This dissertation concerns moral, social, and political recognition, specifically the social practices of its exchange. I argue that recognition is a good that regularly, for reasons integral to the need for recognition itself, evades our willful control. Drawing inspiration from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings, I show that common, important strategies we use to control and redistribute other moral, social, and political goods, when employed to manage and transform recognition relations, regularly spoil the recognition that is thereby secured. They do so, in each case, by diminishing the recognized’s confidence in the sincerity of the resulting act of recognition. I call these effects “practical inversions,” ways that recognition evades our grasp because of our efforts to manage it. In the central chapters of this dissertation, I articulate the structure of three of these practical inversions. I argue that recognition resists our efforts to struggle for it, functioning best when given spontaneously. I argue that recognition resists our efforts to institutionalize it, functioning best when given as an exception to reigning social norms. And I argue that recognition resists social scaling, functioning best in more intimate social engagement. Though I draw inspiration from Rousseau’s work in articulating these inversions, I articulate each without dependence on Rousseau’s controversial Romanticism, showing that these inversions spoil our efforts to manage recognition relations even when Romantic attitudes are absent, and so survive their refutation. These inversions
demonstrate the extent to which recognition is not a social resource that can be managed at will. And they demonstrate an intrinsic precarity and vulnerability in our relations to others throughout our moral, social and political lives.
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Joseph Nicholas Rees
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In recent years, theorists, activists, and individuals have found clarity and power in the language of “recognition.” This language has identified various harms we can experience, it has named a common need that humans have, and it has illuminated the role of the social and cultural world play in our flourishing. It has changed the way we speak both inside and outside the academy. A great deal of academic literature and cultural vocabulary has emerged from these conversations. What I want to suggest, however, is that there is a certain set of questions about recognition that have received comparatively little discussion, questions of urgent theoretical and practical importance: what are the social practices governing the bestowal and solicitation of recognition? And how do they make trouble for us in trying to manage the recognition orders of our cultural contexts? For short, call this a question asking after the “pragmatics” of recognition. And call the act of bestowing recognition (or misrecognition) a “recognitive.” In the following chapters, I answer these two questions in part. I will argue that recognition is unlike other goods in the extent to which it essentially resists our willful control.

In this introductory chapter, I will explain what recognition theory is and how it emerged. Then, I will focus in on the topic of this dissertation, the pragmatics of recognition, by distinguishing it from the bulk of recognition theory today. Most recognition theory today, I observe, is engaged either in what I call the “metaphysical project” or the “evaluative project.” The metaphysical project asks why and how humans are dependent on others’ attitudes about them. The evaluative project asks how current recognition relations are unjust and what just ones

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would look like. The pragmatic project, by contrast, asks how the social practices of soliciting and bestowing recognition are shaped as well as when these acts succeed or fail and why. I will argue that these often-neglected pragmatic questions ought to be of central importance to recognition theory for both theoretical and practical reasons. Then, I will introduce what is the central concern of this dissertation, what I call recognition’s “practical inversions.” Practical inversions, I will show throughout this dissertation, are ways that recognition evades our willful control. They are ways in which recognition is “slippery,” evading our grasp the harder we attempt to secure it. It is like trying to confidently hold a wet bar of soap in your hands: if you grasp too hard it slips away. Wet bars of soap are in this way subject to their own practical inversion: the harder you squeeze, the less secure your hold becomes. The practice is “inverted” because it rebounds on itself, having the opposite of its intended goal. Squeezing harder decreases your hold on the soap. In essence, this dissertation will argue that recognition is like that bar of soap. And recognition resists our control in these ways, I will argue, for non-accidental reasons, arising less from contingent, practical difficulties in securing recognition and more from the inner logic of the need for recognition itself. In the next three chapters, I identify and articulate the structure of three of these inversions. But first, in this introductory chapter, I take inventory of what has been said about recognition thus far and show that the important pragmatic question has been comparatively neglected.

I. WHAT IS RECOGNITION THEORY?

The pragmatics of recognition is a species of recognition theory more generally. So, first, let’s get clear - or clear enough for now - about what recognition theory as such is.
In philosophical literature, “recognition theory,” most generally, refers to an attentiveness to the degree to which a life is shaped by and so dependent upon others’ attitudes about that life. And so, seen through this lens, we can say that the ingredients of a healthy life include not just individual properties, like health or autonomy, but also social relations, how others relate to us.

In the history of philosophy, recognition theory is relatively modern, fully emerging first in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writing and then taking flight in G.W.F. Hegel’s writing and its descendants. Prior to this, as a general tendency, the supposed need for recognition was commonly raised in order to be dismissed. Aristotle counsels against the life of honor, the life seeking esteem or recognition from others, because it “seems to depend more on those who honor than on the one honored, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us.”2 The Stoics similarly advise against attachment to the circumstances of life over which we lack control, including the attitudes of others toward oneself.3 Broadly, those critical of emphasizing a need for recognition argue that recognition is an external good that ought only to follow upon the pursuit of goods internal to whatever achievement we are being recognized for. One should pursue, the thought goes, the goal and not the prize. And moreover, failure to secure recognition for whatever reason does not negate the value of the internal goods it might have praised. And so, recognition, while it may accrue some benefits to the recognized, is not necessary to a good life. A need for recognition, then, might be a signal of a corrupted psychology, putting the cart before the horse, and theorizing about recognition as a social good like health or security would unjustifiably promote recognition to a status above its station.

What changed? According to Charles Taylor, the emergence of a social and academic concern with recognition took two steps. The first was the gradual erosion of fixed social hierarchies in the course of the Modern era. Whereas one used to be born into a fixed social position accorded a fixed degree of honor, social positions became progressively more fluid and mobile. The second step was the emergence of a Romantic ethics of authenticity. We began to understand ourselves as having individual natures that our lives and actions could be true or false to. Herder writes that “each person has their own measure, as it were his own temperament made up of all his sensual feelings.” And so, “[t]he more deeply someone has climbed down into himself, into the structure and origin of his noblest thoughts, then the more he will…say ‘What I am, I have become.’” Where one once tried to live up to one’s social position, now one tries to express one’s “inner I.” Herder and others believed this to be also true of groups. Cultures were thought to have their own unique cluster of definitive attributes which are healthy to express and unhealthy to suppress. According to Taylor, these changes did not introduce dependence on one another’s attitudes anew – a peasant was always a peasant because others see him that way. Rather, it made misrecognition a pervasive possibility and a problem for the first time. Who one authentically is and how one is viewed by others could now conflict, and that become a site of contest and struggle.

Recognition theory eventually outgrew these roots. Even those of us today who are skeptical of the Romantic ethics of authenticity have learned to be sensitive to the ways interpersonal attitudes can help or harm individuals and groups. This concept came to its fullest

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7 *ibid.*, 197.
expression in the varieties of “new social movements” emerging in the 1960s and onward.

Recognition theory today instructs us to see human psychology as dependent on and vulnerable to the interpersonal attitudes directed toward it. It proposes viewing social conflict not just as a conflict of interests in search of resources, but also as an interpersonal engagement in search of mutual understanding. It is not just injurious to be underpaid, for example, it is also insulting, as that act indicates that my boss does not esteem my labor the same way I do. And recognition theory advises us to see culture, just as much as the state or the economy, as the domain of the political.  

II. TWO NEARBY LOOKALIKES

Philosophical literature on recognition is now vast and diverse. In the service of locating my focus here, the pragmatics of recognitive exchanges, I’d like to distinguish it from what I take to be the two main preoccupations of recognition theory, what I call the metaphysical and the evaluative projects. While each is in itself of great importance, neither wholly includes nor directly entails commitments for the pragmatic project. Yet each serves as a convincing enough lookalike to the pragmatic project that its independence and neglect often go unnoticed.

IIA. FIRST LOOKALIKE: THE METAPHYSICAL PROJECT

Recognition theory principally occupies itself, first, with a defense of its foundational claim that humans are vulnerable to and dependent on the others’ attitudes about them. We cannot simply ignore, recognition theorists argue, others’ attitudes about us. To that end, recognition theorists have articulated a taxonomy of aspects of a life that are influenced by

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corresponding types of recognition or misrecognition, and an interwoven taxonomy of the
mechanisms through which that interference affects its target. These observations will be helpful
in later chapters.

The first investigation often proceeds by philosophical anthropology. The recognition
theorist defends an account of a healthy human life, both conceptually and empirically, and
identifies those aspects of its functioning that depend to varying degrees on recognitive support.  
Following Axel Honneth and his commentators, recognition theorists today typically distinguish
four types of recognition: esteem, respect, love, and elementary recognition. Most literature in
recognition theory accepts or at least starts with this taxonomy, though some use different
terms.  

“Esteem” recognition corresponds most closely to our folk sense of the term. It names
attitudes that identify and affirm one’s unique traits, skills, and accomplishments (what Stephen
Darwall calls “appraisal respect”). Honneth argues that public esteem is necessary to the
maintenance of self-esteem. This is because we learn how to value ourselves through what others
say about us, and because others’ esteem is often practically necessary to maintain my estimable
talents and projects. A systematic lack of social esteem, the denigration of a minority way of life,
on the other hand, produces a dissonant and strained sense of self-esteem. Though each person
cannot be said to be entitled to esteem, since it must be earned, social struggles can pursue

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9 Honneth favored this approach in his foundational work *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. For a critical assessment of the aptness of a generalized anthropology to yield specific and contentful social criticism, see T. Pinkard, "Is Recognition a Basis for Social or Political Thought?" *Recognition Theory as Social Research*, ed. by Shane O’Neil and N. Smith, (Palgrave, 2012) pp. 21-38. In his more recent *Freedom’s Right*, Honneth prefers to derive the content of his recognition theory from immanent critique of existing social institutions rather than from a universalized anthropology.


equalized opportunity for esteem, as well as dispute the public metrics of esteem - what sorts of contributions are valued and in what way.

“Respect,” (or sometimes “rights”) names recognition of another’s autonomy (what Stephen Darwall calls “recognition respect”). Autonomy is the capacity to live by self-directed principles. Respect is owed to each human regardless of their individual accomplishments. Recognition theorists locate the conditions of autonomy not merely in the structure of individual agency but also in the social relations that support it. Autonomy, they argue, cannot be exercised without self-respect, a sense of one’s entitlement to live by self-authorized principles, and self-respect is dialogically cultivated through social signals of the equal dignity of all adult members of society.12 (Thus, recognition theorists principally justify legal protections of autonomy not merely by negatively defining the appropriate reach of state authority but rather by positively defending the good of self-respect that such rights grant to a healthy human life.)

“Love” is a somewhat technical term for Honneth. He has in mind principally the care given by parents to developing children. But Honneth and his followers often include friendship and romantic relationships in the same category of “love.” Honneth understands love in this technical sense to be unconditional, as infants and young children have no talents or accomplishments that earn them their guardians’ love. The presence of these formative care relations is thought necessary for the formation of “self-confidence,” meant technically as a basic and secure sense of self.13 Honneth and others appeal to both conceptual and empirical resources to argue that children lacking basic caring relationships from their parents often struggle to develop a secure sense of self and a basic sense of security in their social environments. The

support of parents gives infants and children a basic safety net to fall back on as they first develop their basic capacities and venture into the world. That security affords them confidence as they do. The limit form of misrecognition in this case is traumatizing abuse of and violence toward children and other intimates, which can shatter one’s confidence in oneself and trust in the world.

“Elementary” or “antecedent” recognition is the metaphysically deepest form of the four, in the sense that it underlies almost any human interaction. Any interpersonal human experience whatsoever presupposes in its functioning a structure of mutual recognition of others as analogously minded like oneself. It is what distinguishes interaction between persons, even when antagonistic or violent, from interaction with objects. Such basic, mutual recognition is variously thought be implicit in either the conditions of consciousness as such or in those of any intersubjective experience, no matter how alien or antagonistic its parties find themselves. The former is grounded in the thought that mindedness is a social, forensic concept that emerges out of engagement with other minded entities.14 The latter sees a recognition of another’s equal autonomy as a condition for the possibility of giving them any reason at all, including an order or a command, no matter how degrading its content.15 This implicit recognition is often thought to have an egalitarian idealized structure that is “covered over” or “lost” in patterns of social misrecognition.

Along these four dimensions, recognition theorists have enumerated sites of cognitive dependence in healthy human life, naming a distinct need for recognition in each case. Others have been critical of the need for recognition, by emphasizing the entanglement between

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practices of recognition and the operation of social power. The simplest version of this worry argues that the values in our culture are already misguided, and so advocating for recognition politics risks recognizing the wrong people for the wrong things. Contemporary America would likely recognize the workaholics and the wealthy, for example. A deeper version argues that the recognized can buy into these corrupted standards when they seek recognition. A compliant slave may sincerely seek recognition for her good behavior compared to her rebellious peers, for example. At its most radical, this line of thinking argues that in any case recognition is a social practice that confines the recognized in a predictable, manageable social identity over time, and that this limits creativity and freedom. Proponents of this view defend a need to be unpredictable that is suppressed by too much recognition. In the name of freedom and creativity, they defend a need to be misrecognized.

This anthropological project identifies the aspects of a human life that are dependent on recognition and vulnerable to misrecognition. The second axis of the metaphysical project describes the various mechanisms through which an act of recognition or misrecognition can affect its target, describing their operation and force.

The first mechanism is the impressionability of human psychology. We tend to internalize the environment of images in which we are immersed, and to construct both an image of ourselves and of our life options out of those internalized materials. This approach takes cultural "representation" as the chief site of recognition and misrecognition. While examples of this form of influence are readily available – we are all susceptible to beauty standards in advertising, for

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16 For an extended engagement between “pro-” and “anti-recognition” theorists, see B. van den Brink & D. Owen, eds. Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory (Cambridge University Press, 2007)
example – focusing too heavily on such examples risks underestimating recognition’s full power and our vulnerability to it. When we speak of our “impressionability” to representation and misrepresentation, it is tempting to appeal to somewhat hydraulic metaphors, as if contaminating materials were “leaking in” to the mind of the one recognized. This promotes the unfortunate impression that susceptibility to such influence is sub-rational, provoking the familiar rejoinder that such influence can be fortified against through heightened cognitive resolve and a broadened imagination. The following mechanisms of influence, by contrast, are comparatively stronger, non-optional, and binding even on rational and strong-willed agents.

An updated account of this mechanism might emphasize that such impressionability does not represent a lapse of responsibility or resolve because it is in fact epistemically appropriate. The social environment of images, the thought goes, is the only source from which the materials of one’s identity can be drawn, and so there is no identity formation that is not influenced by consultation with its available materials. And additionally, when forming an image of how one already is, it is epistemically appropriate to consult with one’s peers in determining both the attributes that one in fact instantiates, as well as the praiseworthiness of those one might aspire to, and so receptiveness to recognitive input can be epistemically virtuous. In essence, while the previous version of this mechanism sees humans as unfortunately susceptible to others’ opinions about them, this latter version sees us as appropriately so.

A third, deeper mechanism focuses on the ways in which recognitive speech acts can alter the target’s practical environment. The way others recognize us change what we are practically and socially able to do. If legislators view immigrants as criminals that attitude can stop them at the border. Seen this way, recognitive influence occurs not in the space of causes, as the language of “impressionability” tend to suggest, but rather in the space of reasons, altering the
discursive environment in which their target move. Thus, according to this approach, vulnerability to recognition’s power to shape one’s identity is neither irrational nor weak-willed, binding even the most resolved agents.\(^{18}\)

A final, deepest pass argues that some of a person’s identity and character traits are wholly or in part constituted by others’ attitudes. Many social offices are constituted by others’ attitudes.\(^{19}\) To be a teacher just is to be seen as such by students and administrators, for example. Many of the character traits that we value are also so constituted. Mark Alfano observes that “[i]t seems quite plausible that being charming depends in part on being thought charming. It’s hard to charm people who sneer at you. And it seems natural to say that being leaderly (to coin a term) depends in part on being thought leaderly.”\(^{20}\) So, too, with being irritating, domineering, intimidating, calming, seductive or entertaining. With respect to these attributes and offices, one’s identity is in part constituted by how one is recognized, and so is inseparably dependent on it.

Finally, some recognition theorists argue that recognition influences our lives not just in the domain of “identity politics,” where we explicitly debate about which ways of life are deserving of which attitudes, but also that it infused through most moral and political engagement as such.\(^{21}\) These approaches often appeal to the phenomenology of reactive attitudes. Reactive attitudes are those attitudes that evaluatively react to the attitudes about oneself that are expressed in another’s behavior, like gratitude, resentment, or forgiveness.\(^{22}\) You resent my stepping on your foot maliciously, rather than when I do by accident, even if the pain

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\(^{19}\) For example, see R. Kukla, "Performative Force, Convention, and Discursive Injustice." Hypatia 29.2 (2014): 440-457.


\(^{21}\) N. Fraser & A. Honneth. Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical exchange (Verso, 2003), 114-159.

\(^{22}\) P. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment” and Other Essays. (Routledge, 2008).
is equal, because of the attitude toward you that such action expresses, adding “insult to injury,” so to speak. And it can be argued that whenever reactive attitudes are at play in interpersonal interaction a recognition or misrecognition of some sort is at play, since reactive attitudes are typically responsive to interpersonal attitudes expressed in another’s behavior. You resent the low wage I pay you because it makes you feel undervalued by me. If I make room for you in the subway you feel respected by me. So, even when recognition is not the explicit topic of conversation, it is implicitly at play. This covers almost the entire field of moral and political engagement, though it is plausible that some economic or environmental systems cause injustices not experienced at the level of reactive attitudes, so there are some political issues that have no recognitive phenomenology.

IIB. SECOND LOOKALIKE: THE EVALUATIVE PROJECT

The second principal preoccupation of current recognition theory is evaluative. It uses the language of recognition to generate principles of justice, to critique existing social arrangements, and to lend clarity to lived experiences of injustice. Here I’ll give some representative examples of each.

The theories of justice typically appeal to structures of recognition that “underlie” or are “implicit” in everyday interpersonal engagement – what I called “elementary recognition” above – as normative standards. Even when on the surface we have antagonistic interpersonal attitudes toward one another, there is an implicit structure of recognition that makes that interaction possible and with which it conflicts. This creates a practical and psychological tension that is only alleviated when these antagonistic attitudes are overcome. A theory of morality or justice can base itself, then, on that implicit structure, modeling what it would look like to make that
implicit structure explicit. The two main exemplars of this approach are Stephen Darwall and Axel Honneth. Darwall argues that an egalitarian relationship underlies and makes possible second-personal engagement, out of which a contractarian ethics can be generated. Honneth argues that basic social institutions have a fundamental purpose that their participants consent to from which they often stray, straining social relations, and that justice involves bringing them back in line with that underlying purpose and so harmonizing social relationships.

The evaluative project also employs recognition theory in the service of social critique. Honneth, for example, critiques social institutions for straying from their underlying, justifying purposes he extracted in his theory of justice. More commonly, however, recognition theorists engage in social critique without first constructing abstract and comprehensive theories of justice in recognition terms, as Honneth and Darwall do. Instead, they give a vivid, clarifying descriptions of a particular injustice using the language of recognition. These approaches are less abstract and more concrete For example, in “The Negro and Recognition,” a chapter in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon produces a phenomenology of the particular recognitive situation in which black former slaves and their descendants find themselves in Europe and its former colonies. Also, in “Shame and Gender,” Sandra Lee Bartky gives a descriptive account of the way that gendered shame is produced and enforced in the typical classroom. In any case,

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26 F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (Grove Press, 2008).
the point of these critical accounts is to use the language of recognition to evaluate and criticize existing social arrangements.

III. THE PRAGMATICS OF RECOGNITIVE EXCHANGES

While theories of recognition have received extended and lively philosophical discussion, I want to distinguish these two conversations, the *metaphysical* and the *evaluative*, from a third: that of the *pragmatics* of recognitive exchanges.

To ask after the pragmatics of recognitive exchanges is to ask after the rules internal to the social practices of recognition that adjudicate those which are properly and defectively executed. By recognitive “exchanges” I mean acts that either bestow or solicit recognition. In the parlance of speech-act theory, I ask after the “felicity conditions” of recognitive exchanges, that is, those conditions that must be met for a recognitive act to succeed in effecting its intended normative change.\(^\text{28}\) A felicity condition of my summoning you to jury duty, for example, is that I am so authorized by the state, while a “summons” issued by someone not so entitled is for that reason defective as a speech act. Recognitive exchanges are equally subject to such felicity conditions. It is these norms which give struggles for recognition their dramatic and narrative shape.

An investigation of these norms governing recognitive exchanges is made pressing by the thoroughly social nature of recognition as a good. Whereas contrasting needs, say the need for water, can be satisfied or unsatisfied regardless of the social rituals through which water is procured - if you gift it to me or I steal it from you, say - the satisfaction of a need for recognition and its social performance are inextricably linked. If you procure water from me in

some socially inappropriate way you may feel awkward or I may feel resentful but you will nevertheless be hydrated. If I seek to recognize you in some way but fail in that performance, by contrast, you are not just saddled with an awkward performance but with a lack of recognition. The good itself inheres in the practices of its distribution. Thus, strictly speaking, there is no good “recognition” that can be abstracted from the social practices of its exchange. Such an abstraction risks reifying it into a good, like water, that can be distributed at will. In this respect, the pragmatic question ought to take on an unprecedented centrality in recognition theory compared to distributive questions, which treat pragmatic questions as merely secondary questions of implementation.

Appreciating this fact – that, ontologically, recognition as a good is inseparable from its social practices of exchange – sharpens the distinction between the pragmatic question on one hand, and the metaphysical and evaluative ones on the other. For social practices are by their nature temporally extended. They are scripts that we follow to take us from one social situation to another. The two lookalikes, in contrast, give time-slice accounts of those endpoints. The metaphysical project asks how humans are dependent upon and vulnerable to recognition. The evaluative project describes unjust misrecognition and just recognition and urges transition from one to the other. The pragmatic question asks about what happens in between. It asks after the social practices that govern the transition from misrecognition to recognition, and the extended interpersonal drama that we are likely to encounter along the way.

One might think that we learn everything we need to know about the pragmatic question from the metaphysical and evaluative ones, namely: love, respect, and esteem people in healthy and appropriate ways. We might think the only way these practices can go wrong is if we recognize each other in inaccurate or unhealthy ways. But this is a mistake. Even an accurate and
commendable act of recognition can fail if it is performed incorrectly. To see this, consider, for instance, Hilde Lindemann Nelson’s imagined response of a nurse to her employing hospital’s “Nurse Recognition Day”: “If you need a Recognition Day, it must be because you knew you weren’t recognized, and why would you draw attention to that?” Or, imagine that your partner expresses love to you by coldly saying “I hereby express my affection.” In both cases, even if the content of the act of recognition is appropriate and commendable, the performance misfires, and so the act of recognition fails.

In what follows, I attempt to fill in our understanding of these pragmatics in more detail. In doing so, I do not take myself to be disagreeing with existing recognition theories so much as advancing the conversation by asking a different and underappreciated question. Because I am asking a different question than those that occupy most existing literature, my concerns are orthogonal to theirs.

IV. PRACTICAL INVERSIONS

Throughout this project, I take regular inspiration from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings. I am principally drawn to Rousseau’s writings because of their literary style. Where other philosophers write abstract theories, Rousseau writes novels, plays, dialogues, and autobiographies. This is beneficial because, as I suggested in Section III above, the pragmatics of recognition manifest most vividly in participant, rather than observer, descriptions and they tend to slip from our attention at too abstract levels of discussion. Rousseau’s literary style helps us stay well-oriented on both counts.

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My aim is to uncover and articulate three different “practical inversions” in the pragmatics of recognition. A practical inversion occurs when our efforts to intervene in and transform the orders of recognition in our social environment are subversive to that very goal. Taken together, these three suggest that recognition is a good that, to a significant degree, evades our manipulative interventions. It is as though recognition resists and retaliates against our efforts to manage it. I was brought to think about these practical inversions by reading Rousseau. Throughout his work, he seems to value recognition but to be frustratingly unable to comfortably navigate social space in securing and managing it. It is as if he senses that recognition will be spoiled by his willful agency in securing it. This drives Rousseau into some odd behavior, trying to manage the recognitive environment without seeming to try, attempting to bestow and solicit recognition obliquely rather than being too direct, or appealing to dramatic self-delusions and social manipulation to transform the recognitive environment. Finding Rousseau’s anxiety somehow both familiar and foreign, I wanted to see what charitable sense I could make of it. I am more interested, though, in asking whether we could relate to Rousseau’s anxieties, here and now, than to make coherent sense of historical texts. So, though I orient my thoughts with Rousseau’s, my aims are not ultimately exegetical. Rather, they are an attempt to articulate a Rousseauian pragmatics of recognition on their own.

Let me give two familiar examples of recognition’s practical inversions. First, some might seek to secure recognition by physical coercion, literally forcing someone to say that they recognize them. But love, respect, and esteem cannot be gained in this way. You might coerce me into acting out or parroting such attitudes, but not the attitudes themselves. Recognizing that, you would likely be dissatisfied with recognition so secured. And so, we know that seeking to
secure recognition by force is subversive to that very goal. Recognition must be given freely. This is a practical inversion: recognition resists coercion.

Here is another example. When desiring the esteem of others, many will pursue positions of social prestige, such as positions of political power or celebrity. They seek these offices because they are vocally and publicly celebrated by others in their community. However, immediately following the famous opening line of *On the Social Contract*, “Man is born free, and everywhere in chains,” Rousseau writes that “[h]e who believes himself the master of others does not escape being more of a slave than they.” From these positions of social power, Rousseau recognizes, the esteem expressed by others is of diminishing value. The more power you secure, the less confident you are that others are sincerely esteeming you, and not simply feigning esteem under threat of the social power you now wield. The rich and powerful are swarmed by those who compliment their character and appearance, laugh at their jokes, and endorse their reasoning. But some, if not many, of these admirers would not act this way but for that wealth and power, and the wealthy and powerful often recognize this. The lesson of this story is that pursuing the esteem of others by securing positions of social power is subversive to that goal because confidence in the sincerity of the esteem secured is inversely proportional to the power secured. It’s lonely at the top. Recognition works best in conditions of equality. This is a second practical inversion: recognition resists inequality.

These two models are illustrative and important. But when they are presented as the sole models of such inversions, it cultivates the impression that the precarity of recognition is solely a byproduct of injustice. Coercion and inequality are things we already recognize as unjust. From that point of view, recognition is spoiled when the powerful seek to secure it from the powerless,

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whether by force or unintended extortion. One might reasonably think that the moral of the story
is that in cases of coercion and under conditions of inequality is recognition spoiled in this way.
The prescription would then be to eradicate injustice, establishing conditions of liberty and
equality, and then such precarities would disappear. The three practical inversions I articulate in
the following chapters, however, do not supervene on independently morally or politically
suspect social arrangements as neatly. In each case, recognition proves to evade our
interventionist efforts for reasons of its own. Securing social liberty and equality, then, will not
eradicate these problems with managing recognition that I will survey. They are problems arising
from the need for recognition itself and arise even when no there is no moral or political fault to
assign.

A word about the scope of my ambitions here and about the aspects of Rousseau from
which I take inspiration. By analogy, compare Hobbes. In Hobbes’s social and political writings,
we can distinguish between diagnostic and prescriptive projects. Hobbes’s diagnostic writings
argue that life in the state of nature is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”31 His prescriptive
writings argue that the social contract and the Leviathan are the solutions to that problem.
Fruitful intellectual labor to this day is spent explaining how, why, and to what extent the state of
nature is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,” for instance using game-theoretic models. But
those who do are presumably not arguing that we should, as a result, stay in the state of nature.
Instead, they are articulating the full extent of the challenges we face in doing so. Here, I
understand myself to be doing the same with respect to recognition theory in Rousseau. I am
articulating the significant challenges we face on our way to the recognition orders we want. But

I am not claiming that these challenges are in principle insurmountable or that doing so is undesirable.\textsuperscript{32}

My motivation to this end is more of a curious exploration than a confident defense. A favorite book on Rousseau relatably begins “I am not a Rousseauian, nor do I know anyone who is…[But] Rousseau is one of the progenitors of the modern mind, one of the discoverers of that world of hopes and feelings, of categories and questions, in which we all now find ourselves living. And thus his writings are personally important to us – like a lost diary from our own childhood – as a means to our own self-understanding and liberation.”\textsuperscript{33} Needing to clarify (and perhaps exorcise) my inner Rousseauian, I set out in his defense, more confident that someone needed to give him a voice in today’s conversations, and that we could all learn in the process, than that his ideas will turn out, at the end of the day, to be right.

V. SINCERITY AND INSINCERITY

In both inversions just discussed – that recognition resists coercion and inequality – the problem arises because the recognition secured seems insincere to the recognized. Forced recognition seems insincere, as does pandering to the rich and powerful. In fact, in what follows, this will be the central problem in all three inversions I discuss: recognition resists our willful management because it makes the resulting recognition seem \textit{insincere} in various ways. Before diving into these practical inversions, I should address a complication that is likely to emerge. Discussions of sincerity and insincerity require some clarity regarding the metaphysics of attitudes. We are sincere when our demonstrated attitudes match our actual attitudes and

\textsuperscript{32} Textually, for that reason, I take inspiration less from Rousseau’s prescriptive works, like \textit{On the Social Contract} and \textit{Emile}, and more from his diagnostic works, like the three discourses, as well as the later works in which he resigns himself to the failure of his prescriptive projects, like the three autobiographies.

\textsuperscript{33} A. Melzer, \textit{The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought} (The University of Chicago Press, 1990), i-xi.
insincere when they do not. What we call sincere and insincere acts of recognition will depend, then, on what we believe constitutes the recognizer’s actual attitudes on one hand, and what constitutes her false attitudes on the other. This, however, is a topic of vexed philosophical debate, one that could threaten to engulf and crowd out my ultimate topic here if I gave due attention to every aspect of them. And, at any rate, I hope that my arguments and conclusions will be agonistic with respect to these debates, evading controversy in them, so I will now say what I can to bypass it.

At the most general level, we can either think that attitudes are *in your head* and that they are *in your behavior*. The first approach holds that attitudes are, roughly, thoughts that are like sentences in your mind, that you generate in internal monologue, and that are accessible through something like introspection. Call these “intellectualist” views. On this view, an ordinary person has at least the best access to these attitudes, and so they are the best judges of the sincerity of their demonstrated attitudes. So, an act of recognition would be sincere if, for example, I said I liked you and that spoken sentence matched the sentence in my head, and it would be insincere if they did not match, if the actual thought in my head was “I hate you.” This view has the benefit of matching our folk intuitions and folk psychology about attitudes and sincerity. It is burdened by an overly complex metaphysics of mind (is there a sentence in my head for every single attitude I have?) and because it gives an individual effectively preemptory authority in adjudicating their own sincerity.

