that this *connaissance* of love frees one from the ideology in which statist misrecognition remains mired? Don't I need a criterion to distinguish between genuine recognition and misrecognition? As I remarked above, we cannot rely on the mimetic plausibility of a recognition modeled on love. Defamiliarization, while a sharpening of perception, is marked by a departure from the plausible, from what is conventionally called verisimilitude. Defamiliarization, rather, opens up a space in which to take up a certain moral stance. But before I elaborate on and recommend this moral stance, this view of recognition, I must first assess Axel Honneth's account of the difference between misrecognition and recognition. Honneth accepts the demand for a criterion to distinguish between them, acknowledging the Althusserian critique in his essay on "Recognition as Ideology." Honneth submits the following standard: recognition is justified only if it "lead[s] to modes of behaviour that give real expression to the actual value articulated in the original act" of acknowledgement (Honneth 2012, 92). Here "real expression" entails a "material element" as opposed, presumably, to a mere symbolic difference or difference of consciousness: Honneth's example is a new job title for an old job without a corresponding raise (2012, 91-92).

A justified change in job title involves, among other things perhaps, an increase in money, but this implies a reaffirmation of the economically stratified status quo for fellow employees. Would exclusive and invidious forms of material improvement count as justified on Honneth's account? The criterion of material improvement would perhaps have to work in conjunction with some stipulation of just distribution. It would therefore be necessary to justify recognition with respect to distribution. Indeed, the articulation of the two major forms of justice, distributive and recognitive, is the burden of Honneth's contribution to his debate with Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition?* In this debate, Honneth contends that redistribution is a form of recognition. Yet on his account, distribution is not merely a function of need but merit, a distinction that opens the way to a non-egalitarian account of recognition. An interesting ambiguity in Honneth's account of the form of recognition implied by the state appears when we compare his *The Struggle for Recognition* to *Redistribution or Recognition?*: in the former, earlier analysis of Hegel, the relationship characterizing the state is one of solidarity underwritten by "symmetrical" esteem for individual, particular value, albeit a symmetry that Honneth admits is not absolutely egalitarian (1995, 129-30). In the latter analysis, the term solidarity drops out in favor of the relationship of esteem for individual accomplishment (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 138-75). The difference is significant, because, according to the account in *Redistribution,* state recognition as esteem is the recognition of merit and is thus necessarily invidious. Esteem for merit is a relationship that endorses the very class distinctions that characterize interpellation. Honneth is aware of this problem, and his answer is that the "equality principle" keeps the invidious tendency of the "achievement principle" in check: the principle of equal rights under the law can be used to claim "a minimum of social status and hence economic resources independently of the meritocratic recognition principle" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 147). But here redistribution becomes a stopgap for the anti-egalitarian effects of a form of recognition. Honneth attempts to construe redistribution struggles as forms of recognition struggles, but some forms of recognition that result fall short of egalitarianism. A raise in pay, then, can signify a recognition of individual merit, but Althusser would be happy to concede this recognition is consistent with—indeed identical to—interpellation: it reinforces class distinctions.

In *Redistribution* Honneth construes recognition not along the dichotomy of justified/unjustified but along a continuum: thus recognition can be increased in quantity (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 144, 186) or quality (2003, 174-75). Honneth is admittedly clarifying Hegel's theory and often avoids inserting his own opinion; therefore his analysis oscillates between description and valorization. For instance, he criticizes the narrowness of Hegel's concept of the nuclear family as paradigmatic of the relation of love but maintains that Hegel's account of love nonetheless retains a "surplus of validity": the principle of love can be claimed by hitherto excluded social groups and individuals in order to demand inclusion (Fraser and Honneth

2003, 146, 174-75, 186-87). Honneth's analysis is thus dialectical: he criticizes an ideological example of love, an unjustified recognition (the sort confined to the nuclear family), but sees the potential for justified recognition inherent in the principle of love. The criterion of material improvement, on the other hand, revises Honneth's continuum in favor of a rigid distinction of justification between forms of acknowledgement that in another context he finds to be dialectically related.

