

The culture of polemic

Misrecognizing recognition

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One would like to be recognized as this or that individual, according to this or that description, since recognition promises to overcome the splitting of what is to be recognized, to facilitate the incorporation of what is split into some unified identity or unified life-context. According to María Zambrano in her book *The Agony of Europe*, first published in 1945, 'European man' strives ceaselessly towards a projected self that is yet to be, while fleeing constantly from another self that still continues to lead a shadowy existence within him. That is why we can supposedly describe European history as the story of a heresy which procures the birth of the European individual. The human being who splits apart into a doubled self (a given self and a projected self) is a 'European' because he or she *decides* to exist, to exist independently of every already prevailing order. This self is grounded in a deficiency, in an absence, in a lack: it represents a violence of existing.¹

From the perspective of reflections such as these one might also understand the demand for recognition, and not merely the confession of which Zambrano speaks, as a historical attempt to overcome that splitting and diremption of the human being which results from this resolute decision to exist. The limits of recognition would then constitute the limits of decision and of resolution, because a resolute and decisive existence always presupposes a self which decides to exist, a self which constitutes itself precisely in and through this founding act. There is a double limit here: first, the limit of the birth and death of the historical or 'European' subject as the limit of two comprehensive orders (pre- and post-historical); second, the limit inherent in any recognition which would enable the self successfully to overcome its splitting into a given self and a projected self. Projects directed towards successfully 'accomplished' recognition only perpetuate the history of the deciding, projecting, recognizing and

overcoming subject: they neither conceive the limits of this subject nor seek its transformation.

For this subject and this theory of recognition the question arises as to how, where and when such recognition can be recognized. When can one say, and when can one know, that an individual or a group has indeed been recognized? That the group or the individual is no longer recognized? Or is yet to be recognized? Is recognition intrinsically bound to a shared experience, to a regulated practice, to certain gestural or specifically linguistic conventions and rules, to legal entitlements and socio-political institutions? Or does the process of recognition perhaps evince resistance to its own recognizability, to the subject and the theory of recognition which would seek conceptually to grasp that process? Might the struggle for recognition be permanently bound to a testimony which cannot be measured through recourse to unambiguous criteria?

'We're queer, we're here, so get fuckin' used to it'

Take the slogan currently circulating in North America, 'We're queer, we're here, so get fuckin' used to it', at once elliptical and utterly unambiguous. As long as it works as a slogan, a caesura which cannot simply be bridged over by transferring and integrating the offensively and polemically intended phrase into a legitimate, legitimated and legitimating discourse, this exclamation effectively testifies to a *struggle* for recognition. But if this slogan, this phrase, this exclamation works merely as a provocation, one which ultimately lives, like every provocation, off a secret complicity and solidarity with what it seeks to provoke; if those who proclaim this slogan bear an already presupposed identity, confess themselves *as* such bearers and thereby direct themselves toward bearers of a different identity, precisely in order to secure equality of treatment and status for themselves through legal,

social, institutional and political recognition – then the struggle for recognition disappears in a reformism which only accepts, and only can accept, differences on the ground of some more fundamental unity. It disappears in the purist and puritanical equality of a ‘political correctness’ that is merely the complement of misinterpretation, exclusion and oppression. Yet a reformism that excludes the process of recognition finds itself confronted with the difficulty of procuring recognition for that fundamental unity, which does not have to be substantial, but which can simply exist on the assumption of a formal equality in principle. Thus every reformism risks slipping into that very struggle for recognition, the uncertain outcome of which it attempts to transform into stability and security precisely through regulation, limitation and direction. Although reformism seeks to incorporate the struggle for recognition within itself, it simultaneously exposes itself to this struggle.