Or, on the other hand, we might think that attitudes are, roughly, summaries of an individual’s behavior. Call these “behaviorist” views. So, if I said that I liked you it would be sincere if I got visibly excited by your presence, invited you to my parties, and the like. It would be insincere if I got uncomfortable around you or avoided you. This view naturalizes the
metaphysics of mind and distributes the adjudication of sincerity, but it deviates from some folk psychology and intuitions in these matters.

Both views must have *some* account of sincerity and insincerity. No matter your metaphysics of mind and attitudes, it is an ineliminable fact about human life that I can pretend that I like you when I do not, or I can pretend that I hate you when I do not. So, both views have to explain sincerity and insincerity, just perhaps differently. Here, in order to sidestep these difficult debates, I will operate with a definition of insincerity for the rest of this project that accommodates both these camps. *A demonstration of an attitude is insincere at least when it is caused and sustained by some reason irrelevant to the actor’s evaluation of the trait appraised.*

So, for example, if I said that I liked your sense of humor, but only because you could get me a job, and stopped when you lost that power, that compliment is insincere. It is insincere on the behaviorist view because the attitude that my broader behavior evidences is that I want to be in your favor when it is to my benefit, not that I like your sense of humor. And though on the intellectualist view I hold the ultimate authority in judging my sincerity, to you it would have to seem insincere because nothing about your sense of humor changed, so my opinion of it cannot have rationally changed. Throughout I will depend only on standard of insincerity – an expressed attitude is insincere if it is caused and sustained by irrelevant reasons – to demonstrate these practical inversions, and so sidestep this vexed debate regarding the metaphysics of attitudes.

VII. ROMANTICISM

The practical inversions I will articulate in what follows have not been discussed at length in either the recognition literature or the literature on Rousseau. But when they are discussed informally, I notice it is tempting to blame them on Rousseau’s Romanticism. Like all
Romantics, Rousseau had a version of the view that we are at our best or our true selves when we act “according to nature,” expressing our natural selves. Recognition resists our willful control, on this reading, because our willful control takes us away from nature in various ways. But such Romanticism is out of fashion today. If these inversions did in fact arise from Rousseau’s Romanticism, then we non-Romantics today would no longer have to worry about them. But a central goal this project is to show that they need not be. Rather than appeal to “sincerity” in the overwrought and outdated Romantic sense of “living according to nature,” I will appeal to it only in the intuitive and uncontroversial sense of telling the truth about your opinions without lying, pretense, sarcasm, bullshitting, and the like. And I will appeal more often to standards of insincerity than standards of sincerity, for reasons outlined in the previous section. This will show that we today are gripped by these inversions in our social practices of recognition even if we are not full-blown Romantics like Rousseau.

In the following three chapters, I will appeal to initial insights in Rousseau’s writing to articulate three more practical inversions: that recognition resists struggle, that it resists institutionalization, and that it resists scaling. Then, in the conclusion, I will begin to respond to some concerns and questions I anticipate you will have about the implications of those inversions.
CHAPTER TWO:
CAN THERE BE A ‘STRUGGLE’ FOR RECOGNITION?

“But how will the person who feels worthy of honor and esteem, yet who the public freely disfigured and defamed, adopt a tone that does himself justice? Should he speak with praise that is merited but generally denied? Should he boast of the qualities he feels he has but which everyone refuses to see? There would be less pride than baseness in thus prostituting the truth.”
-Jean-Jacques Rousseau

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, social theorists and activists have increasingly described the pursuit of justice for socially marginalized groups as a “struggle for recognition.” Women and LGBT activists struggle against cultural degradation. Ethnic and religious minorities often strive to have their unique ways of life socially esteemed, and that esteem is sometimes codified in group rights. And beyond these more obviously cultural concerns, some philosophers have also argued that struggles for recognition also underlie struggles for a just economic distribution. You may also “struggle for recognition” in your everyday life, with your friends, family, and colleagues. Each activity takes a different form, but we now refer to each under the loose umbrella term of a “struggle for recognition.”

The language of a “struggle for recognition” is beneficial because it foregrounds the cultural, and not merely material, venue of such struggles. It also suggests that their

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participants - recognizer and recognized - engage not just in a “conflict of interest,” advancing their respective interests in conditions of scarcity, but also in a “moral conflict,” engaging in dialogue about which persons and pursuits are deserving of which social attitudes. That is, the motivation driving the struggle for recognition is often a felt sense of insult rather than merely of injury. In turn, recognition theorists have developed broader social and political philosophies around this theme, drawing from historical philosophical views to articulate social theories and theories of justice in which a “struggle for recognition” is central. While these theories elucidate and inform existing struggles, the language of a “struggle for recognition” now has a social life of its own, sometimes converging with, sometimes departing from, and sometimes remaining plastic and agnostic with respect to these theoretical accounts. In any case, the language of a “struggle for recognition” has not just described but also shaped the way actors move in their social and political environments, as one of many “metaphors we live by.” It describes to agents and activists the narrative drama of their pursuits: they should feel like a struggle - a struggle to change the attitudes of their peers or compatriots. In this chapter I explore the implications of this language.

Thus far, theorists have paid more attention to the “recognition” half of the phrase “struggle for recognition.” These inquiries have been fruitful, but my focus here is different. I want to draw attention to the “struggle” half of the phrase “struggle for recognition.” When I struggle for recognition, what am I doing? How is it similar to or different than other sorts of struggles? What unique challenges does it pose?

41 G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
To that end, in this chapter, I aim to identify and articulate an effect of recognition struggles, which I call “agential rebound,” which is familiar in intimate recognitive engagement, but is often forgotten when writ large, practically or theoretically. “Agential rebound” names a common reaction of strugglers to recognition bestowed: they often find an act of recognition unsatisfying because they had struggled for it. I imagine you have felt this way before. But this is a puzzling outcome. Why should we be dissatisfied with getting what we want? In this chapter, I argue that it is because recognition strugged for is difficult to perceive as sincere. Once uncovered, this phenomenon illustrates that the “struggle” and “recognition” aspects of a “struggle for recognition” can sometimes be in practical tension. In demonstrating this one complexity, I hope to nurture a broader impression that in a “struggle for recognition” the “struggle” engaged in is just as conceptually complex as the “recognition” procured.

II. EXAMPLE: SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Let me give an example of agential rebound, and of the dissatisfaction it creates for those who struggle for recognition. A representative case of a social “struggle for recognition” is the effort to socially esteem and legally recognize same-sex marriages. Only recently, in the United States a majority of the electorate morally objected to same-sex relationships and their legal recognition, as did politicians in both major parties, and such marriages were not legally permitted. Activists engaged in a prolonged struggle to have same-sex marriages legally recognized. Prior to their legalization, Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton famously switched their positions on the matter from opposing to favoring their legal recognition.

After switching her position, Clinton, who had long objected to same-sex marriages, morally and legally, penned, during the 2016 presidential campaign, a thorough and fully
affirmative editorial outlining her stance on LGBT issues for the *Philadelphia Gay News*. No United States presidential candidate in history had ever made such a comprehensive and supportive statement regarding LGBT issues during their campaign. The most uprated comment on the article online, however, reads: “The sentiment is appreciated, and Hillary has done a lot on the international stage for LGBT rights, this cannot be ignored, but I still can't shake a certain suspected ‘lack of sincerity’ that comes with pandering, a technique common to all politicians, not just Hillary. The fact that she only has come around to supporting Gay Marriage in 2013 still bothers me, I don't actually know anyone who took that long to come around to believing in Gay Rights.”42 This claim generated much more discussion in that article’s comment thread than any other, with dozens weighing in offering evidence of the sincerity or insincerity of Clinton’s position. After two weeks of discussion and almost 200 comments on this theme, commenting was disabled, and existing comments were hidden on the website, though they are still accessible through internet archives. This bestowal of recognition was partly unsuccessful in its aims because many readers were unable to wholeheartedly accept it. The cited cause of their dissatisfaction, though, was not the content of the op-ed, which was bold and thorough, or even Clinton’s policy record on LGBT issues - the comment above praises that record - but rather its timing. For many, the fact that Clinton’s affirmation of same-sex marriage came only after a struggle for its recognition was well underway clouded the sincerity of her act.

This skepticism about the sincerity of the recognition bestowed by Clinton, Obama, and others was not uncommon. Dan Savage, a prominent commentator on U.S. LGBT politics, tried to mitigate this reaction. His response was, in my estimation, the one that gained the most ground against such skepticism at the time. He wrote, “Hillary Clinton’s support for marriage equality

may be a political calculation. And you know what? We worked hard to change the math so that those political calculations would start adding up in our favor. So, sincere change of heart or political calculation: either way, I will take it. Why should they come around on our issues, why should they switch sides or change their votes, if we’re going to go after them hammer and tongs for the positions they used to hold?” Savage is attempting to mitigate this anxiety about the sincerity of the recognition bestowed. But notice that he does not do so by giving evidence that the bestowed recognition was in fact sincere. Instead, Savage suggests that, in order to strategically advance their desired political aims, sexual minorities should forego concern with the sincerity of the recognition bestowed: “sincere change of heart or political calculation: either way, I will take it.” And so, in this case it seems two practical options were available to strugglers: either proceed with an ambivalent verdict about the sincerity of the bestowal or forego such concern with the sincerity of the bestowal in the name of political expedience.

What accounts for this non-ideal outcome? The explanation is partially circumstantial. Clinton herself had developed an undeserved reputation during that election cycle as calculating and untrustworthy. But what I hope to show in this chapter, is that, independent of such circumstantial factors, suspicion of the sincerity of a bestowal of recognition is often a predictable outcome of the fact that recognition is struggled for. In the remainder of this chapter, I aim to explain why, and to uncover the theoretical and practical consequences of this fact.

III. PRELIMINARIES AND OUTLINE

Before I do so, two preliminary comments about the scope of my ambitions are in order. First, my aim here is not prescriptive. I do not, in this context, wish to suggest anything about

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how activists and other agents should or should not conduct themselves in social and political life. My aim is rather to diagnose and articulate a practical problem that those who struggle for recognition face in a way that explains past difficulties in doing so and also helps future theorists and activists perceive that difficulty. While many practical constraints that might face the implementation of moral and political principles are empirical and contingent, and so outside the philosopher’s wheelhouse, agential rebound, I hope to show, arises from the standards internal to the need for recognition itself, and so benefits from phenomenological articulation and conceptual analysis.

Second, following Axel Honneth, recognition theorists have rightly observed that there are different types of recognition, and I mainly have struggles for only one of those types in sight here. Honneth distinguish between at least four types of recognition: elementary, love, respect, and esteem.44 Elementary, or “antecedent” recognition is recognition of another as a minded entity with which one is or could be engaged with second-personally; this form of recognition singles persons with which we interact out of the environment of objects upon which we merely act. “Love,” for recognition theorists, refers to the intimate emotional bonds, whether familial, friendly, or erotic, that cultivate and support the beloved’s basic capabilities. Respect, sometimes called “rights,” or “recognition respect,” is an acknowledgement of the equivalence of all autonomous beings, and so a conviction to restrict one’s behavior to that compatible with their autonomy’s functioning. Esteem, sometimes called “appraisal respect,” is understood as the acknowledgment of a particular attribute of an individual or group as exhibiting a praiseworthy virtue, broadly defined.

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In this chapter, I take esteem or appraisal respect as my principal focus. This particular focus is appropriate because modern recognition struggles tend to express their desired goal not as an acknowledgement of human equality – the language of recognition respect – but as an affirmation of cultural difference – the language of esteem or appraisal respect. That is, their rhetoric tends to celebrate diversity rather than respecting sameness. Iris Young says, in other words, that they “insist on the positive value of their specific culture or experience,” rather than “promot[ing] equal treatment.” They thus seek what Honneth calls “esteem” and Darwall calls “appraisal respect” rather than what each calls “rights” and “recognition respect,” respectively. Not all do, but many do.

In recognition theory, “esteem” does not carry its folk sense as an acknowledgement of special distinction that celebrities and royalty might enjoy, bestowing social indicators of that status such as applause and trophies – the class of goods we encourage children not to value. Rather, it names the moral or aesthetic approval of a certain attribute or pursuit, instead of disapproval, contempt, or disgust. This form of recognition is at issue whenever we debate the value of individual or cultural attitudes towards groups or lifestyles, such as stereotypes, media representation, and moral or religious approval. Someone is appraised or esteemed whenever they are identified with a distinctive attribute and positively evaluated under that description, explicitly or implicitly. Misrecognition in these cases either misdescribes the recognized, wrongly evaluates the attribute, or both. “Refugees are criminals,” “veterans are inspiring,” and “Garcin is a coward” are all examples of esteem (appraisal respect) or its absence.

47 An ongoing debate assesses the relative centrality of rights or recognition respect and esteem or appraisal respect to both existing social struggles and to the demands of justice. This is one front in the debate over the relative priority of the “right” and the “good” to such matters. Another debate weighs the relative importance of struggles for recognition against struggles for redistribution in implementing a just society. In principally focusing on struggles for recognition
These distinctions make tidy abstractions from a much messier reality. Often it is not clear whether we are seeking or bestowing elementary recognition, love, respect, or esteem. Sometimes it is clear enough. I can struggle to be esteemed as a good painter without thereby seeking critics’ love or respect. But sometimes it is much harder. For example, many who morally object to homosexuality claim to respect homosexuals as persons but object to homosexuality as such. Others criticize this stance as incoherent. Especially where deep social prejudices are involved, there is substantial, murky overlap between respect and esteem. It may be logically possible to recognize another’s autonomy but say that because she is a woman she is bad at math, but its psychological possibility is strained. For clarity’s sake, though, I will make my central claims first about struggles for esteem as such, and then I will revisit these distinctions again in Section IX.

Struggles for esteem or appraisal respect occur whenever the recognized contests the way they are described and evaluated by their recognizer, whether an individual or social group, and seek to replace it with a description and evaluation that the recognized endorses. Unpacking the metaphor, if recognition is “struggled for,” then the strugglers’ desired outcome is fixed. That is, strugglers have a particular attitude they seek to instill in their recognizers, and it is on that basis that they judge the success of their struggle. So, strugglers set out to persuade their recognizers with a set outcome in mind. In this way, a struggle for recognition differs from an open-ended conversation about the merits of certain ways of life, in which participants are not wed to a particular outcome as a metric of their success.

[footnote:here, specifically those for esteem or appraisal respect, I do not mean to prejudice either debate one way or another. Foundational or not, esteem struggles play a significant role in our personal and political lives, and so their structure is worth investigating for its own sake. And even if you believe that establishing rights or recognition respect is the ultimate mark of morality or justice, struggling against esteem or appraisal mistreatment is nevertheless central to correcting the immorality or injustice of any existing social context.]
IV. THE PRAGMATICS OF STRUGGLES & BESTOWALS

When I say that my concern here is with the “struggle” of a “struggle for recognition,” I mean that my concern is with the *pragmatics* of recognition. Specifically, I focus on the practices of soliciting and bestowing recognition with an eye to the norms that govern them, adjudicating between those functionally and defectively performed. As I argued in the previous chapter, this pragmatic question ought to be of pressing importance to recognition theory. So, what are the basic norms governing the solicitation and bestowal of recognition?

We best perceive social norms when someone violates them. Norms governing conversational volume, for example, pass unnoticed until someone speaks too loudly or softly. So, we can identify some norms governing the bestowal of recognition by examining cases where the recognizer finds a struggle inappropriate or a recognized finds a bestowal unsatisfying and asking why.

Some of these are readily familiar. The recognized can protest that the *content* of the bestowal is factually or evaluatively incorrect. Immigrant groups might deny that their presence is a drain on social resources, or a religious minority might deny that their ascetic practices waste their lives’ potential, for example.

Recognized parties also find *coerced* or *commanded* bestowals unsatisfactory, whether coerced or commanded by the recognized or by a third party. That is why it is funny that, in the television show *Arrested Development*, the “Alliance of Magicians” carries the tagline “We Demand to Be Taken Seriously!” It is why you cannot literally force someone to like your cooking. The recognized would likely say that, because the recognizer was compelled to express recognition through physical or normative force, such a bestowal is no more an act of recognition that that of an actor on a stage. It simply mirrors the look of recognition. They might also suspect
coerced or commanded recognition is unstable, as it is likely to cease once such compulsion ceases, and so cannot be relied upon as an asset in extended social agency.

And some theorists believe unequal bestowals of recognition respect to be practically confused. Recognition respect is an acknowledgement of another’s rational and moral autonomy. If I seek such recognition from someone who I believe to lack such rational autonomy, I cannot have confidence in whatever recognition they bestow. If this is true, then soliciting recognition respect from an inferior is a self-defeating aim, as is bestowing it upon a superior. On these grounds, some Hegelians argue that struggles for recognition respect have a naturally equalizing tendency, because only in a condition of mutuality do these predictable dissatisfactions cease.48 However, these reflections do not inform us about the shape of struggles for esteem or appraisal respect, since they exhibit no similarly equalizing tendency. There is no practical contradiction in seeking recognition as a good cook from someone who is not a good cook, for example. This is why some have rightly called aspirations to equality of esteem or appraisal respect “a bad joke.”49

I take it that these intuitions are the ones that are generally ready-to-hand. So, we are comfortable saying that a bestowal of esteem or appraisal recognition is defective if it is descriptively or evaluatively inaccurate, the recognizer was coerced, or if it aims to unequally bestow an essentially equal form of recognition. If we take these as exhaustive list of such norms, then, a bestowal is felicitous provided its content is truthful and the recognizer is free. Neglecting to enumerate these pragmatics further has, I think, often licensed calls to implement recognitive arrangements in language borrowed from distributive struggles. Iris Marion Young calls on “despised groups [to] seize the means of cultural expression to redefine a positive image

48 See R. Williams, Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 59-68.
49 M. Walzer, Spheres of Justice (Basic Books, 1983), 55.
of themselves,” echoing the Marxist injunction to “seize the means of production.” Three times on the first page of an article foundational for recognition theory, Charles Taylor treats as comparable a “struggle” and a “demand” for recognition. This language supports the impression that, provided recognizers are not coerced or commanded, a struggle for recognition can be effective no matter how forward, assertive, willful, in a word “agential” those who struggle for recognition are. I hope to show, though, that the phenomenon of agential rebound speaks against this impression.

In order to do so, I will first need to add a fourth condition to this list: when we seek recognition from others, in many cases we seek their sincere recognition. When it is clear to the recognized that a bestowal does not reflect the recognizer’s considered judgment - that it is insincere - they are likely to be dissatisfied with it just as they would in the above cases. When it is unclear to the recognized whether recognition is bestowed sincerely or not, they are likely to have an ambivalent response toward that bestowal. In the following section, I argue that strugglers typically seek sincere recognition.

V. WHY SINCERITY?

I have suggested that when we seek recognition, we seek others’ sincere recognition. This means that the bestowal reflects their true judgment about the merits of the trait appraised. This suggests that we invest value in our recognizers’ attitudes as such. But when we struggle for recognition, do we desire sincerity in this way? It’s plausible to view things otherwise. Esteem

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50 I. M. Young, op. cit., 11, emphasis added.
51 The essay begins, for example: “A number of recent strands in contemporary politics turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for recognition... And, the demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today’s politics, on behalf of minority or ‘subaltern’ groups, in some forms of feminism, and in what is today called the politics of ‘multiculturalism.’” C. Taylor, op. cit., 25.
misrecognition is often harmful simply because the social expression of negative attitudes impedes psychological health or social functioning, and proper recognition is beneficial because it facilitates them. These effects hold regardless of the true attitudes of one’s recognizers; what matters is the attitudes they perform. Feigned racism is just as damaging as sincere racism. Stokely Carmichael is often quoted as having said “If a white man wants to lynch me, that's his problem. If he's got the power to lynch me, that's my problem. Racism is not a question of attitude; it's a question of power.”52 On this view, we can say that recognition is of “instrumental” and not “intrinsic” value, and so sincerity has no importance in itself, or is at least not centrally important. What matters is the behavior and its effects.

In some cases, the instrumentalist view resonates intuitively. The instrumentalist view is supported by a folk intuition that we should not ultimately concern ourselves with what others think about us. It also enjoys some *prima facie* phenomenological support. Through most of the day, our attention is absorbed by our individual aims, and that is enough to occupy our attention. Others’ attitudes about us are often too many and varied to be kept in mind. These attitudes can produce effects that impede the realization of our aims, but when they do we typically direct our efforts toward eliminating those obtrusive effects so as to advance our own aims, rather than dwelling on the underlying attitudes that generate them as such. Consider a biochemist whose career progress is impeded by her colleagues’ biases concerning gender and scientific aptitude. So, she embarks on a “struggle for recognition,” petitioning her colleagues and the workplace authorities, demanding that such sexist behavior ceases. It is possible that the principal value animating that struggle would not likely be her concern with her colleagues’ sexist attitudes as such, but her dedication to her career, the pursuit of which is under threat. The struggle would be

52 Though this quote is regularly attributed to Carmichael, it may be spurious.
successful, then, if she alters her colleagues’ sexist behavior, even if they continue to privately harbor the same sexist attitudes – that is, even if it is insincere. Thereafter, she would no longer have to be so bothered; she could pursue her career aims undistracted. Seen this way, when we struggle for recognition, we do not invest value in their recognizers’ attitudes intrinsically, but only instrumentally, for their practical impact on our independent pursuits.

We are sometimes instrumentalists about recognition in this way. However, I suggest that intrinsic concern with others’ attitudes is a “center of gravity” toward which we do and should tend, and that wholly instrumentalist concern is an exception. It is the defeasible default to which we drift. This is true for psychological, epistemic, moral, and strategic reasons.

Psychologically, close attention to the phenomenology of interpersonal engagement makes it clear that we do in fact invest the recognition of others with intrinsic value, at least most of the time. In “Freedom and Resentment,” P.F. Strawson argues that the moral attitudes that interpersonal engagement with others occasions, such as “gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings,” what he calls “reactive attitudes,” essentially embody “the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions toward us of other human beings.”

This he defends as a matter of unavoidable psychological fact. Ordinarily, if I dismissively laugh at your argument, phenomenologically, you do not principally experience that as a practical setback to your scholarly career, rather you are offended and embarrassed by the attitude about you and your intelligence that such laughter expresses. Just as, when I tell you to “picture a pink elephant” you do so automatically, when others express attitudes about you within earshot you will be assailed by that image and evaluation of yourself no matter its impact on your independent pursuits. You may struggle to overcome the judgment expressed, but you typically

do not simply ignore it. Our psychological set point, then, values others’ attitudes about us intrinsically. To view misrecognition wholly as a practical impediment, stripped of offense at the attitude it expresses - to adopt what Strawson calls the “objective attitude” toward others - can only be achieved occasionally through considerable psychological strain, but to sustain such an approach long-term “does not seem to be something of which human being would be capable.” Instrumentalism about recognition moves in the direction of the objective stance to a degree and so carries with it a corresponding degree of psychological strain.

That we typically invest value in others’ recognitive attitudes themselves (intrinsically) and not merely for their effects (instrumentally) can be seen in a simple example. Imagine that I offer you a head start in a race that you think you do not deserve. Imagine also, for the sake of the example, that I make the offer in private, and that you would be able to take the head start without detection from others. This expresses an attitude toward you that you are likely to resent, namely one about your athletic skill or sportsmanship. But in offering you a head start, I have not impeded your practical interests in winning the race or reputation. I have, in fact, advanced them: you are more likely to win, and to have seemed to do so fairly. Your resentment of my offer, then, cannot be a response to its effects on your own aims. Rather, you would resent the offer itself as such, because you are concerned with, insulted by, the attitude it expresses as such.

I have just suggested that we do, in fact, value others’ attitudes about us intrinsically. Further reflection confirms that, indeed, we should, for both epistemic and moral reasons. Others’ appraisals are both descriptive and evaluative; they make a particular claim about how we are living and a general claim about how one should. To call someone “lazy,” for example, is to make a particular descriptive claim about how they do spend their time and a general

54 *ibid.*, 12.
normative claim about how one should spend their time. The first, description, is a matter of self-knowledge. Excepting, perhaps, some immediate, simple, qualitative experiences - that I am now feeling hunger, for instance - I am no more than a closer observer of my life than others, and can be mistaken. I hold no peremptory authority. Everyone knows someone who believes themselves to be hardworking but is not, for example. Epistemic responsibility calls for you, then, to value others’ claims about your attributes and behaviors for their possible truth, even if you come to reject them, rather than solely for their practical consequences.

The second, evaluative, aspect of such appraisals is similarly part of a socially distributed project. We ought to answer questions about what sorts of activities are worth pursuing together, not each of us in isolation. Consider again being called “lazy.” Whether relaxed leisure or busy productivity is more worthwhile is a question each of us might take a stance on, as with any evaluation expressed through an appraisal. And, as Cheshire Calhoun argues, in answering these value questions, “I am one person among many persons, and we are all in the same boat,”⁵⁵ that is, with similarly relevant information and a need to practically coordinate our futures together. “None of us can answer the question - ‘What is worth doing?’ - except from within our own deliberative points of view…[N]othing guarantees success. The thought, ‘It is just my judgment and it may be wrong,’ cannot be banished no matter how carefully deliberation proceeds.”⁵⁶ And so, you ought to take others’ attitudes about the value of your pursuits under consideration along with your own. You may disagree with the stance expressed in the appraisal, but to dismiss it without consideration because it conflicts with your own goals is to unduly claim monological authority regarding such deep and difficult questions. Such a stance is akin, Calhoun observes, to “[a]rrogance, pomposity, bullying, haranguing, defensiveness, incivility, close-mindedness, [and]

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⁵⁶ Ibid.
deafness to criticism (traits particularly connected with fanaticism).” When evaluating who we are and deciding who we want to be it is hubris to assume we can decide wholly on our own without input from others. To take the evaluative attitude expressed in an appraisal of you under consideration in itself, rather than concerning yourself solely with its practical consequences, is a demand of moral-epistemic responsibility, even if you in turn refute the attitude expressed.

Finally, reasons of political strategy often justify a desire for sincere recognition. This is because insincere recognition can produce a harm called “domination.” To illustrate the concept of domination, Phillip Petit imagines the experience of a slave of a benevolent master. The master does not actively harm the slave but can at any moment. Even if he does not harm the slave, the master still limits the freedom of the slave because he is subject to arbitrary interference at any moment. The slave likely lives in fear and polices his own behavior in the master’s stead. Being subject to arbitrary interference, and having your freedom constrained as a result, Pettit calls “domination.” Insincere recognition often has a similarly dominating structure. If most members of a society have homophobic attitudes but are compelled to express accepting attitudes for whatever reason, that insincere recognition can dominate lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. They can live in fear of their “recognizers” and police their own behavior in their stead. Sincere recognition lacks this dominating structure, and so is often worth pursuing for strategic reasons.

And so, I believe that when we struggle for recognition, though we may suspend this concern occasionally, we typically struggle for a sincere change in our recognizers’ attitudes, because we value those attitudes intrinsically, and not just for their practical consequences.

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57 ibid., 259-260.
59 In arguing that when we seek recognition we seek sincere recognition, I do not mean to commit myself to any controversial metaphysical views about the privacy of consciousness with which talk of sincerity is sometimes associated.
Sincerity is a standard arising from the need for recognition itself – it is part of what we value when we value recognition. If I have convinced you that we do and should often struggle for not just acts of recognition, but sincere acts of recognition, then consider the rest of this paper an articulation of how the ambivalence cited above toward Clinton’s bestowal of recognition predictably follows after many such struggles. If I have not convinced you, and you are still sympathetic to Dan Savage’s reaction to the above episode, consider the remainder of the paper a warning about the practical difficulties that would follow if we held out for sincere recognition.

This sincerity condition reveals the essentially communicative function of recognitive bestowals. To bestow recognition on another is to communicate how you feel about them. When you tell a student that they have done excellent work, for example, you are principally striving not just to voice your opinion out loud, but to bring the student to become confident that you sincerely hold it. It is not sufficient that the recognizer happens to hold or express the attitude sought. With any communicative act, that act can fail if the recipient does not become confident that the communicator holds the view expressed.

Failing in this communicative function is a way that a bestowal of recognition can fail at one of its central tasks. They do so if they exhibit evidence that they are insincere. And they are partially defective if their sincerity is unclear to the recognized. In either case, the recognitive bestowal fails to perform its communicative function because the recognized does not become

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Talk of sincerity is historically entangled with views that one’s attitudes or character are wholly separable from one’s actions and so inscrutable to others. See, for instance, L. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, 1973). This view is criticized by those with behaviorist commitments about what constitutes or evidences one’s attitudes and character. But whatever the outcome of this debate, it is an undeniable feature of social life that I can act like I like you when I do not, or act like you disgust me when you do not. Any plausible resolution of this debate has to preserve and explain this folk intuition, and my concerns here are agnostic with respect to the various ways of doing so.

60 In arguing for this position, I take myself to be departing from Nancy Fraser’s influential position. She argues that recognition and misrecognition are of interest to critical theory principally for their practical effect on the recognized party’s social status, and only derivatively for their effect on the recognized party’s psychology or flourishing. Her view lends itself to the conclusion that recognition is valued only for its practical consequences, and so a recognizer’s sincerity is of no importance to the recognized. See N. Fraser and A. Honneth *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Verso, 2003), 29.
confident that that bestowal reflects the recognizer’s sincere opinion. The practical problem that I aim to uncover here is one way that bestowals can fail in this way. I suggest that on the three most plausible interpretations of what “struggling” for recognition entails doing so interferes with the communicative function of the resulting bestowal of recognition. They do so because struggling for recognition in each of these ways makes that bestowal difficult to perceive as sincere.

VI. IS A “STRUGGLE” A LEVERAGING OF SOCIAL POWER?

In this and the following two sections, I consider three different interpretations of what a “struggle” for recognition might consist in. In each case, I show that struggling in that way predictably detracts from the struggler’s satisfaction with the recognition returned. These three interpretations of a “struggle” need not be seen as competing interpretations. It is plausible that each of them is one aspect or element integrated into actual struggles.

Perhaps the most intuitive understanding of a “struggle” for recognition is that it is a leveraging of social power by the struggler who wants to be recognized. This is the form most other political struggles take. A union, for example, might struggle for increased pay for its members by threatening to strike. Doing so has a specific strategic goal, namely, to alter the management’s viable options so that the pay increase becomes the most attractive (or least unattractive) option to them. Before the struggle, the pay increase was not in the management’s financial disinterest. After the struggle, faced with the option of a pay increase or a work shutdown, it becomes the most financially wise option. So, we might think of a struggle as an alteration of another’s practical environment so that the option the struggler seeks is made to be
the most beneficial option to them. This would not force but rather compel them to do what the struggler seeks, as they are still free to act against their own interests.