One of the key differences between the recognition I am recommending (recognition that is fundamentally love) and the recognition that Honneth proposes (recognition as love sublated by equality and solidarity), is that Honneth's struggle for redistribution as recognition, though putatively an "intersubjective" appeal to other people, is also an appeal to what he calls the "capitalist social order." But this order is in fact an irrelevant object of appeal for those whose only recourse is to mutual aid from concrete others. Honneth is aware that his model of recognition is unavailable to many. It is an ideal only realized in the "realm of actualized freedom." As such, it may have a utopian surplus as an inspiration for social struggle. But two considerations qualify its utopian value: First, seeing Honneth's recognition under its utopian aspect may rather cause dismay and defeatism, not to say resentment, among those denied such recognition and lacking the realistic possibility of attaining it. The mutual recognition of the poor, specifically those beyond any possibility of social prestige, has nothing necessarily to do with envy; mutual aid is an alternative rather than a substitute for status. Second, seeing Honneth's recognition under its utopian aspect promotes the illusion that the capitalist social order is utopian in the good sense of the word. At the risk of fetishizing a condition of deprivation, I maintain that the condition of the worst-off nonetheless shows the necessity of love comprehending equality and solidarity as alternatives to relationships of prestige and invidious differences of wealth. What I am calling love, then, is a type of recognition that (a) may be mediated solely in metaphorical or symbolic terms; (b) is therefore available to all; yet (c) is not inconsistent with material improvement. It is in fact a precondition for it. But if we follow Honneth in making material improvement a necessary condition of recognition, we consign a great portion of humankind to non-recognition; at the same time, by defining a (spiritual) love as the essence of recognition, we both acknowledge a form of recognition in the hands of the rejects of society themselves and lay the basis for a recognition of material improvement. Further, only if we love others will we have the impetus to engage as equals in acts of solidarity that will improve their status and material situation.

Material, Spiritual, Aesthetic

What would recognition mean if it were not material? I have been opposing the "spiritual" to the "material," and Judith Butler can represent

the familiar consensus of identifying reality with materiality. Butler criticizes the allegedly Cartesian position of psychoanalytic theorist Mladen Dolar, faulting him for a position that resembles mine: that the reality of "love" is non-material and inassimilable to interpellation. But Dolar, charges Butler, makes the mistake of locating love in an "interior register" within the "pure ideality of the soul," in contrast to the external and material register of practices (Butler 1997, 127). "The failure of interpellation is clearly to be valued," she concedes, "but to figure that failure in terms that rehabilitate a structure of love outside the domain of the social risks reifying particular social forms of love as eternal psychic facts" (1997, 129). Butler does not admit the possibility of psychic facts that are neither social nor eternal, relying instead on the obviousness of the "binary" between social and eternal or between time-bound process and reification. These binaries exclude a third possibility, aesthetic phenomena and the aesthetic power itself. The aesthetic phenomenon of defamiliarization is neither social nor eternal. As "aesthetic" in the sense of attunement to the realm of phenomena, defamiliarization rather calls into question the opposition of social and eternal by showing how both may be evaded. Defamiliarization, though a process that takes place via the medium of language, nonetheless is a process that destroys the pretentions of language to constitute the social or symbolic, to say nothing of commitment to the existence of something eternal. Defamiliarization shocks into strangeness the obviousnesses on which much ontology, whether materialist or Cartesian, depends.