Who is it that generally raises this demand for acceptance and what is intended by it? If there is indeed no unambiguous, but merely a more or less plausible or probable, answer to either of these questions, and if the plausibility and probability of any possible answer depends upon some contextual insertion (for which there can be no ultimate criterion), then the resulting dissemination of this demand can be regarded as an effect of iterability. The interpretation of the demand itself demands and needs recognition. To interpret is to recognize. Yet it is just this need for a cognitive interpretation and an interpretive recognition – the dissemination of the demand, the iterability – that allows the demand to be raised as a demand at all. We could never even raise the demand ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’, we could never even interpret the phrase as a demand, as the intrication of an assertion and a demand, if it were possible to determine unambiguously what the demand in question signified; if it could be shown indubitably that it represented nothing but a demand. For a demand without the moment of uncertainty remains inconceivable.

‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’: if this phrase implies a demand for recognition, then it seems, like all demands for recognition, for confirmation and institution, to be torn through by a contradiction, to be suspended by a certain irony – it is demanded that one recognize what one no longer needs to recognize. We who demand recognition are already what we are, not merely someplace else, somewhere to which you have no access, or which you could simply avoid, and that is precisely why we are

demanding recognition here in your very midst. On the other hand, only when you, to whom our demand is addressed, get used to something you must get used to, something which in a certain sense you already have got used to, only then are we what and who we are, in your very midst. The necessary contradiction harboured within the demand for recognition allows us to translate the phrase in the following way: *We*, who raise our voice in our own name, because this name and this voice are not yet our name and our voice, because we must first appropriate them for ourselves, we are here without being here, we are what we are without being what we are, and this is why we demand that you recognize us and get used to our being here as what we are. Only when you have got used to our being here, and that we are what we are; only when you have thereby recognized us, whom you do not even need to recognize since we are already here, in your midst – only then shall we be able to say that we are here, that we are what we are, and that we have a name and a voice.



The demand for recognition is a demand for confirmation and institution. The phrase in question at once binds and separates assertion and demand through the paradoxical blind spot of the ‘so’. The ‘so’ marks the simultaneity of a continuity and a caesura,

of a closing and an opening. The contradiction, the irony, the diachrony within this simultaneity robs speakers and agents of any possibility of straightforwardly counterposing their own ‘we’ to the ‘we’ of others, of any possibility of marking an unambiguous distinction between those who make the demand and those upon whom it is made, between those who are to bestow recognition and those who are to receive it. The *skandalon* of the phrase, its irreconcilable polemic, the illegitimacy it possesses prior to any possible legitimacy and legitimation, lies in the equivocation it generates in conflating the ‘we’ of those to whom the demand is addressed and the ‘we’ of those who make it. At the same time, the latter seem to segregate and delimit themselves all too unambiguously, for they constitute the ‘we’ who hurl the phrase like a shaft which, once the others recognize the danger of its whistling flight, has already struck home.

‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’: a recognisable phrase and a barely intelligible exclamation; an impertinent suspicion and an act of violence beyond all argument; a declaration of war and a declaration of love; an exclamation whose pointed contours permit no divided, wrangling or sentimental foes to take its measure; an exclamation whose measure can only be taken by that foe whom Jean Genet sought out in his imaginary newspaper advertisement – one who is ‘blind, deaf and dumb’, because he is permitted no possible room for manoeuvre, ‘without legs, without arms, without a stomach, without a heart, without a sex, without a head’.² On the one hand, there is hardly any doubt who the demanding subject is and what the demand consists in. On the other hand, the boundaries between these subjects, who are not yet subjects, prove to be shifting and impermanent. The demand cannot immediately be re-cognized (*Wiedererkennen*).