Struggles for recognition can leverage social power in this way. A social movement might leverage donations, popular opinion, and voter support to make support for same-sex marriage in a politician’s political interests. But doing so in part detracts from their goal. If the goal of a struggle for recognition is to bring about the communication of sincere esteem, struggling in this way would interfere with that effective communication. In other words, it would not bring about communication of recognition for the right reasons. Struggling for recognition in this way creates reasons to bestow the recognition sought independent of the trait appraised. If the politician comes to support same-sex marriage after this struggle, it could plausibly be because it was the least unattractive option, and not based on a moral evaluation of homosexuality. Indeed, if they bestow recognition at the point that it becomes the least unattractive option, it is not just possible but plausible. These are facts the struggler knows. Insofar, then, as a struggler seeks sincere recognition, struggling in this way detracts from the value of the recognition secured.

So, if struggling for recognition is leveraging social power, a form of agential rebound results. Call this form of agential rebound “practical leveraging”: successfully struggling for recognition by altering the recognizer’s practical environment so that it is in their interest to do so generates reasons to bestow recognition independent of the trait appraised. This diminishes the struggler’s confidence in the sincerity of the recognition bestowed.

VII. IS A “STRUGGLE” A SOLICITATION, PLEADING OR REQUEST?

As we saw in Section IV, it is clear that recognition gained through a command is defective. It would be correct, in such cases, to say that the recognition was bestowed because
the recognizer “had to,” that is, in response to the obligation imputed to the recognizer by the command. Commanded recognition is insincere, then, because it is generated by the normative force of an obligation, rather than by perception of the merits of the attribute appraised.

Struggles for recognition need not demand. Rather, they can solicit in various ways - requesting, entreating, imploring, and so on.\textsuperscript{61} Though these terms vary with respect to their felt urgency, each, unlike a command, leaves the recognizer comparatively free to decline without having violated the terms of the request. You can hold me at fault for having disobeyed a command, but not for having declined a request. And so, we might initially reason that recognition gained because I asked for it has evidence of its sincerity secured, at least with respect to normative forces generated by the struggle. Because a request for recognition leaves the recognizer free to decline, the thought goes, it has not instituted any non-optional normative pull on the recognized to which bestowed recognition might be responding. But this would be a mistake.

It is tempting to assume in this way that any speech act that leaves the one addressed free to continue as before without violating the terms of that speech act leaves the constraints on their practical agency unchanged. But this is a mistake. Christine Korsgaard vividly illustrates:

\begin{quote}
If I call out your name, I make you stop in your tracks…Now you cannot proceed as before. Oh, you can proceed alright, but not as you did before. For now, if you walk on, you will be ignoring me and slighting me. It will probably be difficult for you, and you will have to muster a certain active resistance, a sense of rebellion. But why should you have to rebel against me? It is because I am a law to you….I have given you a reason to stop.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

In this case, though stopping or continuing is voluntary, responding to the call in some way is not. Any further action counts as a response to the call, carrying with it narrative and normative significance that may be attractive or unattractive, bearable or unbearable, to the one called. In


\textsuperscript{62} C. Korsgaard, \textit{The Sources of Normativity} (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 140.
this vein, Mark Lance and Rebecca Kukla observe that solicitations, such as requests, entreaties, or pleas, often “create and foreclose action possibilities by changing the normative significance of various forms of behavior, including the significance of lack of behavior….Once a call is recognized by its target, even inaction counts as a response, since the call calls for uptake.”63

Here is an everyday example. If I request that you attend my party in one sense you are free to respond as you choose: comply or decline. But in another sense, Lance and Kukla argue, you are not. After you receive the request, they observe, you cannot proceed as you would have otherwise. If you comply, your plans have changed. If you decline, you are straining our friendship. Either outcome is a response to the new normative pull the request creates. Non-imperatival speech acts, they reason, such as solicitations or requests, then, even though they leave their target free to proceed as they choose, nevertheless render any subsequent decision in part a response to the normative pull of that speech act.

What is true of party invitations is equally true of struggles for recognition. Here is a familiar example. Everyone has had the experience of desiring a compliment - a form of esteem recognition - but felt that requesting or even subtly suggesting that the compliment be given would detract from the satisfaction of the compliment returned. We might be inclined, as a result, to dismiss the compliment as “just being nice.” But this is not because you are coercing the completer; they are free to give you their honest opinion. This is because any request or solicitation of a compliment places a non-voluntary normative pull on the recognizer by changing the significance of declining to give the compliment sought. The completer may reasonably not believe the compliment, or not find it worthy of mention, but still bestow it because the solicitation made the significance of refusing to bestow it a less preferable outcome.

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for them. For instance, they might give it to avoid appearing rude or disagreeable. It becomes, as a result, unclear to the receiver, intuitively aware of this fact, whether the compliment was given sincerely, occasioned by the merits of the attribute complimented, or insincerely, because of the normative change that request effected.

Though this is an intimate example, the effect scales to broader social dynamics whenever recognition is solicited. Regularly, for example, strugglers request that recognizers across society update their language use to avoid expressions with sexist, ableist, racist, or heterosexist etymology or connotations. Such struggles do not coerce or compel the recognizer to do so, but they change the significance of their declining to do so. What was once ordinary language now carries new significance as a result of that solicitation. Strugglers may reasonably suspect that many recognizers alter their language as requested not because they recognize the merits of the suggestion - perhaps they are unconvinced that etymology is of moral importance - but out of a desire to avoid being saddled with the pejorative label of “political incorrectness.” Thus, soliciting the desired recognitive bestowal clouded the sincerity of the recognition secured.

So, when a struggle is a solicitation, pleading, or request, another form of agential rebound predictably follows. Call this form of agential rebound “solicitation force:” Struggling for recognition clouds the sincerity of the recognition returned because soliciting recognition has a non-voluntary effect on the recognizer’s practical options. Once they are solicited, any subsequent behavior takes on significance as a response to that solicitation. This raises the plausible possibility to the struggler that recognition might be bestowed because of the attractiveness or tolerability of those new significances, rather than through a perception of the merits of the trait appraised.
VIII. IS A “STRUGGLE” AN EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN?

We might also interpret struggles for recognition as educational campaigns, or foreground that aspect of them in our analysis. The struggler aims not principally to demand, request or implore, but rather to educate. The struggler is pointing to the attribute to be recognized and informing the recognizer of its unappreciated merits. Recognition is compelled, then, not by the normative force of the solicitation, but rather by newly focused and properly informed attention to the attribute to be recognized itself. And so, it is brought out not by any variety of normative compulsion but rather by a newfound appreciation of the attribute itself, as the sincerity standard requires.

Some recognition struggles do indeed take this form, but they are nevertheless vulnerable to a third form of agential rebound. To get it in sight, notice that many who seek recognition are nevertheless reluctant to do so because they find struggling for recognition to interfere with their self-presentation and so proper perception of the trait appraised. We see this, for example, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, desiring recognition in response to his social disrepute, nevertheless expresses reluctance to defend his character to his peers. He writes that he was “forced” by that disrepute to speak ceaselessly about myself….But how will the person who feels worthy of honor and esteem, yet who the public freely disfigured and defamed, adopt a tone that does himself justice? Should he speak with praise that is merited but generally denied? Should he boast of the qualities he feels he has but which everyone refuses to see? There would be less pride than baseness in thus prostituting the truth.64

Here Rousseau expresses a recognizable worry that struggling for recognition can itself, in an effort to make it more perceptible to one’s recognizers, warp the attribute for which the struggler seeks recognition. In some cases this is a worry about misrepresenting the contents of the attribute appraised - perhaps a distrusted immigrant group exaggerates their patriotism - though

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this is a contingent and avoidable hazard. Much harder to avoid is the fact that showcasing an attribute for recognition in this way can present that attribute’s relation to other attributes in distortion. And this is a hazard more integrally bound into attempts to struggle for recognition by educating one’s recognizer.

To see why, it is helpful to reflect on the relation between identity and self-presentation. The attributes for which we seek recognition do not stand alone. Rather, they are part of a constellation of such attributes that form our identities. Different attributes stand in important relations to one another, including relations of dependence, interdependence, and relative importance. You might understand yourself as an activist, an educator, a lesbian, a Texan, a Christian, and an amateur musician. But the way in which you identify with each of these can in part be a function of its relation to the others. You might understand your activism to be derived from and dependent on your Christianity. Your identity as a Texan might resonate for you provided you understand it as the least definitive among these, while you find overly jingoistic Texan pride unpalatable. It is not just the contents of our identities, but also these relations and relative priorities that we express in our self-presentation. Prior to a struggle for recognition, our self-presentation proportionally expresses both the contents of our identities, as well as these interrelations and priority relations.

A struggle for recognition seeking to educate one’s recognizers often requires an alteration in the struggler’s self-presentation. For whatever reason, their pre-struggle self-presentation does not elicit the recognition sought. And so, the struggler showcases the attribute to be recognized more emphatically. This distorts perception of the struggler’s self-presentation, suggesting that the showcased attribute plays a more important role in their identity than it ordinarily does. What is important to us and what aspects of us are misrecognized do not always neatly align. Because
of that, there is no guarantee that those attributes which one takes to be centrally definitive of one’s identity are also those that are systemically misrecognized. And yet, the ordinary course of a struggle for recognition has a tendency to suggest their convergence.

Dean Spade, for example, recounts that he had to elevate gender to a more central and essential attribute of his identity in order to gain medical recognition as a “true transsexual” to access a gender-affirming mastectomy. He writes:

‘When did you first know you were different?’ The counselor at the L.A. Free Clinic asked. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I knew I was poor and on welfare, and that was different from lots of kids at school, and I had a single mom, which was really uncommon there, and we weren’t Christian, which is terribly noticeable in the South. Then later I knew I was a foster child, and in High School, I knew I was a feminist and that caused me all sorts of trouble, so I guess I always knew I was different.’ His facial expression tells me this is not what he wanted to hear, but why should I engage the idea that my gender performance has been my most important difference in my life? It hasn’t.65

Similarly, Alice MacLachlan argues that when you “come out of the closet” following the conventional narrative, you predictably risk falsely presenting yourself with an “oversexualized” identity, distorting observers’ perception of the attribute about which you are educating them.66

Personally, I did not “come out of the closet” for this reason. Instead I went from being “closeted” in high school to “out” in college while bypassing the actual social performance of “coming out” – a practice that is certainly an educational struggle for recognition. I intuitively sensed that that performance risked distorting observers’ perception of the way my sexuality fit into my broader life.

So, even if a struggle for recognition is an educational campaign, it interferes with the communicative success of the act of recognition returned. Generalizing from these examples, we can say that, if a struggler’s ordinary self-presentation does not elicit the recognition sought from a particular recognizer, soliciting their recognition by showcasing that attribute prominently and

more emphatically can inflate its role in one’s self-presentation. And so, the struggler may worry that the resulting recognition is responsive to a distorted picture of the attribute appraised. Call this form of agential rebound: “distorted self-presentation.”

The threat of distorted self-presentation renders strugglers particularly apprehensive when they already face over-representation of the trait in question. Many cultural minorities feel misrecognized because their minority status inaccurately pervades their recognizer’s perception of them. Struggling for recognition runs the predictable risk of exacerbating that problem. In her memoir, the rock musician Carrie Brownstein, for example, expresses frustration at the double bind in which members of her all-women band found themselves. They desired freedom from the music industry’s sexist attitudes and proper recognition as a women’s band. Yet struggling for recognition exacerbated the problems they sought to overcome. For that sexism’s principal effect was in that industry’s tendency to treat the fact that theirs was an all-women band as the most important and interesting fact about them. It was all that many reporters asked them about, for example. And so, for Brownstein, to be adequately recognized as a woman musician would involve decreasing the amount of attention paid to that fact. Yet struggling for recognition would increase such attention and suggest that that attribute played a more central role in her identity as a musician than she intended, further provoking reactions it sought to evade. Recognizing this double bind sheds light on the otherwise perplexing hesitance some feel toward struggling for recognition even when they are wholly convinced of the rightness of its goals.

The kind of failure at issue here is different than that in the previous two forms of agential rebound. In those, it becomes unclear in the course of a struggle whether the recognition bestowed reflects the actual judgment of the recognizer rather than an independent motivation of

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theirs. Here, the bestowal may indeed reflect the recognizer’s considered judgment, but that considered judgment is based on a distorted description of the attribute esteemed. Still, such recognition is justifiably unsatisfying to the recognized because, as in the previous cases, it fails in to fulfill recognition’s communicative function. Recognition, I have argued, is valuable because it is a means of providing feedback on one’s actual behavior and of deciding what sorts of life pursuits are worthwhile. If others’ recognition of you is based on a distorted image of the attribute recognized, that recognition does not comment on, validate, or disparage that attribute as it actually exists in your life. Thus, just as in the previous two forms, this third form of agential rebound interferes with the communicative clarity of the recognition bestowed, and so at least partially dissatisfies the recognized.

IX. THE SCOPE OF AGENTIAL REBOUND

So, I have argued by now that when we value recognition, we often seek the communication of sincere recognition, and that on the most plausible interpretations of what a “struggle” for recognition is, doing so interferes with that need being met. This begins to make sense of the fact that many find bestowals of recognition unsatisfying because they had struggled for them. In this section, I ask how common this effect is in struggles for esteem recognition and whether a similar problem plagues struggles for other types of recognition.

How common is agential rebound within struggles for esteem? The title of this chapter can give the impression that every struggle for recognition is thwarted by agential rebound. But the three sources just described all identify possible, not necessary, ways that struggling for recognition can bring about defective bestowals of recognition. And so, it might be thought, a struggle for recognition can be confidently pursued provided these three hazards are avoided.
But recall that the communicative aim of a bestowal of recognition is to bring the struggler to become confident that the recognizer holds the view expressed. Even if the recognizer does not in fact bestow recognition for any of the three reasons surveyed – even if they are in fact acting sincerely – the struggler is still aware of the possibility of insincerity and of the fact that struggling for recognition increases its likelihood. We do not have conclusive access to the reasons that explain others’ actions; we only make fallible, educated guesses. And struggling for recognition, as I have shown, predictably creates new reasons. For struggling for recognition to undermine the success of the bestowal of recognition, it is not necessary that one of these forms of agential rebound be demonstrably present to the recognized, only that struggling for recognition makes it increasingly unclear to them whether they are. And so, even if struggling for recognition does not in fact cause recognition to be bestowed insincerely in every instance, the communicative failing that struggling causes is predictable outcome in standard cases. Struggling for recognition, in other words, does not show that resulting recognition is in fact insincere, but rather it makes it more difficult to perceive as sincere. And that happens whenever we struggle for esteem recognition.

Thus far, I have focused my attention on struggles for esteem only. This naturally raises the question of whether struggles for the other three types of recognition exhibit a parallel effect. A full consideration of the question is beyond the scope of this chapter, but here I would like to point to the main considerations that would determine an answer.

Struggles for esteem or appraisal respect can exhibit agential rebound, we saw, because of that form’s communicative function. Its bestowal aims to bring the struggler to become confident that the recognizer holds the expressed attitude sincerely. Struggling to bring about recognition of this type undermines a bestowal’s capacity to do so. Other forms of recognition
would be subject to agential rebound, then, if they were similarly struggles to bring about the communication of a sincere attitude and not just an associated behavior.

Elementary recognition, we saw earlier, is recognition of another as a minded entity with which one is or could be engaged with second-personally. It singles persons with which we interact out of the environment of objects upon which we merely act. In many accounts, this form of recognition is an intrinsic feature of any human interaction. But this is somewhat of an exaggeration. It is true that even when we insult or do battle with others we still view them as minded entities, and so with elementary recognition. But sometimes we violently treat others as mere objects, when we cart them across a border *en masse*, for example. Sometimes people with disabilities are treated as literal objects by those that “handle” them. A struggle for elementary recognition, then, would be a struggle to be brought out of the space of causes and into the space of reasons in a recognizer’s worldview. Given that that transition has features fundamentally different from those of a struggle for esteem, the effects that I have I argued follow from struggles for esteem do not obviously transfer over. Full consideration of whether we find elementary recognition gained through struggle dissatisfying would require its own chapter.

For struggles for love to exhibit agential rebound, the beloved would have to value love because it expresses the lover’s sincere and accurate appraisal of them. Thus, the issue hangs on whether and to what extent love might be conditional or unconditional. This is a matter about which both folk intuitions and theoretical accounts diverge. Some believe that parental love is an initially unconditional emotional attachment. An infant, for example, has no personal attributes that earn its parents’ love. And professions of romantic love sometimes proudly cite their unconditionality. Others believe that love is more like esteem, expressing the lover’s positive appraisal of the beloved’s qualities. My suspicion is that it is different for different types of love,
but I lack the space to argue that here. If love were unconditional in this way, then the beloved would be satisfied only if the lover had a loving attitude toward them, no matter why. If love were conditional in this way, then love would be more like esteem, and the beloved could wonder whether they were loved for the right reasons. We can test our intuitions about struggles for love and agential rebound by asking whether ardent courtship clouds the sincerity of professions of love returned, or whether an earnest campaign to win friendship detracts from the value of the friendship returned. I imagine different readers will have different reactions.

Respect (or “rights” or “recognition respect”) would perhaps be the most difficult case to decide. It is an acknowledgement of the equal autonomy of all rational beings. This is a difficult case because it is unclear whether recognition respect is expressed through behavior alone. Stephen Darwall seems to suggest that bestowing recognition respect consists solely in behaving in certain ways. He writes that “[u]nlike recognition respect…[a]ppraisal respect is the attitude itself,” which suggests, though not definitively, that he views recognition respect as inhering more in behavior than in attitude.68 When you struggle for my recognition respect, does a change in my behavior suffice, or is there some attitude beyond the behavior with which you are also concerned? It is plausible to think that I have recognized you in this way provided I have not interfered with the functioning of your autonomy. If this is the case, then bestowals of recognition respect are wholly behavioral, and its expression consists in that lack of offending behavior. And yet, it is also plausible to think that recognition respect is an attitude we make efforts to express beyond refraining from interfering in others’ autonomy. Sarah Buss, for example, argues that recognition respect is something that we regularly communicate through etiquette. She calls attention to “the expressive function of manners: by behaving politely, we are

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in effect, ‘saying’ something to one another…. [T]he message expressed is that we defer to another person because we hold them in regard.” 69 Whether or not struggles for recognition respect are subject to agential rebound largely hinges on the resolution of these two intuitions.

What is more, to return to a point made earlier, there is a great deal of ambiguous overlap between esteem and respect in the real world. A prejudiced person can say, with logical coherence, that they respect the autonomy of a racial minority but believe that, say, their way of life is unappealing. This would be a case of respect but a lack of esteem. And yet, especially where deep-rooted social problems like racism are at issue, it is reasonable to believe that such prejudices nevertheless demote the recognizer’s view of the basic rational competence and equality of the recognized as a whole, and so interfere with their respect of them. In the complicated and ambiguous real world, then, it is likely that struggles for esteem and respect often cotravel, woven together, and so the shape and effects of one struggle are not neatly distinguishable from the other.

X. POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

So far, I have argued that struggling for recognition can undermine the value to the struggler of the recognition secured thereby. Some might see this as a cautionary tale, warning us of the folly of investing value in recognition from others at all – as a reductio ad absurdum of recognition politics. We ought then, we might think, to divest from concern with other’s attitudes about the values of our life pursuits. But we have already seen that such a response is misguided. It is empirically misguided because, as recognition theorists have argued at length, the course of a human life is deeply shaped by the attitudes about that life expressed by others, even if the

recognized refrains from internalizing those attitudes. And, at any rate, we already saw in Section IV that aspiring to wholesale divestment from concern with esteem or appraisal respect is psychologically, epistemically, morally, and strategically misguided.

We might think, in turn, that this cautionary tale does not speak against valuing recognition but rather against seeking it out. The trouble, this thought goes, comes when we seek to secure recognition directly, and so we should instead direct our efforts at cultivating the virtues of the trait to be recognized. This position might draw inspiration from Alasdair MacIntyre’s view that we should pursue the goods “internal” to a practice rather than seeking out “external” goods like public acclaim directly. ⁷⁰ So, for example, sexual minorities should focus on cultivating the best sexual relationships they can, as they understand their virtues, and public recognition is more likely to come as a result. Because no agency would be exerted in pursuit of recognition directly, the recognized would then avoid the difficulties of agential rebound. It is true that this approach would avoid those difficulties, but the strategy is socially optimistic. In all cases, a great deal of luck determines whether a virtue is recognized. But further still, a “struggle for recognition” is typically thought to be undertaken by culturally marginalized groups, and in such cases more than luck intervenes between the achievement of internal goods and its recognition. A typical charge leveled in a struggle for recognition is that the dominant cultural rules for bestowing recognition are skewed. That is, their concern is not merely that due recognition has not been bestowed, but that the dominant social rules indicating which virtues are deserving of recognition are structurally biased against them. In typical cases, then, members of marginalized groups can reliably predict that the “external good” of recognition will not follow the cultivation of the “internal goods” of the attribute in question. And given that, as I

argued in Chapter One, the absence of regular misrecognition is central to a life’s flourishing, this is not an outcome with which members of marginalized groups can sit comfortably.

XI. CONCLUSION

Thus, when we struggle for recognition, we face a predictable practical dilemma: recognition is something that we need but that is often spoiled by its pursuit. It is no surprise that struggles for morality and justice face formidable practical obstacles. Struggles to equitably distribute wealth face ideological resistance, struggles for environmental justice encounter miseducational efforts from interest groups, and struggles for racial integration are suppressed with overt violence. Though regular and predictable, these are contingent barriers. It is conceivable that such struggles might not have faced them. Every struggle also faces moral constraints. You might think it impermissible to feed yourself by stealing food. Moral barriers are more widespread and immutable than practical barriers, but they are still, like the practical barriers, external to the good pursued. That is, there is nothing about hunger itself that prohibits the theft of food. Stolen grain nourishes as well as purchased grain; the food’s nourishing power is not spoiled by its theft. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that recognition struggles, by contrast, face a unique barrier to their pursuit that emerges from within the standards of the need for recognition itself. And, as a result, the good of recognition itself is often spoiled by its pursuit. Recognition is by its very nature principally a communicative act, striving to cultivate in the recognized a confidence in the sincerity and accuracy of the recognition bestowed. But the ordinary course of a struggle for recognition erects barriers to the recognized party’s confidence that the recognition secured thereby reflects either their considered judgment on the matter, an accurate perception of the trait in question, or both. These predictable difficulties explain a
familiar ambivalence that we face when we struggle for recognition. We often lament that we needed to struggle for the recognition we won, and wish that it had been bestowed without a struggle, like when you wish a compliment had been given to you unprompted. And we are often partially dissatisfied or uncertain with the recognition they secure as a result.

We often value others’ free action. You might want me to recognize you, but only freely, without coercion. But the threat of agential rebound I have articulated reveals a higher standard. In all three forms of agential rebound, the recognizer might bestow the recognition sought freely, even with good intentions, yet its value to the recognized is still undermined by the fact that it was struggled for. In these cases, the standard against which bestowals are measured is not their freedom, but their spontaneity. Only bestowals of recognition that are spontaneous, at least with respect to the activity of the recognized that might seek it out, wholly evade the problems of agential rebound. This may not be a standard we could practicably honor in our moral and political lives, but it is a regulative ideal demonstrably governing the social practices of recognition nonetheless. It is the standard to which our need for recognition ultimately aspires.

In these ways, “struggle” and “recognition” are often in practical tension. This, I think, illustrates the unusual, perhaps unique, complexity of recognition as a social and political need. Any need can evade our control for external reasons - scarcity, bad luck, moral complications, and so on. The need for recognition exhibits the unusual feature that it can, by its own standards, evade our grasp to the extent that we willfully, assertively, that is “agentially,” pursue it. Moral and political agents seeking to alter their social environments feel this effect acutely. They struggle with the practical dilemmas and ambiguities it creates. They feel the necessity of struggle but also the opacities it creates. Our accounts of recognition struggles should be equipped to explain it and lend empowering clarity to that experience.
CHAPTER THREE:

THE ROMANTIC CRITIQUE OF ETIQUETTE

“You don’t have to lie and say you’re alright/
   We’re just happy that you’re here./
But if you’d yell and tell me to “go to hell,”/
   Well at least you’d sound sincere.”

- Conor Oberst, “‘Til St. Dymphna Kicks Us Out.”

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout his work, Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasizes the importance of affirmative interpersonal relationships, whether parental, friendly, romantic, communal, or political, to human well-being. In fact, viewed a certain way, one could say that the entirety of his corpus is dedicated to defending the importance of such relationships, diagnosing their widespread absence, detailing the conditions of their implementation, and warning against obstacles to their success. It comes as a substantial surprise, then, that Rousseau regularly rails against the use of etiquette, manners, and politeness - social tools many value for their ability to communicate and establish these affirmative relations. He warns parents and educators, for example, to

[guard, above all, against giving the child vain formulas of politeness which serve at need as magic words for him to submit to his will everything which surround him and to obtain instantly what he pleases. The fancy education of the rich never fails to leave them politely imperious, by prescribing to them the terms they are to use in order that no one dare resist them. Their children have neither the tones nor the wiles of supplication; they are as arrogant when they beg as when they command - indeed, even more so - since they are all the more sure of being obeyed. One sees from the first that in their mouths ‘If you please’ signifies ‘I please’ and that ‘I beg you’ signifies ‘I order you.’ Admirable politeness, which results only in their changing the sense of words and never being able to speak other than in the accents of dominion! As for me, who am less afraid that Emile be coarse than that he be arrogant, I much prefer him to beg by saying, ‘Do this!’ than to command by saying, ‘I beg you.’]

Rousseau sustains this suspicion consistently throughout his corpus and defends it on multiple grounds. Undoubtedly earnest, his critique is nevertheless scattered, impressionistic, eclectic, and

imprecise. The above quote is the longest sustained attention given to this critique in his writing. As a result, Rousseau’s tirades against etiquette risk the same fate as those against Modern social life in general, as diagnosed by Arthur Melzer: “In the end, most of his readers, I suspect, come away from the First and Second Discourses, with their thunderous declamations, wondering just what is bothering Rousseau.” If affirmative interpersonal relationships are the goal, etiquette should be a shoe-in. What, then, is the problem?

And yet, this critique is worth understanding because of its sustained influence over contemporary interpersonal engagement. Many Western countercultural movements owe at least part of their governing logic to Rousseau’s “Romantic” legacy - whether beat, hippie, punk, grunge, emo, or hipster - and each typically yields an antipathy to etiquette in turn. Further, as Charles Guignon observes, “[m]ost of us deal with the conflicting demands made on us in the modern world by being [Rationalists] in public and Romantics in private,” suggesting that the critique of etiquette might exert influence not just on some people all of the time but all people some of the time. Judith Martin, better known as “Miss Manners,” suggests, in fact, that this antipathy toward etiquette is now the dominant attitude in American culture. She writes that “we are [today] left with the Jean-Jacques Rousseau School of Etiquette with its charmingly naive directive that we should all behave like (noble) savages. We seem to be doing our best. America has been trying the Rousseau system for the last few decades.” We can conclude that the etiquette critic is still a lively cultural interlocutor to the etiquette defender, and that that critique now has a life of its own, not moored to the textual details of Rousseau’s or any other Romantic

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writer’s texts. The critique is worth understanding then, not mainly as a historical, exegetical exercise, but as a reflection on current social dynamics.

The prevalence and availability of this attitude is evidenced, for example, by the critical and popular success of the episode “Nosedive” from the television series *Black Mirror*. Each episode is a standalone, dystopic, science-fiction narrative, which the creator describes as “about the way we live now.” “Nosedive” imagines a dystopia characterized by the appearance of excessive politeness. In its reality, a society’s members use technology to rate the agreeability of all of their social interactions in real time, and use those aggregated scores to officially and unofficially evaluate one another in turn. As a result, members are constantly striving to seem polite to one another to a fault. The episode paints social interactions as, as a result, polite, yet superficial and insincere. Viewers are steered to view with suspicion those who are successful in appearing polite and to view the protagonist, Lacie, with sympathy, as she struggles and fails to do so. Lacie’s break from her polite behavior is inspired by her encounter with the truck driver Susan, who’s behavior is often kind but grating and rough, and whom the narrative of the show encourages viewers to admire. When Lacie is imprisoned at the end of the episode for having her propriety rating fall too low, she and another prisoner, a stranger to Lacie, exchange a series of escalating profane insults, and this is presented as the moment of greatest catharsis and interpersonal intimacy in the story. The popular and critical success of “Nosedive” does not, on its own, give us a conclusive reason not to be polite – it is not an argument – but it does show that an implicit suspicion that there could be such reasons resonates with many. It taps into an anxiety about etiquette that many contemporary viewers have.

My interest in this debate about etiquette is not that of a devoted partisan but rather that of a curious observer. I do not consider myself a committed defender or a committed critic of
etiquette. I quite enjoy being polite and get quite upset when others are not. But I chuckle and nod knowingly whenever a Romantic critiques etiquette. I probably need to get my commitments straight. But, sound or not, the Romantic critique of etiquette exerts considerable force over our everyday interactions, and calls out for deeper understanding, even if not ultimately our allegiance. My hope, in this chapter, is to isolate and reconstruct the strongest version of the critique. My reconstruction takes regular inspiration from Rousseau’s writing, but it is not wedded to it. My aim is to make sense of a general attitude of which Rousseau is an early and prominent articulator, but not any sort of ultimate authority. The suspicion of etiquette that he articulates lives, ultimately, in everyday interactions, not in any particular text.

I hope to show that the critic’s most powerful charge is that acts of etiquette are difficult to perceive as sincere and so predictably struggle in their communicative aims. The Romantic critique of etiquette rests, I argue, on a social epistemic concern and not an immediately moral one. That is, it does not accuse the polite actor of improper conduct so much as lament the opacity between people that etiquette creates. This framing explains, I will show, an otherwise puzzling widespread social practice: those sensitive to the Romantic critique of etiquette often strive to express prosocial attitudes, as etiquette prescribes, through seemingly antisocial behaviors, as etiquette does not. I call these practices “anti-etiquette etiquettes.”

The overall goal of this dissertation is to identify several ways in which our attempts to manage the distribution of interpersonal attitudes predictably rebound on themselves, what I call recognition’s “practical inversions.” Doing so will help us as theorists to appreciate the extent to which recognition is unlike other social goods which can be managed more directly, and it will help us as moral agents to navigate interpersonal interactions more skillfully. In the previous chapter, I argued that recognition resists struggle. In this chapter, I argue by way of the Romantic
critique of etiquette that recognition resists institutionalization, that is establishment as regularly practiced norm in a culture. Once institutionalized, the argument shows, the bestowal of recognition loses a degree of its communicative effectiveness. It is one of the costs we incur in making the world a better place.