My opposition to a strictly "materialist" account of recognition is not an ontological commitment but a moral stance. For Kant, "the concept of the intelligible world" in which ends in themselves or persons exist is "only *a point of view* which reason finds itself constrained to adopt outside appearances *in order to conceive itself as practical*" (Kant 1964, 126; emphasis original). This practical stance straddles the divide between inner sense ("psychic fact") and eternity, determinism and freedom, and is enabled through the antinomian process of aesthetic experience: what Shklovsky conceives as defamiliarization. As Kant puts it in the *Critique of Judgment,* the aesthetic faculty of "judgment will effect a transition from the pure cognitive power, i.e., from the domain of the concepts of nature, to the domain of the concept of freedom…" (Kant 1987, 18). Analogously, the moment of defamiliarization enables a transition from the realm of necessity to that of freedom, or the realm of the material to the realm of the spiritual. The judgment enabled by defamiliarization can effect a transition from the misrecognition that characterizes the realm of necessity to the recognition that characterizes the realm of actualized freedom. This realm of actualized freedom, as I suggested as the outset, resembles Althusser's totality of society much as Wittgenstein's duck resembles Wittgenstein's rabbit. But the criterion that distinguishes Althusser's realm of necessity from Dahlberg's realm of freedom is the fact that, in contrast to the instrumentalized subjects within the Althusserian state—even the bad subjects who appear to play no role—*Bottom Dogs* is

unabashedly an aggregate of useless subjects. They cannot be used as mere means, as Kant said of humanity, and must be either rejected, ignored, or affirmed—that is, called ends in themselves.

Recognition and Defamiliarization

Shklovsky insists that it is the process of experience, not the object of experience, that defines the experience of defamiliarization: "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important*" (Shklovsky 2012, 12; emphasis in original). The process of defamiliarization thus seems to bring together the two senses of "aesthetic"—sense experience and art appreciation—in the view of all phenomena as art. The object, however, seems important, for Shklovsky seems interested in Tolstoy's critique of the practice of flogging. By refusing to give a conventional description, Tolstoy's word choice conveys absurdity and cruelty, the arbitrariness of the sort of political regime under which Shklovsky wrote.[5] The lack of artfulness in the act of flogging tends to undermine rather than reinforce the artfulness of Tolstoy's description. And Shklovsky's dramatic selection of the act suggests that the object itself is indeed important. Far from reconciling sense experience and art appreciation, Shklovky's defamiliarization wrenches apart the two. Insofar as the object is really perceived, the object cannot but be appreciated. Shklovsky insists that in art "the process of perception has become an aesthetic end in itself" (Shklovsky 2012, 12); in fact he implies that not merely the form (perception) is an end in itself but the content, too. If we take Shklovsky's ethically charged examples, we may say that perception as end in itself recalls Kant's principle of the treatment of persons as ends in themselves, and indeed it encourages us to posit a kingdom of ends as a rival order to the kingdom of necessity that is the history of the organization of what Lenin called "human material."

What in the context of Dahlberg's novel constitutes the realm of necessity and what constitutes the realm of actualized freedom? Hegel's and Althusser's totalities are from the vantage point of *Bottom Dogs* equally (or identically) the realm of necessity. The difference between the two aspects under which the picture may be seen is immaterial; a third aspect is necessary to understand Dahlberg's recognition. Shklovsky's process of defamiliarization, far from merely aestheticizing all of experience, as it first appears to do, makes all experience of the world ethical: that is, it challenges us to perceive the "other" or the "object"—a stone, a prostitute, etc.—as a person. In some

[5]See Jameson (1974, 51).

cases, the bottom dog occupies a condition in which the status of humanity as end in itself, "something *whose existence* has *in itself* an absolute value" stands out most clearly (Kant 1964, 95; emphasis original). Dahlberg's scene begins with interpellation—the prostitute's "high sign"—that is arrested by defamiliarization, comprehending the other under a new aspect, with a new respect, and followed by a nascent relationship of recognition. Thus the alternation of identification and alienation or Hegelian and Althusserian subject-formation can be reread thus: Lorry's moment of defamiliarization is a moment of ecstasy or travel outside of the self that opens the possibility of treating the prostitute, quintessentially the mere means for the satisfaction of the self, as an end in herself. What, then, is the criterion that distinguishes recognition from interpellation, that is, that distinguishes Dahlberg from both Hegel and Althusser? It is the perception of the individual as an end in him- or herself, the imagination of the aspect under which the individual is useless to the institutions of society and thus free to be rejected or else affirmed in its own project, its alternative practices.