This unsettling opening up of borders and limits is furthered once we grasp ‘fuckin’ as the object of that habituation which is demanded: get used to a different kind of fucking! Again, the ones who proclaim the phrase suddenly become those who recognize, while those who encounter it and to whom it is addressed suddenly become those who require recognition and have to struggle for it. From this perspective, those who are targeted and struck by the phrase must themselves struggle to earn the recognition from those who recognize only with reluctance and for that very reason are themselves recognized as bestowers of recognition. Bestowers of recognition who are not ‘reluctant givers’,

* The distinction between *Anerkennen* (recognition) and *Wiedererkennen* (re-cognition) is awkward to render in English. *Anerkennen* has the sense of acknowledging.

as Michael Walzer puts it;³ bestowers of recognition whose generosity does not consist in their miserliness, their hesitation, their reticence, their reluctance, in a sense of responsibility – such bestowers of recognition stand more in need of recognition than those who are still to be recognized. This open economy of recognition harbours a certain undemocratic moment, a one-sided dependency, which renders it unsuitable for procuring a closed economy of reciprocal recognition in which that moment of dependency could be overcome or ‘sublated’ in a Hegelian fashion.

This does not imply that the process of recognition exercises a disintegrative effect. On the contrary, to the degree that the process of recognition never comes to a final conclusion; to the degree that it is constantly unsettled and placed in tension by a one-sided dependency, by an asymmetry, by a relationship of heterogeneous forces, it seems rather to solicit that decisionistic resistance which exercises an integrating effect that is crystallized in a servile collective solidarity with what is arbitrarily recognized. A thinking and a politics of recognition that underestimates or is even incapable of perceiving the danger of such decisionism remains impotent against it, precisely because this thinking and this politics confuse the process of recognition with a process of simply recognizing (*Wiedererkennen*).

The insuperable difficulties which the exclamation and expression ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ presents for both a theory and a subject of recognition are clearly revealed where this exclamation and expression functions as a privileged example for other possible demands for recognition, and where it strives to ensure and maintain an accomplished relation of recognition as a familiar and habitually accepted fact. A demand for recognition cannot just represent a demand for the establishment of a relation of recognition which brings the struggle for recognition to an end. For it must also represent a demand for the *maintenance* of this established relation, since without such maintenance the fulfilment of the demand would merely prove to be a further postponement. In other words, when we ‘get used’ to what is recognized, then this process of habituation and familiarization – which permits the establishment of the relation of recognition and is simultaneously suspended by its unfamiliarity, an unfamiliarity which first makes the act of recognition what it is – must eventually come to an end. It must produce something utterly habitual if the demand for recognition is to be properly and effectively fulfilled. No subject of recognition would ever be secure if the process of habituation – where



those who recognize get used to those who are to be recognized, and those to be recognized get used to those who recognize them – itself failed to become habitual. The fatal character of this necessity, however, lies in the fact that such habitual familiarity threatens the very re-cognition of recognition upon which the permanence of the already established relation of recognition rests.

Does not the very process of habituation destroy the act of recognition which requires that process? Is it not inevitable that the discriminating indifference and the concealed domination should assume the form of habitual recognition? And is it not the case that such habitual recognition renders the recognized invisible and obliterates them in their very difference? Is there any more effective remedy for recognition or means against it than that process of habituation without which there can be no recognition? Acceptance through habit: the monument and ruin of recognition. Even a theory of recognition; a historical, conceptual, historico-philosophical investigation – an investigation which must always also exempt itself as such from the struggle for recognition and attempt to justify its own exemption on the grounds that this is the only way of doing justice to recognition itself – can be denounced as an oppression, a repression, an eradication, a per-

version inflicted upon those who are to be recognized; as an unacceptable, ideological, politically strategic and controlling subsumption of recognition under a process of exclusive and excluding re-cognition.