II. WHAT IS ETIQUETTE?

Before we analyze the Romantic critique of etiquette, we need to get clear about what etiquette is. I take “manners,” “etiquette,” and “politeness” to be terms that refer to the same social practices from different angles. Etiquette prescribes the following of conventionally approved norms of social interaction in part because they are the existing social conventions for those interactions. That is, when it is good to follow etiquette’s rules, it is in significant part good because those practices are approved of as a contingent matter of fact in that context. You can see this in the fact that when you ask “what is the etiquette?” in a certain situation you are asking a hybrid factual-normative question. It is somewhere between “what should one do?” and “what is one typically expected to do?” For example, in the United States one waits in line to order coffee while in Italy one does not (there one orders coffee like one orders a beer at an American bar). Etiquette sees these as reasons that speak in favor of following suit in both contexts. In this way, though there is much overlap, etiquette takes a different initial analytic lens than ethics, which ordinarily views the conventionality of a behavior as of only derivative importance. For most ethical theories, particular conventionally approved practices need to meet some other standard to be prescribed, maximizing utility for example, and the violation of conventionally approved practices is regularly prescribed by ethical theories. Seen another way, etiquette views the following of conventionally approved norms as advisable absent any other reasons that speak
in its favor, while ethics does not. If an ethicist asks “why should I do that?”, “because that is what one is expected to do around here” is not a reason that speaks in favor of doing so outside some intermediate justification. But for etiquette, the conventionality of a behavior is of more immediate importance.

I say that etiquette prescribes conventionally approved norms and not simply existing practices for two reasons. First, our actual behavior often falls short of our standards. Etiquette might prescribe that one respond to an R.S.V.P. even in conditions when most people do not. Etiquette prescribes not what people actually do, but what they all recognize one is supposed to do in that context. Second, there are many social conventions that many follow but that they recognize are not conventionally approved. For example, a schoolyard bully knows that schoolyard bullies, as a matter of convention, bully the nerds. But all parties know that that is not conventionally approved behavior in their wider community. The bully knows that bullying is something he should not do, and that is why he keeps his bullying out of view in most contexts he travels through. For simplicity’s sake, when I refer to “social conventions” and its equivalents in what follows, I mean “conventionally approved norms” in the relevant context in this way. Sometimes our communities overlap and their prescriptions conflict, but “etiquette” tends to refer to what most people in most contexts you run in would say is the appropriate behavior in that context.

Why follow reigning social conventions in this way? Etiquette is an organic social practice, not a philosopher’s invention, and so there is not a single answer to this question, but rather a family of interrelated defenses. Because they form an overlapping unity in this way we can think of these referents as different aspects under which the etiquette as a whole can be viewed, rather than as competing candidates for the “true” conception of etiquette.
What is perhaps the most popular conception of etiquette is a conceptual outlier among the rest. This is the view that following the conventions of etiquette serves no justifiable purpose. Humans, on this view, tend to habitually follow social conventions “just because,” and this habit does not survive rational scrutiny. Philippa Foot seems to hold this view. On this view, the conventional placement of a salad fork in a table setting, for example, is merely an archaic custom, which we would be just as well off without. Though it commands quite a lot of popular allegiance, this conception of etiquette is an outlier among academic and cultural defenses of etiquette, all of which argue that following the rules of etiquette serves some additional, potentially justifiable practical or moral purpose. If the Romantic’s critique of etiquette were directed at this view, its argument would be readily obvious but uninteresting, since it would not charitably engage with the more sophisticated defenses of etiquette available, dismissing them outright instead.

Some more optimistic conceptions of etiquette hold that the rules of etiquette can serve a justifiable practical or moral function. On the more practical end of the spectrum, we might think that the rules of etiquette reduce conflict in social interactions which would otherwise make them difficult or impossible. Call this the “regulatory” function. One stands to the right when walking on a sidewalk, for example, so that pedestrian traffic in the other direction is not blocked and also so that faster foot traffic in the same direction can sometimes pass. The practice is individually rational because it improves the average walker’s commute compared with its absence. Without it there would be a traffic jam.

Moving closer to the moral end of the spectrum, the rules of etiquette can also serve a “ritualistic” practical function, as Judith Martin calls it. Significant experiences in life - such as

births, graduations, weddings, divorces, and deaths - are typically highly emotionally charged and participants often benefit from the cultivation of beneficial emotions and the suppression of unbenevolent ones. Conventional rituals can guide us through this process. Martin writes that “[r]ather than leaving it to individuals as a do-it-yourself project to work out how to come to terms with their chaotic feelings on such momentously emotional social occasions, the ritual codified in etiquette facilities the process.”

In her example, one follows the social conventions of mourning, such as wearing black, in order to cultivate, manage, and experience the emotions appropriate to mourning.

There are also popular and theoretical justifications of etiquette’s moral function. One we can call the “moral specification and training” function. On this view, the rules of etiquette aid in the application of our abstract moral commitments to concrete situations. Karen Stohr writes, for example, that

[k]nowing that one should respond indignantly to a racist joke is not the same as knowing how to respond to a racist joke - with what words, with what facial expressions, with what actions. This is where the rules of etiquette step in, because what they provide us with is precisely a way of communicating these essential moral attitudes to others.

Defenders of this function appreciate etiquette as a training program in a particular kind of moral expertise. As new adherents to a moral view, or as new inhabitants of a social context, we often do not know how to fulfill our abstract moral intentions practically. As a new professor, for example, I may intend to inspire my students, but only end up embarrassing myself with a sentimental display. The rules of etiquette, shaped over time, embody a degree of cultural and historical moral expertise, and act as a training program for that practical moral skill until one

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76 J. Martin and G. Stent, “I Think; Therefore I Thanks: A Philosophy of Etiquette,” The American Scholar, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Spring, 1990), 250.
can reliably turn one’s abstract moral commitments into concrete, practical prescriptions on one’s own.

A fifth interpretation values etiquette as a vehicle for the communication of interpersonal attitudes.\textsuperscript{78} Call this the “communicative” function. One such attitude is respect, understood as the valuing of another’s autonomy. Communicating respect involves more than merely not interfering in another’s autonomy. It involves making it clear to her that you value her autonomy and intend to act in a way that does not interfere in it. Beyond refraining from disrespectful behavior, communicating respect is of moral value because it shapes the psychology and informs the practical deliberation of the person to whom it is expressed. You may have every intention to respect my practice of a disreputable religion. But if you do not communicate that intent to me I have no way of knowing that and so might not practice out of fear or social pressure. And I may develop a feeling of inadequacy and find it harder to respect myself as a result. Communicating respect can bring me to know that and avoid those harms.

Why should we follow social conventions in order to communicate respect? In part, this is because respect is a fairly abstract attitude; it is difficult to imagine what words I would use to effectively communicate my respect for you directly, other than asserting “I respect you,” which is far from convincing. So, we rely on behaviors conventionally understood to express respect, like holding a door open for another or waiting one’s turn in line, in order to effectively communicate respect, especially in quick interactions between individuals with diverse backgrounds.\textsuperscript{79} Further, when I follow conventional standards of appropriate behavior, rather than relying only on my own controversial interpretation of what is appropriate to do in every situation, I communicate that I do not view myself as the sole, superior judge of the rules we

\textsuperscript{78} K. Stohr, \textit{On Manners} (Routledge, 2011).
should follow in social interaction. I communicate that I, instead, view each of us as equals in that ongoing project, communicating my respect for them.\textsuperscript{80} This is why wearing bright colors to a conventional funeral, even if you personally think funerals should be joyous affairs, is disrespectful. It communicates that others’ conflicting views do not matter – that it’s all up to you.

I think it is right that etiquette serves to communicate moral respect in this way, but I think that that is not the only attitude we value it for communicating. It also serves to communicate hospitality. When I invite you as a friend over for an informal dinner you might bring a bottle of wine and I might offer to take your coat, both guided by etiquette. I doubt you are really worried that there will not be enough to drink and I do not doubt that your ability to manage your coat on your own. Instead, in each case we follow the reigning social conventions of that situation to communicate to one another that we welcome the intimacy between us that the dinner brings. In terms of the types of recognition distinguished in the first chapter, what these acts of etiquette communicate in this context is love, understood as a technical term denoting emotional connection between intimates, including friends. Etiquette also facilitates the communication of esteem. Applauding after a philosophy talk or standing after a ballet recital are both ways that audiences communicate esteem for the performance by following conventional norms of behavior in those situations.

So, on the communicative view, following reigning social conventions is of value because it is an effective means to communicate interpersonal attitudes, whether respect, love, or esteem. This is more practically feasible than either letting my non-communicative actions “speak for themselves” or communicating these attitudes directly, explaining with words that I recognize

you in one of these ways and why I do. And it matters on the communicative view that the conventions in question be the reigning conventions in that context in order for them to effectively communicate those attitudes to their patient. They function as a common, cultural language. I argue that the most charitable interpretation of the Romantic critique is directed at the communicative function of etiquette.

III. FALSE STARTS

Though, as I hope to show, one version of the Romantic critique of etiquette is forceful and warrants our attention, it is often overshadowed in popular discourse by other, less successful, variants. Here, then, I indicate those other critiques are and explain why they are unsuccessful.

A first critic might hold that etiquette is bad because, in telling us to be polite to everyone, it tells us to be nice to everyone, in the sense of making them comfortable and happy, and that many should not be made to feel this way. But being polite does not always make people comfortable or happy. Martin writes, for example, that “[i]f you are rude to your ex-husband’s new wife at your daughter’s wedding, you will make her feel smug. Comfortable. If you are charming and polite, you will make her feel uncomfortable. Which do you want to do?”81 So, this objection is unsuccessful.

A second critic might hold that many of the social conventions that etiquette instructs us to follow are shaped by structures of power. As a result, the skeptic worries, these social practices communicate undesirable attitudes, rather than those the defender of etiquette intends to express. For example, following the convention that a man should ask his girlfriend’s father for permission to propose to her communicates sexist attitudes, not respect, love, or esteem for his

girlfriend. Additionally, the skeptic worries that social practices shaped by structures of power are easier for those who have historically benefited from those structures to follow than it is for those who have been marginalized by them to do so. For example, the social conventions surrounding professional dress in the West are easier for white men to follow than they are for other groups. Though the critic is right to point out these dangers, it is not one that the defender cannot absorb. The defender believes that following established social conventions is an effective way *in general* to communicate respect for others, but she does not defend each specific convention in turn. If an individual convention communicates a moral attitude antithetical to the one intended by etiquette, the defender advises that it be revised or abandoned. She can still hold that following established conventions is generally an effective, but defeasible, way to express moral attitudes. This critique would only hold if the critic could demonstrate that the norms etiquette follows are so regularly shaped by power that their ability to communicate positive attitudes is unavoidably eclipsed.

A third critic might hold that when we act as etiquette instructs we mask our true attitudes and that doing so is insincere. In this case, the critic rightly notes that etiquette often calls on us to conceal our spontaneous reactions to those with whom we interact and to perform certain attitudes, like an actor, instead. Etiquette might instruct us to act as though we enjoy interactions with strangers who we spontaneously find irritating, for example. Though etiquette does regularly prescribe censorship of our spontaneous attitudes in this way, it does not immediately follow that doing so is insincere. Whether it does follow hinges on controversial questions regarding the metaphysics of attitudes. If I as a US-American spontaneously find a German person’s directness grating and unpleasant, but reflectively recognize that my reaction is shaped

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by my cultural upbringing just as much as their behavior is, and act politely instead, it is not obvious which is my true attitude. The answer hinges on whether one’s “true” interpersonal attitudes inhere in one’s unreflective reactions or in one’s reflective commitments when they conflict. I will have more to say on this matter in the following chapter, but for now it suffices to say that if this were the heart of the critic’s objection to etiquette it would not further the debate any more but rather redirect it to a more vexed one.

A fourth critic might hold that it is always, in some sense, good to act on unreflective attitudes uncensored. Rousseau writes that “[t]he fundamental principle of all morals…on which I have reasoned in my writings”84 is that “man is naturally good, and...it is solely by [social] institutions that men become wicked.”85 Rousseau holds that, prior to socialization, children and denizens of the state of nature lack sustained negative and destructive attitudes toward one another, that these are artificial animosities that each of us must learn, and that through introspection socialized individuals can reflectively distinguish the former, natural from the latter, artificial sentiments. According to this view, if we express those attitudes that feel natural to us rather than follow the prescriptions of etiquette that correct for them, then we are guaranteed to avoid negative and destructive social attitudes toward one another. This view that our “natural” sentiments are always good is, I think, is the dominant popular interpretation of the Romantic critique of etiquette, and is likely what Martin has in mind when she refers to “the Jean-Jacques Rousseau School of Etiquette with its charmingly naive directive that we should all behave like (noble) savages.” Despite its popularity, this critique is deeply implausible. The claim that humans are “naturally good” does not stand up against observations of how humans

actually act. And the claim that we can distinguish these natural from artificial attitudes through introspection is highly dubious. If you try, now, to act only according to those dispositions you are confident are wholly natural you will not get very far. What is more, Rousseau’s arguments for both claims are almost certainly unsuccessful.\footnote{For a detailed account of their failure, see Melzer, \textit{op. cit.}}

These latter two conceptions of the critique are similarly based on niche and culturally specific views about the metaphysics of attitudes, human nature, and authenticity. These views, together, give rise to a broader life ethics - that one should get in touch with one’s feelings and express them as outwardly to be authentic and “natural” - exhibited in minority, Romantic subcultures, but rejected by most people. In my observation, these are the grounds on which the critique is most often dismissed in everyday discourse. A reasonable defender might retort that the critique only follows if one subscribes to this Romantic ethics of authenticity, but that she does not. What I suggest here is that the critique does not need to rest on any such controversial, stereotypically “Romantic,” premises about the nature of the self, belief, naturalness, and authenticity. Instead, the critique rests on beliefs about the \textit{successful communication} of interpersonal attitudes. Etiquette, as we saw, is often prized as a vehicle to communicate that the actor holds certain moral attitudes about her interlocutor. The critic, I argue, worries that using etiquette as a vehicle to do so often predictably leaves observers unsure of the actor’s sincerity in holding those attitudes. While the preceding critiques are controversial premises about authenticity of the actor, the communicative critique is based, I aim to show, on comparatively general and intuitive observations about communicative social practices. These are not as easily dismissed.
IV. HEURISTICS OF SINCERITY

I have suggested that the Romantic critique is directed at the communicative function of etiquette. That is, it is directed at the view that following reigning social conventions is of value because it is an effective means to communicate interpersonal attitudes, whether respect, love, or esteem. The critic believes that etiquette struggles in this communicative function. To see why, note, for illustrative contrast, that the communication of an attitude is a greater goal than something we might call its “mere expression.” Mere expression is successful when you voice your attitudes out loud, perhaps cathartically or because you are talking to yourself. You merely express your frustration when you scream alone in your office and no one hears you, but you do not communicate it to anyone. And so, it depends only on facts about the speaker for its success. Successful communication further requires that a hearer comes to know, by virtue of your scream, that you have the frustrated thoughts and feelings that motivated it. When I shout “I love you” at a loud bar and you fail to hear me, I may have merely expressed that attitude, but I have not yet successfully communicated it to you. Or, even if you heard me, but thought I was joking, I would say that I “failed to communicate” my love to you. The point of this contrast is to appreciate that the success of communication depends on facts not just about the speaker, but just as much on facts about the hearer and their shared communicative environment. For etiquette to be a successful act of communication, then, it must bring about the confidence in the patient that the actor respects, loves, or esteems them. Using social conventions to communicate these attitudes is, the critic argues, to an extent subversive to that goal. It diminishes the patient’s ability to glean from the actor’s behavior that she holds the attitude in question. They are difficult to perceive as sincere. This is the heart of the Romantic critique of etiquette.
To see why, note the broader concern about social life that motivates the Romantic critique. The foundational problem with Modern social life, according to Rousseau, is that it is difficult to discern one another’s true interpersonal attitudes. Children and denizens of the state of nature, he thinks, wear those attitudes on their faces and bodies immediately. In Modern social life, though, we learn that we can control others’ attitudes by manipulating our appearances so as to convey attitudes that are to our advantage, even if we do not hold them. Thereafter, it became in the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things: and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train….Man must now, therefore, have been perpetually employed in getting others to interest themselves in his lot, and in making them, apparently at least, if not really, find their advantage in promoting his own. Thus he must have been sly and artful in his behavior to some.\(^{87}\)

Typically and predictably, when we do engage in such “cheating trickery,” we project kind and flattering appearances towards others who can in turn advance our own ends. In Rousseau’s words, this behavior typically and predictably “puts on the mask of benevolence.” Though Rousseau contrasts the insincerity of Modern social life with two myths of pure sincerity in childhood and the state of nature, those myths are not required to make this point. It is simply an undeniable fact about Modern social life that wait staff flatter customers they dislike, that the marginalized reflectively monitor their responses to not upset the powerful, that advertisers pander to consumers they are ultimately indifferent to. Crucially, the claim is not that all or most of us are in fact engaged in “cheating trickery” all or most of the time, though Rousseau’s inflamed rhetoric sometimes seems to suggest this, but rather that the pervasive possibility of cheating trickery makes it difficult to identify true benevolence, as on the surface both look the same. As a result, when others’ attitudes about us matter to us in themselves, it is often difficult to discern true from false positive attitude. The Romantic draws our attention to a social epistemic consequence of that fact: it is almost always a live question whether interpersonal

attitudes are sincere or not, and when their sincerity matters to us we each can act as sincerity
detectives, collecting information about our appraiser’s social and practical environment to judge
their sincerity.

There are many things we might mean when we call an expression “sincere.” Consider, for
example, the case in which someone reflectively affirms anti-racist attitude but shows physical
signs of anxiety when she shares a flight with someone who looks to be of Middle Eastern
descent. Which is her sincere attitude? I do not want to take a stance on these vexed questions
here. Instead, as I indicated in Chapter One, I appeal only to a standard of insincerity for the
expression of attitudes that should be compatible with any plausible account of their contrasting
sincerity: an expressed attitude is insincere at least when it is the case that the only motive of
your expressing that attitude is some aim irrelevant to the trait appraised. So, for example, if you
call your boss “smart” only because they have the power to promote you, fire you, or change
your pay, in order to curry their favor, but you would not call them “smart” if they lacked that
power, then that attitude is insincere. I take it that this is a maximally ecumenical case of
insincerity and is compatible with any plausible account of sincere attitudes that is meant to be
compatible our everyday understanding of the term.

I suggest that, when a speaker’s sincerity is in question, there are two dominant heuristics
that listeners employ to assess it. First, listeners can attend to the genealogy of the expressed
attitude. They ask themselves “does the speaker have a history that would predictably give rise to
this attitude?” If I know that your cultural upbringing emphasized antipathy toward a certain
social group I am more confident of its sincerity when you express it. And if I knew and had
watched you when you overcome that antipathy as you befriended a member of that social group,
perhaps when you reasoned through your transformation out loud, I can be confident of its
sincerity. This heuristic is the most appropriate because it aims to trace the origin of the attitude directly; it confirms that an attitude is held by tracking it back to its cause. Though it is the most accurate, this heuristic is difficult for most hearers to employ. It requires the listener to have a wealth of information about a speaker’s personal history that it is common for them to lack. Typically, listeners only have access to such personal information about close friends, family, and some students, and not for the great majority of those they engage with.

When a listener lacks access to such special information, they instead check for the presence or absence of possible causes of its insincerity. Those causes are interests the speaker has in censoring their true attitude and expressing the attitude actually expressed. You may assume my expressed admiration to another philosopher for her work is sincere until you discover that I have just applied for a job at their home department, and then your confidence in my sincerity is lessened. This heuristic is easier than the first to employ. While the first requires access to comparatively private information about the speaker’s personal history, the second relies on comparatively public information about the social environment in which the speaker is situated. You may not know the history of my opinions about country music, but you know the predictable consequences of esteeming it in our shared cultural context. I suggest, then, that while the first is the most accurate, the second is our default heuristic across the broad range of our social interactions, particularly among mere acquaintances.

This second heuristic has an odd, but recognizable, consequence. We typically can predict that a speaker will say something if they have more interests in saying it than less. Under this heuristic, however, a listener’s confidence in the sincerity of an expressed attitude is bolstered if a speaker has fewer evident interests in expressing it. In other words, the amount of evident interests the speaker has in expressing an attitude is positively correlated with their predictable
expression of that attitude but inversely correlated with its perceived sincerity. A subject under a totalitarian dictatorship, for example, has many evident reasons to praise the dictator. He knows that his life is at stake and so is his family’s. He fears loss of livelihood, the threat of prison, and social sanction if he does not. The reasons motivating the expression of the attitude are multiple, and so one expects him to do so. But because of that, listeners’ confidence in the sincerity of that praise dwindles with each evident reason that arises. One both expects praise from Kim Jong-un’s subjects while they are under his domain and doubts it sincerity, and both for the same reasons. We should not confuse the predictability of an expression with its perceptible sincerity. They are often inversely correlated.

Speakers are often sensitive to this heuristic and facilitate their listeners employment of it. One of the chief means that speakers use to strengthen the perceived sincerity of their expressed attitudes is to explicitly note the lack of advantages that befall them in expressing it or to note the disadvantages that do. A media personality might recommend a product and explicitly clarify that he is not sponsored by its manufacturer. A politician might state that the policy they support is to their own personal disadvantage as a citizen or is frowned upon by their base of the electorate or financial backers. Both tags bolster the perceived sincerity of the opinion expressed. On the other hand, listeners often raise skepticism among each other about the sincerity of a speaker’s expressed attitude by noting advantages that befall the speaker in expressing it. When I tell you that the media personality is, in fact, sponsored by the manufacturer of the product they recommend, or that the politician does, in fact, face financial pressures to express that attitude, your confidence in the sincerity of each expression is undermined.

Citing such independent interests does not give hearers definitive evidence that the expression is in fact insincere, but it does undermine their confidence in its sincerity. The media
personality may sincerely endorse the product and also happen to be sponsored by its manufacturer. Their motivation is overdetermined. Speakers struggle to communicate their sincerity in these cases, often unsuccessfully. Hearers are left ambivalent and hesitant about the sincerity of such expressions. But this uncertainty is sufficient to constitute a communicative failure. Communicative acts, as we have seen, strive to bring about the hearer’s confidence that the speaker holds the expressed attitude, not their ambivalence and hesitance. Because of this, both speakers and listeners often seek for communicative contexts where the speaker’s expression is not overdetermined. We expect to hear someone’s sincere attitudes in situations where they have nothing to lose or gain by expressing them. Even better, we are most confident that an attitude is sincere when it expressed despite personal costs. Galileo’s defense of the heliocentric model despite persecution by the Inquisition is more perceptibly sincere because of that persecution. These are facts about successful communication the Romantic is particularly sensitive to. Rousseau, for example, in order to bolster the apparent sincerity of his *Confessions* against accusations that he presented himself there in a beneficially flattering light, writes:

> When I wrote my *Confessions*… I was often more careful to conceal my good points than my shortcomings… I often presented what was bad in all its baseness, but I rarely presented what was good in its most attractive light, and often left it out altogether because it did me too much honor, and I would have seemed to be singing my own praises by writing my confessions.\(^8\)

Rousseau is here suppressing the appearance of a potential benefit and highlighting the appearance of costliness to himself in writing the *Confessions* in order to heighten our confidence in his sincerity in writing it and the truth of its contents. Evolutionary psychologists call these “credibility enhancing displays” or “CREDs.” Speakers deploy CREDs when they showcase the costliness of a commitment to them to bolster the perceived sincerity of their commitment. CREDs range from the dramatic, like ritual sacrifice, to the slightest locutions, like

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saying “It gives me no pleasure to say this, but…” These psychologists argue that performing and monitoring CREDs are among the most common and pervasive ways we showcase and evaluate one another’s sincerity.\textsuperscript{89}

The Romantic observes that following reigning social conventions is typically and predictably, though defeasibly, in an actor’s interests. There are both predictable benefits to following such conventions and predictable costs to flouting them. The benefits are those that come from social propriety. Generally, propriety increases one’s social standing and capital while impropriety decreases both. If I want to curry favor with a group of people, one of the best things I can do is follow the reigning social norms in that situation, and one of the worst things I can do is flout them. Because social standing and capital can further almost any interest a person might have, it is in effectively everyone’s interest to pursue. In saying that it is in everyone’s self-interest to pursue such social capital, I do not mean to suggest that those who do are self-interested or selfish in any controversial or judgmental sense. Many of the interests that actors might employ social capital to pursue are beneficial ones. A humanitarian might make an effort to present herself properly in the presence of wealthy philanthropists so that they are more likely to support her malaria relief efforts. We may applaud her efforts, and she may in fact sincerely like the philanthropists, but nevertheless her propriety in their presence typically and predictably accrues her social capital. In ordinary cases she is aware of that fact and so are onlookers.

The costs are those that are incumbent upon social deviance. One of those costs is acute psychological distress. Stanley Milgram once set out to observe reactions to a violation of rider etiquette on the New York City subway.\textsuperscript{90} He had several graduate students ask riders for their


seat when other seats were available. But the students’ reactions were more striking than the riders’. Many viscerally recoiled when asked to participate. The first that volunteered failed to complete all of the intended trials due to the distress that the violation of etiquette caused him. Another graduate student recalls, "I was afraid I was going to throw up."\(^9^1\) When Milgram himself attempted the trial in his students’ stead, he reports that, upon approaching the rider, “the words seemed lodged in my trachea and would simply not emerge.” After he had taken the rider’s seat, Milgram reports that “my head sank between my knees, and I could feel my face blanching. I was not role-playing. I actually felt as if I were going to perish.”\(^9^2\) Analogous experiments are readily available to each of us. Try violating the reigning norms regarding personal space in conversation or appropriate dress at a wedding or a funeral. You can see that even imagining doing so brings on significant psychological distress. Another cost of social deviance is the threat of social sanction. Just as we are often made viscerally uncomfortable by our own violations of reigning social conventions, we are often made equally upset by those of others. Actors are typically and predictably made to follow reigning social conventions from fear of how others would respond if they did not. Notably, this is truer of those lacking social power than those that have more. The powerless must often follow reigning social norms as a means of survival, where censorship and enforcement might cost them their jobs or safety, while the powerful wield enough social capital that they can risk flouting them.\(^9^3\)

These interests that we all have in following and not violating reigning social conventions are general facts that we know about those we interact with, even if we know nothing else about them. The reigning social conventions are also public knowledge. When an actor expresses an

\(^{91}\) *ibid.*

\(^{92}\) *ibid.*

\(^{93}\) I thank Karen Stohr for this final observation.
attitude through reigning social conventions, then, patients and observers of that act typically and predictably have their confidence in its sincerity diminished because of that. It is unclear to them whether the act is motivated by the attitudes they are meant to express or the evident independent interests that speak in favor of following those conventions.

My partner and I do not celebrate Valentine’s Day for this reason. We did at first, but found that displays that would ordinarily communicate affection on any other day struggled to do so on Valentine’s Day, when they were expected as a matter of social convention and so their sincerity was difficult to be assured of. This was true even when the affection was in fact sincere. You do not have to be resolved to abandon Valentine’s Day to be moved by this fact. All that is required for my purposes here is that you would perceive a gift that was given to you on any other day as more sincere than one given on a holiday because the giver had fewer evident reasons to do so.

It follows from the Romantic’s worry here that if a society were to be predominantly polite, and so express prosocial attitudes through reigning social norms, then the communication of prosocial attitudes would typically seem less sincere than the communication of antisocial attitudes. This is the case in “Nosedive.” The members of that dystopian society are so polite to a fault that polite acts seem insincere and impolite acts seem sincere. This seems relatably true in many contexts. If a friend of yours politely agrees to share their french fries with you after you ask but another rudely declines, you are more confident that the latter is sincere than the former. This is why we have the familiar expression in English that someone was “just being polite,” meant express doubt about the sincerity of the attitude behind the act, but no expression that someone was “just being rude” with a similar meaning.

There are contexts in which rudeness and antisociality are what are expected of someone. Sometimes teenagers are mean to other teenagers they actually like, out of a sense of social
expectation. In the movie *Grease*, for example, cool Danny is insincerely mean to square Sandy to conform to his friends’ expectations even though he truly still harbors affection for her from their summer affair. Sincere affection hidden by compulsory animosity is an animating trope of many dramatic stories, especially for young people.

But this does not undermine the Romantic’s worry. To begin with, Danny is *in fact* being insincerely rude, but his rudeness is not *difficult to perceive* as sincere. It is pretty convincing. In fact, Sandy and both their friends all perceive him as being sincere. Only the omniscient audience knows that he is not – that’s part of what makes the movie exciting. This is because Danny still faces broader social costs in being rude to Sandy. If his parents or the school principal were to see him doing so he would likely be sanctioned. This known fact bolsters the perceived sincerity of his rudeness. And more generally, it seems clear that these are exceptional cases. In most cultural contexts, what is expected of someone is to be polite and not to be rude. Ultimately, though, what worries the Romantic is a conditional claim: that *if* a society were to be predominantly polite, *then* the communication of prosocial attitudes would typically seem less sincere than the communication of antisocial attitudes. And that holds independent of what you think is actually expected of people here and now.

This variant of the Romantic critique of etiquette, then, does not take issue with the motives or authenticity of the polite actor. It does not even argue that her politeness is in fact insincere. Instead, the critic in this case worries that, by attaching the expression of interpersonal moral attitudes to the following of social conventions, the defender has diluted the conditions in which the expression of that attitude can be perceived by the patient and listeners as sincere, impeding its communicative success. They can, in each case, reasonably predict that the motives of her polite act are overdetermined by those independent interests that speak in favor of
following those conventions. Thus, the skeptic worries, etiquette impedes the successful communication of prosocial attitudes by tying it to conditions in which the sincerity is already suspect.

To see this vividly, compare acting respectfully and expressing respect through etiquette. The extent to which it is in someone’s interest to act respectfully to another varies by circumstance. Whether or not advantages befall us in respecting one another’s autonomy is historically contingent. In more morally and politically ideal circumstances, it is happily both in your interests and the right thing to do to treat peers respectfully. In conditions of moral damage or injustice, however, respecting one another’s autonomy is often detrimental to one’s broader interests. One risks quite a lot of social capital by respecting the autonomy of slaves in a slave-owning society, for example. Thus, it is a contingent, empirical matter whether being respectful is advantageous or disadvantageous to actors. The same is the case with expressing respect directly - that is, using words to explain to another the way in which you view them as an autonomous, rational equal. Expressing respect by following reigning social conventions is different. It will typically and predictably be in the overdetermined interest of the actor. Thus, among the three, the third is the variant that faces the most regular communicative difficulty from lack of perceptible sincerity.

As I have reconstructed it here, the Romantic critique of etiquette can depend only on premises about the effective communication of interpersonal attitudes. It does not depend on controversial Romantic premises about the overall goodness of acting “naturally,” the location of our true attitudes in our sentiments, or the actual motives of polite actors. In fact, it does not depend on any premises about human nature or the good life at all. It appeals only to a single, uncontroversial type of insincerity, compatible with many accounts of sincerity, in order to
diagnose a communicative difficulty perceptible to the patient of a polite act. The critique thus commands our attention even if we dismiss any or all controversial Romantic premises about human nature, the good life, or the metaphysics of attitudes.