Respect and Recognition

Kantian respect is conventionally distinct from Hegelian recognition, but the two, I contend, are intimately related.[6] The former is a necessary condition of the latter. The most important difference in this context is the difference between what is for Kant a formal acknowledgement of personhood or rational agency as such and what is for Hegel the acknowledgement of the particularities of that personhood, the struggles in which the individual is implicated within ethical life. In the fight for recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel writes that the self may find acknowledgement as a mere "person" but cannot be acknowledged as a "self-consciousness" without "staking" his or her life (Hegel 1977, 114). The struggle for recognition means implicating one's particular life in the lives of other persons, with all of the risks to one's (material, spiritual) safety that this involves. Yet what does recognition become if one has lost one's particular life, has become anonymous, and has nothing left to risk? One may answer that the conditions for recognition are simply lacking and be spurred on by Honneth's "surplus of recognition" to instantiate those conditions.[7] I have criticized this interpretation on pragmatic grounds above. On the other hand, however, one may respond in a more hopeful fashion by defamiliarizing the very notion of recognition—and the notion of respect—in such a way that respect becomes a condition of possibility for recognition. An acknowledgement of personhood

[6]Thanks to John Christman for clarifying the relationship between Kantian respect and Hegelian recognition here. I do not hold him responsible for my attempt to reconcile Kant and Hegel here; indeed, he disagrees with it.

[7]I owe this point to John Christman.

per se is a precondition for an acknowledgement of the particularities of personhood, just because that acknowledgement leads to the enrichment of the person: personhood develops into self-consciousness. In contrast to the fond portraits of idiosyncrasy lent to Lorry's comrades at the orphanage, Lorry himself remains undeveloped, the perpetual "Newcumber"; only after the moment of losing his job and encountering the prostitute does he begin to fashion a narrative of his own by going on the road. It is this estranging experience of an object (the prostitute) as person, and Lorry, in turn, as person, that sets the stage for recognition proper: the narrative of the pursuit of individual particularity, the affirmation of which essentially, basically, nakedly, is called love.

The encounter with the prostitute comes at the very center of *Bottom Dogs*, marking the midpoint between the two communities of love irrelevant to history (the state) that Dahlberg depicts: the free time of the orphans and the leisure of the members of the "after Bible coffee class." The chapters on the orphanage hardly mention the orphanage itself but are devoted to the depiction of individuals outside the classroom itself: "The Newcumber" (Lorry), "Herman Mush Tate," and "Bonehead-Star-Wolfe." Likewise, the community of the Y.M.C.A. substitutes for a Sunday morning church service a period of leisure, an amorphous time after Bible coffee class of discussing Nietzsche and playing poker. Dahlberg describes the irrelevant details of each character—diet, literary tastes, past, income (where applicable)—and weaves together small stories of conversation and poker that add up to nothing but the episodes of the book.[8] Love in the orphanage or the Y.M.C.A. is attention to each one's story with disregard for any plot that structures them all together and drives the narrative forward. Yet this drive is something other than either negative or positive freedom. It is not a liberal, negative freedom from external constraint, for the language games of the orphanage and the Y.M.C.A. depend on the interrelationships, the forms of life, of its members; neither is it the Hegelian positive freedom of the actualization of potential within institutions. It repudiates that potential and indeed those institutions in favor of non-state alternatives. The orphanage and the Y.M.C.A. are indeed externally constrained by ISA and capitalist social order, but internally these constitute spheres are insular and separate from these institutions. With respect to their own circles, the subjects of the after Bible coffee class are free.