The expression ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ is a speech act which is incapable of being controlled. It is an exclamation that one can appropriate for oneself, but only at the cost of relinquishing it to a different process of appropriation, in the very moment of appropriation, domestication, coordination. ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ is a contrary expression, a very queer phrase indeed, a homeless orphan that always behaves otherwise than its family expects, an irregular combatant, a deracinated and deracinating partisan, a fighter whose extreme mobility defies enclosure and containment, whose tactical agility even displaces and unsettles the ‘tellurian’ character and the defensive posture of the ‘classical partisan’ (Carl Schmitt). *But it is because the act of recognition is one of confirmation, and simultaneously one of institution, that every demand for recognition resembles this exclamation and this expression; that every attempt at thinking recognition proves to be a queer and contrary thinking, a contrary thinking of the queer.* One who demands recognition has already arrived, has already reached the destination still to be attained, and does not require the recognition that is demanded. The polemical presumption here lies in the way in which the one who is to be recognized transforms those who are to bestow recognition into those who require recognition. The roles, the functions, the positions in question thereby find themselves caught up in a constant and uncontrollable process of exchange – in the final analysis it is impossible to decide who should be recognized here and now and who is recognizing whom here and now.

‘Spain is different’

The pressure exerted on this here-and-now is all the more exacerbated by the fact that there is no longer any horizon from the perspective of which that exchange could either be recognized as deviant or perverse, or be transformed into a more regular and acceptable one. Thus the process of recognition, duplicating every integrating effect with a disintegrating one, but without permitting this integration and disintegration to be captured by any positive dialectic, does not properly lend itself to any all-englobing act of identification which would ensure stability. Yet recognition is indispensable if one is to identify oneself with a group, with a people, with a country, with a state, with a

tradition; if one is to be capable of identifying these in the first place, capable of re-cognizing them, of re-cognizing oneself in them, of being re-cognized by them. For all identifications must transgress a limit. They therefore require an act of recognition if that re-cognition to which they aspire is to be made possible. Recognition thus intersects and transfixes, for example, every attempt to justify a form of nationalism, even that supposedly enlightened ‘nationalism of the present’ or ‘contemporary nationalism’ which Oriol Pi de Cabanyes, the director of the *Institució de les Lletres Catalanes*, would like to derive from the ‘interrupted identity’ of a people.

Instead of simply opposing ‘the Catalan tradition’ to other traditions; instead of attempting to anchor the sense of national ‘belonging’ in the ‘dense texture of the past’ or to acquire it from ‘planning the future’ – Pi de Cabanyes addresses himself to the present. The here-and-now of a Catalan ‘version’ of the universally human is supposed to furnish the basis for an appropriate contemporary nationalism.⁴ Such a ‘contemporary nationalism’ springs from fears of nationalistic extremism, ‘diseased forms of nostalgia’ and ‘futuristic fanaticism’. But if this idea of an ahistorical, purely ‘punctual’ or instantaneous here-and-now – which appeals to a suprahistorical and utterly abstract conception of human essence without effectively clarifying the relationship between the universality of this essence and the particularity of its specific versions and manifestations – proves to be unconvincing, then such vaunted ‘contemporary nationalism’ proves equally to be a familiar nationalism after all, and thus already to represent the extremism it was supposed to contain. The symptoms of contamination here vividly reveal themselves when Pi de Cabanyes speaks of those ‘undesirable’ cases of interference and interruption which his ‘contemporary nationalism’ would have to exclude from the ‘interrupted identity’ of the Catalans.

The identity of the Catalans is an interrupted one. Like all forms of identity, it cannot insulate itself against the irruption of an alien externality or foreign element. If this identity could insulate itself against such forms of irruption, it would only ossify immediately. Pi de Cabanyes distinguishes between heritage, experience and interruption in order to emphasize the violent and unavoidable moment of ‘interference’, of interrupting and disrupting intervention. But if the identity of a people is essentially an interrupted one, a non-identical one, then it can appeal neither to an organic totality grounded in a past nor to the frictionless or seamless appropriation of a future. The justification of its interrupted identity leads necessarily to the projection of

such a ‘contemporary nationalism’. But as a nationalist project this justification tends to promote a certain extremism, an exclusive appropriation of a totality, a positing of boundaries which would mark some permanent belonging, through which interruptions are subjected to control and by which the sentiment of diverse identity only comes to serve an undisturbed self-assertion. The interrupted identity, the identity which is exposed to the dynamic of recognition and finds itself suspended there, finally transforms itself into a unified identity, into the identity of a re-cognizable and (self-) re-cognizing subject. The plan, the projection, the programme of the new nationalism is the ideological projection of a unification without interruption, of a will to undisturbed self-presence which would place past and future alike in its own service:

The full responsibility for what we shall be at every moment will fall all the more clearly to ourselves. In the precise and appropriate conscious awareness that we have been Catalans for a thousand years, that we are precisely what we are, that we shall be what we wish to be, our own grasp of temporality will be more evenly developed. This sense of equilibrium will in all probability prove to be our strongest protection against all presumptuous forms of interference, against all forms of undesirable interruption and intervention.⁵

Legal indifference

But even if the one demanding recognition is the one bestowing recognition, and the bestower of recognition is the one requiring recognition; even if the here-and-now of recognition is also a there-and-then – why can we not interpret this internal splitting as an equilibrium or balance of reconciling completion? Why must we insist upon the vertiginous movement of an uncontrollable exchange of positions, upon a universal resistance and displacement? Because the difference between the confirmation and institution of what has been demanded is a difference between heterogeneous acts, and this heterogeneity can only be bridged by the dogmatic or postulated presupposition of a re-cognizable unity and a unified re-cognition, by the elimination of the process of recognizing. The phrase ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ represents a caesura charged with tension, an interruption which cannot be bridged over, an invasive and invading presumption, a queer and contrary self-disowning exclamation, elusive over and against all attempts to own or appropriate it.

Consequently it would be a euphemistic interpretation, an essential domestication, if one were to reduce this expression to a demand for pacifying and habitual recognition, for the willing readiness to put up with something, for the reasonable acceptance and toleration of those nameless individuals intended by the first-person-plural pronoun. As little as one can or should exclude an interpretation which regards the expression as a demand for the ‘transformation and reconfiguration of socially binding rules and regulations’, for the creation of that in-difference of nameless recognition which alone is capable of doing justice to difference within society,⁶ one must equally recognize that there always remains something unacceptable and unreasonable about the phrase, something which is directly connected to the exclamatory character of the expression itself. For the latter resists both the ideological preformation of the legal system, which disadvantages those who raise the demand, and the anonymity of a social cohesion regulated by legal norms, the ‘in-differently binding’ character of all rules and regulations, whether it is purely ‘formal’ or substantively ‘effective’ in nature. For this ‘in-differently binding’ validity is either selective in character, and has its condition of possibility in the by no means ‘in-different’ decision concerning who can actually be intended by the regulation in question, or, alternatively, it possesses an undifferentiated ‘in-differently binding validity’ which intends in principle everyone, so that no real recognition transpires at all. In truth this means: by virtue of the indispensable and constitutive selection mechanism involved in it, this ‘in-differently binding validity’ of nameless individuals represents the binding validity of a virtual normality, a normality which saves and keeps itself intact, which builds up an arsenal of power, which has already withdrawn from its exclusionary, minimalizing and marginalizing manifestations once we attempt to call it by its proper name. As in Andrew Sullivan’s apologetic pamphlet *Virtually Normal*,⁷ the difference of the recognized, in which the virtuality in question has accumulated and concentrated itself, is merely that distance which allows normality to assert itself all the more fiercely and inexorably.

Of course one does not have to pay the price of a naive intentionalism or contextualism, if one wishes to distinguish ‘political recognition’ from another kind of recognition and to utilize this distinction in order to mark a difference between the sphere of namelessness and the sphere of names. But one does fall back into a naive intentionalism or contextualism if one claims that the name of ‘the political’

should be reserved for the anonymous social order which is always presupposed by the ‘non-political’ or ‘sub-political’ spheres of recognition. For the opening which repeatedly suspends recognition, the opening to which the challenge of that unpredictable and uncontrollable expression ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ bears testimony, itself belongs to the political dimension and to the politics of recognition. It is precisely this *opening* which makes politics necessary. Must the effective political securing of that open domain we supposedly require in order to experience the significance of what has already taken shape in the ‘non-social’, ‘subsocial’, ‘non-political’ and ‘subpolitical’ forms of recognition,⁸ must this too not remain exposed to the possibility of suspension and disturbance if such ‘in-differently binding validity’ over against difference is not ultimately to lead to a levelling process of assimilation, to the namelessness of eradicated names?