Instead of arguing, what is perhaps more commonplace, that polite acts are in fact insincere, I have argued that they are difficult to perceive as sincere. Though the difference is grammatically subtle, reframing the critique in this small way fundamentally transforms its structure and tone. If the critic’s claim was that polite acts are in fact insincere, the problem would arise from some culpable defect in the polite actor, and the charge against her would be an insulting one. But when the critic claims that polite acts are difficult to perceive as sincere, the problem is located in the agent and patient of the polite act’s shared social epistemic environment. Framed this way, the critique as such raises no accusations against any individual polite actor or act at all. It may be the case that the polite actor is in fact sincere but the patient is confused about her sincerity. The ultimate conclusion of the critique, as I have articulated it here, is to lament that predictable confusion.

Surprisingly, that conclusion is one I think that the defender of etiquette may be intimately familiar with. Almost every polite actor knows the pain of intending a polite act to sincerely communicate a positive attitude but noticing the hesitance with which it is received. Indeed, often the recipient, too, wishes to know that the polite act was sincere. And yet they fail to meet in understanding. Typically, the defender of etiquette stresses the moral importance of performing polite acts while the critic stresses to the social epistemic difficulties that result when one does. It could be that the defender and the critic do not ultimately disagree so much as highlight different aspects of etiquette more emphatically, the moral and the epistemic, respectively.
What is Romantic about this critique of etiquette? Recall that Rousseau’s fundamental principle is that “man is naturally good, and...it is solely by [social] institutions that men become wicked.”94 One version of the Romantic critique emphasizes the first claim, that humans are naturally good, and objects to etiquette’s censoring of natural behavior. I dismissed that implausible claim at the outset. But notice that this fundamental principle is a conjunction. The second claim is that the problems that ail us can arise not from any individual’s evil but from the conditions of socialization. In other words, they are irreducibly emergent properties of social life.

My reconstruction of the critique is Romantic in this sense: etiquette’s communicative problems arise when we try to institutionalize the communication of prosocial attitudes in reigning cultural norms. It is a communicative problem that arises structurally, from the very nature of institutionalization, and is not reducible to any individual’s willing obfuscation of their true attitudes. So, this version of the critique is Romantic in the sense that it explains an interpersonal problem we face as an emergent property of socialization that is no individual participant’s fault. The critique is also Romantic in its effects. A major theme of Rousseau and other Romantics’ writing is the worry that modern life makes us strangers to one another, that we cannot discern one another’s attitudes.95 Rousseau’s final work begins “So now I am alone in this world, with no brother, neighbor, or friend, nor any company left but my own.”96 It produces the feeling of being “alone in a crowd.” The critique as I have constructed it here lend clarity to this effect. It explains why polite actors and recipients of their polite acts often fail to meet in understanding,

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95 This interpersonal “obstruction” and the desire for interpersonal “transparency” is the organizing lens of Jean Starobinki’s interpretation of Rousseau’s corpus in J. Starobinki, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction. (The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
encountering confusion and opacity where each sought communication, affirmation, and connection.

V. ANTI-ETIQUETTE ETIQUETTES

So far, I have argued that the one defensible version of the Romantic critique of etiquette holds that, by attaching the expression of prosocial attitudes to the following of social conventions, etiquette renders that expression communicatively diluted, and so less effective. Because the following of social conventions is motivationally overdetermined, it is difficult for the patient of a polite act to be confident of the sincerity of the attitude it might express, and this depletes its power as a communicative act. Recall, however, that the defender of etiquette had good reason to employ social conventions to this end. She hoped they would serve as a common social language for the quick and ritualized communication of attitudes that are otherwise difficult to communicate. In this section, I argue that the critic often also recognizes the power of such languages and rituals and seeks for those that evade the problems outlined in the previous section by employing what I call “anti-etiquette etiquettes.” Anti-etiquette etiquettes are social practices in which actors seek to communicate attitudes like respect, love, or esteem to their patients, but attempt to do so in a with impolite air about them. Said differently, they communicate prosocial attitudes through antisocial rituals. The reason for doing this, I suggest, is to employ a common social language and ritual for the communication of moral attitudes as etiquette does but while minimizing the communicative drawbacks of overdetermined motivation by making the act seem costly to the actor. It is a particular kind of credibility enhancing display. In all CREDs, the speaker is attempting to cancel in advance the hearer’s suspicion of independent motives and raise their confidence in its sincerity by showcasing the costs they incur
in acting the way they do. My argument rests on a series of examples, which I hope you find familiar and that you recognize the social practices at play in them and their important functions.

Consider an exchange between “Miss Manners” and one of her readers. The reader writes “I’m a 21-year-old woman and even though I love to joke around and be mannerless with my friends, I still enjoy politeness. I’m writing you for advice on how to be goofy and classy at the same time.” And Martin responds

Perhaps you misunderstand what manners and etiquette are. Surely you do not mean to say that you are mannerless with your friends. Do you shove them out of the way to get to the food? Do you tell them they are boring you and you wish they would go home? Do you respond to their problems by saying, ‘So what?’...Miss Manners...suspects you mean that you and your friends tease one another in ways you know will not hurt, and that when you get together, you dress, eat, and speak in ways you would not do, even with them, on formal occasions such as their weddings or their relatives’ funerals. In other words, you observe informal etiquette on informal occasions. That is perfectly consistent with being mannerly, which means showing respect and consideration for others while practicing the etiquette - the specific rules of how to do this - that apply to the particular situation and era in which you find yourself.97

Notice that Martin’s main example of what is licensed on informal occasions is not just forgoing ordinary prescriptions of etiquette, like declining to say “bless you” to someone who sneezes, but something that runs counter in style and intention to formal etiquette, namely actively teasing one another. That is, she suggests that positively antisocial practices make up a substantial part of the aesthetic and character of environments in which etiquette is relaxed. Erving Goffman similarly notes that cultivating “an associable mood of sullen, silent irritability,” is often a way that people cultivate “solidarity” in informal environments.98 Think, for example, of wait staff who are polite in the dining room but rude and abrasive in the kitchen, or teachers who affirm their students in the classroom but complain about them around the water cooler.

One interpretation of this phenomenon is that it serves a cathartic function. Etiquette typically requires us to constrain our antisocial impulses with effort in formal settings, and

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97 J. Martin 1979, op. cit, 32-33 (emphasis added).
informal settings allow us to let off some steam and recharge by letting those antisocial impulses flow. At the climactic end of “Nosedive,” Lacey and a fellow prisoner enjoy a cathartic exchange of escalating, profane insults with looks of release and joy on their faces. There is likely some truth to the catharsis interpretation. But notice that Martin seems to call the teasing that she notes a part of “informal etiquette.” That is, not something that we are merely allowed to do in informal situations, but something etiquette instructs us to do in informal contexts. This suggests that it performs an important function. I suggest that we often purposefully employ such seemingly antisocial behaviors, like teasing, in order to create an environment in which prosocial attitudes that are expressed seem more sincere.

Often, the antisocial aesthetic and the prosocial attitude are combined in the same act. I have a friend who is often kind and supportive in her actions - more so than most, in fact - but seems compelled in each instance to give an air of rudeness to her polite acts. When she helped me move into a new apartment she peppered the move with theatrical, small criticisms of my new home, complained about the move’s inconvenient timing and physical demands, and reminded me how many times she had recently helped me move. “So, you’re moving again,” she said, “I guess I have to help you again.” When we arrived at my new apartment dramatically stated “Wow! Another dump! It’s okay your big break will come some day.” Though they did sting a bit when I was feeling more tired or sensitive, none of the comments were particularly hurtful, and we both knew that. They were delivered in an over-dramatic way that betrayed their insincerity. We both laughed after each comment. They did, though, contribute to a sense of intimacy between us. I suggest that her intention, conscious or not, in being slightly rude was to clarify that her help was principally motivated by friendly affection. Reigning social norms among young people in a city instruct us to offer help to friends and acquaintances when we
learn that they are about to move. And they also tell us that it would be rude to decline a request for such help without a special reason. Aware of these norms, a mover might reasonably be unsure whether they were helped by friends and acquaintances from friendly affection or from an independent interest in seeming agreeable and a fear of social sanction. My friend’s rudeness during the move gave an air that she was unmoved by such considerations - that she did not fear seeming impolite or all the costs that come with it. It narrowed down the field of plausible motives for her help, rendering the help more communicatively successful. Friends are often, or at least seem to be, ruder to each other than strangers are.

This helps explain why people sometimes find a small amount of antisocial behavior comforting. Overall, people who are mostly rude are unpleasant, and people who are mostly polite are pleasant and comfortable to be around. But it is remarkable how often people can believe this and yet find the company of those who are polite to a fault somewhat unsettling. They often describe them as inscrutable, and so unfamiliar and distant. The comfortable middle ground seems to be when actors are able to be polite on the whole, but artfully perform small impolite acts to show that they are not beholden to social norms for their own sake and so put their peers at ease. In this vein, in Persuasion, Jane Austen says of Anne that “she felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped.”

These antisocial displays are of enough social importance that they are often ritualized. In gay men’s subcultures, for example, drag queens engage in an informal competition called “reading,” where they artfully insult one another, typically picking at each other’s insecurities in

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99 J. Austen, Persuasion (Penguin Classics, 2003), 160. I thank Karen Stohr for pointing me to this passage.
creative ways. These insults typically pick up on what are normally forbidden topics, such as each other’s weight, economic background, or intelligence. For instance, one might “read” another’s need for orthodontia by asking “was your barbecue cancelled? Because your grill is all screwed up.” Participants succeed in the competition by voicing the most creative and transgressive insults. However, if their insults actually hurt the feelings of the person read, any and all of that success is wholly cancelled. The goal of the competition, then, is to creatively insult one another without actually hurting anyone’s feelings. In Martin’s words, the goal is to “tease one another in ways you know will not hurt.” The reader does this knowing enough about the psychology of their target to pick a topic that is hurtful but not too hurtful to them, and presenting the insult in such an artful way that the impression of insult is outweighed by an admiration of their creativity. Some believe reading to be evolutionarily entangled with “reading the dozens,” a similar artful competition among young African-American men of exchanging “yo mama!” jokes that exhibits many parallel structures. One function of reading is to showcase the creativity of the reader, made more impactful by its provocative content. But it also creates a bonded environment in which the expression of further prosocial attitudes is more easily perceived as sincere. If you know from experience that I am willing and able to make fun of your appearance, for example, and incur all the social costs that come with it, then when I later compliment your appearance it will likely seem more sincere to you. It is a bonding exercise, assuring participants that they are having “real” connections with one another.

Roasts have a similar structure. The typical structure of a roast is to creatively tease the person roasted before saying something sincerely kind about them. A typical best man’s toast at a wedding has this structure. He will playfully highlight the groom’s faults and recall

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embarrassing stories about him before praising him directly. The former teasing makes the latter praise seem more sincere to the groom and audience. For that reason, though roasts have an antisocial surface structure, they often have a deeper prosocial function. Consider, for example, the traditional roast of the President by a comedian that ends the United States White House Correspondents Association Dinner. Barack Obama, who had and desired a relatively positive relationship with the media, attended and was roasted throughout his presidency, while Donald Trump, who has and cultivates an antagonistic relationship with the press, has so far broken the tradition and declined to attend.

None of these acts do in fact violate reigning social norms to perform their function. As Martin and Goffman both note, all do something that is appropriate in that situation. But what is required of one in all the examples above is an air of transgression. The artful performance of a felt sense that I have violated a social norm is what gives my speech an air of costliness and so reassures you of my broader sincerity. Audiences might gasp in response to the best man’s comment because of this air of transgression, but when pressed and upon reflection they will say he did nothing inappropriate. Actually violating reigning social norms, as in Martin’s examples of shoving you out of the way for food, would cultivate negative attitudes between participants that would override the desired effect. Anti-etiquette etiquettes create an air of transgression without actually transgressing.

And so, I argue that lapses from etiquette, or seeming lapses, often serve to compensate for the communicative difficulties intrinsic to etiquette. One could concede that all of the examples given above have the structure and function I describe, but deny that any of these amount to a true deviation from etiquette. Etiquette, the objection goes, denotes whatever the reigning social norms deem as appropriate behavior in a given situation, and one might say all of these antisocial
displays are prescribed by those norms. Reigning norms hold that the best man ought to tease the
groom during his speech in the way he does. And so, the thought goes, I have not shown that we
struggle against the communicative shortcomings of etiquette, but rather I have only further
specified the way etiquette makes our communication more precise. This, I grant, is true at a
high enough level of abstraction. The best man is doing exactly what one is supposed to do in his
situation. But from the participants’ perspective what makes these acts succeed is their air of
impropriety and transgression to the speakers and hearers. This may be an impression that all
parties would lose if they stopped to think about it or were questioned about it, but it is an
illusion of transgression that the social practice depends on nonetheless. If these acts became
widely understood to be a prescription of etiquette it would spoil their function. And so, these
acts are both true acts of etiquette, what Martin calls “informal etiquette,” but they depend on a
felt sense that one is being subversive, transgressive, impolite, and so are also “anti-etiquette.”
We theorists may correctly call them acts of etiquette but to the participants such a label would
destroy that sense of transgression that they call upon to function. They are irreducibly both.

VI. EVALUATION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

My principal aim in this chapter has been to describe and conceptually articulate the
Romantic critique of etiquette, not to defend it. Nevertheless, I imagine you can tell that I feel its
force. The critic is right, I think, to point out that expressing interpersonal attitudes through
reigning social conventions renders them communicatively diluted, and so less effective. But is
this sufficient ground for abandoning the prescriptions of etiquette? I think not, for four reasons.

First, recall from Section III that the communicative function is only one of several valuable
functions of etiquette. There we saw that etiquette also serves the important practical functions of
coordinating social activity and processing emotional events, as well as the important moral function of guiding us in the application of our abstract moral commitments. All are independently valuable functions that have no communicative aspirations. And these different functions often do not neatly correspond to particular prescriptions of etiquette. Rather, individual prescriptions of etiquette often serve all of these functions at once. And so, we could not carve out and abandon those prescriptions of etiquette that have a communicative function, saving the rest. Valuing the coordination, ritualistic, and specification and training functions of etiquette likely leave the existing practice of etiquette intact.

Second, it is a mistake to assume that the options available to us as moral actors are to either communicate attitudes through our actions or, perhaps motivated by the Romantic critique of etiquette, not to. The latter is rarely, if ever, possible. Etiquette tells me not to browse the internet on my phone throughout a philosophy talk, but instead to express curious attention through my body language. I may, moved by the Romantic critique, be convinced that this will fail to communicate respect as intended. But that does render the two options communicatively equivalent. Regardless of whether attentive body language would successfully communicate respect, browsing on your phone communicates disrespect. Moral actors are typically faced with a decision not between whether or not to communicate attitudes, but which attitudes to communicate. And as we saw, because of the heuristics of sincerity, negative attitudes communicated through deviations from etiquette are easier to perceive as sincere than positive attitudes communicated through etiquette are. So, even if you believe that attentive body language fails to communicate respect, you should still be aware that browsing on your phone typically communicates disrespect, and often effectively so. Etiquette helps us avoid communicating negative attitudes even when it struggles to help us communicate positive
attitudes. So, we have communicative reasons to follow the prescriptions of etiquette even if its typically and predictably struggles in its central communicative function.

And, third, though anti-etiquette etiquettes aim to evade the communicative problems facing etiquette, they are not a viable alternative to evade these problems in all cases. They depend for their communicative success on the behaviors they prescribe being exceptional and socially deviant. If we as moral actors were to try to communicate moral attitudes only through anti-etiquette etiquettes, that deviant behavior would be socially normalized, and so lose its ability to communicate sincerity. To treat anti-etiquette etiquettes as a preferable alternative to etiquette would lead to a perpetual cycle where socially deviant behaviors are replaced by more and more socially deviant behaviors as the effective way to communicate attitudes *ad infinitum*. Anti-etiquette etiquettes should be viewed then, as a social tool we can use in exceptional circumstances, when it is especially important but difficult to communicate one’s sincere prosocial attitudes. It is not promising as a communicative strategy in general.

And fourth, even if our polite acts struggle to communicate prosocial attitudes, they often serve an integral role in *facilitating* experiences that do.\(^{101}\) Etiquette prescribes that I bring a bottle of wine to your dinner party and that you take my coat. Even if the Romantic is right that these acts are difficult to perceive as sincere expressions of affection, they do help inaugurate a social event in which attitudes are communicated more clearly, namely, a dinner-table conversation.\(^{102}\) Many of our encounters with one another where we learn about one another’s attitudes are flanked by social rituals that ceremonially open and close them. And so, even when individual polite acts struggle to successfully communicate interpersonal attitudes, they can serve

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\(^{101}\) I thank Deidre Nelms for suggesting this point.

an instrumental role in bringing about such communication by creating more opportunities for interpersonal engagement.

Though the Romantic critique is not immediately action guiding, telling us to disregard the prescriptions of etiquette, it does inform our social agency in other ways. For instance, it validates a degree of uncertainty that patients of polite acts sometimes exhibit. An academic’s presentation of her research findings at a conference, for example, might be met with several polite acts meant to communicate esteem for her work. Nevertheless, she might be plagued by a suspicion in the back of her mind that the audience was “just being polite,” and confide in a colleague that she would be more assured of its sincerity if it were communicated in ways not prescribed by etiquette, for instance, if an audience member emailed her after the conference asking follow-up questions or inviting her to contribute to an edited volume. Her colleague may reproach her for her inability to “take a compliment.” But the Romantic critique validates her uncertainty as reflecting a true feature of her social epistemic environment. So, her colleague should not criticize and sanction her uncertainty (though it does not follow that the colleague should actively validate her uncertainty either).

And finally, the Romantic critique instructs us to recognize that anti-etiquette etiquettes serve an important social function, and so not dismiss them as unnecessary or to scoff at their impropriety. If a friend of yours, for example, has evidently positive attitudes and kindly helps and supports his friends, but usually with an air of snark rudeness, the Romantic critique calls on us, before censoring that snark rudeness, to entertain the possibility that he is trying thereby, consciously or not, to make his kind behavior more communicatively effective.

The Romantic critique also newly validates only a narrow set of reactions from the patient of a polite act. It validates their private uncertainty and their longing for communicative acts not
prescribed by etiquette. It does not validate their indifferent dismissal of or hostility toward a polite act. We all know someone who claims to have seen through the fraud of etiquette and takes this as license to be ungrateful for and rudely dismissive of polite acts. He also sometimes takes righteous pleasure in undercutting others’ polite acts in progress. He claims to see that each polite act is at best useless or at worst conceals harmful intentions. But he can find no justification for these behaviors in this critique. As we have seen, this Romantic critique takes issues only with the communicative function of etiquette, not with the other independently important functions, so it does not justify undercutting etiquette. And it vindicates an inability to tell what attitudes motivate a polite act; it does not embolden suspicions that polite acts do in fact conceal negative attitudes. Despite popular versions that are, the Romantic critique of etiquette is not a mean-spirited critique, and does not validate mean-spirited reactions.

VII. CONCLUSION

Neither etiquette nor Romanticism are philosophers’ inventions, and so each refers to a family resemblance of practices, exhibiting only a loose conceptual unity. For that reason, there are several Romantic critiques of etiquette. When those critiques are quickly dismissed, it is usually because the versions of the critique at hand are grounded in controversial Romantic premises about the goodness of acting “naturally” that do not pass rational scrutiny. However, I have argued that there is one version of the Romantic critique of etiquette that is not based on any such controversial premises. Instead, this critique appeals only to uncontroversial premises about effective communication to show that etiquette struggles in one of its prized functions, the communication of positive attitudes. While the Romantic critic has diagnosed a real challenge that the polite actor faces, he has not given us sufficient reason to abandon the prescriptions of
etiquette. Etiquette serves important functions other than the communicative one, and acting against the prescriptions of etiquette would communicate worse attitudes than following the prescriptions of etiquette would. And so, this version of the critique is not action guiding.

What the critique does do, however, is diagnose a social epistemic difficulty that agents face. I have argued that etiquette serves to institutionalize recognition and that etiquette is difficult to perceive as sincere. If we remove the middle term, etiquette, we learn that institutionalized recognition is difficult to perceive as sincere. The bestowal of recognition serves its communicative function best when it is an exception to reigning social norms. Once the bestowal of recognition is written into the social norms of a culture, it loses a degree of its communicative effectiveness. In the previous chapter, I explained that recognition resists struggle. In this chapter, I have shown through the Romantic critique of etiquette that recognition resists institutionalization. In the language of this broader project, this is another of recognition’s practical inversions. That is, it is another way in which our efforts to intentionally manage recognition are undermined precisely because of those efforts. It is a practical difficulty that social agents find themselves regularly grappling with and that theorists ought to be sensitive to. In the following chapter, I outline a third practical inversion in the pragmatics of recognition.
CHAPTER FOUR:

RECOGNITIVE SENTIMENTALISM – A NON-IDEAL RECOGNITION HEURISTIC

“The Revolution brought to its highest intensity the idea of the public, and established, Dr. Arendt suggests, an ultimate antagonism between the unshadowed manifestation of the public life and the troubled ambiguity of the personal life, the darkness of man’s unknowable heart. What was private and unknown might be presumed to be subversive of the public good. From this presumption grew the preoccupation with sincerity, with the necessity of exposing and guaranteeing it to the public. Sincerity requires a rhetoric of avowal, the demonstration of single-minded innocence through attitude and posture, exactly the role-playing in which Rousseau had found the essence of personal, ultimately of social, corruption. ‘One cannot,’ André Gide has said, ‘both be sincere and seem so.’”

–Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity103

I. INTRODUCTION

The principal theme of Rousseau's Dialogues is confusion. Specifically, it is confusion about interpersonal attitudes - about what people think of Jean-Jacques, what he thinks of them, and what each should think of each other. Throughout, the discussants, named "Rousseau" and "the Frenchman," have a maddeningly circuitous debate about the character and virtues of an absent third individual named "Jean-Jacques." The latter represents the historical Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the author of Emile, On the Social Contract, and the like, who rose to fame and then to infamy in the intellectual culture of Europe and to persecution by some of its governments. The Frenchman represents the general public attitude toward Jean-Jacques, and Rousseau represents what the author of the dialogue, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, would think of himself if he had never written or read his works, but only heard about that author through public discourse. Both discussants, who have never met Jean-Jacques, draw from what is in the public record about Jean-Jacques to come to a verdict about his character, but doing so produces more confusion and opacity than clarity. Neither discussant can be confident that what is in the public record has led them to the truth. It is only when Rousseau and subsequently the Frenchman meet

Jean-Jacques in person that confusion dissipates and the dialogue progresses. Curiously, we the readers are not invited to these meetings, they happen off the page. After meeting Jean-Jacques in person, Rousseau and the Frenchman both come to recognize the goodness of his character and feel secure in their judgments. The interpersonal attitudes between all three settle in harmony as a result of this private meeting. This dramatic arc reveals a standard animating the recognition pragmatics of the text: the exchange of recognition functions best in private, informal, in-person meetings than in public, formal contexts.

This standard is akin to another animating much of Rousseau's writing: recognitives are most effectively communicated through involuntary bodily reactions. Julie and the Confessions are rife with tears, blushing and the like that communicate interpersonal attitudes. There are too many examples to choose from. When Rousseau meets his beloved Madame de Warens for the first time, for example, they do not speak but communicate through often-involuntary body language. My personal favorites are Rousseau's overdramatic accounts of the beginning and end of his friendship with David Hume. When they first meet in person: "I threw myself on his neck and embraced him tightly without saying anything, but covering his face with kisses and tears that spoke for themselves."104 And when their friendship ends:

After supper, the two of us were silent beside the fire when I noticed that he was starting at me, as he often did, in a way that is hard to describe. This time his dry, burning, mocking, and prolonged gaze became more than disturbing. To free myself from it I tried to stare back, but when my eyes met his I felt an inexplicable shudder, and I was soon forced to lower them.105

In these and many other cases, recognitives are communicated through bodily reactions, especially those that are involuntary, like blushing or crying, or those that are significantly involuntary, like facial expression, body language, tone of voice, and the like.

105 Ibid., 421.
These and the above episodes, together give rise to the impression that, for Rousseau, the exchange of recognitives, both positive and negative, functions best in private, informal, in-person meetings and through bodily reactions, especially involuntary ones. And it suggests that the exchange of recognitives in some sense struggle to fulfill their communicative function in public, formal, meeting or through composed, scripted speech. In the next section I will name this as giving greater weight to “scaled-down” than to “scaled-up” media in such matters. Together, for shorthand, call Rousseau’s preference for scaled-down media "recognitive sentimentalism" for short.

One explanation of recognitive sentimentalism would be that to recognize someone consists in having a natural, involuntary, sentimental reaction to them, that to recognize one's peers, for example, being swept up by a feeling of positive regard for them. And, on this understanding, these spontaneous reactions function best in private environments where we “let it all hang out,” and not in our reflectively controlled, scripted public behavior. This would explain recognitive sentimentalism as an effect of Rousseau's Romantic naturalism, the view that we are only authentic when we act on unmodified natural feelings, a life ethics that holds sway in some subcultures today. Emile begins: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man,”106 and in the Reveries Rousseau’s happiest moments are those where he turns off his reflective monitoring and surrenders to his natural passions.107 But both this ethics of naturalism and this metaphysics of interpersonal attitudes are non-starters. It is not always clear what Rousseau means by “natural,” but, whatever it means, the view that authenticity consists in acting "naturally," has no philosophical legs.108 What is

more, Rousseau’s sentimentalism is not held consistently across contexts. He writes in *On the Social Contract*, for instance, that “the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty.”109 Also, the view that recognition consists in having an affective reaction to another takes a stand in a vexed and controversial debate about the metaphysics of attitudes. If I affectively recoil in disgust at you but cognitively recognize your dignity and worth, which is my "real" attitude? This is a difficult philosophical question. I myself think the question of which is your “real” attitude invites more confusion than clarity. And so to defend recognitive sentimentalism this way would largely be to beg the question. Seen this way, then, Rousseau’s recognitive sentimentalism is largely indefensible. We ought to discard it along with such Romantic naturalism wherever it shows up - from Rousseau to hippie culture and beyond.

But compare Rousseau’s *Dialogues*, now, to a very different work: the 2017 social thriller film *Get Out*, written and directed by Jordan Peele. It follows Chris, a young, black man from a city on a visit with his white girlfriend, Rose Armitage, to meet her affluent, suburban, white family and their friends.110 The final act of the film descends into an all-out racial horror, where the Armitages and members of their white-supremacist secret society aim to capture and enslave Chris. The prior, realist bulk of the film, by contrast, follows Chris’s subtle navigations of the genial environment that disguises this hostile underbelly. The Armitages’ public, reflective, and controlled behavior signals nothing but liberal and welcoming attitudes towards African-Americans. Their public record is inscrutable. The patriarch repeatedly emphasizes that he “would have voted for Obama a third time if he could.” He emphasizes early on that he disparages “Aryan race bullshit.” Peele explains that the Armitages “are the liberal elite god and

goddess....The audience will know ‘they are not racist.’” Guests at the garden party the Armitages host shower Chris with hospitality and compliments and introduce him warmly to their friends, who make a point to praise black public figures like Tiger Woods in his presence. And yet, throughout Chris keeps a keen eye on discrepant, unreflective behaviors that slip through the cracks. When Chris leaves the room the guests’ affable cheer transforms instantly into an uncanny, stern silence. Their body language and conversational rhythm subtly shift when Chris enters a conversation. Guests at the party touch Chris in ways slightly different than they do others. They enter his personal space or touch his body a bit more readily than they do to others. The camera focuses in on their unconscious ticks like fidgeting or wringing their hands to create a sense of unease. Peele crafts the film to highlight this discrepancy: the Armitages’ and their friends’ public, controlled behavior is welcoming while their private, unreflective behavior creates a deep, palpable unease. Like Rousseau, Chris gives greater weight to the latter signals in determining his peers’ attitudes and intentions. These actions are often too subtle to point to as definitive evidence of bias, but he trusts the unease they create. Peele describes that Chris “knows something’s wrong, he just doesn’t know what…He can’t describe to Rose where his suspicion is coming from - which is an experience a lot of African Americans have, where were perceiving something and we’re being told that we’re not actually perceiving it correctly.”

Chris’s interactions with black groundskeeper and maid exhibit similarly discrepant behavior. The black groundskeeper Walter publicly and explicitly praises the Armitages, yet Chris finds his praise unconvincing. Chris says Walter’s “whole vibe is hostile.” When Rose asks him why, he explains that “it’s not what he said. It’s how he said it.” When the black maid Georgina smiles and insists explicitly that “the Armitages are so good to us,” tears involuntarily fall from her

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111 J. Peele, “Director Commentary,” Get Out (Universal Pictures, 2017), DVD.
112 Ibid.
eyes, and the script indicates that “there’s a pain behind her smile.” Peele claims that Chris’s discrepant exchange with Georgina here “sums up the entire movie.” The palpable anxiety that these exchanges create for Chris is the film’s main focus until the dramatic conclusion that vindicates it. The film treats his attention to these bodily, private behaviors as warranted. And it has resonated with African-American audiences for vindicating their experience of the phenomenology of interaction with white Americans.

Here, Chris is employing the same standards to discern others’ interpersonal attitudes as Rousseau does. Both give more weight to what is involuntary, private, or informal in interpersonal exchange than to what is controlled, public, or scripted. And yet, I have no reason to believe that either Peele or his protagonist Chris subscribe to a Romantic view of the good life or the metaphysics of attitudes. In fact, each’s self-presentation suggests they probably do not. Neither has an air of naturalism about them. Nothing in their behavior evidences a yearning for a lost childhood or a return to the state of nature. This invites the possibility, then, that recognitive sentimentalism need not depend on the controversial Romantic commitments outlined above and so does not fall with them.

My aim here is not to defend recognitive sentimentalism but rather to explain it. Put another way, I am not interested in recognitive sentimentalism as a philosopher’s theory but rather as a heuristic of attitudes employed by agents in the everyday social world. The question that interests me is not where you, the reader, and I should become recognitive sentimentalists, but rather why people like Jean-Jacques and Chris do. What motivates them to privilege the particular heuristics of interpersonal attitudes that they do? Does that stance serve any important or justifiable purpose in their social agency? What distal practical effects arise from that attitude?

\[113\] ibid.
How should we respond to such attitudes? For recognitive sentimentalists are often charged with spoiling our efforts to manage and improve the recognitive economy, with casting suspicion on seemingly productive interpersonal interactions, and with robbing others of control of the interpersonal attitudes that are attributed to them. As in the last two chapters, my ambitions here are not prescriptive but rather diagnostic. I am trying to understand how and why our efforts to manage the recognitive economy often predictably and lamentably fail and what difficulties we can anticipate when we set out to do so.