Though *Bottom Dogs* appears a rambling picaresque, the structure is then a circle: the orphanage, the prostitute, the after Bible coffee class, and the loss of virginity, are a series of moments in a dialectic that refuses progress to curve back upon itself, a circle that excludes the state and represents an alternative to both Althusserian and Hegelian accounts of history. It is a sequence

[8]This description of irrelevant detail resembles Giorgio Agamben's "whatever singularity" as "being such as it is" (1993, 1). However, in according with this view of singularity I do not thereby reject the goal of recognition, as does Agamben (1993, 85-87).

of respect for the end in itself and subsequent recognition of particularity. Dahlberg comes close to romanticizing the lives of the bottom dogs, his novel appearing at the crucial juncture between the era of the freewheeling "hobo" and the desperate "stiff";[9] yet at the same time he avoids miserabilism or pity. He steers a course between these two forms of sentimentality, observing instead both the aspects of wretchedness and resilience of the orphans and prostitutes he portrays. These two aspects correspond to criticism and affirmation, the criticism through sheer mimesis of a society dependent on the exclusion of bottom dogs and the affirmation, through defamiliarization, of the ability of bottom dogs to hold one another in mutual regard despite their lack of social position. *Bottom Dogs* is a third aspect under which to perceive the picture Hegel and Althusser present—a picture that tends to hold us captive.

Love, Equality, Solidarity, Wherever Form is Found

I began with the claim that a portrayal of the passage from interpellation to recognition via defamiliarization would loosen the grip of the theory, and the very efficacy of the practice, of interpellation, whether of the Althusserian or Hegelian variety. Dahlberg helps us to imagine a social sphere independent of history in both the Althusserian and Hegelian sense (the two histories that are finally identical). The circular structure of *Bottom Dogs* resembles a utopia insofar as a utopia is defined by its detachment from history, or the development of the state and its apparatuses. Within this circle the subject is free.

In an important sense it is perverse to model a theory of recognition on a condition of deprivation. But Gustavo Gutiérrez argues that an affirmation of poverty means a protest against poverty as well as a stance of solidarity with the poor (1988, 171-73). Just as Lorry moves from familiarity to a strange recognition, Dahlberg's novel might shock one into a fresh respect for the bottom dogs of society, hitherto taken for subordinates of the ISA or victims of the capitalist social order, and open the way for the imagination of practices of love that might serve as alternatives to the progress narrative, or Althusser's stasis narrative, of family, civil society, and state. This recognition—a practical stance that is available in the absence of the possibility of material amelioration—is finally consistent with material amelioration. Indeed, it is a precondition for it. Only if we affirm socially useless persons as ends in themselves, as part of a community of ends, can we have any moral impetus to work in solidarity with them to strive for material improvement. To imagine a recognition as essentially non-material is not to ignore the material causes or solutions to non-recognition. Thus "mutual aid," mentioned

[9]See Kusmer (2003, 203).

above in the context of symbolic struggle, can and should lead to material struggle as well. This sense of recognition is both utopian (egalitarian) and practical (the application of egalitarianism to practice). A spiritual stance towards recognition, a recognition proper to those who do not even have the property of their labor, is a precondition for any struggle for acknowledgement in the form of material things.

Defamiliarization is thankfully not confined to art: "I personally feel," writes Shklovsky, "that defamiliarization is found almost everywhere form is found" (2012, 18). Form, or emplotment of the chaos of life, is characteristic of experience as such. Whenever stories of the worst-off of society take on plot and occupy a place in our life, they may be defamiliarized and seen as something other than things subsumed by the capitalist social order and the ideological state apparatus. A novel by Dahlberg is only a shock or a shove to take part in these relationships of love. We can read about the bottom dogs of society, but we can only know them as humans through one-on-one relationships that will take a utopian imagination to produce. These relationships are intrinsically important. They are also preconditions for the project of equality and solidarity: of organizing despite capitalism and state towards spiritual and material goals.

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