If the framework within which differences exist is quite obvious; if it is obvious that there is an overall framework which comprehends and includes these differences; if it is already decided, for example, that it is exclusively ‘relationships of *adult* love and friendship’⁹ which effectively characterize a determinate ‘non-social’, ‘subsocial’, ‘non-political’, ‘subpolitical’ open domain of recognition; then difference has already been robbed of what makes it different in the first place. Difference has been domesticated and the phrase ‘We’re queer, we’re here, so get fuckin’ used to it’ has been deprived of its *political* virulence. It is not merely in the juridical sphere that the phrase represents a caesura that cannot simply be bridged, but rather in all spheres in which recognition proves to be decisive. Certainly, the irreducible tension in the process of recognition is a tension between asymmetry and symmetry (otherwise the recognition would be nothing more than a re-cognition), so that the demand for effectively secured political spaces of openness and free play, for a certain leeway, is just as inscribed within the struggle for recognition as is the destabilizing disjunction of play and space. Politics is nothing other than the name for sustaining and enduring the conflict within this tension, between name and anonymity.

Asymmetry and symmetry, confirmation and institution, do not have the invariant form of a concept. Rather, they are stabilized elements of a recognition which is and must be distinguished from mere re-cognition, a recognition whose tensile character consists in the fact that dissolving it into an accomplished form of recognition only eliminates the difference

between recognizing and re-cognizing. But the possible modes and opportunities for recognition, which result from the *constellations* and *configurations* of the elements involved, cannot in principle be located within a hierarchical relationship, within any relationship of precedence or derivation, presupposition or dependency. Recognition precisely promotes the subversion of such relationships wherever they have assumed a fixed and independent existence. It makes a difference whether we are speaking of the recognition accorded to a people struggling for its own autonomy or the recognition involved in love or friendship; but the various forms of recognition and their respective configurations are nonetheless simultaneously subject to a process of deformation. They are themselves part of a movement whose dynamic cannot be grasped either by concepts of form or by concepts of formlessness. Recognition is misconceived if we attempt to divide it up into forms and modes which are laboriously segregated from one another in order thereby to control the process of recognition. Recognition is misconceived if we make the reformist attempt to relate it to the underlying unity of a universal 'in-differently binding validity' or of an accomplished and effective recognition. Recognition is misconceived if we believe we can simply know or re-cognize it, or even measure the misconceiving of recognition against this possibility.



Against majorities and minorities

The misconceiving of recognition which is involved in the reformist conception of the latter, a *misconceiving which cannot even be thought without the continual destabilization of recognition*, has one important consequence: drawing distinctions between the various majorities and minorities that struggle for recognition may well serve as a reformist strategy within the overall horizon of a unity based upon formal equality, but it also afflicts the majorities and minorities struggling for recognition with a perilous social blindness. For anyone who distinguishes majorities from minorities and ascribes him- or herself to this majority or that minority, can only address the essentially incommensurable and measureless moment which is harboured within the very movement of recognition by attempting to reduce this resistance to all measurability precisely to some measure, to a range of quantifying and identifying factors. In an essay discussing the question of measure, of minorities and majorities in the debate concerning multicultural societies, Werner Hamacher writes:

For any claim that is incommensurable with a purely quantitative representation according to equivalents, there is a voice which still ineluctably makes itself heard precisely in this representation – an other voice, and perhaps something other than a voice. The commensurable must render itself incommensurable, and the countable uncountable.¹⁰

Minorities that struggle for recognition, and the majorities that recognize them, must intrinsically blind themselves before the anarcho-revolutionary power of the measureless. Expressed in another way: a group that identifies itself as a minority can, fundamentally speaking, no longer struggle for recognition and has already become powerless in this struggle. When someone on the street of a North American city shouts 'Hey, faggot!' to a supposedly recognized individual, the latter feels outraged. Alternatively, someone who makes no appeal to the recognition of a fixed identity invents other, more novel, war machines.