In what follows, I hope to give both Rousseau’s and Chris’s suspicions a more plausible defense. I argue that recognitive sentimentalism can be grounded not on any controversial metaphysical or ethical claims, but rather on a social epistemic one. Specifically, I argue that the recognitive sentimentalist is motivated not by a belief that “true” interpersonal attitudes lie in our scaled-down behavior and that such attitudes cannot in principle be “scaled up.” Rather, I will argue that recognitive sentimentalism is a heuristic employed by agents who recognize that the means by which such attitudes might be scaled up in their own social epistemic environment are systematically corrupted or exploited. Drawing analogies from recent non-ideal political theory, I will argue that the recognitive sentimentalist is non-ideal recognition theorist. This comparison will gain us insight with respect to how we ought to understand and respond to recognitive sentimentalists we encounter in the world.

The aim of this dissertation as a whole is to uncover three “practical inversions” in the pragmatics of recognition, that is, ways that our efforts to effectively intervene in and transform the recognitive environment fail in part because we intervened. The previous two chapters showed the extent to which recognition resists struggle and institutionalization. The upshot of this chapter is that recognitives to an extent resist scaling.
II. SCALING RECOGNITION

Drawing from the examples in the previous section, we can construct the following spectrum of media along which the exchange of interpersonal attitudes can be scaled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involuntary Bodily Reactions</th>
<th>Voluntary Bodily Reactions</th>
<th>Private Speech (back regions)</th>
<th>Public Speech (front regions)</th>
<th>Group Recognition</th>
<th>Legal Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

"scaled down"  "scaled up"

This represents the spectrum of media along which we communicate interpersonal attitudes, from the way they arise naturally and without voluntary control, to the ways in which they are officially, publicly communicated after deliberation. The communication of interpersonal attitudes that falls further to the left of the spectrum we can call “scaled-down,” while that which falls further right to the spectrum is “scaled-up.” Along this spectrum, both Rousseau and Chris give greater weight to scaled-down media than to scaled-up ones in determining others’ interpersonal attitudes. In *Get Out*, the more “scaled up” an act of recognition was, the more racially inclusive it seemed, the more scaled-down it was, the more racist it seemed.

Involuntary bodily reactions include things like blushing, crying, startled jumps and the like. Recognitive acts in this category include crying with joy or sadness at another’s behavior. Semi-voluntary bodily reactions include those that we can control but often fail to do so, such as our tone of voice, our bodily posture, our eye contact, our facial expressions, and so on. Recognitive acts in this category include having a relaxed body language with someone or having restricted breathing and speech around another.

The difference between “private” and “public” behavior names the difference, respectively, between behavior we intend to be seen by no one or only by intimates and that
which we intend for a general social audience. Public acts of recognition include, for example, a boss giving an employee an “employee of the month” award while private recognition includes, for example, that boss complaining about that same employee to her partner over dinner at home. A helpful conceptual tool to describe this distinction is Erving Goffman’s distinction between “front regions” and “back regions.”¹¹⁴ Front regions are the aspects of our self-presentation that we intentionally manage to project a desired public image of ourselves. In Goffman’s words, they are “the part of the individual’s performance which regularly function in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance.”¹¹⁵ Back regions are those aspects of our lives that detract from that desired image and so we keep hidden. Goffman’s favored example is the restaurant, where the waiter’s poised and genial self-presentation in the dining room is his front region while his frazzled, irritable behavior in the kitchen is his back region.

Group recognition occurs when a group speaks on behalf of its members. When a labor union endorses a political candidate, for example, that act indicates that at least most of its members endorse that political candidate.

Legal recognition occurs when interpersonal attitudes communicated through the laws or other acts of government. When a government legalizes same-sex marriage (except when they do so solely to solely maintain liberal neutrality) they legally recognize same-sex couples. When the Quebec government legally protects French language it expresses legal recognition of Francophone culture.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ ibid., 13
These are six different media through which interpersonal attitudes can be communicated. Four different scaling dimensions are interwoven here that allow the communication of recognitives to be “scaled up”: from involuntary to voluntary, from private to public, from individual to group, and from informal to legal.

The recognitive sentimentalist is a social actor who treats scaled-down behavior as more indicative of a recognizer’s attitudes than their scaled-up behavior. Why? In the last section I claimed that one explanation - that personal authenticity or “true” attitude consist in scaled down behavior - is a non-starter. Is there another explanation, then, of the recognitive sentimentalist’s giving greater weight to scaled-down acts of recognition than scaled-up ones?

III. A LESSON FROM NON-IDEAL THEORY

Insight into the recognitive sentimentalist’s motivations can be gleaned, I think, on an analogy to the debate over ideal and non-ideal theory in political philosophy. I shall argue in subsequent sections that recognitive sentimentalism is a non-ideal recognition heuristic. First, in this section, I will outline the analogous debate between ideal and non-ideal theories of justice.

Ideal theory describes the principles any fully just society would follow, derived without consideration of the particular injustices of any society. It tells us what is just in theory. Non-ideal theory responds by telling us what is the case as a matter of fact, specifically by citing the injustices of current societies. And the non-ideal theorist thinks there is something misguided or incomplete about ideal theory. What?

The first charge leveled against ideal theory by non-ideal theorists is that it does not properly guide action. Ideal theory is sometimes said to not be action guiding at all. Utopian theories often do not tell us how to redress historical injustices or navigate dilemmas caused by
multiple existing injustices, for example. Further, the non-ideal theorist charges that ideal theory prescribes actions that exacerbate injustices rather than correct them. In defense of the latter claim, the non-ideal theorist argues that even if we correctly identify the principles that would govern a wholly just society, it does not follow that it is just to follow those principles here and now. Also, further, it does follow that our actions are just \textit{to the degree} that they follow those principles, here and now. Here is a familiar example. We can assume that in a wholly just society our decisions would not discriminate on the basis of race. However, it does not follow that we should, here and now, not act in ways that make racial distinctions. In order to correct for current racial injustices, we often must act in ways that are racially “discriminating” in the literal, original sense of the term, namely treating different cases differently. Nor does it follow that our actions are just \textit{to the degree} that they do not racially discriminate, here and now. This is because actions that correct for historical racial injustices are often racially discriminatory, such as reparations or affirmative action. If we infer, then, from the fact that a wholly just society would lack racially discriminatory action that we ought to cease discriminating on the basis of race, here and now, we ignore or exacerbate racial oppression.

The non-ideal theorist is not only warning against a theoretical error that philosophers may commit, but also a practical error that many commit in their everyday lives. In a 2007 decision ruling against affirmative action policies, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Roberts reasoned that “[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”\textsuperscript{117} This reasoning appeals to the ideal case to rob us of the tools to address the non-ideal reality. Moreover, a practical ethics of “colorblindness” has emerged governing everyday affairs in many liberal cultures. Adherents claim “not to see race”

\textsuperscript{117} Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, 551 U.S. 701.
in any of their interactions with others and are proud to do so because it approximates the ideal principle. But some activists have warned that this attitude has in fact hindered our ability to perceive and remedy everyday racial injustices.

These critiques reveal a general fallacy to which we are prone in our everyday practical reasoning. Call it the “fallacy of approximation.” It does not follow from the fact that in an idealized circumstance we would follow a certain principle that we ought to follow that principle in non-ideal circumstances, nor that we are acting correctly to the extent that we approximate to that principle. Correcting for this fallacy in our practical reasoning would involve recognizing the route to ideal conditions will sometimes require action that runs counter to that principle. When someone says “you have to spend money to make money,” they are correcting for the fallacy of approximation in financial matters.

And the second charge the non-ideal theorist makes is that ideal theory can function ideologically. “Ideological” has multiple meanings, but one understanding is that it describes a principle that, while just at some degree of idealized abstraction, functions to support unjust structures when circulated in some unjust conditions. This is one interpretation of Marx’s claim that liberalism is the ideology of capitalism. The principles of individual liberty are true at a level of idealized abstraction, but lend support to injustice when circulated in capitalist societies by justifying the exchanges on which that system is built. John Roberts and other proponents of “colorblindness” use that principle ideologically because their use masks racial injustices that they are meant to redress. In this charge, the concern is not whether the ideal principle is true or false, but whether it is hazardous when circulated publicly.

I think that we can gain insight into the motivations of cognitive sentimentalists like Rousseau and Chris by understanding them as a non-ideal recognition theorists. A case can be
made in the abstract, and I will make it in the next section, that social agents ought to give equal
or greater weight to scaled-up acts of recognition than to scaled-down acts of recognition in ideal
conditions, for epistemic, instrumental, and moral reasons. However, Rousseau, Chris, and you
and I all live in non-ideal epistemic environments. The recognitive sentimentalist recognizes that
in those conditions greater weight ought to be given to scaled-down acts of recognition. And
further, it reveals, I will show, that the public circulation of the ideal principle - that we ought to
give greater weight to scaled-up acts of recognition - can function ideologically, masking
important interpersonal attitudes to which agents ought to be sensitive and so diverting their
practical agency.

IV. THE IDEAL EPISTEMIC CASE

Should agents give greater weight to scaled-up or to scaled-down media of recognition
when discerning one another’s interpersonal attitudes? Recall the four scaling dimensions
outlined in section two: from involuntary to voluntary, from private to public, from individual to
group, and from informal to legal. Considering each of these scaling dimensions in isolation
from their social environment, there are strong prima facie reasons to give equal or greater
weight to scaled up-acts of recognition. So, these idealized considerations are at least ambivalent
about or even speak against recognitive sentimentalism. For that reason, drawing from the
analogy in the last section, call a social actor that gives greater weight to scaled-up acts of
recognition in determining the recognizer’s attitudes a “recognitive idealist.” What are the
reasons that speak in favor of recognitive idealism?

The first dimension along which recognitives can be scaled is from our involuntary
bodily behavior to our reflectively controlled bodily behavior. So, imagine that while interacting
with a member of a group stereotyped as violent my unreflective reaction is to stand back and hold a guarded posture. But, I recognize that the stereotype is unfounded and my reaction unjustified, so I reflectively override it and purposefully maintain an open, welcoming bodily posture as best I can, but my involuntary hesitance still shows through a bit. I think most of us, when asked, would say that the latter is our “real” attitude. This is because it is the one that is the output of our cognitive deliberation and reflective endorsement. And so, it is something we would take ownership of. The involuntary reaction is some combination of my culture and my biology acting through me, but is not something I identify with; in fact, I distance myself from it.

When we think this way, our thinking seems analogous to Harry Frankfurt’s analysis of the will. Frankfurt’s distinguishes between first- and second-order desires. First-order desires are desires for things in the world. Second-order desires are those for the desires we wish to have - those we approve of on reflection. The unwilling drug addict has a first-order desire to take the drug but a second-order desire not to have that first-order desire. For Frankfurt, this second-order desire is the one I take ownership of, I identify with, it reflects my true self. It is part of me. The conflicting first-order desire acts upon me and through me, but it is not the attitude with which I identify; it is like a force that acts upon me as forces from the outside world do. It is not part of me. Christine Korsgaard holds a similar view, in which my true attitudes are those I “reflectively endorse,” and those involuntary bodily behaviors that conflict with them are a kind of invader.

We also identify more with our controlled behavior not just against resistant unreflective behavior, but also disorganized unreflective behavior. We have all had the experience of not being able to express our thoughts and feelings successfully “off the cuff,” needing to exert more

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reflective control by scripting and planning what we mean to say. Most of us would say that the latter represents our real attitudes because we exerted more reflective control over it.

Further still, when we seek to improve ourselves, we begin with our controlled behaviors and aim for our involuntary behaviors to follow. It is how we create new habits. In a sense, then, my controlled behaviors represent who I aim to be while my involuntary behaviors represent who I used to be. For example, someone might realize the error of their homophobic attitudes and be intentionally verbally and physically welcoming of gays and lesbians, but nevertheless maintain a residual, involuntary nervousness and reserve in their presence. We might be inclined to say that the former are their true attitudes because they represent their intentions. The inclusive posture represents what she identifies with and who she is trying to be.

There is strong prima facia reason, then, to give greater weight to our voluntary acts than to our involuntary acts in determining our interpersonal attitudes because the former indicate our identification, considered attention, and intention, while the latter do not when they conflict.

The second scaling dimension is from our private behavior to our public behavior. As we saw in Section II, we can treat this as roughly identical to Goffman’s distinction between “back regions” and “front regions.” Front regions are the images of ourselves we construct for public consumption, while back regions are those behaviors we conceal from public consumption because they conflict with the image ourselves we are trying to project. For example, I am often affirming and encouraging of my students in the classroom, a front region, but complain about them while I am grading papers at home at night, a back region.

Goffman himself is cautiously agnostic about whether our front-region or back-region behaviors reflect our “real” attitudes. He writes:

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While we could retain the common-sense notion that fostered appearances [front regions] can be discredited by a discrepant reality [back regions], there is often no reason for claiming that the facts discrepant with the fostered impression are any more the real reality than is the fostered reality they have the power of embarrassing. A cynical view of everyday performances can be as one-sided as the one that is sponsored by the performer. For many sociological issues it may not even be necessary to decide which is the more real, the fostered impression or the one the performer attempts to prevent the audience from receiving.….[W]hat reality really is can be left to other students.121

And again: “It may be repeated that no claim is made that surreptitious communications [back regions] are any more a reflection of the real reality than are the official communications with which they are inconsistent [front regions]; the point is that the performer is typically involved in both, and this dual involvement must be carefully managed lest official projections be discredited.”122 So, we might be agnostic regarding whether to give greater weight to private or public recognitives, against the recognitive sentimentalist’s emphasis on private ones.

But further still, Goffman’s central idea, taken in abstraction, lends support to assigning greater weight to front-region behavior. The reasons are similar to those in the previous scaling dimension. Front-region behavior represents who I am consciously, intentionally trying to be, the public image of myself I am cultivating. It is something I take reflective ownership of. And it represents what I am trying socially to be. It is the image I am projecting toward the outside world. Put another way, front region behavior represents the version of myself I invest in with great effort and time. It represents my long-term values and commitments. Back region behavior is not something I cultivate intentionally; it is an accidental byproduct of my front-region behavior. And it is something I socially minimize in my self-presentation. I complain about my students at night when I am tired and overwhelmed, but I do not bring that attitude into the classroom because it does not represent who I, on more resolved reflection, want to be. So, as with the previous dimension, public behavior seems prima facie a better indicator of someone’s

121 Goffman, op. cit., 43.
122 ibid., 108.
attitudes because it represents a greater degree of their cognitive reflection and affirmative ownership.

So understood, we can view recognitive idealism – giving greater weight to scaled-up media in determining interpersonal attitudes – as a form of cooperative interpersonal aid. Our presentation of our front regions is often disrupted by the embarrassing intrusion of back region material. A student may notice a teacher’s annoyance moments before he enters a classroom and puts on a warm face. Goffman writes that “when a participant employs [practices] to save the definition of the situation projected by another, we speak of…‘tact.’”\textsuperscript{123} Tact, in giving greater weight to scaled-up than to scaled-down media in determining interpersonal attitudes, is a way we help one another become the people each of us wants to be by facilitating each other’s front-region construction.

The third scaling dimension is from individual to group. Recently, some philosophers have asked whether groups \textit{as such} can have attitudes over and above those of their members.\textsuperscript{124} I do not mean to intervene in that important debate here. Rather, I am interested in whether we can treat the expressed attitudes of a group as reliable indicators of the attitudes of their members. Georgetown University recently issued a statement of support for undocumented students who arrived in the country as children, for example. Part of the value of that statement was to communicate to undocumented students how they could expect to be treated by faculty and staff. And so, the statement by the group aimed to communicate information about the attitudes of its members. When executed properly, statements by groups ought to be reliable indicators of their members’ attitudes. It is required for group statements to be what they purport to be. What is more, acts of group recognition also serve as useful heuristics for us to determine

\textsuperscript{124} E.g., B. Huebner, \textit{Macrocognition} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
one another’s interpersonal attitudes. It would be practically burdensome for each undocumented student to discern the attitudes of each faculty and staff member at each university they might consider applying to. Group recognition is an empowering tool we can use to navigate our social environment.

The final scaling dimension is from informal to legal. The reason for favoring scaled-up acts of recognition in this dimension combine those of the previous dimensions. In a democratic society, acts of legal recognition are acts of group recognition. Further, they represent the output of that group’s deliberative process about what attitudes to reflectively endorse. Taking these considerations together, acts of legal recognition express the “general will” of the people. Legal acts also represent a degree of finality in such matters. We are likely to say “the people have spoken” after such acts as a way to indicate the end of a public debate. Considered in themselves, legal acts, then, are the most scaled-up acts of recognition because they represent a greater degree of rational reflection and scrutiny, a greater degree of communicative intent, and a greater degree of resolve and permanence supporting those attitudes than any scaled-down acts do.

Scaled-up media of recognition also occupy our attention for strategic reasons, over and above these epistemic ones. When we set about to change the recognition orders of a society, it is difficult to change each and every person’s private, bodily behaviors one-by-one. Instead, we focus on changing the society’s laws, the group stances, the workplace policies, and the reflective opinions. This is both because they are more willfully manageable and because they have wider domains. It is easier and more effective to change a society’s laws than to change each individual’s sentiments one-by-one.
V. THE NON-IDEAL EPISTEMIC ENVIRONMENT

So, as we’ve seen, considered in abstraction from a particular social environment, there are good reasons to treat scaled-up acts of recognition as equally or even more indicative of a recognizer’s attitudes than scaled-down acts of recognition. They represent a greater degree of rational reflection and scrutiny, a greater degree of communicative intent, and a greater degree of resolve and permanence supporting those attitudes. So, in theory, equal or greater weight ought to be given to scaled-up acts of recognition. The recognitive sentimentalist, however, believes that greater weight ought to be given to scaled-down acts of recognition in fact. This is because she recognizes that she lives in a non-ideal social epistemic environment. Specifically, she recognizes that in her particular time and place each of these scaling dimensions is systematically exploited or corrupted. By “exploited” I mean that that scaling dimension is intentionally abused, consciously or unconsciously, by recognizers to communicate false attitudes. By “corrupted” I mean that it regularly communicates false attitudes absent anyone’s intention for it to do so. In this section, I will explain why Rousseau felt this to be the case about his own social epistemic environment. Then, I will show reasons why social agents might reasonably suspect that each of these scaling dimensions is corrupted here and now, in the twenty-first century United States.

Why did Rousseau distrust the scaling dimensions of his own environment? For Rousseau, young children and denizens of the state of nature wear their attitudes on their faces and bodies immediately. It is impossible for their attitudes to be concealed or misrepresented. “Prior to all reflection,” natural humans are swept up involuntarily by their empathy for others, or their violent reactions, or their sexual impulses.\textsuperscript{125} So, all available media equally represent their attitudes. But the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality recounts a historical fall from this

\textsuperscript{125} J.J. Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (Hackett University Press, 1992), 37.
condition. Rousseau’s historical approach here situates his resulting diagnoses as non-ideal theorizing: it is a historical contingency, and not human nature, that corrupts our epistemic environment.\(^{126}\)

Language evolves, Rousseau argues, once each begins to think reflectively about themselves and see themselves in social space, through the eyes of others, and how their opportunities and limitations are shaped by others’ attitudes about them. And it evolves just as much to conceal and misrepresent our attitudes as it does to communicate them. Rousseau believes with Tallyrand that “speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts.” Once we develop speech, we can verbally manipulate the attitudes attributed to us in a way that brings us social advantages. It became in the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things: and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train….Man must now, therefore, have been perpetually employed in getting others to interest themselves in his lot, and in making them, apparently at least, if not really, find their advantage in promoting his own.\(^{127}\)

Rousseau need not claim that we are all engaged in “cheating trickery” all of the time. His worry is that such cheating trickery is a regular enough risk that it makes genuine recognition and strategic flattery difficult to distinguish. After such transformation, Rousseau laments, we often cannot tell who is being sincere in their flattering verbal behavior. Anyone can gain by falsely representing the attitudes you wish to hear while their behavior betrays it. This is an argument that the first scaling dimension, from involuntary to voluntary, is systematically exploited. And, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter, Rousseau thinks that involuntary bodily reactions

\(^{126}\) Notably, Charles Mills, a leading critic of ideal theory as ideological, allies himself with Rousseau’s genealogy of modern life in one of his main articles critical of ideal theory. See C. Mills, “Race in Rawls/Rawls on Race,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 47(S1), 184.

can betray that deceit. This is because they cannot be reflectively managed by the actor in this way.

Are there reasons for us to have a similar concern, here and now, even if we are not Romantics nostalgically yearning for a lost natural state? Some evolutionary psychologists have raised worries parallel to Rousseau’s. Joseph Henrich argues (in the paper that introduces “CREDs” discussed in the previous chapter) that the advent of symbolic communication like language left humans extremely vulnerable to systematic manipulation by one another.\(^\text{128}\) Prior to symbolic communication, human animals could only manipulate one another through physical force, which was difficult. Symbolic communication, however, opened to door to low-cost manipulation. He writes:

> The core idea is that, with the evolution of substantial communicative capacities in the human lineage, cultural learners are potentially exploitable by manipulators who can convey one mental representation but actually believe something else, or at least misrepresent their depth of commitment to it…Models can manipulate learners by misrepresenting their (the model’s) true underlying representations or commitments. Tom Sawyer famously did this when he manipulated his mates into believing that he (and they) actually liked painting a fence.\(^\text{129}\)

We often worry about being manipulated by one another. But though physical manipulation typically takes an antisocial form – I punch you or cage you – symbolic manipulation often takes a prosocial form – I falsely make you believe that I am on your side – in ways that serve the manipulator. In essence, prosocial attitudes, like recognition, are pervasively vulnerable to exploitation by symbolic manipulators. Compared to physical manipulation, symbolic manipulation is a low-cost way for manipulators to gain leverage over others. Critics of recognition theory often charge that acts of recognition are “merely symbolic.”\(^\text{130}\) Here we discover an even more radical charge: that they are ripe for regular, systematic abuse.


\(^{129}\) Ibid, 246.

In Rousseau’s writing, lies and deceit are regularly betrayed by involuntary bodily reactions. For example, Rousseau recalls, “during [a] meal the older daughter, who had recently been married and was expecting a child, suddenly looked hard at me and asked if I had had any children. Blushing all over my face, I replied that I had not had that happiness.” Rousseau evades the question because he abandoned his children to a certain death, but his blushing betrays that evasion.

Rousseau and Henrich, then, both believe that voluntary bodily reactions and speech are especially vulnerable to symbolic manipulation to a degree that involuntary ones are not. (Rousseau does believe that involuntary bodily reactions are manipulable, but as I will show in Section VI, that manipulation is extraordinarily difficult and does not create a problem of insincerity in any case.) Both, then, identify a greater attention we pay to the involuntary in determining one another’s attitudes. But that attention is not warranted on their accounts by an understanding that those attitudes inhere in such bodily reactions essentially. Rather, it is warranted because our voluntary bodily reactions are systematically exploited in a way that our involuntary ones are not. In other words, it is not grounded in the metaphysics of attitudes, but rather in the non-ideality of our social epistemic environment. Both believe the involuntary to voluntary scaling dimension to be systematically exploited as a matter of fact, and so give greater weight to scaled-down acts of recognition in determining interpersonal attitudes.

How can these abstract evolutionary considerations inform our understanding of recognition politics today? Recognition theorists have rightly worried about the social circulation of negative interpersonal attitudes. But these reflections reveal the high potential for the communication of positive interpersonal attitudes to be regularly exploited and abused. Even

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social agents who have racist, sexist, and homophobic personal interests can and often do express anti-racist, ant-sexist, and anti-heterosexist attitudes in ways that accrue them social power and mask and even enable their countervailing attitudes and behaviors.

Take, for example, Eric Schneiderman, the former attorney general of New York State who resigned after multiple women accused him of misogynistic sexual violence. Over years, Schneiderman had cultivated a reputation as a professional and personal feminist. In an op-ed in *The New York Times*, “The Problem with ‘Feminist’ Men,” Jill Filipovic argues that Schneiderman wielded his feminist reputation to leverage power over women and mask his bad behavior:

How do we reconcile these two versions of a single man? It wasn’t just that Mr. Schneiderman appears to have been a feminist in the brightness of day but a violent misogynist when the lights went down….The reality may be darker: that the power he derived from his role in progressive politics was intertwined with his abuse. He seems to have used his feminist-minded political work to advance his own career, to ingratiate himself with the women he would go on to harm, and to cover up his cruelties…. [E]ven the men we thought we could trust — especially, perhaps, the ostentatiously good ones — may not be quite what they seem…. Mr. Schneiderman also seems to have used his feminist reputation as a tool to access the exact kind of women he apparently enjoyed breaking down, while his liberal bona fides made the women who say he mistreated them second-guess themselves, and stay quiet.

Here Filipovic suspects especially “ostentatious” displays of recognition. Rousseau regularly uses the very same word (“ostentatoire” in French) to convey skepticism about displays of recognition. Why? Calling a display “ostentatious” is to say that it is seems intentionally controlled to manage how one is viewed. We say this when a display seems too controlled, too intentional for the context. Ostentatious displays of recognition, for both, raise suspicion that

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133 For example, Rousseau writes: “Another event dealt the last blow to my peace of mind. Madame d’Ormoy had been trying to win my affection for several years without my being able to guess her reasons. Her *ostentatious* [ostentatoire] little presents and her frequent visits, which had no purpose and bought no pleasure, indicated clearly enough that there was a secret intention concealed here, but did not show me what it was….One fine day during my convalescence I received the novel from her all printed and even bound, and I found in the preface such *exaggerated praise* of me, so out of place, vulgar and affected, that it made an unpleasant impression on me. This sort of crude flattery is never the work of true benevolence, and my heart could never be deceived in such a matter.” (J.J. Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. P. France (London: Penguin, 2004), 41-2.)
those displays are motivated to accrue social power rather than by the merits of the trait appraised. And so, evidence that a display of recognition is intentionally expressed invites a degree of suspicion about its sincerity.

In contrast, involuntary bodily reactions can serve as a check whether and when the voluntary actions and speech are exploited in this way. In Get Out, for example, the garden party guests go out of their way to ostentatiously express anti-racist attitudes to Chris. It is their involuntary bodily postures, movements, and patterns of eye contact that raise Chris’s suspicion. Iris Young argues that in the contemporary United States, almost everyone pays lip service to anti-racist and anti-sexist attitudes and benefits from doing so. And we have seen that this lip service can serve as a front to gain the speaker credit and mask their underlying prejudicial attitudes. Members of marginalized groups nevertheless “discover their status by means of the embodied behavior of others: in their gestures, a certain nervousness that they exhibit, their avoidance of eye contact, the distance they keep.” In my terms here, their involuntary bodily reactions reveal the prejudicial attitudes that their controlled behavior denies.

Rousseau, Henrich, and Young, then, give us reason to give greater weight to involuntary bodily reactions than to controlled behavior in determining which interpersonal attitudes to attribute to someone. And their reasons are not grounded in the metaphysics of attitudes in the abstract. Each argues that controlled behavior is regularly exploited as a matter of fact, and that in these non-ideal conditions, involuntary bodily reactions are reliable checks on that exploitation. This heuristic is familiar, I think, to members of oppressed groups that sometimes find the privileged too quick and too eager to identify themselves with anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-heterosexual views.

The second scaling dimension we considered was from private to public. How does this scaling dimension fare as a matter of fact here and now? As a contingent matter of fact, contemporary Western culture understands the private/public divide to be largely coextensive with, if not equivalent to, the home/work divide. We understand our “public lives” to refer to whatever we do in our occupational roles while our “private lives” refer to whatever we do “off the clock.” Put another way, the primary front-region/back-region divide governing our lives is that between our workplace and our home. So, the question at hand is whether the attitudes we express from our occupational roles are equal if not better indicators of our actual opinions than those we express at home.

Academic philosophers like me, perhaps more than any other group, must be cautious of their unusual standpoint with respect to this question. Tenured university professorships are unique in having their free professional thought and expression largely protected and encouraged. No other occupation enjoys the same degree of protection. And even among tenured professors, philosophy professors enjoy more conventional latitude to express opinions on any matter - whether ethics, politics, religion - than, say, a chemistry professor. From this perspective, it might be tempting to think a representative instance of the question at hand is “when I praise my students to their face and complain about them at home, which is my real attitude?” It may hinge on something like how tired I am. And so the question would center on the metaphysics of attitudes and the answer would likely align with the recognitive idealist.

But how does this private/public divide affect the rest of the U.S. American workforce? Elizabeth Anderson argues that the contemporary worker is literally the subject of a dictatorial

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government of their employers. The typical American workplace has a top-down rather than democratic decision-making procedure, and employers enjoy wide legal latitude to regulate or punish their employees for almost any behavior or speech. And the typical employee can only flee one workplace dictatorship by joining another one with equal power, so no meaningful exit is available. She opens with a series of striking examples of this power in practice:

Walmart prohibits employees from exchanging casual remarks while on duty, calling this ‘time theft.’ Apple inspects the personal belongings of their retail workers, who lose up to a half-hour of unpaid time every day as they wait in line to be searched. Tyson prevents its poultry workers from using the bathroom. Some have been forced to urinate on themselves, while their superiors mock them. About half of U.S. employees have been subject to suspicionless drug screening by their employers. Millions are pressured by their employers to support particular political causes or candidates. This government does not recognize a personal or private sphere of autonomy free from sanction. It may prescribe a dress code and forbid certain hairstyles. Everyone lives under surveillance, to ensure that they are complying with orders. Superiors may snoop into inferiors’ e-mail and record their phone conversations. Suspicionless searches of their bodies and personal effects may be routine. They can be ordered to submit to medical testing. The government may dictate the language spoken and forbid communication in any other language. It may forbid certain topics of discussion. People can be sanctioned for their consensual sexual activity or for their choice of spouse or life partner. They can be sanctioned for their political activity and required to engage in political activity they do not agree with.

The attitudes expressed by almost every contemporary worker at work is effectively controlled by their employer, either directly or indirectly. And each is subject to arbitrary interference from their employer at any moment for almost any reason including the opinions they express. Because of this, it is reasonable to assume that the typical American worker comports their behavior at work to conform to the desires of their employers rather than to express their either their unreflective or their considered judgments. What is more, the vast majority of U.S. American workers are employed in the service industry. This necessitates comporting their behavior to conform also to the desires of their customers. The New York Times recently investigated the ways a typical waitress comports her

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expression of interpersonal attitudes both to accrue tips and to avoid harassment. Three quarters of a typical waitress’s salary comes from tips, and they “ignore comments about their bodies, laugh off proposals for dates and deflect behavior that makes them uncomfortable or angry — all in pursuit of the $2 or $20 tip that will help buy groceries or pay the rent.” Here are just some of the ways these women tailored their interpersonal attitudes to suit their customers:

- “If we don’t smile, if we don’t look cute, we don’t get tips.”
- “With men you have to be careful. You can’t be too sweet. You can’t be too serious.”
- “He was flirting with me heavily. He racked up about a $70 tab. And when I turned him down for dinner and drinks he wrote a zero in the tip line.”
- “I’ll put up with some stuff to get the tip. You know the little ‘Oh! You’re so funny!’ That might be an extra $5 right there. Do I like doing that? No.”
- “There’s always one guy that’s going to give you those eyes, the body language, flirt with you throughout the whole meal, and usually if you dance the dance with them, you do get a higher tip. You want to take a shower after.”

What for Goffman, considered in abstraction, was rightly a complex question about the metaphysics of attitudes - does my front-region behavior or my back-region behavior represent my “real” attitude when they conflict? - has been rendered an uninteresting question in our non-ideal environment. It seems obvious, requiring no argument, that the waitress who praises her boss and customers at work but rails against them at home does not actually like them. They are clear about that themselves: “Do I like doing that? No….You want to take a shower after.” While considered ideally it hinges on whether our true attitudes lie in our intentionally controlled and publicized behavior or our relaxed, unpublicized behavior, in our non-ideal conditions it hinges on whether our true attitudes lie in our behavior that is relatively free or that which is responsive to censure and retaliation. Front regions gained credibility as sources of our true attitudes in the ideal case because we craft them around our long-term identities and values. But the contemporary workplace is not organized around workers’ reflective long-term values. 37% of

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British workers think their jobs are entirely meaningless.¹⁴⁰ The private to public scaling dimension, then, is systematically corrupted as a matter of fact in contemporary Western cultures, then, because it renders the expression of interpersonal attitudes responsive not to the values of the speaker and the merits of the person or trait appraised, but rather to independent and unrelated reasons.

What about the scaling of recognition from individuals to groups? In the contemporary United States, people largely do not participate in groups. The latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first saw a drastic decline in U.S. American group participation. Union, parent-teacher association, neighborhood, political, and recreational group participation have all sharply decreased.¹⁴¹ When we do see recognition bestowed by groups, the vast majority of such bestowals are made by businesses. In the wake of a string of police killings of African Americans in 2017, Starbucks launched its #racetogether campaign in which baristas were encouraged to start conversations about racial justice with customers after writing that slogan on their coffee cups. On 2018’s International Women’s Day, McDonalds inverted its golden arches on social media to create a “W” for “women.” Pride parades in large cities are now dominated by floats representing large corporate businesses like defense contractors, banks, hotels, and fast food chains.

These acts of group recognition by businesses are both systematically corrupted and exploited. They are corrupted because effectively every business in the contemporary United States has a top-down decision-making structure.¹⁴² The elite few in these businesses control what political stances they express, while lower-level employees hold no sway in such decisions.

¹⁴² Anderson, op. cit.
Elizabeth Anderson argues that this structure is isomorphic to a feudal dictatorship, oligarchy, or aristocracy. Such acts are corrupted because these groups speak for their members without epistemic warrant. The attitudes of an elite few are passed off as the attitudes of the whole. Following Anderson, this is as certain as the fact that a declaration of war by a feudal dictatorship does not represent the animosities of its individual members. Such acts of recognition are exploited because business decision making is always at least swayed by, if not dictated by, the profit motive. Literature in business scholarship predominantly treats such acts of recognition as smart marketing strategies, what it calls “cause-related marketing.”143 This literature treats cause-related marketing as a way to sell a product, and only derivatively as a way to speak the truth. Many businesses that participate in pride parades stand to profit by marketing to LGBT customers, and a number of LGBT-marketing consultant agencies have arisen in the past few decades. As with the previous scaling dimension, the non-ideal conditions of the individual-to-group dimension render that metaphysically complex question uninteresting. While it is a complex question in theory whether acts of a group speak for its members, in practice here and now it is trivially true that they do not. Of course we do not learn about any or the average McDonald’s employee’s feminism by their act of recognition as a group on International Women’s Day.

As in the previous two chapters, the problem is not that these acts of recognition are in fact insincere. Rather, it is that their context makes them difficult to perceive as sincere. The fact that businesses bestow recognition in the course of their business undermines the communicative

effectiveness of those acts. This can frustrate recognizers who do not know how to come across as sincere as a result, even when they are. Howard Schultz, the former CEO of the Starbucks corporation, for example, has a business practice he calls “brandsparks,” which he defines as “subtle, surprising, and rare marketing events usually linked to cultural or humanitarian issues and devoid of a self-serving sales pitch.” These include acts like closing all their stores to give their employees racial bias training, costing them a day’s revenue nationwide. Presumably, brandsparks are “devoid of a self-serving sales pitch” in order to heighten their perceived sincerity. And yet because Starbucks is a profit-driven business, this act is still difficult to perceive as sincere, even if costs the company a great deal of money. The very cost is vulnerable to be misread by witnesses as another marketing ploy in itself. Starbucks, the thought goes, knows that profitable humanitarian acts can be seen as self-serving, and so hurt their image, so they alter make the marketing act seem costly and selfless to enhance their image. On the popular radio program *This American Life*, Schultz got into a progressively heated and antagonistic argument with a reporter about whether their racial bias training was sincere or a marketing stunt. Angry, Schultz quit the interview early, unable to convince the reporter of his sincerity. The show’s host Ira Glass interjects:

OK. All right, here’s the theory. Is it possible that he is so insistent that there’s no marketing in it because, yeah, he knows that anything his company does publicly affects how the public sees his brand. Like, of course doing anything like [the racial bias training] is a kind of marketing. But he doesn't want to admit it because actually, underneath it, he actually is trying to do a good thing. He's trying to actually address racism. He thinks America is too racist. He wants to do something about it. And he just feels like, oh, if we start admitting that there's some marketing, or we get some brand halo from this, that's just going to muddy the message.

That is, the optics of a profit-driven enterprise bestowing recognition puts them in a double-bind.

No matter what they do, whether it is immediately profitable or costly to them, it can be

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plausibly and reasonably read as an investment in long term marketability and profitability, rather than a sincere act of recognition.

Finally, what about the scaling dimension from informal to legal recognition? Again, there is substantial reason to suspect that this scaling dimension is corrupted in the contemporary United States. In the largest study ever of its kind, Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page compared the success of 1,779 proposed federal policy changes from 1981 to 2002 against their polled favorability among members of different income groups.\(^{146}\) They also compared the causal influence organized interest groups had on public policy. Their ultimate finding was that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence.”\(^{147}\) In fact, they found that “[w]hen the preferences of economic elites and the strands of organized interest groups are controlled for, the preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy.”\(^{148}\) What is more, they found that the policy preferences of those with the most influence, organized groups representing business interests, negatively correlated with those of the average American, and even only modestly with the high earners. These findings indicate, the authors suggest, that the current United States government is not a democracy, in the sense that “the majority does not rule – at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes.”\(^{149}\) When we recognize this fact, we cannot confidently say that a legal act of recognition is a scaled-up act of popular recognition, reflecting the


attitudes of the people it governs. It may seem to, but in fact, in current conditions, it would better represent only the will of organizations representing business interests, not even, on Gilens and Page’s analysis, the personal attitudes of the economic elites that run them.

These accounts of exploited and corrupted scaling dimensions each illustrate a more general trend in Rousseau’s writing: his distrust of *mediation*.\(^{150}\) Though our attitudes should in principle be communicable through layers of media, each successive layer as a matter of fact opens greater avenues for exploitation, corruption, or even simple confusion, as with a game of telephone. We can reasonably assume, then, that a Rousseauian grows increasingly suspicious when recognitives are filtered through various media, for example, from in-person to televised. Against mediation, Rousseau preferred *immediacy*, like when you meet someone face-to-face.

I have argued in this section that the main scaling dimensions of recognition are systematically exploited or corrupted here and now, as a matter of fact. In other words, ours is a non-ideal epistemic environment for the scaling of recognition. I worry here that you, the reader, are tempted to raise particular counterexamples by pointing to individual acts of recognition that have successfully scaled along these dimensions. But ideal and non-ideal theories speak in different modalities. Ideal theories are more concerned with what is necessarily true, and so are more threatened by individual counterexamples. Non-ideal theories are more concerned with what is predominantly the case, and so are less so. What I hope to have shown is that social agents have reasons to distrust these scaling dimensions not in theory but in practice, and not all of the time but reliably so. Any social agent like Jean-Jacques or Chris aware of these reasons

will be skeptical of scaled-up acts of recognition and have greater trust in scaled-down acts of recognition in discerning others’ interpersonal attitudes.

VI. ROUSSEAU’S ENGINEERING OF SCALED-DOWN MEDIA

Rousseau wrote in multiple voices. On my reading, some texts were diagnostic and some were prescriptive. The diagnostic project laments that, as a matter of fact, layers of progressive opacity emerged between humans with layers of progressive socialization out of our natural state. The principle diagnostic texts are the “Discourse on the Arts and Sciences,” the “Discourse on the Origin of Inequality” and the “Essay on the Origin of Languages.” In social life, Rousseau laments, we regularly act insincerely. Insincerity is often indistinguishable from sincerity, and is a source of interpersonal manipulation as well as interpersonal opacity.

The prescriptive projects aim to redress this problem. Because he believes a return to nature to be impossible (in no small part because he suggests it never even existed), Rousseau’s method in each case is to rebuild human nature from the ground up, so that social life feels “natural” to humans. In Emile the tutor prepares his student for adult life by orchestrating his environment so that he develops the appropriate artificial sentiments but so that they feel natural to Emile throughout. So too does the legislator in On the Social Contract, who creates a sentimental patriotism in his subjects that feels to them as though it arises spontaneously, without orchestration or manipulation. Specifically, he causes citizens to love and identify with one another by manipulating their environment through “religious ceremonies … games … exercise…[and] spectacles”\(^{151}\) Similar social engineering projects are found in “Considerations on the Government of Poland.” In each case, a powerful mastermind orchestrates his subjects’

scaled-down behavior so that the sentiments that feel natural to them are actually those that are conducive to Modern social life and social harmony.

Rousseau tries to engineer scaled-down media in this way in part because doing so would eliminate the problem of insincerity before it emerged. Attitudes so engineered would become sincere attitudes. If Emile comes, by the tutor’s design, to love Sophie both involuntarily and voluntarily, all aspects of his self in unison, this becomes his sincere attitude, and the threat of any kind of internal conflict - of insincerity - is bypassed.

But we must also note that these prescriptive projects were all failures for Rousseau because of the impossibility of such engineering. The effective, sustained manipulation of scaled-down media in Rousseau’s writing always requires an implausibly omnipotent force. The tutor surveys and manipulates Emile’s environment with total precision and perfection. The legislator is explicitly described as an impossibly omniscient and omnipotent figure immune to human passions. What is more, Rousseau worries that any degree of failure in these engineering projects would be total failure, as it would expose to subjects that they were being manipulated, like seeing the man behind the curtain, and destroy the illusion entirely. As a result, the later Rousseau abandoned these engineering projects as impossible. Emile meets an unhappy end in the book’s sequel. Rousseau abandons the pen name “Citizen of Geneva” under which he wrote his political works. Though these prescriptive works are eventually abandoned, the problems from the diagnostic works remain throughout Rousseau’s corpus. Because of this, the problems of insincerity in the diagnostic texts strike me as more thoroughly Rousseauian than the engineering of scaled-down media in the prescriptive texts.

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152 This reading in this paragraph of Rousseau’s prescriptive projects as a series of failures to redress the problems identified in the diagnostic texts is the organizing theme of D. Gauthier, *Rousseau: The Sentiment of Existence* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Organizing the dialectic of Rousseau’s works in this way clarifies my discussion here in several ways. What the prescriptive projects show us is, first, that for Rousseau all media of expression can, in principle, be manipulated, and so exploited or corrupted. So, involuntary bodily reactions do not have an uncorruptable, irrepressible power to thwart social artifice and speak the truth. But, if it is done successfully, their manipulation does not introduce a problem of insincerity but rather cuts it off at the pass. And further, systematic exploitation and corruption of these scaled-down media requires an unrealistic degree of social knowledge and social control. It is the stuff of conspiracy theories. In the language of Section V, from an evolutionary point of view, exploitation and corruption of scaled-down media is the more “expensive,” requiring widespread social engineering, while that of scaled-up media is comparatively “cheap” to exploiters and corruptors. Because these scaled-down media are typically impossible for individuals to manipulate in themselves (I cannot force myself to blush) and exceptionally difficult to manipulate in others, they are comparatively resistant to such manipulation, and so comparatively reliable tells when other scaled-up media are exploited or corrupted.

VII. HANGING OUT

My core argument in this chapter requires only that I demonstrate that dominant scaling-up dimensions happen to be systematically exploited or corrupted and that the recognitive sentimentalist is responding to that fact in giving greater weight to scaled-down than to scaled-up recognitives. Now, however, I want to make the additional claim that there is a particular scaling-down heuristic that is comparatively resistant to such exploitation and corruption, namely, “hanging out” with someone.
In the story from the *Dialogues* with which I began, it is only after Rousseau and the Frenchman each hang out with Jean-Jacques in private that the interpersonal attitudes between all three begin to confidently settle. In *Get Out*, Chris depends on the feel he gets from hanging out with others to determine which attitudes to attribute to them. This is a recognizable fact about everyday life. If you have ever said, confused about someone’s attitudes and prejudices, “I need to hang out with him to make a final judgment,” you have appealed to hanging out as a scaling down heuristic. Or, if you have ever been faced with two accounts of someone’s attitudes and prejudices, one from someone who appeals only to the public record and another who has hung out with her, and you gave greater weight to the latter, you have appealed to hanging out as a scaling down heuristic. In this section, I will explain what I understand hanging out to be and how it integrates many scaled-down media into one activity. Then, I will argue that it is a reliable heuristic because it communicates a comparatively vast amount of information about interpersonal attitudes through comparatively unexploitable and uncorruptable media.

What do we mean when we say we are “hanging out” with someone? When I ask you to hang out with me, I am asking you to join me for private, informal, comparatively unscripted, recreation that is also bilateral, embodied with few people. I say “comparatively” unscripted because when we hang out we still follow social scripts. We might get coffee, go for a walk, or gossip “as one does.” But those scripts are much more defeasible, leave more room for improvisation, and rely more on know-how than, say a formal knighting ceremony. And any of those particular activities can be abandoned if the situation calls for it. When we hang out we have no fixed goals that dictate in advance what we should do or say and we let the agenda and conversational narrative develop organically and improvisationally either in response to our material and social environment or on a whim. In Kieren Setiya’s terms, hanging out is an
“atelic” rather than “telic” activity – it is not directed toward an end goal that extinguishes the
activity, like making money or grading papers is, but the value is in the activity itself, like
dancing or appreciating art.\textsuperscript{154} Hanging out is also bilateral in the way that a conversation is.
Each of us is flexibly responsive to the other’s speech and behavior in determining what to do or
say next rather than writing the narrative one-sidedly. No one participant has monological
control. Our behavior is constantly responsive to each other’s behavior. We can call this lack of a
predetermination or monological control in a hangout’s narrative its “flexibility.” And hanging
out also almost always involves sharing the same physical space with someone (though new
technologies are creating exceptions). By the nature of the activity, a single hangout is limited to
a handful of people at a time - certainly fewer than ten, and in my experience returns diminish
after five, maybe six. Thereafter, you would say “we were at the same party, but I didn’t really
hang out with her.”

Why is hanging out so good at increasing people’s confidence about one-another’s
interpersonal attitudes? There are two classes of reasons. One stems from its flexible, bilateral
nature. The other stems from its typically embodied nature.

The flexible and bilateral nature of hanging out allows the recognized to gain exponentially
more information about the recognizer’s attitudes than a scripted, monological act of recognition
could. Compare, for example, an official, scripted statement of recognition, say by a politician, to
hanging out with them. In the statement, the recognized can gain comparatively little information
about their attitudes and dispositions. It is limited to the semantic content of the statement and
perhaps a few context clues. When hanging out, by contrast, the recognizer cannot rely on pre-
formed responses to occurrences, and they would be strained to reflectively monitor, analyze,

and plan a response to each input on the fly. Inevitably, their responses will be off-the-cuff reactions to the situation and the other’s behavior. And hanging out’s flexible nature allows aspects of the recognizer’s attitudes and dispositions to be tested from multiple angles - what questions they ask, how they laugh at jokes, what gives them pause, what interrupts conversational flow. In essence, hanging out generates a combinatorial explosion of information that triangulates participants’ interpersonal attitudes and dispositions to a wholly different degree than comparatively unilateral, telic, or scripted engagements, like the official statement of recognition, ever could.

As I already discussed in Chapter Two, the sincerity of Hilary Clinton’s recognition of the LGBTQ community has been contested within that community, for better or worse. A gay friend of mine who worked for Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign often remarks that when gay and lesbian staffers hung out with Clinton behind closed doors their skepticism dissipated. They became confident that it was sincere.

The second reason hanging out is good at increasing people’s confidence about one-another’s interpersonal attitudes is because it is normally an embodied activity. You cannot hang out by email. Today we sometimes hang out by online chat or video conferencing, but this is a derivative activity approximating the embodied one. We would still say that hanging out in person is more thoroughly hanging out. And video conferencing maintains both the instantaneous audio and visual connection to someone of normal hangouts.

In Section V, I supported Rousseau’s view that one of the earliest and most pervasive problems humans faced is the threat of symbolic deception, those who manipulate their social appearances to mask their true attitudes. Some evolutionary psychologists have argued that we
have developed involuntary reactions that betray such manipulation.\textsuperscript{155} And the point for our purposes here is that all of these tells are integrally embodied. Blushing is central example. We have all experienced involuntary physical signs that betray our social performances. Paul Ekman, a leading authority on the psychology of lies and deceit, observes that we often make “micro expressions” that betray our lies, like a change in eye contact or breathing patterns or control of the facial muscles. Other tells indicate whether an emotional reaction is wholly voluntary or partially involuntary. In most people, for example, wholly voluntary smiles lack a crinkling of the skin around the eyes. Wholly or partially involuntary smiles do, called “Duchenne smiles.”\textsuperscript{156} Similarly, human brains respond differently to hearing voluntary and involuntary laughter.\textsuperscript{157} We may contest the details of any one of these examples, but the general trend remains: embodied interaction with another gives you both vastly more information about their interpersonal attitudes and provides more reliable tells of manipulation than does unembodied interaction.\textsuperscript{158}

Such tells arise not only as properties of bodies, but also as relations between bodies. Unlike bodily properties, bodily relations are not at all decipherable by the recognized over video conferencing. The psychologist John Dividio conducted a study that found that white doctors with racially prejudicial attitudes revealed on an implicit association test did not speak differently to non-white patients but stood in different physical postures with respect to non-white patients.\textsuperscript{159} They stand at a greater distance, look less at them, they touch them less, they

\textsuperscript{158} I thank Trip Glazer for guidance regarding the themes in this paragraph.
have a more closed posture, they lean back. And when African-American patients rate the friendliness of the doctors, they respond less to the verbal statements and more to the non-verbal cues “by far,” according to Dividio. Recall Chris’s hesitance about Walter: “It’s not what he said. It’s how he said it.” In my language, the patients gave greater weight to comparatively scaled-down media of recognition than to comparatively controlled ones in determining the doctors’ attitudes, or, to more scaled-down than scaled-up media.

You can only hang out with a few people at a time, and so you can employ these mechanisms to determine someone’s attitudes a few people at a time. This is one of the major aspects of hanging out as a scaling down dimension. It allows you to get a confident sense of a few particular people’s attitudes about you at a time, and not about a demographic group or population en masse. This is another aspect of the central thesis of this chapter that recognitives resist scaling: it resists scaling in number. It functions best with one person and returns rapidly diminish as they are aggregated.

As an aside, the fact that hanging out is an atelic activity connects it the practical inversion articulated in Chapter Two: that recognitives resist struggle. Because hanging out is an atelic activity, it ceases to be hanging out when we treat it as an instrument to some end. So, hanging out proportionally loses its capacity to build confidence in the sincerity of recognition when parties intentionally treat it as an instrument to that end. Hanging out produces confidence in the sincerity of recognitive relations as a side effect rather than as an intended goal.

It is possible to fake hanging out, but it is exceptionally hard to do. And the ability to fake it depends solely on the skillful performance of the recognizer. There are no background patterns that do the work for them, as in many of the corrupted scaling dimensions. Rose, for example, in Get Out, hangs out with Chris throughout the film, and yet the most surprising turn in the final
act is that she, too, is part of the plot to enslave Chris. But the audience is meant to be stunned by this deepest twist in the plot; we are unable to square the Rose that successfully hung out with Chris with the one that was part of the conspiracy. The transformation strikes us as supernatural, as if she is a wholly different person. On set, in fact, Peele and the actors referred to the transformed Rose by a different name, “Ro Ro.” After Ro Ro is revealed to the audience, she deters Chris’s friend from rescuing him over the phone. In that scene, Peele asked the actress to present Rose’s voice but Ro Ro’s face and body. Peele initially doubted that any actor had the skill to do so such a difficult task, but she did, and the resulting performance is uncanny and haunting. All this serves to explain the discrepancy between the Rose that hangs out with Chris and the Ro Ro that seeks to enslave him by suggesting that it takes an exceptional, in the film’s view supernatural, skill to willfully manipulate one’s communication of interpersonal attitudes over time while hanging out.

VIII. DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

Throughout this chapter, I have been drawing an analogy between recognitive sentimentalism and non-ideal theory. But here is a disanalogy. The harms that non-ideal theorists claim follow from circulating ideal theories occur whether or not the non-ideal theorist is there to name them as such. When Chief Justice Roberts appeals to “colorblind” reasoning to undermine affirmative action programs, the harms that follow for racial minorities occur whether or not there is a non-ideal theorist observing and critiquing that fact. But recognitive sentimentalism is different. A recognitive sentimentalist’s comparative skepticism about scaled-up acts of recognition and comparative confidence in scaled-down acts of recognition is motivated by her belief that the dominant scaling dimensions of her environment are systematically exploited or
corrupted. It is her belief about the social epistemic environment that makes scaled-up acts of recognition ineffective for her.

Rousseau claims to be especially perceptive of the falsity of Modern social life. The illumination on the way to visit Diderot in prison that spawns Rousseau’s whole writing career is an insight that social institutions are corrupted and corrupting.160 Similarly, in Get Out, Chris is introduced at the outset as someone who is exceptionally aware of the mechanisms that suppress African-Americans and maintain white supremacy. The song that introduces him, Childish Gambino’s “Redbone,” organizes around the repeated hook “stay woke!” - an injunction to maintain a degree of social awareness that is socially suppressed and hard-won. Peele says of the song choice: “It fit perfectly. I needed the whole audience to understand that the lead character Chris - who is a photographer - is ‘woke.’ He’s not an idiot. He is alert. He’s going to be making the right decisions.”161 He is first introduced as a professional photographer who documents the lives of African-Americans that are not seen in dominant culture or discourse. He wears his camera around his neck throughout the film and looks through it as his investigative lens.

Commentaries on the film have noted that cameras had a special symbolic significance at the time the film was released.162 Cell phone video recordings had recently captured and publicized a pattern of police assaults and murders of African-Americans that were previously concealed from view. They are seen as lenses to hidden truths. Chris, then, is exceptionally aware of the mechanisms that maintain white supremacy, and how white people can cultivate a public image as “colorblind,” “post-racial,” or “anti-racist” to conceal and protect those mechanisms. It is this

161 J. Peele, op. cit.
“wokeness” that makes him skeptical of the Armitage’s scaled-up professions of anti-racism and attentive to their scaled-down indications of racism. A less aware social actor might have taken their scaled-up professions of anti-racism at face value, and so would not, in the end “get out.”

Skepticism about scaled-up acts of recognition often comes from those who have greater knowledge about that scaling dimension and how it is exploited or corrupted – those who, proverbially, “know how the sausage gets made.” Last Thanksgiving, my family was discussing the apologies made by public figures in the wake of a recent wave of sexual harassment revelations. The greatest skepticism about their sincerity came from the one family member who works in the highest levels of advertising and public relations. She said “I can’t help but see the hands of a publicist at work behind these apologies.” In a course I taught called “Political Emotions,” we discussed an email the university president had sent to the university apologizing for naming new buildings after former slave traders and promising to make right on the university’s historical exploitation of slavery. Most of my students found the email sincere, except the ones who had organized the sit-in in the president’s office that preceded the email. They saw it as a strategic concession.

And such beliefs often change with one’s social position. Privilege is often invisible to those who wield it, while oppressed people often have an intimate familiarity with the interpersonal mechanisms that sustain their oppression. And so, recognitive sentimentalism is often emphasized by those in oppressed social groups. The psychologist John Dividio’s did a study of doctor-patient interactions, and how the doctor’s attitudes were interpreted differently by white and black observers and patients:

Black participants basically dismissed the verbal altogether. But if you asked the white person how friendly [the doctors] behaved [toward the black patients], two things predict how friendly they thought they
behaved. One was how non-prejudiced they are. And the other one was how nice, how friendly they were verbally because those are the things that are accessible to us.\(^{163}\)

White patients were attentive to doctor’s speech, a comparatively scaled-up medium of recognition, while black patients were attentive to their body language, a comparatively scaled-down medium of recognition, in determining the doctors’ interpersonal attitudes. Whether or not recognitives easily scale in a particular social environment, then, may often depend on the perspectives that the parties each occupy.

IX. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is easy to miss the point of non-ideal theorizing. The ideal theorist makes abstract normative claims and the non-ideal theorist responds with distressing factual claims. We can be tempted to say that the conversations are orthogonal. It can seem like the non-ideal theorist is simply reminding the ideal theorist just how bad the world is, something the ideal theorist presumably already knows. But, as we saw in Section III, the non-ideal theorist’s message to the ideal theorist is that ideal theory, due to its abstraction, is either not action-guiding in relevant cases, wrongly action-guiding, that some practical problems only emerge in the non-ideal lens, or that ideal theories are “ideological” when circulated socially, that is, that they somehow support the non-ideal conditions they abstract from.

In recognitive exchanges, the sentimentalist can charitably be understood as someone who realizes that the scaling of recognition is of moral, strategic, and epistemic importance, but that those scaling dimensions have been effectively hijacked – systematically exploited or corrupted – as a matter of fact. And this fact changes the sentimentalist’s deliberative situation. For it does not follow that, in discerning interpersonal attitudes, the sentimentalist should act the

\(^{163}\) A. Spiegel & H. Rosin, op cit.
way that she would act in ideal conditions – the fallacy of approximation. The epistemic and moral options available and appropriate to the sentimentalist are transformed by the non-ideality of her environment. In this section, I show how the non-ideal epistemic environment can change the options that are available, attractive, appropriate, or rational to both recognizer and recognized in several interrelated ways.

The non-ideal environment creates genuine dilemmas regarding which attitudes to attribute to recognizers. We regularly need to decide which attitudes to attribute to someone when the data conflict. Rachel McKinnon gives a fitting example in her “Allies Behaving Badly,” of a trans woman named Victoria at an academic department party:

After a couple drinks, she’s in conversation with a few people, when one of her colleagues, James, begins telling an amusing anecdote about her. The story is about how she didn’t notice a particular feature about his house at a previous department party. James continues the story: when Victoria gets into an involved conversation about her field of work, she gets a sort of tunnel-vision focus. He then says, ‘So of course he wouldn’t notice something like that. When he gets talking epistemology, he doesn’t notice anything about his surroundings. He…” In rapid-fire succession, James mispronouns Victoria five times….Victoria goes to a mutual colleague, Susan, to complain about James’s mispronouning her at the party and to raise worries about the workplace climate given that this isn’t the first time James has done this. [But Susan responds:] ‘I’m sure you just misheard him; you’re on edge and expect to hear mispronouncing. I just don’t believe James would do that. He won a university diversity award for his supporting queer issues, after all. Besides, he’s been a supporter of yours in the past too. He really is your ally.”

Here Victoria gives greater weight to James’s scaled-down behavior while Susan urges her to give greater weight to his scaled-up behavior. Victoria, like Chris in Get Out, is faced with a practical dilemma. Considered ideally, it is clear that they should give greater weight to others’ scaled-up behavior in determining their interpersonal attitudes. This is in part a matter of moral tact. But considered non-ideally, Victoria and Chris give greater weight to scaled-down behavior in order to protect themselves. Both are sensitive to the fact that “ally” and “non-racist” are often exploited as protective covers that mask prejudicial behavior. In their non-ideal situation, both are pulled by the genuine, but competing values of moral tact on one hand and personal

protection on the other in trying to decide which attitudes to attribute to others. This genuine dilemma is an effect of their non-ideal situation.

The non-ideal theorist also charges that the circulation of ideal theories can function ideologically. That is, they can distort our perception of our environment by making it seem as if our actual, non-ideal environment mirrored the ideal conditions described. With respect to recognition, this occurs when the sentimentalist’s diagnoses are censored as inaccurate. In *Get Out*, for example, Chris’s suspicions peak at the end of the garden party. After the party, Chris tries to address his concerns to Rose and proposes that they leave early. It is during this conversation that, on the director’s commentary, Peele makes the observation already quoted in the introduction that Chris “knows something’s wrong, he just doesn’t know what…He can’t describe to Rose where his suspicion is coming from - which is an experience a lot of African Americans have, where were perceiving something and we’re being told that we’re not actually perceiving it correctly.” Rose denies Chris’s suspicions, reinterprets suspicious episodes positively, points to the mostly genial behavior of the guests, and postures verbally and physically in a way that makes his judgments seem unsound or insulting. This makes Chris doubt his suspicion, and so his judgement of their attitudes, and renege on his plan to leave early, and so his plan to protect himself.

Viewed this way, we misperceive the situation when we engage the sentimentalist’s claims on ideal grounds. Consider again the analogy to ideal and non-ideal political philosophy. The proponent of affirmative action is vulnerable to being charged with being in favor of special treatment and against equality in the abstract, rather than in response to the non-ideal environment. In other words, the ideal theorist falsely attributes unattractive ideal claims to the non-ideal theorist. She reinterprets her claims as bad moves in the ideal conversation, not as
responses to non-ideal realities. A parallel effect can happen with respect to recognition epistemologies. Imagine if Rose would have inferred from Chris’s attention to scaled-down media in non-ideal conditions that he holds a parallel view about the metaphysics of attitudes in the abstract: that in any case our true attitudes lie in our scaled-down and not our scaled-up behavior. That view can rightly be criticized as pessimistic and unfair. It robs people of control over their character and attitudes, it disqualifies much of their hard work in determining who they are and what attitudes they are held to, it belittles the means we use for personal improvement and moral progress. This misunderstands the source of the sentimentalist’s discontent, and it also casts the recognitive sentimentalist in an unattractively naturalistic, primitivist light. When members of oppressed groups complain of these scaled-down behaviors, that attention is often attributed to the special natures of those oppressed groups, like women’s emotional intuition or racial minorities closeness to nature, rather than to their different attitudes toward their non-ideal epistemic environment. This paints the complaining party as sub-rational. Iris Young writes: “When the more bold of us do complain of these mundane signs of systematic oppression, we are accused of being picky, overreacting, making something out of nothing, or completely perceiving the situation…which can make oppressed people feel slightly crazy.”[165]

But the recognitive sentimentalist, on my account, need not be making such controversial and unattractive claims. She can be agnostic about or even agree with the idealist on these matters in the abstract. It is the non-ideality of her situation that draws her attention to scaled-down behavior.