The suspicion that no one is more powerless than someone who has struggled for recognition *as* a member of some minority or majority, adducing more or less convincing reasons and obtaining more or less successful results – the suspicion that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the one who has achieved recognition is the most powerless of all – this suspicion is transformed into an insight once we perceive that recognition, precisely because it only remains recognition to the degree that it does not solidify and objectify itself *as* recognition, suspends

the possibility of the 'as': the possibility of 'recognition as'. The moment of equilibrium, of equality in the struggle for recognition, may repeatedly promise or even open up this possibility, but it also suspends it precisely because it can never be wholly isolated or dialectically defined as a determinate result. The pre-predicative or linguistically articulated 'as' which determines what is present in its specific quiddity gets separated from itself in the struggle for recognition, even before it can constitute itself as a unity, as the 'as' itself, as the 'as' of an originary or subsequently modified understanding.

Following a suggestion of Michael Walzer it would appear useful to distinguish an explicit and complex 'recognition as this or that' from a 'simple recognition',¹¹ from the universal expectation with which one member of society may reasonably approach and engage with another. But every recognition which is supposed to serve the successful establishment of an equilibrium, an order or a framework, which is supposed to satisfy universal expectations, is implicitly or explicitly a form of 'recognition as', a recognition through which the recognized party can be recognized as a member of that group whose parameters are circumscribed by the framework and which is sustained in equilibrium by the order. *Thus the struggle for recognition reveals itself as a struggle for the 'as', for the structure of the 'as-such'; it reveals itself as a struggle for revealing-oneself-as-something.* Consequently we should not confuse the reification of recognition – something which eliminates the process of recognition and merely grasps recognition itself as the repetition and confirmation of a presupposed identity, precisely as 'recognition as' – with recognition and the struggle for recognition itself.

In the last analysis 'recognition as' proves inevitably to have concealed or excluded the alterity of the process of recognition. As a consequence of this concealment and this exclusion one no longer recognizes nor is recognized, because fundamentally one only ever recognizes oneself: the struggle for recognition becomes the struggle of the subject which strives either to include otherness within itself or to exclude otherness from itself. The politics of recognition becomes a fundamentalist and immanentist politics, irrespective of the intentions or the means with which it operates. Another limit to recognition: the annihilation of otherness through an absolute re-cognition, which is precisely what my struggle, *mein Kampf*, has in its sights.

Translated by Nicholas Walker

Notes

This essay is excerpted from Alexander García Düttmann's book *Zwischen den Kulturen. Spannungen im Kampf um Anerkennung (Between Cultures: Tensions in the Struggle for Recognition)*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1997.

1. María Zambrano, *La agonía de Europa*, Mondadori, Madrid, 1988, p. 42.
2. Jean Genet, *L'ennemi déclaré*, Gallimard, Paris, 1991, p. 9.
3. Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, Basic Books, New York, 1983, p. 254.
4. Oriol Pi de Cabanyes, *Repensar Catalunya*, Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1989, pp. 88–9.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
6. Christoph Menke, 'Warum und wie?', in *Babylon*, no. 13–14, Neue Kritik, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, p. 92.
7. Andrew Sullivan, *Virtually Normal: An Argument about Homosexuality*, Picador, London, 1995.
8. Menke, 'Warum und wie?', p. 94.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
10. Werner Hamacher, 'One 2 Many Multiculturalisms', manuscript 1994, pp. 30–31.
11. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. 258.