But we must remember that recognitive idealism is true in an important sense, namely, considered ideally. And recognitive idealism is very often true first-personally. When I try to

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manage the attitudes that are attributed to me, when I try to be less racist or sexist, for example, I focus principally on my scaled-up behavior. I regulate my voluntary behavior and pay special attention to how I act in my public roles. When I am held to account for my private and unreflective behavior, it can feel as though am being unfairly scrutinized and that my efforts are not begin appreciated. I may censor the sentimentalist and demand that she pay attention only to my scaled-up behavior. But avoiding these ideological tendencies means balancing knowledge that idealism is true in the abstract and first-personally on the one hand with the knowledge that sentimentalism is true as a matter of fact in my environment. Both are true, but it is psychologically difficult to hold both thoughts at once.

So far in this section, I have argued that the non-ideality of our epistemic environment complicates the recognizer’s practical situation. But it also creates equal complications for the recognizer. She faces a practical tradeoff when trying to communicate sincere interpersonal attitudes. The epigram with which I began this chapter ended by saying that “[s]incerity requires a rhetoric of avowal, the demonstration of single-minded innocence through attitude and posture, exactly the role-playing in which Rousseau had found the essence of personal, ultimately of social, corruption. ‘One cannot,’ André Gide has said, ‘both be sincere and seem so.’” Gide’s categorical claim is exaggerated, but my framing of recognitive sentimentalism here reveals a more modest version of the same problem. In non-ideal epistemic environments, like Rousseau’s or ours, it becomes practically urgent to communicate recognition at scaled-up levels. We want to change the recognition order at the public, group, and legal level with a degree of confident control. Yet at the same time, those scaled-up acts of recognition become increasingly ineffective in those non-ideal environments because they become less trusted and so more difficult to
perceive as sincere. Consider the following observation from Hilary Clinton’s memoir of the 2016 election:

Wiki leaks played into people’s fascination with ‘pulling back the curtain.’ Anything said behind closed doors is automatically considered more interesting, important, and honest than things said in public. It’s even better if you have to do a little legwork and google around for the information. We sometimes joked that if we wanted the press to pay attention to our jobs plan, which I talked about endlessly to little avail, we should leak a private email about it. Only then would it be news worth covering.\footnote{H. Clinton, \textit{What Happened} (Simon and Schuster, 2017), 349 (emphasis added).}

Clinton does not speak directly of recognition here but the communicative effect is the same. She aims to communicate her message through scaled-up media because of the degree of control they afford as well as the range of public impact they offer. Yet, scaling-up the message in this way decreases its perceived honesty, or sincerity, compared to scaled-down media. Because scaling-dimensions are less trusted in non-ideal circumstances, moral and political actors face a trade-off between, on one hand, the degree of control and range of impact of their acts of recognition and, on the other hand, their communicative effectiveness. They face a trade-off between, in Gide’s words, being sincere and seeming so. This unfortunate dilemma that the recognizer faces is the heart of the third practical inversion: that recognitives resist scaling.

X. ROMANTICS WHEN SCALED-DOWN, INSTRUMENTALISTS WHEN SCALED-UP

In his early work \textit{The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts} and in later works, Axel Honneth argues that humans depend on three varieties of recognition for their flourishing: love, respect, and esteem. And each of these serve or can serve a psychological need for recognition.\footnote{A. Honneth, \textit{The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts} (Polity Press, 1995).} So, what matters to us is the attitude that is communicated as such, and not just its practical effects. Honneth claims that there are three domains of modern life that correspond to these three forms of recognition. We give and receive love in the private sphere, in
the home. We give and receive respect in the political sphere. And we give and receive esteem through civil society and the markets. On Honneth’s view, then, what primarily changes when recognition is scaled up or down is the type of recognition appropriate to that context. Honneth’s view is just one example of a tendency many of us often have to speak of recognition writ large, given and received at scaled-up social levels.

But my argument in this chapter challenges us fundamentally reconsider this tendency. I have shown that in non-ideal social epistemic environments like ours recognitives are more typically viewed as sincere by agents when they are scaled down and less viewed as sincere by agents when they are scaled up. This suggests that a need for recognition, understood as a need for the successful communication of interpersonal attitudes, is more at home in scaled-down contexts than in scaled-up contexts. This has implications not just for Honneth’s view, but for any view that holds that recognition can be a scaled-up social phenomenon.

Recall the distinction, drawn in Chapter Two, between valuing recognition intrinsically and instrumentally. We value recognition intrinsically when we actually care what people think about us as such. We value recognition instrumentally when we are concerned only with the practical effects of the attitudes displayed. Rousseau and Romantics like him almost always value recognition intrinsically. Rousseau writes: “In all the ills that befall us, we are more concerned by the intention than the result. A tile that falls off a roof may injure us more seriously, but it will not wound us suddenly as a stone thrown so deliberately by a malevolent hand. The blow may miss, but the intention always strikes home.”

168 Honneth’s appeal to the public/private divide in this use has rightly come under scrutiny for its gendered implications. See, for example I. Young, “Recognition of Love’s Labor: Considering Axel Honneth’s Feminism” in B. van den Brink & D. Owen, eds. Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 189-214.

Rousseau is the insult more than the injury, the attitude communicated independent of its practical effects.

Charles Guignon observes that “[m]ost of us deal with the conflicting demands made on us in the modern world by being instrumentalists in public and Romantics in private.” That is, we conduct ourselves by what is required of us in public and what feels “authentic” in private. I hope my argument in this chapter has convinced you of a parallel claim: in a parallel slogan, most of us deal with the non-ideal recognitive environment by being instrumentalists about recognition in “public” and Romantics about recognition in “private.” Or, in the terms I treated as equivalent in Section II, most of us tend to be instrumentalists about recognition in our front regions and Romantics about recognition in our back regions. And the back region to front region scaling dimension is only one of those at issue here, so said more precisely: we value recognition intrinsically as it is scaled down and instrumentally as it is scaled up. To the degree that we recognize the non-ideality of our social epistemic environments, we value recognition for its own sake in embodied, private, informal, contexts with few people and value it only for its practical effects to the degree that it is removed from these contexts.

XI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify and articulate three “practical inversions” in the management of social recognition, that is, ways the logic of recognition thwarts our efforts to intentionally alter it. In the previous two chapters, I argued that recognition resists struggle and institutionalization. In this chapter, I have argued that recognition resists scaling. Taking inspiration from Rousseau, I have argued that the communication of recognition functions best in

private, informal, embodied interaction between individuals, and that it loses its communicative effectiveness as is it abstracted to more scaled-up media, such as scripted communication, communication from within one’s professional roles, communication on behalf of a group, or legal recognition. And I have shown that this can be grounded in the non-ideality of our social epistemic environments rather than in a Romantic metaphysics of attitudes or ethics of the good life. In ideal circumstances, scaled-up acts of recognition are just as reliable indicators of interpersonal attitudes as scaled-down acts of recognition are. But in non-ideal circumstances like ours the reliability shifts to the scaled-down ones. We lose the ability to scale acts of recognition precisely when we need it most. Approached this way, the sentimentalist’s prejudice commands at least our attention and sensitivity, if not ultimately our allegiance, when we think about how to build the recognition orders we want, whether or not we are Romantics in the traditional sense.
CHAPTER FIVE (CONCLUSION):
RESPONSES TO THREE QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

In the three central chapters of this dissertation, I have shown that recognition is an unusual moral and political good in that it resists our willful control more than other goods do. Recognition resists struggle (Chapter Two), it resists institutionalization (Chapter Three), and it resists social scaling (Chapter Four). I called each of these facts a "practical inversion" in the pragmatics of recognition. Though the mechanism in each case is different, the resulting problem is the same: though we might be successful in securing behavior associated with the recognition sought, a perceiver's confidence in the sincerity of the attitude that behavior is supposed to express often does not follow. In essence, behaviors associated with recognition are easier to bring about than confidence in their corresponding attitudes. In this conclusion, I answer three questions I imagine are on your mind. What I say on all three counts will be preliminary. I hope to indicate where conversations beyond this dissertation might productively go, rather than end them conclusively.

II. WHEN DOES RECOGNITION WORK?

The bulk of my arguments in the preceding chapters were negative. I argued that sincere recognition is a good of deep psychological and moral importance to humans and then demonstrated all the ways that its solicitation and bestowal go awry. This should not leave us with the impression, though, that we are each isolated, that we cannot recognize and be recognized by one another. For we do all the time without difficulty. We can look at these
practical inversions negatively, that is, for what they tell us about where and how we recognize one another without any trouble.

If we look at these inversions negatively, we can get a rough sense of when recognition functions well. It functions best in private, informal, embodied engagement between few individuals (Chapter Four). It functions best when it is somewhat exceptional or idiosyncratic, in the sense that it is not most plausibly read as motivated by reigning norms of appropriate behavior (Chapter Three). And it functions best when it is spontaneous, not struggled for by the recognized or by a third party (Chapter Two). Taken together, these features paint an intuitively familiar picture of recognition functioning best when it informal, exceptional and spontaneous.

On the weekend, a friend takes a moment, unprompted, to warmly smile and tell you she’s proud of you. It is an experience many have all the time, sometimes daily, with friends, family and other intimates. It is an intimate, informal and unforced experience. This is the natural "home" of the social practices of recognition.

Importantly, I have argued throughout that recognition "resists" struggle, institutionalization, and scaling out of this context. I do not claim that recognition cannot be struggled for, institutionalized, or scaled. I have argued that recognition is a communicative act and that communicative problems typically and predictably arise when it is struggled for, institutionalized and scaled. Each of these inversions manifests in degrees. Recognition lightly struggled for is more communicatively effective than recognition aggressively demanded, for example. And the three inversions compound on one another. Recognition subject to only one inversion is more communicatively clear than recognition subject to all three. Recognition is "at home," then, in the contexts absent such inversions and its communicative success is progressively diminished by the number and degree of inversions present. It does not
immediately lose all communicative success when it is at all struggled for, institutionalized, or scaled.

III. IS RECOGNITION DEPOLITICIZED?

Another concern is that each of these three chapters' conclusions threatens to depoliticize recognition. For each removes recognition from a context in which we have come to understand and talk about it politically. We tend to describe broad social movements as "struggles for recognition." And we tend to envision the goal of such struggles as the transformation of the reigning norms of a culture. We tend to talk about recognition as a social good at a "scaled-up" level, making broad claims about the recognition orders of a culture or society as a whole. My arguments that recognition is not at home in any of these contexts should worry us, as speaking of recognition in this way has been both theoretically helpful and practically empowering for many. We have learned to describe social subordination not just in terms of material deprivation, but in terms of circulated social attitudes and relationships. The vocabulary of misrecognition has given us tools to diagnose and bring to consciousness our own subordination. And the language of recognition politics has been a catalyst of social struggles. I ought to, then, on pain of moral and social irresponsibility, explain how I think these political resources can be preserved in spite of my potential depoliticizing of recognition here. There are two theoretical resources, one already discussed and one new, that relieve this worry.

The first resource was developed in the previous chapter. There I argued that many of us are Romantics about recognition in private and instrumentalists about recognition in public. Or, more precisely, we treat interpersonal attitudes as of intrinsic value in comparatively scaled-down contexts but of value only for their practical effects in comparatively scaled-up contexts,
on a sliding scale. So, even if true recognition's proper home is relatively depoliticized in the way described above, we can still speak about the interpersonal attitudes on a broader social scale in terms of their practical effects. For example, activists can struggle to normalize and legalize same-sex marriage for the practical benefits that it brings, namely the right to marry, without worrying themselves about the actual attitudes of the legislators and judges that bring it about. Since I have argued in Chapter Two that we do and should typically value sincere recognition as a defeasible default, for psychological, epistemic, moral, and strategic reasons, this instrumentalism about recognition is a kind of "as-if" recognition politics, using the language of recognition to talk about something slightly different, namely the practical effects of cultural attitudes. Recognition proper of same-sex relationships nevertheless still belongs in a comparatively depoliticized context like that described in the last section.

The second resource is a distinction between struggles for recognition and struggles against misrecognition. Everyday language tends to speak of these two activities as the same, but they are conceptually and practically distinct. We can diagnose negative interpersonal attitudes circulating in a social context and strive for their elimination without the additional goal of securing love, respect, or esteem from any particular individuals or class of individuals. Negative interpersonal attitudes, like racism, sexism, homophobia, cissexism, ageism, ableism and the like have demonstrably corrosive effects on people's well-being and life chances. But eradicating these attitudes is a political goal in and of itself. It is a further and independent step to feel loved, respected, or esteemed by those who once held those attitudes. It is a coherent, significant, and understandable goal to be simply left free of those negative attitudes without seeking those positive attitudes in addition.

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171 I thank a participant at the 2017 Philosophy and Social Science Conference Czech Academy of Sciences Institute for Philosophy in Prague for suggesting this approach, though I never learned her name.
IV. WHAT ABOUT THE BOOTSTRAP EFFECT?

Finally, I would like to briefly comment on a common response to this project. When I describe these practical inversions to philosophers at conferences or over coffee, they offer one solution more than any other. They say something of the form “why can’t it be like what we do with children, where we have them do something until it becomes real? What about the bootstrap effect?”

Here’s what I gather they have in mind. Aristotle writes that "our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities."172 Kant similarly writes that "the endeavor to appear good ultimately makes us really good."173 Pascal held a similar view, as did Confucius. Nancy Sherman's formulation summarizes these nicely: "pretense can bootstrap sincerity."174 Call this shared view "the bootstrap effect." Repeatedly acting as though we had certain dispositions can create those dispositions in us, we ought to do so when there is a gap between the moral dispositions we have and those we wish we had. When philosophers raise the bootstrap effect in response to the practical inversions I have articulated in the past three chapters, the thought seems to be this: even if those inversions exist, they name only momentary and not lasting problems. Provided we can secure behavior associated with the recognition sought over time, the sincere attitudes will come about in turn, and with it the perceiver's confidence in that sincerity. Repeated behavior associated with the recognition sought will “bootstrap” us into the sincere counterpart. In closing, I would like to indicate in brief outline what I see to be the promises and limitations of invoking the bootstrap effect in response to recognition's practical inversions. This will involve distinguishing different implications that this invocation might

have, different “what abouts” in “what about the bootstrap effect?” I will happily acknowledge that the bootstrap effect is a powerful and crucial moral technology we can use to improve ourselves and our relations to others. But I also argue at the same time that even if the bootstrap effect serves that purpose, it does not negate what is of moral and philosophical interest about these inversions, and that there is one way the bootstrap effect can be cited that may be morally hazardous.

At the outset, I want to complicate the assumption that the bootstrap effect automatically follows from the inversions I have outlined. That is, it is not always the case that acting as though you had an interpersonal attitude creates that sincere attitude in turn. A lawyer can, under professional obligation, act as though she likes a client for years while cursing them at home with no resulting change to the latter. The bootstrap effect appears to function most seamlessly for well-meaning actors seeking moral improvement for its own sake, and that is a powerful way we transform our moral communities. But the inversions I have articulated in the prior chapters often bring actors to perform interpersonal attitudes under practical stress, not out of a sincere desire for moral improvement. It is not immediately clear to what extent the same effect would follow more generally. But, for the sake of continued discussion, I will set that concern aside for now. So, if a philosopher asking “what about the bootstrap effect?” means “can the bootstrap effect overcome the problems that arise from these inversions?” my answer is a cautious but happy “yes.”

What exactly would the bootstrap effect look like applied to recognition's practical inversions? Take the first inversion: recognition resists struggle. How might the bootstrap effect overcome this problem? You struggle for my recognition. I then bestow the recognition sought on you verbally and behaviorally. But, the fact that you struggled for it gives you pause, for you
are uncertain whether I recognize you out of a sincere appreciation of the merits of the trait appraised or due to the forces created by the struggle itself. The bootstrap effect tells us that after struggle, institutionalization, or scaling there is a stage of pretense, or seeming pretense, in recognition. It is a kind of "as-if" recognition that promises to beget sincere and communicatively effective recognition over time. Social agents sensitive to these practical inversions like Rousseau have an acute sense that the recognition bestowed in this intermediate phase is partially satisfying and partially dissatisfying their need for recognition. It is like the ambivalence I feel when my three-year-old niece says "please" when instructed to do so after she makes a demand. On one hand, I am happy that she is saying and doing the right thing. On the other hand, it is clear that does not yet understand what she is saying. She says "please" when instructed because it makes her demand more likely to be met. She does not use it in its proper sense, to give the person asked more latitude and power to grant or deny the request. But we continue to tell her to say "please" and to reward her for doing so because we know it will grow into the proper use of the term over time.

Rousseau was unable to countenance these periods of temporary pretense, politically or personally. In both cases, he could only countenance transitions in interpersonal attitudes that felt seamless and instantaneous to the participants, with no intermediate transitional stage. As a political advisor, he called for the creation of a patriotic community in citizens at birth, so that they never know themselves to identify otherwise than with their compatriots: "Upon opening its eyes, a child should see the fatherland, and see only it until his dying day. Every true republican drank love of fatherland, that is to say love of the laws and of freedom with his mother's milk. This love makes up his whole existence; he sees only his fatherland, he lives only for it."\textsuperscript{175} Such

citizens never have to go through the awkward transition of developing patriotic attitudes *in media res* – they feel them naturally since birth. In his personal life, when Rousseau needs to become a different sort of person, he opts to do so all at once without transition, and acts as though he had always already been the person he becomes. Jean Starobinski calls these personal transitions "magic," explaining that Rousseau "donned masks not to dupe others but to change his own life. When Rousseau lies, he believes in his lies....He sheds his personality so as to enter into his role, and the metamorphosis leaves no residue...He does not know (or does not want to know) that he is dissimulating."\(^{176}\) In both the political and personal cases, we see in Rousseau a hostility to the process of transformation in interpersonal relations over time. The endpoint is desirable, but something about the process of transition he finds awkward, painful and off-putting. What sense can we make of why it bothers Rousseau, and are his worries at all recognizable to us, here and now?

Going through a stage of pretense on the way to sincerity seems to be what bothers Rousseau and people like him. But, the bootstrap effect assures us that this pretense will become sincere. Does citing the bootstrap effect, then, negate the philosophical importance of these inversions, and should citing the bootstrap effect satisfy someone like Rousseau, cancelling his uncomfortability? Without denying the practical effectiveness and moral importance of the bootstrap effect, trying to make sense of Rousseau’s anxiety, I want to raise some caution about the philosophical and rhetorical citation of the principle and what its truth does and does not entail. I want to press against, first, thinking that a moral narrative is solely defined by how it ends, and so that these intermediate problems are of no real interest to us as philosophers if they can be overcome. And I want to guard against, second, rhetorical appeal to the bootstrap effect

that, even if that principle is true, puts pressure on the recognized to overcome their ambivalence about an act of recognition. To defend these claims clearly and concretely, I will draw lessons from the argument in Thomas Brudholm's book *Resentment's Virtue* by analogy.\textsuperscript{177} There Brudholm discusses the politics of resentment and forgiveness in South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission [“TRC”], a topic nearby the politics of recognition. To be clear, I do not mean to be endorsing Brudholm’s analysis of the TRC or forgiveness (nor rejecting it). In fact, I do not mean to be commenting on the TRC or forgiveness directly at all. I appeal to his argument only because it lends clarity to my discussion by analogy.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission ["TRC"] was a unique initiative of the South African government to respond to its history of apartheid. Rather than putting the perpetrators on a more conventional trial, the commission offered the perpetrators amnesty in exchange for accounts of the truth of their crimes corroborated by testimonies from victims, relatives, and witnesses. The perpetrators were not required to apologize or express remorse, rather the onus was on the victims and witnesses to come to forgive them through the cathartic telling of their stories. The commission prided itself as a victim-friendly environment compared to a conventional criminal court. The TRC report claims its central aim was the "validation of the individual subjective experience of people who had previously been silenced or voiceless."\textsuperscript{178} The process, according to the TRC report, "is about seeking to forego bitterness, renounce resentment, moving past old hurt."\textsuperscript{179} Yet, despite its victim-centered rhetoric and focus on moral repair, roughly 60 percent of those who testified felt worse after.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{178} ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{179} ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid., 22.
Brudholm has two goals in his discussion of the TRC. One is to defend resentment and a refusal to forgive as often defensible moral stances. But it is Brudholm's second goal that I find a clarifying comparison to my topic here. His second goal is to engage in what we might call a "second-order" analysis, not about whether or not forgiveness and resentment are advisable in and of themselves, but rather about the practical effects of promoting forgiveness and its practical effects. This latter concern is about conversational ethics. Brudholm raises worries about the rhetorical effects of promoting forgiveness even when it is the most morally appropriate outcome.

The TRC and its leaders officially claimed that forgiveness cannot be demanded or coerced, that it is something a victim or witness must come to themselves. And yet, Brudholm notices in the rhetoric of the TRC a troubling "boosterism of forgiveness," that is, language that subtly pressures victims and witnesses to forgive. Nelson Mandela writes, for example, that "personal bitterness is irrelevant. It is a luxury that we, as individuals and as a country, simply cannot afford." Desmond Tutu writes that "to forgive is the best form of self-interest, because I'm also releasing myself from the bonds that hold me captive and it is important that I do all that I can to restore relationship. Because without relationship, I am nothing, I will shrivel." In the preceding of the TRC, Brudholm observes, victims and witnesses are regularly nudged to forgive even when they showed no inclination to or were reluctant to do so. In roughly 70% of the testimonies the commissioners either brought up the concept of forgiveness unprompted or even encouraged those testifying to forgive the perpetrators. In a remarkable exchange, commissioners pressured a panel of grieving mothers to forgive their children's killers:

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181 ibid., 50.
182 ibid., 37.
183 ibid., 47.
184 ibid., 27.
Question: Let me put it this way; you do read newspapers and watch TV, not so?
Answer: Yes I do read newspapers and I do watch television.
Question: I assume that you know about this Truth & Reconciliation Commission that's going on, of which Amnesty is a part thereof?
Answer: Yes I heard.
Question: Do you know that this is done by the Government to foster or to promote reconciliation in this country?
Answer: Yes I do know that.
Question: What is your attitude about this reconciliation process?
Answer: I don't have any comment on that one.
Question: Do you believe in reconciliation?
Answer: Yes I do believe.  

In this exchange, Brudholm observes, "The witness's refusal to forgive or to support the granting of amnesty thus is met with attempts to convince her that her attitude will harm her country's rebuilding efforts." Sustained resentment was also pathologized by the commissioners, as one asked a victim why she had not pursued psychotherapy to address what the commissioners called her "problematic relationship with white people." The commission also signaled that forgiveness was expected and appropriate when it was offered. One commissioner says to a victim: "According to your statement you do say that in spite of all this you still don't hate any one, and you don't hold any grudges against anyone, and you are prepared to forgive everyone who comes to you. That we appreciate a great deal." Similar nudges, which pressure victims and witnesses to forgive because it is the practically necessary and morally best outcome, are found throughout the proceedings transcripts, as well as pressures against those who resist. This boosterism of forgiveness, advocating for forgiveness and against resentments, did not leave the moral situation just as it was. For many victims and witnesses, it added insult to injury. One victim protests "I refuse not to be angry and cannot forgive. What is even more difficult is to have someone tell me I should not still feel like this."  

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185 ibid., 31.
186 ibid., 31.
187 ibid., 33.
188 ibid., 28.
189 ibid., 19.
For Brudholm, the hazards of "boosterism of forgiveness" can hold even when forgiveness is the morally appropriate outcome. What is hazardous about the TRC's rhetoric is that it treats the appropriateness of that conclusion as grounds to cancel anything of importance in resistant attitudes, pathologizing them, and effectively treating the conclusion as the only morally important part of that story. Brudholm compares the above rhetoric of the TRC to the more commendable rhetoric of the Constitutional Court of South Africa in a lawsuit related to the crimes of apartheid. The court's defense of amnesty for the perpetrator begins with an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of victims' resentment to its verdict. It states: that "every decent human being must feel grave discomfort in living with a consequence which might allow the perpetrators of evil acts to walk the streets of this land with impunity, protected in their freedom by an amnesty," and so symbolically forgiven by the law. However, the court defended amnesty and forgiveness as the most appropriate conclusions, all things considered, because a break in the cycle of violence and resentment that such amnesty would newly bring to South Africans "some of the human rights so unfairly denied to the generations which preceded them." In sum, both the TRC and the constitutional court cited forgiveness and amnesty as the morally and instrumentally appropriate end, but while the TRC censored and pathologized resistant attitudes to that end, the Constitutional Court acknowledged their ambivalence as morally and psychologically legitimate, was cautious about rushing victims toward forgiveness, and acknowledged the moral remainders of its doing so when it advocated the exact same end as the TRC. In this period of moral transition, both the TRC and the Constitutional Court endorsed and enacted the very same moral end, but while the former cancelled attitudes resistant to that end the latter honored them and acknowledged the moral remainders that its decision created.

190 Brudholm, op. cit., 59.
191 ibid., 60.
Both the TRC and forgiveness are complex issues, and I do not mean to take a stance on them in particular here. But what can recognition theorists learn from Brudholm’s analysis? We learn, first, that what is philosophically important about a moral narrative is not exhaustively defined by how it begins and ends. Instead, participants can be bound by conflicting moral and psychological values that are treated well or poorly, validated or pathologized, as they are overridden on the way to that desirable end. Both the TRC and the Constitutional Court began and ended the same, but what happened in between marked the moral difference between them. So, we learn that participants in a moral transformation can be legitimately ambivalent about undergoing a moral transformation even when it is a transition to the morally best outcome. And further, we learn that a transformational rhetoric that cites that choiceworthy end too emphatically – what Brudholm calls "boosterism" of that end – can risk censoring that ambivalence and further undermining that conflicting moral value.

Thus, returning to recognition, even if the bootstrap effect does tell us how recognition overcomes these practical inversions, that insincere recognition becomes sincere over time, that satisfactory endpoint does not negate what is philosophically important about these inversions. In the transition from misrecognition to recognition, there is a typically a stage of either pretense or perceived pretense in the act of recognition secured. The act of recognition is often the midpoint, and not the conclusion, of the moral story. The recognized is often ambivalent or uncertain about the sincerity of the act of recognition in this transitional period. We, as social and moral agents and as philosophers, are not just in the business of identifying preferable outcomes. We are also participants in these moral narratives, who ought to know what stages, disruptions, and attitudes we will encounter along the way to those conclusions. Even when the bootstrap effect works, it does not eliminate the philosophical importance of attention to the practical inversions it
overcomes. So, if a philosopher asking “what about the bootstrap effect?” means “does the bootstrap effect render the problems it overcomes unworthy of philosophical attention?” my response is “no.”

Also, Brudholm's analysis calls on us to be cautious of one sort of appeal to the bootstrap effect in recognition politics that can be hazardous, what we can call “boosterism of recognition.” It does seem appropriate to appeal to the bootstrap effect first-personally, when talking to myself, so to speak, and trying to become a better person. I might urge myself, for example, to act as though I do not have xenophobic attitudes until I do not. What the above analogy cautions us against is a certain second-personal appeal to the bootstrap effect. Boosterism of recognition occurs when a recognizer or third party cites the bootstrap effect as a means to censor the recognized's ambivalence about an act of recognition. If you struggle for my recognition and I bestow it upon you, but you are ambivalent about that recognition because you had struggled for it, it would be inappropriate for me to cite the bootstrap effect as a way to censor your ambivalence, telling you that you are wrong to feel ambivalent now because we are on the way to a better outcome, that soon my recognition will be sincere and you will be confident that it is sincere. So, if a philosopher asking “what about the bootstrap effect?” means “does the bootstrap effect give us grounds to criticize those ambivalent about acts of recognition?” my answer is “no.”

Summarizing this section, the “practical inversion” I have articulated in this dissertation show that it is easier for us to bring about the performance associated with an act of recognition than the attitude itself. The one recognized is often left skeptical or ambivalent about the sincerity of the act of recognition as a result. But, according to the bootstrap effect, we often come to have the dispositions we perform – “pretense can bootstrap sincerity.” While more work
needs to be done to understand how the bootstrap effect applies to acts of recognition among specifically, we can assume that it in some valuable ways does. So, this skepticism or ambivalence can be overcome – insincere recognition can become sincere over time. The bootstrap effect is often a powerful moral technology we use to create the world we want. But, even still, these practical inversions ought to remain of interest to social philosophers. The drama we encounter along the way to that world we want is of interest in itself. And as moral agents, we should be mindful about citing the bootstrap effect to censor someone’s skepticism or ambivalence about an act of recognition even if we know it will be overcome.

V. CONCLUSION

I hope I have convinced you that recognition resists struggle, resists institutionalization, and resists scaling, and that these features shape the complex social practices through which we navigate and negotiate our recognitive environments. What is more, though these features find a rich articulation in Rousseau's writing, they need not depend on any of his controversial Romantic commitments that many of us today reject. Instead, as I have argued, they can depend on thin and uncontroversial commitments about the effective and clear communication of interpersonal attitudes and what occludes it. And their subtle effects are familiar and recognizable in everyday interpersonal engagement even when Romantic theories and ways of life are absent.

My argument in this project has focused on articulating the structure of three specific practical inversions: that recognition resists struggle, institutionalization, and scaling. While I am confident that those three inversions exist and function in the way I have described them here, naming and articulating these three specific inversions is ultimately a mediate goal of this
project. Those three are meant to leave you with a more general impression by way of example.

The question animating this project, which I suggested is comparatively neglected in recognition theory, asks after the norms governing the social practices of bestowing and soliciting recognition, adjudicating between those effectively and defectively performed. I suggested that attention to this question would reveal that recognition is unlike other social goods in that it follows a subtle logic that often evades our willful control. The three inversions that I articulate here are meant to make this point by way of example. I do hope I have convinced you that these inversions exist and create the practical problems that I argued follow. But, ultimately, I want you to come away from this project with appreciation of the importance of this neglected question, beyond the three specific answers I have given here. I hope you are struck by the richness of the narrative and social space between misrecognition and recognition, a richness that emerges most clearly from narrativized, concrete, participant descriptions like Rousseau's. The space between misrecognition and recognition is just as philosophically rich and practically complex as its endpoints, following an often non-linear path, and it is there that we discover the extent to which recognition often evades our willful control.
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